

**Active citizenship: the role of Third Sector adult education within UK
and devolved Welsh Governments' policy contexts.**

A case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales.

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Abstract

This thesis examines contested concepts of active citizenship and how these have been promoted by governments and the Third Sector in the UK, principally post-1997. By focusing on devolution in Wales, in contrast to Westminster it investigates claims that devolution offers a greater capacity to reduce the democratic deficit and enable more profound citizen engagement. Central to this analysis is the case of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. This was used as a lens through which to scrutinise the scope for empowering approaches within the Third Sector despite its increasingly close and controversial relationship with UK governments.

The research draws on critical social analysis for the theoretical framework, to examine concepts, policies and findings. It explores the significance of structural inequalities upon active citizenship within these contexts. Previously highlighted by radical and feminist theorists the critiques focus on 'multi-layered' and 'differentiated' notions. These claimed to promote more inclusive concepts of citizenship. Through qualitative research methods such as participant observations and semi-structured interviews with UK and Welsh Government civil servants, WEA staff and learners in South Wales, it aims to unravel these concepts in relation to the practical impact. It focuses on how the UK's Third Sector organisations, such as the WEA South Wales, have been able to promote more radical styles of active citizenship in line with educative and empowering community development pedagogies.

Key findings highlight challenges and contradictions in UK policies and practices, while revealing complexities faced by governments when trying to encourage active citizenship without prescribing how citizens should participate. Conversely, it reveals unexpected outcomes conveyed by the research participants, which illustrate positive examples of active learning for active citizenship in the Third Sector despite wider constraints and pressures. It confirms that differentiated support is required for citizens to participate on their own terms.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Abstract	4
Introduction	8
Chapter 1: Perspectives on Active Citizenship	14
1.1 Origins and definitions of the concept of 'citizenship',	16
1.2 Citizenship', the nation-state and global citizens	17
1.3 Social Justice, equality and feminist approaches to citizenship	22
1.4 Citizenship within the UK	26
1.5 Citizens' democratic participation, devolution and identities	28
1.6 What is active citizenship?	31
1.7 Governance and Governmentality	32
1.8 Neo-Liberal and community based notions of citizenship	34
1.9 Civic republicanism and communitarian citizenship	35
1.10 New Labour and active citizenship	36
1.11 Post-Thatcher Conservative approaches to citizenship	42
1.12 Citizenship and Education	43
1.13 Global Citizenship Education	47
1.14 Conclusion	49
Chapter 2: Methodology	52
2.1 Critical analysis as a research approach	53
2.2 Participative and inclusive research	54
2.3 A qualitative approach to data collection and developing the research strategy	57
2.4 The study context	60
2.5 The role of the case study	61
2.6 Fieldwork – participant observation	63
2.7 Feminist approaches to research	64
2.8 Sampling	66
2.9 Interviewing	70
2.10 Analysis of data	72
2.11 Limitations to the study	74
2.12 Insider/ Outsider Research and sources of potential bias	76
2.13 Ethical considerations	80
2.14 Research Summary	83
2.15 Conclusions	85
Chapter 3: Democratic participation, governance and devolution in the UK	87
3.1 Critiques of representative democracy in the UK	87
3.2 Alternatives forms of democratic governance and participation	92
3.3 Deliberative democracy	95
3.4 Civic and civil engagement	96
3.5 The balance of power and democratic participation	97
3.6 The UK's Democratic Systems and participation	99
3.7 UK Electoral systems	100
3.8 Democratic representation and voting patterns	101
3.9 Devolution and Democracy	102
3.10 Glass walls or glass ceilings? People, power and devolution	103
3.11 Devolution, Inclusion and Representation	109
3.12 Conclusions	111

Chapter 4: UK Governments' policies: active citizenship and community engagement	113
4.1 The impact of social injustice and exclusion on active citizenship	113
4.2 UK Government policies, social exclusion and citizenship	115
4.3 Privatisation and citizen's participation	120
4.4 Engaging and empowering communities: New Labour approaches?	121
4.5 Centralism and localism: contradictions in government policies	124
4.6 Ignoring the Big Society?	128
4.7 The Welsh Government: a new approach to active citizenship and community engagement?	131
4.8 Community empowerment and engagement in Wales	135
4.9 Conclusions	141
Chapter 5: Active citizenship- the evolving role of the Third Sector in the UK	143
5.1 Defining the role of the Third Sector and voluntary activity in the 21st Century	144
5.2 UK Government policies: changing dynamics with the Third Sector	145
5.3 'Voluntary' activity and active citizenship	150
5.4 The Welsh Government's 'alternative' approach to the Third Sector	152
5.5 Education for active citizenship	157
5.6 Democratic learning for active citizenship	159
5.7 Active Learning for Active Citizenship	160
5.8 UK Governments approaches to third Sector citizenship learning	163
5.9 Welsh devolution and education for active citizenship	165
5.10 Lifelong learning and active citizenship within the Welsh context	169
5.11 Conclusions	172
Chapter 6: The Workers' Educational Association and active citizenship	175
6.1 The Workers' Educational Association: background and context	175
6.2 The WEA in the UK- a focus on Wales	177
6.3 The WEA and working class culture in Wales	180
6.4 The case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales	182
6.5 The WEA Wales and education for active citizenship	185
6.6 Concepts of active citizenship in the WEA	187
6.7 The significance of an organisation with a democratic structure	192
6.8 Political education in the modern WEA	195
6.9 Critical and democratic education- theory and practice	200
6.10 Transformative and empowering educational processes in the WEA	204
6.11 The value of experiential learning	209
6.12 Conclusion	211
Chapter 7: The WEA and community engagement	213
7.1 Partnership working and its impact on active citizenship	213
7.2 Communities First?	219
7.3 Can the WEA empower communities?	222
7.4 WEA engaging the grassroots via Community Learning Representatives	227
7.5 Education for Sustainable and Development Global Citizenship- community partnerships on a global scale	229
7.6 Conclusion	232
Chapter 8: Active Citizenship: Obstacles and Outcomes	235
8.1 WEA staff and participants views on barriers and opportunities for active citizenship	235

8.2	Socio-economic barriers and how were these being addressed?	236
8.3	How did the WEA address multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination?	242
8.4	How far can educational provision backed by support structures make a difference?	245
8.5	Confidence, Self-esteem & Motivation	251
8.6	Reflecting on alternative experiences of WEA	254
8.7	Overcoming the obstacles to active citizenship and the wider benefits of learning	256
8.8	Progressing and contributing as learners and citizens	261
8.9	Conclusions on the WEA's ability to address barriers faced by participants	265
Chapter 9: The WEA South Wales and the role of government		267
9.1	Tensions and challenges for the WEA South Wales	267
9.2	The WEA and the challenges of public policy regarding education	270
9.3	How far might devolution help to offset political and financial pressures?	274
9.4	Conclusions regarding the WEA's relationship with UK Governments	281
9.5	Conclusions for the WEA South Wales case study	282
Chapter 10: Conclusions on findings		287
10.1	How varying perceptions of active citizenship in the UK contribute towards an understanding and practice of active citizenship	288
10.2	Whether Post-1997 government policies and approaches in the UK have enhanced the opportunities for active citizenship.	289
10.3	Reducing the democratic deficit and the role of devolution in Wales.	292
10.4	How the Third Sector's work within recent policy frameworks has helped to encourage independent and grassroots forms of active citizenship.	294
10.5	How certain Third Sector organisations work in partnership to enhance opportunities for active citizenship.	296
10.6	How active citizenship is encouraged and embedded through the work of the WEA.	297
10.7	The extent to which the WEA has helped to recognise and overcome barriers and obstacles which curtail active citizenship.	298
10.8	Challenges faced by the WEA and partner Third Sector organisations when subject to financial and political pressures from UK Governments.	300
10.9	Contributions	301
10.10	Reflections on what I have learnt	303
10.11	Other areas for exploration	303
Bibliography		305
Appendices		322

Introduction

The research explores the following question:

To what extent does the Third Sector's work within varying UK and Welsh Government policy frameworks encourage active citizenship?

A case study of the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) South Wales, in the context of devolution in Wales.

This research investigates whether UK governments' policies and initiatives aimed at promoting community engagement and tackling the democratic deficit contribute towards, complement or undermine the Third Sector's work in activating citizenship. A case study of the Third sector organisation the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) South Wales, examines how and to what degree community development based adult education can encourage citizenship. In this contested context it specifically focuses on the Welsh dimension and how recent devolution within Wales impacts on the role of the voluntary sector and how far this actually enlarges the space for active citizenship.

Context for the thesis

The study took place within the context of the 'Taking Part' research capacity building cluster Active Citizenship and Community Empowerment. It has been funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), which has aimed to produce research on active citizenship and community empowerment with the Third Sector. This study forms part of the research contribution from Goldsmiths University, one of the partner organisations contributing building on the work of the Take Part Network.

It specifically examines the policies and initiatives relating to active citizenship of the UK governments with a particular emphasis on the devolved Welsh

Government administrations from 1997-2013. The case study observed the work of the long-established but constantly evolving Third Sector organisation the Workers' Educational Association South Wales, between 2009 and 2012.

This study draws attention to how citizenship agendas and political changes influenced by different UK and Wales based governments are set within a context of wider global social and economic financial pressures and relationships.

Outline of thesis

The research has been informed by my academic background in politics in relation to social policy with a particular focus on issues relating to social justice and inequalities. My perspective has also been shaped through my practical experience of working in a variety of settings in the UK and Japan, including the Third Sector, education and for the Welsh Government. These theoretical backgrounds and professional experiences have contributed to doubts regarding the capacity of the Third Sector in the UK to promote active citizenship in the fullest sense. This has been particularly relevant since the post-2008 recession, within the wider context of economic and political agendas as well as constraints from government policies. I was aware of the tensions and contradictions in public policy which aimed at promoting active citizenship, whilst actually prioritising economic and skills agendas, meanwhile placing increasing expectations on active citizens and Third Sector organisations to fill the gaps in service delivery.

Thus the study explores questions within this framework which draw upon theories relating to how active citizenship is affected by inequality and social injustice. It therefore critiques the work of the Third Sector and UK governments from a predominantly critical social theory perspective. It also examines Feminists' arguments, particularly Lister's (1998) and Young's (1992) 'multi-layered' and 'differentiated' notions of citizenship. These notions are questioned, by inquiring whether they have the potential to be inclusive in

theory and practice and the extent to which citizens determine the conditions of active citizenship on their own terms. It asks if bespoke levels of support and access to resources are required to enable citizens to feel empowered to positively and actively participate in society at a variety of levels. Therefore it questions whether governments, alongside organisations in the Third Sector, can potentially play a central role in ensuring that citizens have equal access to the resources and support which enable active citizenship.

Devolution for Wales has potentially provided an opportunity for a more inclusive arena for all citizens who live in Wales. The extent to which this new layer of government has the capacity to help to reduce barriers to participation and enable greater citizen engagement was questioned through examination of the policies and initiatives implemented by the Welsh Government. However, the capacity of devolution within its limited form raised doubts regarding the Welsh Government's ability to ensure that all citizens receive the support required in order to reach their full potential as active and engaged citizens. This principally relates to wider UK policies and funding structures which have focussed on reducing social benefits from the most vulnerable or disenfranchised citizens, while expecting greater contributions from them. The study also questions UK governments' increasingly close relationships with the Third Sector and its ability to act independently on behalf of citizens, in particular to help include those citizens who are not engaged with formal governmental systems or society.

It examines claims made by theorists such as Crick and Freire that learning for active citizenship is central to enabling citizens to challenge and overcome barriers to full and meaningful democratic participation. In this context education may be enabled as a liberating, democratic and reflective tool which can potentially play a central role in providing a sustainable method of ensuring citizens can actively and willingly challenge government and power. Therefore it was useful to explore whether the potential benefits of education could actually make a significant impact on active citizenship, given the barriers and challenges in making citizens' voices heard effectively. A critical examination into the Third

Sector adult education organisation- the Worker's Educational Association South Wales therefore seemed appropriate, due to its long established mission to encourage active citizenship within the context of social justice. The case study explores whether Third Sector organisations such as the WEA have been able to maintain their underlying purpose and status as a Third Sector organisation- despite wider political and financial pressures to conform to government agendas. Also in contrast to governments, if organisations within the Third Sectors are better placed to deliver the type of transformative education which enables critical thinking and more meaningful acts of social participation? The research revealed that there were some surprise findings, as well as complex tensions between the desired outcomes of the Third Sector and the evolving agendas of the UK and Welsh Governments.

Overview of the thesis

The evolving concepts of active citizenship from the ancient Greece of Aristotle to the contemporary Britain of Bernard Crick have influenced recent debates and policies in the UK. The relevance of these concepts and policies are introduced throughout the literature review in chapter 1. It examines varying definitions of citizenship including notions of global citizenship and the potential to develop citizenship which is inclusive. It goes on to highlight the complex barriers which curtail equal rights and the inclusion of all citizens to democratically participate and explores the contribution of the UK's Third Sector. The chapter then discusses the central role education can play in enabling and empowering citizens to become active.

The methodology for the research is set out and explained in chapter 2, setting the context for the case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. It outlines the methods used to carry out the fieldwork, including participant observation and emphasises the underlying ethos of the study which is to discover how to empower citizens including as part of the research process itself. It explains the process of critical analysis of the policies of government

and work of the Third Sector Wales and across the UK, in relation to active citizenship

Chapter 3 looks at the links between democracy and active citizenship, and the changing nature of government and governance. Drawing on interviews with civil servants in Wales, it also examines the capacity of the devolved governments in the UK, with a specific focus on Wales to enable democratic citizen participation.

In Chapter 4, UK and Welsh Government policies and initiatives which aim to encourage active citizenship are outlined, using interviews from policy advisors. The chapter highlights the underlying effects of social injustice and government programmes which aim to address unequal opportunities to active citizenship. It specifically analyses community regeneration programmes within this context.

Current issues and debates regarding approaches to active citizenship in the Third Sector will be discussed in Chapter 5. Particular attention is given to the changing relationship between governments and the Third Sector and the effects on active citizenship. It also highlights the role that education has in enabling active citizenship, particularly through certain Third Sector organisations by analysing data derived from interviews with civil servants in these areas.

The focus changes from chapter 6 through to 9, as the findings from the case study of the WEA South Wales are critically examined. Chapter 6 discusses the background of the organisation, which has long espoused a commitment to promoting active citizenship through education and through its wider social movement structure. The study critically explores these claims through presenting an analysis of interviews and observations from attending WEA and other Third Sector organisation activities. Chapter 7 goes on to outline how the WEA works in partnership with other organisations to promote community engagement. The extent to which the WEA has attempted to enable its participants to overcome barriers and obstacles to participation are then

discussed in chapter 8. Then in Chapter 9 the relationship between UK Governments and the WEA is discussed, focusing on the ambiguities of promoting critical and active citizenship within this context.

The final chapter summarises key findings from the study in relation to the research question. It reflects on Westminster and Welsh Government policies and initiatives, as well as how they work with the Third Sector to promote active citizenship, before returning to the theoretical issues that were explored at the outset.

Chapter 1: Perspectives on Citizenship

Introduction

This chapter explores evolving and contrasting perspectives on citizenship. It traces the roots of the concept from the ancient Greek polis through to the pivotal social notions of citizenship advocated by T H Marshall, centred on the premise that citizenship involves a balance of rights and responsibilities. It discusses the relevance of global and trans-boundary citizenship concepts and examines the changing nature of citizenship within the UK. Despite a widening definition of citizenship within the framework of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and notions of global citizenship, there are complex ambiguities and barriers which curtail equal rights of citizens from being fully realised. This is highlighted through key debates regarding the inclusion and exclusion of citizens within national or international contexts, as emphasised by contemporary commentators such as Ruth Lister (1997) and David Held (1991; 2007) amongst others who explore feminist as well as internationalist perspectives. Their discussions of the limitations of traditional definitions of citizenship focus upon rights and responsibilities in the public sphere, within the context of the nation state. They set the scene for later chapters which investigate the ways in which active citizenship is defined, contested and enacted in the contexts of devolution in Wales as well as the UK more widely.

The challenges of citizen engagement are further examined with a focus on the specific UK and Welsh Government policies and initiatives aimed at promoting active citizenship and reducing the democratic deficit. The chapter explores the revival of communitarian and participative styles of citizenship which were ostensibly advocated by the UK's New Labour's approach to citizen engagement. It highlights the limitations of these policies and initiatives which have been criticised for not tackling the underlying socio-economic and political conditions which affect citizens' ability to actively and effectively participate. Some of these criticisms are reflected in the changing role of the Third Sector, where there has been a growing emphasis on financial competition and

professionalization, often deriving from state pressures. Concerns regarding the co-option of the Third Sector by the state to deliver key functions are explored in relation to its ability to act as an independent challenger to the state, or to facilitate meaningful active citizenship.

In the UK, post 1997 governments placed a renewed emphasis on society as a space in which engaged citizens could improve their communities and society as a whole. The UK as part of a wider European framework introduced initiatives such as Communities First in Wales and the New Deal in England. These were aimed at regenerating and empowering communities. Despite high levels of investment into these programmes, criticisms have been made that they have not delivered the desired outcomes. The Conservatives followed this with the idea of the Big Society with a greater emphasis on civil society and the responsibility of individuals to improve their communities and deliver key services. The state dominated approach of these initiatives raises fundamental questions about the nature of citizenship and the ability of individuals and groups to influence the power structures around them and make a meaningful impact on their own and other's lives. In turn it highlights the complexities of governance and democratic participation, particularly with regards to the extent to which devolution within the UK can make a positive impact on active citizenship. The literature highlights the limitations to what can be achieved by individuals, groups and organisations in society, if fundamental power structures and inequalities and notions of hierarchical governance structures are not challenged and transformed. These issues and the various concepts of citizenship are thus considered, with particular stress on how citizens can be motivated and enabled to challenge such barriers and participate fully in society at a local level as well as in an increasingly globalised world.

Therefore the role of education, as a means by which citizens then can potentially influence change and engage in positive and democratic practices is explored. This sets the framework for the issues that are examined throughout the research. It provides the theoretical context and identifies the gaps in existing knowledge that are to be addressed. These issues are considered

specifically later in the case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales, exploring the extent to which Third Sector organisations can influence and encourage active citizenship, however defined.

1.1 Origins and definitions of the concept of 'citizenship'

Citizenship is a widely recognised but contested concept. 'In its most general sense' Delanty declares 'citizenship is about group membership' (2000:9). He also identifies generally acknowledged key 'components' of citizenship which include 'rights, duties, participation and identity.' This concept's origins are rooted in the ancient Greek polis. 'For both Aristotle and Cicero, two of the key founding philosophers of the civic republican ethic, good citizens were those who were committed to engaging in the public sphere of the polis for the common good' Fryer (2010:33). It has since been broadly accepted that individuals can be bestowed with the status of citizen when they belong to a recognised political community e.g. the state. Aristotle, arguably the original protagonist of civic republicanism declared that citizens 'share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn' (1986:123). In this sense citizenship thus implies a reciprocal and active relationship between an individual and the community that they belong to. Nonetheless, this form of citizenship involved the exclusive participation of specific elites, where property owning males were considered the only rightful citizens, sanctioned with civic rights.

Since ancient times the definition of citizenship has evolved implicitly and explicitly alongside major social and political change and often in response to widespread inhumanity and oppression, which have triggered struggles for democratic, civic and social rights. Attempts to address the imbalance of power and rights between citizens and authority were enshrined in a number of pivotal documents. These included the 1698 Bill of Rights in England; the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen' 1789, after the French Revolution and the United States of America's 1791, Bill of Rights. These original documents and social changes however still failed to address fundamental human inequalities, as none of these documents universally acknowledged the rights of women,

slaves or children. More recently the UN's Declaration of Human Rights declared the rights of all people, discussed further later in the chapter.

More recently in the UK if not globally, the dominant ethos which emerged in the post- World War II era was captured through T H Marshall's definition of citizenship: 'Citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties, with which their status endowed,' (50:29). Marshall defined 3 fundamental types of citizenship rights. These were civil rights; political rights and social rights. Marshall recognised that mere legal and political rights were not adequate by themselves to attain full citizenship and declared that social and welfare provision was also essential. In some states social and economic equality became increasingly important to this definition and post war polices. States including the UK demonstrated a commitment to policies which promoted a more equal distribution of wealth as well as establishing the right to public education, health and unemployment benefits.

Nonetheless, Marshall's concept did not address all aspects of inequality as it did not consider cultural pluralism and most notably neglected to address the issue of the barriers to realising the equal rights of women. Fryer argued that Marshall's 'concept of citizenship failed to differentiate adequately between formal and substantive rights, and that it implied acceptance of the separation of the public and the private spheres of life overlooking the disadvantaged and exploited position of women and others' (2010:30). Critics have therefore emphasised the particularism of his interpretation. Despite this, the main tenets of Marshall's concept of citizenship have remained central to contemporary debates on citizen's rights. Thereafter there has also been increasing recognition amongst some commentators that social justice is a pre-requisite for full citizenship to exist. This includes social justice for women and disadvantaged minorities - a recurring theme, that subsequent chapters develop in more detail.

1.2 'Citizenship', the nation-state and global citizens

After the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia 1648, citizenship became intrinsically linked to the nation-state, which became thereafter seen as the prime means by which citizens were governed. Scholars such as Hobbes and Rousseau deliberated the underlying link between the establishment of the nation-state and citizens. The concept of the Social Contract was developed, as a means of justifying the legitimacy of the state as the sovereign power. The 'social contract' in conjunction with the rise of the nation-state would in theory provide a basis for potentially more equal polities. 'The primitive compact substitutes for a moral and legal equality which compensates for all those physical inequalities from which men suffer. However unequal they maybe in bodily strength or intellectual gifts, they become equal before the law.' Rousseau (1960:238). The state therefore was the means by which at least ideally, citizenship could constitute equality for all those who belonged to it. Rousseau also emphasised the need to recognise socio-economic inequality as injustice and an impediment to citizenship and thus the polity/ community as a whole:

'Under a bad government such equality is apparent and illusory. It serves only to keep the poor man confined within the limits of his poverty and to maintain the rich in their usurpation. In fact, laws are always beneficial to the 'haves' and injurious to the have nots... Whence it follows that life in a social community can thrive only when all its citizens have something and none have too much,' Rousseau (68:268).

Despite attempts to create greater socio-economic and political equality in the post-Marshall era, critics argue that there are some fundamental problems with the strength of the social contract. 'The existence of the underclass casts doubts on the social contract itself. It means that citizenship has become an exclusive rather than an inclusive status. Some citizens are full and some are not', Dahrendorf (1987:13) in Levitas (2005:16).

As more universal and potentially inclusive concepts of the citizen are evolving, the role of the nation-state as the prime actor in the lives of citizens has been fundamentality questioned. Different levels of political rights and

interdependencies have created various forms of governance which influence the lives of citizens within a process of 'globalisation'. Whilst the definition and relevance of globalisation varies between theorists, it is broadly agreed that it involves 'the intensification of economic, political, social and cultural relations across borders' Holm and Sørensen (1995:1-117).

This rise in complex interdependence between different agents and actors has highlighted issues at a global level, such as environmental pollution and global warming, pandemics and demographic expansion. In these situations local issues have a global impact and arguably need to be addressed at both levels. These key concepts are explored later, analysing the initiatives to engage citizens at a local level, within the wider global context.

David Held therefore challenges the nation state as the most 'appropriate realm' 'for developing and implementing policy' (2002:98). He perceives that cooperation between different political, social and economic agents at a trans-boundary level has become a constant necessity and not a mere ideal. Held also illustrates how globalisation can both undermine and appear to increase democratic accountability. 'The enmeshment of national economics in global economic transaction', 'results in, the autonomy of democratically elected governments has been, and is increasingly constrained by sources of unelected and unrepresentative economic power'. He aims to rectify these democratic deficits through 'democratic law' which 'to be effective must be internationalised... cosmopolitan law' (2000:99). Here Held underlined some of the contradictions and problems related to citizenship which automatically involves activities and inter-connectedness across borders, but is curtailed and undermined by multi-faceted inequalities including legal, political, cultural as well as social and economic.

As Scholte (1999:22) in Edwards (2001:275) expressed this 'governance involves more than the state, community involves more than the nation and citizenship involves more than national entitlements and obligations'. Hoffman takes the point further by asserting that 'the state is actually a barrier to the notion of

citizenship' (2004:2). 'Citizenship' according to Cheney (1994) should be 're-conceptualised as a capacity within people rather than as... something people do or do not possess at any one time or any one place'. These theorists therefore argued that the concept of the citizen should be perceived beyond the legal status or rights of individuals and instead one which focuses on the potential and actions of citizens as differentiated humans.

Faulks represents the view that 'citizenship is a momentum concept that must be expanded beyond the state to be truly secure... to deny others rights because of cultural difference is to put our own rights at risk'(2001:40). At the heart of this transition is the concept of legitimacy and security. Oliver and Heather distinguish between traditional concepts of citizenship which are linked to nationality and 'new citizenship which recognises the existence of human rights outside of the state' (1994:195). Such concerns have underpinned the work of some Third Sector organisations in promoting education for global citizenship, as subsequent chapters explore in more details.

Central to the notion of trans-boundary citizenship has been the introduction of international agreements on human rights. Despite its deep-set ambiguities, in 1948 the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed and drafted by a range of over 50 member states worldwide. Accordingly, this universal concept claims that essentially to be a human is to be a citizen. Soysal describes this as promoting a 'post-national model of citizenship based on individual human rights and the logic of 'universal person-hood, rather than the logic of national citizenship' (1994:3). This was the first document to encompass all members of the human race including women and children regardless of economic, social or cultural background. Theoretically it claimed to establish a completely inclusive concept of the citizen, with no exclusions or exceptions. Alongside this has been evolution of the International Bill of Rights. This comprises of the International Covenants recognising civil, political as well as economic, social and cultural rights. These internationally recognised agreements have been accompanied by the establishment of institutions such as the International Court of Justice. Critics however outline the ineffective and arbitrary nature of this type of

international justice, especially as countries such as the USA and China have not agreed upon it. These treaties nonetheless acknowledged the need to protect individual citizen/ human rights on a global scale, regardless of the sovereignty of the nation-state. The challenges and ambiguities of the lived out practices of the universally recognised citizen are explored in later sections.

This universal notion of the citizen highlights a revival of the ancient concept of the global or world citizens or what was described as citizens of the 'kosmos' by ancient Greeks. Immanuel Kant (1796) outlined the essence of 'global citizenship... attests to a certain view of the world that is holistic in the sense that there is no essential reason why barriers, borders, diversity and the disparateness of the human condition (to) render one person and their conditions and actions irrelevant to any other'. Held exemplifies this position by stating that 'in this system of cosmopolitan governance, people would come to enjoy multiple citizenship and political memberships in the diverse political community which significantly affect them,' (2007:100).

This approach is clarified by Axtman who points out that 'Held's view of 'cosmopolitan citizenship' 'does not aim for a world government or federal world state (2004:101). He accepts democracy must be institutionalised on many levels, ranging from the local/ municipal to the sub-national and national levels and through to the regional level and to the global level'. Dower concurs that 'although global institutions... do not reflect (global citizenship), being a global citizen is about being committed to the development of appropriate institutions at global level' (2002:253). Limitations to this concept are set out by critics such as Skeggs however who has argued that 'Cosmopolitanism' is an elitist concept open only those who have the resources to fully participate in what is an increasingly globalised market. 'Cosmopolitan, therefore, as an embodied entitled subjectivity relies on the requisite cultural resources (time, access, knowledge) for requisite dispositions' (2004:159).

However as Dower argued 'citizens may differ about many things, and be opposed to one another on some matters, but if they are acting as citizens they

have at least some values which they share' (2002:149). Heater reiterates this view and perceives that 'citizenship' can be the unifying identity which transcends all others, not necessarily aligned to global institutions (1990:2). 'Citizenship is one amongst many identities that individuals will feel, but is distinguished by its necessity for moral maturity, and by its potential to moderate the divisiveness of other identities, gender, religion, race, class and nation'. Cosmopolitan citizenship according to Delanty is the recognition that 'the fundamental criterion of citizenship is no longer birth ... but residence and cultivation of a critical discourse of identity as multi-layered' (2000: 67).

'The Cosmopolitan, both in its Kantian origins and in some contemporary invocations can be seen to invoke a philosophical and moral stance. Less a descriptive vocabulary than an ethical project, cosmopolitanism in some of its most recent theoretical renditions in political and theory becomes a way of resolving the moral questions that arise from the attempt to reconcile different kinds of difference,' Keith (2005:39).

In this sense cosmopolitanism needs to be recognised more as an ideal rather than an accurate description of what already occurs across a global multifaceted and complex array of identities and affiliations. However it does offer an approach for the changing trans-boundary, power relationships that effect citizens across the globe, while still recognising the governance and government exists on a multitude of state and local levels. These global and multi-layered notions of citizenship are explored throughout the thesis, particularly with regards to how UK citizens relate to the power structures and identities which shape their lives.

1.3 Social Justice, equality and feminist approaches to citizenship

Feminists such as Lister (2003:87) in Leca (1992:30) complement the cosmopolitan and critical social concept of citizenship with a 'multi-layered' perspective, which 'operates on several frontiers from the local to the global, in which people can express multiple and overlapping loyalties and identities'. Lister promotes an alternative to the traditional universalism espoused by liberals, which arguably overlooks difference and inequalities. She therefore

challenges the presumption that there is an ultimate moral and ideological standpoint from which or to which all citizens should adhere. Almost invariably every individual, culture and sub-culture has its own ideas, desires and perceptions of the societies which it works within. This is where universalism and the traditions of civic republicanism break down. Therefore, as Lister argues, liberal notions of citizenship involve 'narrow political conceptions, rigid separation of the public and private sphere; (and) its appeal to notions of universalism, impartiality and the common good'(2003:15).

She described an alternative approach as 'Universal Differentiation', which 'aims to encompass all social cleavages simultaneously' (2003:68). This perspective reflects the complexity of identities within an increasingly interconnected world. In parallel postmodernist and feminist Iris Marion Young coined the term 'differentiated citizenship', which takes account of individual and group identities and differences. She argued that 'the ideal of universal citizenship stands in contrast to universality as equal treatment. The inclusion of everyone requires special rights attending to group differences which undermine oppression,' (1990:48). Even though identities are often fluid, it is necessary for them to be acknowledged and for inequalities to be addressed. Mouffe also stresses there is an additional need to recognise group rights, which she 'does not see in conflict with citizenship'. Accordingly, 'radical democratic citizenship does not simply extend the sphere of rights in order to include these groups but allows for the radical restructuring of the identities and the polity' (2003:253).

This feminist viewpoint identifies the 'suppression of the 'other' in that societies are divided into those citizens perceived as legitimate and useful and the 'other' which includes those who have been traditionally treated as inferior and therefore lacking positive rights e.g. women; immigrants and refugees etc. Fraser recognises the fundamental factors which undermine people's ability to participate. She perceived that 'two different types of impediment need to be eliminated 'social inequality' and 'mis-recognition' of difference', in so far that difference should not be perceived as a negative or exclusionary concept,

whereby people are wrongly stereotyped as 'different' in order to satisfy particular political agendas (1997:45).

Attributing the non-participation of citizens to the mere choice of individuals underestimates the impact that social, legal and economic inequalities have upon their actions. This has been illustrated by the erosion of fundamental legal rights to expression and equal treatment which have been eroded since the 1980s, in Britain. The rule of law sometimes has fallen short where governments have legislated against specific groups. Kennedy expresses her concern at the undercurrent of democratic erosion and justice. 'The catalogue of inroads into our liberty is shocking when we take stock'. The following are examples of this precedence:

'Internment without trial for suspected terrorists; cuts in legal aid, limitation on the rights to silence, expansions of the state to invade privacy, incitement of public fear of terrorism, crime, asylum seekers, and immigrants to justify serious erosions of civil liberty and introduction of identity cards,' Kennedy (2007:5).

This emphasises the need for re-recognition that the fundamental principle of equality before the law is only one pre-requisite for responsible and active participation. It also highlights how connecting the public with the private is important in order to truly enable active citizenship. The separation between the public and the private spheres has been the subject of much criticism from feminist perspectives. This distinction has been arguably sustained by traditional structures whereby only rights within the public sphere are recognised as necessary or legitimate. Young describes this dichotomy as society perceiving 'the public as general and the private as particular' (1990:48). As a result, there have in fact, been some shifts, widening definitions of the public sphere in relation to public policy interventions. For instance some recent state policies have intervened in the domestic sphere where previously this had been perceived as being outside the realm of a state's requirements. In the UK laws against domestic violence have highlighted the need for further positive rights for individuals and groups to ensure that equality of opportunity is available in areas of life formerly outside the scope of such public policy

intervention. Conventionally unrecognised contributory facets of inequality which impede meaningful citizenship are gradually being acknowledged and challenged. The recognition of underlying inequalities and the effects they have on individuals' abilities to participate as citizens are examined below and as central themes in later chapters.

Feminists such as Lister have long asserted that there is an 'indivisibility of civic, political and social rights' (2003:25). If these rights were fully provided it could provide in principle every individual with all the necessary tools with which they can learn to become active and productive citizens. 'Active citizens are those who are ready and prepared to take on the obligations of citizenship by contributing directly or indirectly to good governance of the communities. Different levels of support are required to enable hard to reach groups e.g. disabled and refugee groups', Barnes et al (2007:20). It is important here to recognise that the term 'hard to reach' is a controversial and 'inconsistent term', as it has at times been used by commentators to stigmatise particular groups. 'The expression 'hard to reach' according to Smith (2006) as in Brackertz (2007:1) 'defines the problem as one within the group itself not within the approach to them'. However the use of the term 'hard to reach' in the context of this study will be used without negative connotations relating to those groups or individuals that through personal or social circumstances rather than merely choice find it difficult to participate in mainstream political or social activities. Therefore it includes those that experienced perceived or actual barriers to participation that are discussed in more detail later in the study particularly chapter 8.

'Positive freedoms' are key to ensuring citizens have equal opportunities to act within a society. Consistent with Gould (1988:32) in Lister (2003:17) 'positive freedoms' involve 'self-development, requiring not only the absence of external constraint but also the availability of social and material conditions necessary for the achievement of purpose or plans. In her view 'gross inequalities would undermine the ability to carry out political and civil rights'.

As Winckler (2009) of The Bevan Foundation in Wales has argued, 'social justice' is what is required to enable people to engage fully within a society. Central to this concept is that each individual can offer different qualities as a citizen within a socially just world. Marx declared 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs (1994:315)'. In this sense perceiving citizenship as a process of learning and adapting, rather than a stagnant set of rights and responsibilities, would allow for differentiated contributions and greater levels of inclusion. Democratic and formal civic roles only represent some types of participation, as more subtle and informal contributions should be appreciated. Woodward similarly deliberates the fluid nature of 'citizenship' and describes it as a 'capacity within people, rather than citizenship as something people do or do not possess at any one time or in any one place' (2004:10). Therefore the need to ensure people have access to positive rights and support to reach a position where they are able and willing to participate is central to achieving full and active citizenship. How UK Governments and the Third Sector have approached these issues is central to the thesis. Therefore how devolution has contributed to the capacity for democratic and full participation as well social justice are themes explored specifically in chapters 3 and 4 and re-emerging throughout the case study.

1.4 Citizenship within the UK

For many the idea of being a citizen within the UK has historically been perceived as a remote perhaps even an irrelevant concept. British political culture has displayed the duality of deference and tradition; whilst simultaneously being at the forefront of radical grassroots movements which have demonstrated a desire for equality and participation in civic life such as the rise of the welfare state. In fact the Power Commission's research highlights how the current 'British Parliamentary system of elected representation and considerable executive power was built in an era of very limited educational provision and in which deference and rigid hierarchy and static social control were taken for granted', which resulted in widespread alienation (2006:19). Pearce and Hallgarten also argued that 'the concept of citizenship has a more

problematic status in the UK than in other democratic countries... given the absence of a written constitution, a history of citizenship rights or a civic republican tradition of active self-government' (2000:3).

One contributing factor of this arguably could be explained in part as members of the UK and British state remain 'subjects' of a constitutional monarchy, rather than citizens of a state. Crick alludes to how perceptions of citizenship have emerged: 'In our history citizenship has often appeared as something granted from on high to subjects rather than something gained from below' (2000:6). British citizens' identities have evolved through incremental historical precedence and there is no grand narrative to draw upon for a united sense of citizenship. Elizabeth Frazer illustrated this point by drawing on historical convergences and ambiguities in the UK: 'The role of capital and the nature of class rule, imperialism and colonial oppression of Welsh, Scots and Irish people, the dominance of Protestantism over Catholicism- these are all features of British history that tend to underline division and oppression rather than convergence and agreement' (2000:95). These complicated and often overlooked aspects of British political culture and history therefore reflect complex social and political identities in relation to citizenship. Heater reiterates that in Britain there is 'the principle that sovereignty resides with the Parliament and with the people' this reflects a culture whereby 'citizens are 'a mixture of active citizen and a passive subject' (1999: 80).

Exploring further the concept of what it is to be a citizen of the UK or Great Britain also requires reflection regarding ever-changing political and cultural identities. In 1992 the UK Government signed up to the Maastricht Treaty, which officially made all UK citizens, citizens of Europe. Article 17 (1) of the amended EC Treaty 'Citizenship of the Union is hereby established... Citizenship shall complement and not replace national citizenship.' Therefore from 1997 onwards, a person who has been eligible for a UK passport and therefore has had legal status as a UK citizen would also be afforded official status as citizen of the European Union. Arguably, however these same citizens to varying degrees could also be considered citizens of numerous political bodies e.g. Wales;

Scotland; England and Northern Ireland/ Ireland, even local government. Here the multifarious identities and status of citizens within the UK highlight the need to perceive citizenship as an affiliation beyond physical or state boundaries. Therefore again, 'multi-layered' notions of citizenship reaching beyond the exclusive status aligned with the nation state, offer an opportunity to frame citizenship as a more inclusive concept.

1.5 Citizens' democratic participation and devolution

Western governments have emphasised problems with what has been perceived as the rise in general disengagement from civic life and political engagement, across western populations. This reduction of participation and lack of accountability between citizens and formal democratic systems, for example a decline in voting in governmental elections is often referred to as the 'democratic deficit'. Commentators frequently align this deficit with apathetic, non-political and non-participatory citizens. However within the western world in particular this tends to over-simplify how and why citizens participate. Although official voting figures in the UK have been gradually declining since the late 1970s, underlying reasons for this are often over-looked. Hoffman pointed out however that 'the state has always been an elite institution incompatible with meaningful and widespread participation. Apathy and inequality reinforce one another,' (2004:4). In his view a wider variety of participative avenues including introducing devolution needed to be implemented, in order to promote 'thicker' and more effective citizenship.

Devolution amongst other measures played a central part in New Labour's policies. Its reforms aimed to 're-draw the boundaries between what is done in the name of the people and what is done by the people themselves,' (Blair 1996). From 1997, the New Labour Government delivered referendums to electorates in Scotland and Wales, who voted for the devolution of both nations. This was followed in 1998 by a strong majority of 71% which voted to ratify the Good Friday Agreement and progress with devolution in Northern Ireland. The establishment of devolution within the UK specifically aimed to

address democratic deficits with these nations, as certain cultural and political differences and rights had long been overlooked within the Westminster focused model of representation. A further discussion of post 1997 measures to address this deficit in the UK is explored in greater detail in chapter 3, with the central focus on devolution in Wales.

Owing to Wales' small size and lower levels of socio-economic inequality, devolution potentially offered greater scope for deeper and more meaningful citizen engagement, factors explored more fully in chapter 4. Proponents of Welsh devolution have presented a vision of citizenship within Wales, which embraces difference, promotes equality and provides avenues for participation including for those with critical viewpoints, claims examined in chapter 3. 'It was frequently claimed that devolved government would be judged by its ability to bring about more accessibility, representativeness, legitimacy, openness, participation, innovation, inclusiveness and accountability' Chaney et al (2001:1). Furthermore, the potential strength of the Third Sector throughout Wales, to offer an arena for alternative forms of democratic representation, is based on its strong historical connections with grassroots movements and community-led initiatives, as well as its recently increasing close relationship with the Government in Wales, explored further in chapter 5.

However doubts have been raised regarding the genuine capacity of devolution within Wales, as decisions made at Westminster and beyond, have at times undermined the democratic power of citizens within Wales. Illustrations of this deficit are available in later chapters. Likewise the underlying political culture even within the new democratic structure in Wales has presented challenges to citizen participation. According to Leighton Andrews a Welsh Labour politician (1999) at the dawn of devolution in Wales, a more radical political culture was required alongside the devolution settlement, to replace more narrow notions of citizenship aligned with pre-existing hierarchies and political affiliations. In that statement he declared that 'the campaign for Welsh devolution is over, but the struggle to build a living breathing Welsh democracy has barely started' (1999:194). The extent, to which devolution in Wales has helped to transform

culture which 'preserved the privileges of unchallenged authority,' (ibid), into an inclusive environment where equality and democratic participation flourishes, is central to the discussions in subsequent chapters.

Heater likewise points out that there are also further issues to contend with regarding the complexity of how identities intersect with political rights within the UK, as cultural affiliations even post-devolution do not always correlate with the level of political powers and rights of various nations and communities. 'In devolved structures such as... Scotland and Wales, they have a deep sense of civic allegiance to region (Country) and have the right to vote and serve in the assemblies, however they have no legal status as a citizen per se' (1991:132). This multi-faceted sense of identity itself illuminates the difficulties for people when understanding their role as citizens at different levels of governance.

These challenges are reflected further in the complexity in the legal, social and political rights of those who are not afforded official citizenship status within the UK. 'The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 in the UK and subsequent acts' according to Dwyer 'further restrict people's ability to assert their citizenship rights, therefore promoting exclusion rather than inclusion' (2000:49). Gundara goes further to identify the underlying cultural, as well as the legal barriers facing people's ability to act as full citizens. 'Since citizenship legally bestows equality... then racial justice and equity can only be actualised if institutionalised racism is absent... for those who are not even immigrants their rights are more tenuous, especially groups like refugees and asylum seekers' (2002:10). It was also recognised that:

'Citizenship despite its universalist rhetoric has always been a group concept- but it has never been expanded to all members of any polity. There are members who are denied the legal status of citizenship on the basis of their place of birth... many members of polities are excluded from the scope of citizenship even if they are legally entitled to its benefits' Isin and Wood (1999:20).

There have however been various attempts to address some of these inequalities for example through the European Convention on Human Rights

2000, signed under the New Labour Government. Here certain economic and social rights of all EU citizens were enhanced by these measures. They deepened the commitment by European Member states and their citizens to a set of commonly shared values and ideals which are protected by law. Despite this, the rights of non-EU citizens have remained unequal and calls to pull out of this commitment by UK parties such as the Conservatives, highlight opposition to equal rights for non-British citizens.

In summary then, the complexity of citizen's democratic rights in relation to multi-layered identities and status raises crucial questions about how to envisage and encourage active citizenship across different political structures and states. It highlights the challenges facing citizens and governments alike when attempting to engage in and encourage democratic participation, particularly where certain citizens are culturally or politically excluded. Within this context the implementation of devolution within the UK has offered an alternative platform from which certain citizens can potentially participate democratically. The implications for devolution regarding its ability to address the democratic deficit and inequality are central features of the study.

1.6 What is active citizenship?

The broad and contested nature of the concept of citizenship is reflected in the wide spectrum of views expressed regarding the extent to which citizens should be 'active' or 'passive' or as Emile Durkheim (1954) coined it 'thick' and 'thin' citizenship. Traditional notions of the 'good' citizen reflect this dichotomy. Liberals and neo-liberals have traditionally argued that the 'good' citizen is a largely passive subject, participating at a minimal level. These citizens conform to laws and participate in elections with little disruption to the power structures. On the other hand civic republicans such as Aristotle and Crick argued that 'good' citizens play an active part in influencing policies and governance structures. These notions of the 'good' citizen have more recently underlined policies and initiatives by governments to influence or control.

'Active Citizenship,' implies participation for those at least that are granted the status of citizenship. It thus suggests that citizenship which involves both rights and responsibilities, requires a certain measure of activity. Gaventa for example argued for 'an understanding of citizenship as participation' which 'puts less emphasis on rights as entitlements... and more on citizenship that is realised through responsible action' (2001:278). Differing purposes of active citizenship correlate with underlying political ideological perspectives. Varying perspectives on the purpose and style of participation are outlined as follows.

Barnes et al (2007:9) summarised some of the main discourses within the UK regarding the changing perspectives of citizen participation: these include the empowered public; consuming public; stakeholder public and the responsible public. 'Empowered public discourse... is a site of struggle between different views of power, inequality and political agency' and focuses on marginalised and disadvantaged groups. Consumer public discourse according to Barnes et al (2007:13) is essentially a neo-liberal perception, which perceives the individual as 'exercising choice in their use of public services, facilitated by the operation of the market in goods and services.' Stakeholder public discourse has been described and promoted by the economist Will Hutton (1997:3) characterised in Barnes et al (2007:15) 'as being consistent with representative democracy, the introduction of 'new' voices and modes of engagement in public decision making.' Concepts of 'responsible' public discourse emphasise the individual's responsibility to participate and contribute towards the state, but derive from varying ends of the political spectrum. Communitarianism places value on social responsibility, 'with bonds arising from collective action in communities.' Barnes et al (2007: 13). This contrasts with the 'New Right', which stresses the individual and the family as the main components of society, based on the central belief in economic and social self-help. These differing approaches have been adopted by various governments inside and outside of the UK to justify and implement aspects of their ideological agendas.

1.7 Governance and Governmentality

Recent discourses regarding the changing nature of 'governance' and the notion of 'governmentality' reflect these various perceptions of active citizenship. They also relate to the role of government, as well as underlying power balances between citizens and democratic institutions and structures. These concepts are broadly outlined as followed:

'Governance theory' according to Taylor 'moves away from fixed ideas about power as a commodity rooted in particular institutions to more fluid ideas of power developed and negotiated between partners'(2007:291). This notion involves the idea that decision making powers are devolved away from the central state to encourage greater participation and what consecutive governments have called 'enabling' authorities and 'localism', concepts which are further discussed in chapter 4.

Governance has increasingly involved service delivery provided directly by non-state actors such as the private and Third Sector, as well as individuals themselves. Governmentality does also involve new spaces beyond the state as Cornwall (2004) and Raco (2003) in Taylor (2007:293) argue, which are also created by the state itself, with agendas and control remaining ultimately with the state. This has led to a culture of organisations, particularly Third Sector recipients of government funding, shifting their missions to conform and act as agents of the state. Di Maggio and Powell, 1983 described this process as isomorphism. This process has at times undermined and contradicted their ability as independent actors, able and willing to challenge power structures and state practices. Concerns regarding the relationship between the Third Sector and the state are discussed in more detail below, in chapter 5 as well as throughout the study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. Specific UK Government's policies and initiatives which relate to these notions of state intervention are also further examined below.

1.8 Neo-Liberal and community based notions of citizenship

Conflicting theories about the level of state intervention when establishing and sustaining active citizenship, could broadly be expressed through the main schools of thought such as liberal/ consumer and social/ community based approaches. These are described below:

The legal application of European citizenship in the early 1990s had somewhat paradoxically followed a decade of stringent neo-liberal economics, which promoted political and cultural individualism, as well as largely anti-European sentiment. This emphasis on individualism was arguably epitomised by the provocative and powerful statement by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (1987) that 'there is no such thing as society'. The underlying assumptions of this assertion, as many commentators have maintained, had far reaching consequences on the political culture of the UK. Despite claims to the contrary, 'Thatcherism' according to Held 'is the natural enemy of citizenship' in that it was 'an attack on equal entitlement... Thatcherite policies unapologetically drive towards unrestricted private accumulation, its attacks on public expenditure and its critique of the 'dependency culture' (1991:19). Equally it could be argued that Thatcherism undermined civic identities as well as equal opportunities to engage and act as active citizens. Policies were implemented throughout the 1980s and 90s to curtail the capacity of public and popular civil movements particularly in terms of legislation against direct forms of protest. Held asserted that 'Thatcherite policies were consciously implemented to adjust power in favour of authority. There was a reduction in the rights of trade unions, insistence of secrecy on government affairs and an increase in police powers including the Terrorism Act and the Public Order Act' (2004: 258). Concurrently, civic action and protests such as the Miners' Strike in 1984 were quashed by the Conservative Government. Despite these protests and widespread acts of discontent, the Government under Thatcher ignored miners' and their communities' protests and continued with their policies to close down large scale industries at a fast pace. These actions therefore resulted in thousands of

citizens being denied the 'right to work' and participate in society as was expected, as alternative forms of employment were rarely put in place. By the 1990s the British public was represented throughout the media as disinterested, disengaged and apathetic towards politics and civic life. Thus, the capacity and power of civil action and civil society was being undermined on both an ideological and practical level.

Another dominant concept championed by the Conservative Party was the 'Consumer citizen' model which reached its pinnacle as a result of the neo-liberalist economics of the 1980s and 90's. In 1991 the Major Government introduced the Citizen's Charter, embodying the individualist concepts put in place under Thatcher. This new set of consumer rights was to provide first and foremost 'choice' in terms of the material world. Corrigan (1997) in Barnes et al (2007: 15) also argued that 'consumer discourse was valuable as it provided a meaningful expression of citizenship not previously expressed through voting.' Nonetheless, critics have argued that far from providing real 'choice' to the citizen, this type of market-led approach to providing public services in fact created further monopolies, exposed further socio-economic inequalities, inconsistent provision of services and led to much greater levels of unaccountability. Overall many citizens became 'disempowered' and further disengaged from the political sphere. As Prior asserted 'the logical outcomes of privatisation (are) an ever increasing division between, those citizens able to compete in the world market and those unable to compete' (1995:167).

1.9 Civic republicanism and communitarian citizenship

Alternatively, community based and social notions of citizenship have been embraced to varying degrees through civic republicanism and communitarianism notions of citizen participation. These approaches place more emphasis on the active reciprocal conditions of citizenship and have received increasing attention from post-Thatcher Governments. Reflected in the sentiments of the Ministry of Justice it outlined what the Labour Government at the time perceived citizenship should involve: 'There is a duty of

allegiance owed by citizens to the UK... citizenship should be seen as a package of rights and responsibilities which demonstrate the tie between a person and a country' Packham (2008:3).

Bernard Crick, a prominent proponent of modern civic republicanism emphasised that this involved the embodiment of rights and responsibilities. However, unlike more right-wing notions of participation he believed that 'people should have the rights even if they have no sense of civic duty, sometimes even moral duty. But the theory was that rights should inspire duties'. Most fundamentally he believed that 'citizenship is individuals voluntarily acting together for a common purpose' (2010:23). This collective interpretation of citizenship contrasts with individualistic versions of citizen participation and focuses on the capacity of individuals to make a positive contribution towards society. This diverges fundamentally with neo-liberal notions of citizenship that place an expectation on the individual to participate in prescribed ways without acknowledging the person's resources and desires to do so.

1.10 New Labour and active citizenship

The New Labour Governments elected from 1997 onwards attempted to reverse the trend from the atomistic to a communitarian perspective of society. The subsequent Blair and Brown Governments uttered a new type of rhetoric promoting citizenship, aimed at reigniting civic duty. This has been coined the politics of 'the Third Way', promoted by Giddens and Etzioni. For example according to Giddens 'government has a role in creating a civic culture... well developed civil society offers an alternative political arena in which government can reach the people'(1998:23). Therefore New Labour's policies and ethos explicitly recognised the interconnected influence of civil society and the government and did not perceive that they should be considered as entirely separate entities. From this perspective, if for no other reason than to legitimise government policies and actions, a commitment would be shown to enhance the capacity of 'civil society'.

Widespread initiatives were established to re-create local if not a national spirit and community capacity. It also supported and implemented policies which encouraged a broadly civic republican version of citizen participation. The emphasis was placed on creating a new relationship between the British state and civil society, replacing government by governance. This was to be achieved through mechanisms such as referendums, consultative activities, and deliberative participation, Mayo and Annette (2010:17). Devolution also aimed to fill large gaps in the UK's democratic structure which had been heavily exposed under the former Conservative Governments. David Blunkett UK Home Secretary and Education Minister under the Labour administrations argued that: 'democracy is not just an association of individuals determined to protect the private sphere but a realm of active freedom in which citizens come together to shape the world around them' (2003) Civil Renewal- a New Agenda Lecture. 'The importance of civil society goes beyond underpinning political action, formalised institutions and processes of decision-taking. It reflects the philosophy of the ancient Greek Polis: that the essence of a functioning human being is participation and engagement with the world around them' Blunkett and Taylor in Crick and Lockyer (2010:26).

Through a wide range of initiatives funded by central, regional and European funding streams a new era of communitarian style rhetoric emerged, aimed at creating the notion of a 'stakeholder' society. The Department of Education Training and Regeneration in 1998 claimed that 'the aim of public participation was to create a 'virtuous circle', participation in local initiatives lead to increased levels of public interest, urging experiment with new forms of public engagement and deliberation, to contribute to the building of responsive and accountable governance across the board,' Barnes et al (2007:22).

UK governments initiatives including the Communities First programme¹ in Wales (facilitated by the Welsh Assembly Government and funded through the

¹ Communities First and the New Deal for Communities were aimed at regenerating and empowering communities, part funded by the European Social Fund- discussed in chapter 4.

European Objective 1 Funding scheme) and the New Deal for Communities in England and Social Justice in Scotland), according to critics all shared the same inherent contradiction, in that government's top down approach may have undermined the very purpose of community participation at grassroots level. Whilst many areas and individuals have benefited from the inward investment and attempts to invigorate citizenship in the short-term, it could be argued that the long-term capacity of citizens to engage in civic involvement and active citizenship has not significantly increased. 'Community workers' according to Craig et al 'have been increasingly expected to 'enable' those already most disadvantaged communities to take on significant active citizenship roles in service delivery while rights to publicly funded services based on need have become further eroded'(2011:197). These initiatives have arguably therefore resulted in only short-term and superficial impacts on the regeneration of local communities and their citizens, as fundamental socio-equalities have not been tackled.

In the UK, volunteering activities have been focused on by consecutive governments as a central means by which citizens are expected to contribute in civil society. Between 1997 and 2010 New Labour focused on volunteering as a means by which it could encourage civil renewal and social inclusion. In (2005) its Volunteer Conduct Code of practice claimed that volunteering can help tackle social exclusion. Individuals can improve their skills and employability and can show that they have a contribution to make to society' Home Office (2005, section 5.3).

This illustrated how UK governments have attempted to prescribe how citizens should contribute to society. Hodgson highlighted some of the underlying issues that are facing the citizen as a volunteer. She stated that 'professionalisation of the voluntary activity, impacts volunteering'. They are 'now continuously looking for experts to produce business plans, performance needs; targets and advertising' (2009:101). These types of pressures upon citizens and communities have posed problems for those wanting to participate on their own terms. It has also undermined some of the government's own aims which

its initiatives have proclaimed to promote such as creating new spaces for governance outside of the formal structures of government.

These factors have affected government programmes such as Communities First in Wales in particular, as these types of pressures have at times discouraged volunteers from getting involved. Eventually some of these issues were recognised by the Welsh Government itself, through its reviews of the Communities First programme. Therefore after the 2006 review the Outcomes Fund was implemented. This aimed to re-focus funding allocation on the needs of the community, rather than simply responding to the expertise of volunteers or workers. As Hodgson also argued that if these government-led initiatives are to encourage active, community-led participation then the government needs to facilitate rather than dictate these processes (2009). 'The state,' according Crowther and Shaw 'must learn to foster civic autonomy of communities- rather than seek to co-opt and incorporate them' (1999:19). These issues have been reflected across the Third Sector at large and are analysed in chapters 4,5,7,8 and 9.

Critics such as Hodgson emphasised that New Labour's influence permeated civil society to the point where 'it is at the very least being stifled and at worst manufactured by the state'(2009:96). The culture created by increasingly centralised government funding structures has led to many not for profit organisations having little choice than to be supported by financial aid supplied by the government. Criticisms of New Labour's approaches to citizenship have thus included their potential incorporation of the Third Sector. The complexities involved in this relationship are central to the study and are explored in more detail by looking at the specific study of the WEA and other examples of the Third Sector working in partnership with the state and its initiatives.

The tensions that communities and citizens have been confronted with, regarding democratic participation have been echoed across the UK's Third Sector relationships with the state. The recurrent attempts by New Labour to

determine Third Sector activities were conveyed in the (2009) Government's Third Sector Review. It explained that the Government Minister for the Third Sector had set the scene for the potential future of the Third Sector's relationship with the Public Sector. He had 'challenged the Third Sector to show the way in transforming public service' The Office of the Third Sector (6 January 2009). This illustrated a mounting dependency and expectation that the Third Sector should lead the way with regards to public services and fill the gaps in provision. These tensions and ambiguities are explored throughout Chapter 5 and the case study in the context of devolution in Wales.

This correlates with critiques of New Labour policy, which emphasise how rhetoric and implementation were often in contradiction, within their policies. Clarke outlines four processes for active citizenship which he perceives New Labour to have promoted: activation, empowerment, responsabilisation and abandonment (2005:447). For Clarke there has been a continuation of market-led neo-liberal policies, coupled with a more idealistic if not moralistic language about community engagement. Clarke claimed that the rhetoric regarding the 'activated citizen' describes a condition where the 'passive citizen' is transformed into 'active self-sustaining individuals' and that 'empowered citizens', restates citizens as 'consumers of public services' (2005:447). Tony Blair (2004) himself as Prime Minister emphasised that 'the public service... will be driven by the patient, the parent, the pupil and the law abiding citizen' (2005:449). Therefore 'responsibilised citizens' are 'bearers of responsibilities as well as rights', whereby 'bad choices result from irresponsible people rather than the structural distribution of resources' Clarke (2005:451). Hodgson reaffirms this idea by stating that the Welsh Assembly Government, which has been led by governments always including New Labour 'is more concerned with producing 'responsible citizens with whom it can liaise rather than active citizens in the true sense' (2009:92). Ultimately then Clarke criticises New Labour for their continuation of individualistic economic policies and thus 'abandoning' the citizen, by 'dismantling' 'protections and defences constructed in post-war welfare capitalism against the rigours, vagaries, demands and

inequalities of the market and the unconstrained power of capitalism'(2005: 449).

Other critics of New Labour's policies have noted the pro-civil society rhetoric, but perceive that this has often been coupled with policies which still favoured the un-curtailed market and the voice of authority, rather than the citizen's. Johansson and Hvinden describe New Labour's approach as a 'hybrid concept', 'drawing on social democratic and communitarian concepts of the citizen, but dominated by the neo-liberal concern to 'liberate' the citizen from the state' (2005:448). Kaldor also critiques: 'Liberal democracy in its inability to redeem its promises of inequality.' This, as some radical theorists argue, is due to its 'tendency to develop overwhelming state bureaucracy; its inability or unwillingness to redistribute wealth and eradicate poverty; its reluctance to extend full citizenship to an array of marginalised groups... and meanwhile erode or slow civic, social & political rights including the right to peaceful protest,' Kaldor (2003) in Martin and Powell (1998:430-447).

Yet as Pearce and Hallgarten point out decisions are not made at a purely national level and the 'globalized economy, makes government interventions much more complex politically and socially' (2000:23). Members of the Labour Party have re-reiterated this view. 'The adage 'think global act local' has never been more relevant in a world where global interdependence- economic, social and political- has made joint and collaborative action a necessity not a debatable option,' Blunkett and Taylor in Crick and Locker (2010:27). This re-emphasised how national governments are inherently linked in responsibility for citizens across borders, which was highlighted by the 2008 international banking crisis and government's inability and unwillingness to deal with the roots of the problem. International business wields immense power over the lives of citizens on domestic and international levels, however there is little to hold these corporations and individuals to account.

Levitas echoes these underlying shortcomings with the capitalist based political system even where governments like New Labour have proclaimed their desire to create more equitable societies, in her view there is a:

‘Tendency to look only at the condition of the poor and to pay insufficient attention to inequality and polarization. A focus on redistribution is inadequate if it fails to call into question the principles and conditions of the initial distribution of resources and the economic social structures in which it is embedded,’ Levitas (2005: xi).

In summary, New Labour recognised the need to re-ignite community engagement and encourage more equitable and active forms of citizenship. Through specific initiatives such as devolution and Communities First it aimed to increase democratic participation and promote community-led active citizenship. However its reluctance to deal with underlying power structures and the dominance of the financial markets undermined some of its attempts to promote active citizenship and reduce the democratic deficit. Inequities of power and inadequacies of the governance structures highlight some of the underlying reasons for the continued democratic deficit between citizens and the structures which influence their lives, key issues that emerge in the findings, discussed in subsequent chapters.

1.11 Post-Thatcher Conservative approaches to citizenship

Some of the issues regarding governance, particularly centralised control were revisited and capitalised upon by the Conservative Party towards the end of Labour’s 3rd term in government. Using a combination of new rhetoric and old policies, the Conservative Party released their (2010) Manifesto: An Invitation to Join the Government’ which re-emphasised the need for local decision-making processes and the rights of the ‘responsible’ citizen. The future of Britain was to include the attributes of an idealised ‘Big Society’, where individuals would take responsibility for themselves and their families, helping their neighbours and taking on important roles in their communities. According to Fryer the ‘Big Society’ ‘idea envisages communities shaped by voluntary activity and mutual enterprise which thrives in meeting local needs, where everyone has the skills,

and the confidence needed, to share in identifying how best we can create a world where everyone can fulfil their aspirations; and where everyone shares responsibility for building society' (2010:xv).

Throughout this new Conservative rhetoric the economic individualism of the 1980/90s, is coupled with an emphasis on personal responsibility, reflecting Thatcherite neo-liberal policies. Set against a climate of economic unrest caused by the global financial-banking crisis, the UK Conservative Party in Coalition with the Liberal Democrats prioritises a dramatically reduced public sector and a retraction of economic and social welfare provisions. Many critics have argued that the simultaneous reduction in 'positive' rights to economic equality, combined with an increased expectation of citizens to contribute to society is not merely untenable, but also practically bereft. Douglas Hines (2011) from the New Public Thinking Organisation highlights some of the inherent contradictions of the 'Big Society' vision. 'A genuine big society could only flourish in a Britain where the widening inequalities of the past 30 years are tackled and where the richest individuals and most profitable corporations no longer feel free to opt out of the tax system' website accessed {12/6/2012}. These different and inherently contradictory government policies and approaches towards encouraging active citizenship will be examined further in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

1.12 Citizenship and Education

Education is perceived by many as the central tool for activating citizenship. Evidence from Wilkinson and Pickett has shown that there is a direct connection between quality of life, active citizenship and education. 'People with more education earn more, are more satisfied with their work and leisure time, are less likely to be unemployed, more likely to be healthy, less likely to be criminals, more likely to volunteer their time and vote in elections' (2009:103).

Contrasting approaches reflect the varying concepts of the purpose of education in relation to citizenship. Policies and investment within the UK particularly since 1997 have introduced citizenship education into the pre-16 curriculum. In fact, as Lockyer et al (2003:16) explain, 'in 1997 New Labour

introduced citizenship education to schools in England.’ Scotland, Northern-Ireland and Wales also had various forms of citizenship education. Likewise the importance of promoting active citizenship through lifelong learning has been widely debated within political and academic circles. The focus of this study will be placed on Adult Education but the fundamental critiques can also relate to the education system at large within the UK.

Since the 1980s a dominant critique from critical thinkers has been the increasing economic emphasis on education. The rise of neo-liberal dominated policies had focused primarily on the economic benefits of education at post and pre adult level. Market-led policies have influenced the style, content and underlying purpose of lifelong learning, which placed priority on vocational skills. ‘Instead of humanistic ideas concerning quality and personal development, concepts such as evaluation, control and cost efficiency became important,’ Fejes and Nicholl (2008:21).

Even the language used in workplace training and adult education classes became fundamentally business orientated. ‘A new language emerged from the private sector including such terms as consumers, customers, value for money and quality’ Prior (1995:23-24). This change in ethos became embedded to the extent where ‘consumer’ and ‘citizen’ became accepted within the UK as almost inter-changeable concepts, which has created tensions for learning providers. Its critics have argued that it has severely limited the scope of the educator to a narrowly defined set of objectives i.e. to prepare the adult for the workplace with a particular set of skills. Wider and more participatory subjects have been pushed to the periphery of ‘education.’ This has been done through funding streams focusing almost entirely on market driven subjects. This type of pressure on education providers emerges as a potential issue for Third Sector organisations as subsequent chapters 5 and 9 explore in more detail.

In contrast though, despite this increasing emphasis upon the economic functions of education, the principle purpose of ‘citizenship education’ according to the New Labour Governments was also to develop a ‘good society’

with a change of emphasis away from the individualist attitudes of earlier Conservative Government. The intentions were set out in the White Paper Excellence in Education (1997). According to the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE) 'Citizenship education should foster respect for the law, justice, democracy and nurture common good at the same time as encouraging independence of thought. It should develop skills of reflection, inquiry and debate.' However, despite encouraging questioning and reflection the 'citizen' would still accept the general assumptions and rules about a market-led economy.

In contrast, Paulo Freire (1972) asserted that 'no education is neutral.' Freire like Bourdieu (1977) emphasises the underlying socio-economic system which influences the educator and the educated. Freire argued that the purpose of education should be 'education for liberation rather than domestication' (1972:56). Therefore citizens must learn how to reflect upon and question the system that they live in. He differentiates between two types of education the 'banking concept (1972:46) whereby people simply obtain knowledge, then contrasts this with the more intrinsically useful 'problem posing' approach whereby individuals learn to critically examine their own situations and find ways of transforming their realities (1972:53-54). This kind of education is intended to achieve what Johnson (1979:3-34) describes as 'really useful knowledge' which can be utilised to understand and critique and then take action for social change rather than merely reproduce existing realities, such as unequal social relations, theories which are explored further in chapter 5.

Similarly, Bertrand argued that where the state or the market acts to dominate the thoughts and acts of the citizen through education they undermine the ability of the citizen to act as a full citizen and undermine liberal democracy. 'The task of a liberal education; is to give a sense of the value of things other than domination, to help to create wise citizens of a free community, and through the combination of citizenship with liberty in individual creativeness'(2004:254).

These views are reflected in theories of 'popular education'. These challenge conventional state derived education 'as the most effective way of creating a more democratic system, whereby citizens (particularly adults) can genuinely participate at a local level, with the ability of affecting issues that concern wider communities,' Crowther and Shaw (1999:14). They explain that 'popular education (that) is rooted in the interests and aspirations of and struggles of ordinary people'. Likewise that 'knowledge from below is the hallmark of popular education, (it) is defined primarily in collective rather than individual terms... it has an egalitarian rather than meritocratic ethic', (ibid). This style of education has been widely practiced through community education, where the curriculum is set for and by members of the community. This notion could be fundamentally aligned to social movements, in promoting democratic debate, as well as cultural and political understanding at grassroots level. Therefore adult education, particularly community based education can arguably offer an alternative space where social democracy can flourish and develop challenges to mainstream and conventional practices. Shukura (2007) in Craig et al (2011:272) also argues for an 'anti-oppressive model of citizenship education'. This would aim to 'recognise and challenge racism as an anti-democratic force'. It would aim to 'be more consistent with youth and community work that has a focus on deliberative democracy, developing critiques of structures and advocating social change rather than voting or conformity'.

In line with other radical thinkers, Crowther and Shaw emphasise the potential role that education can play in an inclusive yet diverse democracy, in that 'education has to equip people for democracy as a way of life' (1994:4). It is therefore essential that a radical and reflexive style of democratic participation emerges. As Dewey, had earlier argued, 'the new politics must therefore find ways to embrace both the reality of difference and the necessity of common purpose'. In his view 'the best way to create education for democracy is to develop democratic education. If we want adult learners as active citizens we should engage learners as 'citizens' in shaping of adult education itself' (1938:14). Faulks also espoused the view that 'a developed sense of citizenship demands that each citizen develops empathy of understanding for other

cultures and sensitivity to the interests and needs of others. A diverse, rather than homogenous polity is more likely to create the opportunity for the skills of empathy and sympathy,' (2001:51). The impact and enactment of these key attributes and skills are discussed in Chapter 6 & 7.

Pearce and Hallargaten similarly argued that 'education in citizenship should above all be education of the critical spirit, a critical/engagement with one own position in society and an awareness of the wider forces to which all individuals respond' (2000:25). Education however occurs via both formal and informal means, often less formal methods such as cultural experience and socialisation can be more pervasive and powerful forms.

Likewise Gelpi (1979) and Mayo (1997:47) recognise that (lifelong learning) education must be linked to wider systemic transformation. Lifelong learning can contribute to positive transformation 'only if it is not content to be merely an instrument of 'domestication' to train people to fit into existing economic, social, political and cultural constraints'. Thus as a central aspect of citizen education, underlying socio-economic structures also need to be challenged fundamentally and continuously if citizens are too be truly engaged and active. These themes re-emerge the throughout the thesis with a specific investigation into how education can empower citizens to challenge inequalities. The focus of which is the whether the organisations within the Third Sector can be most effective at providing education for these forms of active citizenship.

1.13 Global Citizenship Education

As preceding discussions indicated, it is difficult to dispute the very intensity of global interaction amongst individuals, groups, organisations and states on political, social and particularly economic levels. Although the existence, possibility and desirability of a 'global' or 'world' citizen is still widely disputed, these concepts deserve intellectual space in discussions in relation to the current or future nature of governance and citizenship and education.

Heater asked 'if the truly moral patriot must judge his country against a universally applicable ethical code, is he not by that assessment acting as a world citizen?'(2003:201). 'The study of citizenship' Heater also argues 'is not just a topic, but a large variegated, ever-changing project' (1990:180). Global citizenship education should be seen as 'a movement rather than a method', he argued, reflecting the transitional occurrences that evolve at local, regional and trans-national levels, through both formal and informal approaches. Whilst it is very important to discuss issues that are global or international both in origin and effect e.g. environmental issues, disarmament and war, arguably other more fundamental concepts could be more useful in the long-term development of 'really useful knowledge.' Johnson (3-34). Deliberating how to understand and question political systems, cultures and institutions at every level of society, would be key tenets of empowering education. This form of education theoretically ensures that people are provided with opportunities for gaining political literacy and knowledge of the systems through discussions that use relevant, contemporary and meaningful examples.

P B Clarke states that 'the fundamental change in the way in which the particular and the universal are related to the public and in private, is to admit the civic virtues to wide areas of life most generally wherever one can act towards the universal, therein lies civic virtues.' (1996:23) Clarke also illustrates that certain key values and acts that are understood or undertaken at local level, can have a universal effect and symbolism. This illustrates, most fundamentally, the need to recognise, understand and accept 'difference' and 'similarities' thus treating 'differences' in a positive rather than negative way. Likewise it is important to understand what differences there are (e.g. inequalities) and how individuals and groups can live with or challenge inequality as a concept and a reality. These principles are arguably fundamental in order to create and sustain inclusion and participation within various communities at local or international levels and are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

In summary, it could therefore be argued that fundamental issues regarding global or world citizenship education could be and at times are delivered in relation to the same foundational principles and with the same purpose of broad citizenship education. This would include values and concepts such as respecting differences, recognising and addressing inequalities and treating and perceiving people with the equal right to dignity. The introduction of Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) in schools and lifelong learning programmes under the UK and Welsh New Labour Governments have been based around some but not all of these key principles. These initiatives and pedagogies are further discussed in chapters 5 and 7, in relation to how education for active citizenship is delivered at a local level within a wider global context.

1.14 Conclusion

The concept of citizenship remains highly ambiguous and lacks in the most part any consistent definition. Likewise, the morphing of this concept reflects the changing boundaries, identities and affiliations which occur at every level of local, national and international society. It therefore also fundamentally challenges some traditional concepts of citizenship which are aligned with the nation-state. As Isin and Wood proclaim 'citizenship is a legal status and practice that progressively widens its sphere to include various rights. It is a contested field' and ideally 'democracy ensures that it will remain thus' (1999: ix).

As the literature highlights, the purpose of citizenship is arguably to ensure a sense of belonging if not enablement for individuals and communities – a sense of belonging which is attached to both rights and responsibilities. The literature highlights how traditional liberal perspectives of citizenship, particularly when perceived as a status aligned only to the nation-state continue to promote forms of unequal citizenship. Conversely, feminists such as Young (1991) and Lister (1997) advocate 'universally differentiated' concepts. This aims to go even further than the global, person-centred notions underlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and subsequent UN legislation. Although, the

nation-state still has an essential role to play in the lives of individuals and society, supra- national and sub-national organisations and markets influence the lives of citizens. These have simultaneously undermined and increased democratic practice and meaningful participation. These changes are particularly relevant in relation to the potential for devolution in nations such as Wales, in order to present greater opportunities for citizen participation. These areas of contention are examined throughout the thesis.

In contrast to the state originated 'top down' perspectives of active citizenship espoused by Conservative and New Labour Governments alike, some radical commentators envisage a notion of citizenship which derives from citizens themselves. This perspective compliments the explosion of a globalised culture which has united many individuals inside and across borders to potentially influence political cultures. These actions are perceived as inherently more directly participatory and empowered forms of democratic citizenship. This includes a growing international civil society. Social movements, Third Sector organisations as well as NGO's and voluntary organisations have alongside individuals, challenged formal and informal political norms and structures across local and global levels. These alternative notions of citizenship often encompass an inherently active and social approach. However increasing concerns regarding the co-option by governments within the UK of these non-governmental organisations particularly the Third Sector have been expressed. These themes are central to the study and raise important questions regarding global and local forms of active citizenship.

Additionally, varying forms of citizen participation appear to remain inconsistent and curtailed by the context and condition of the lives of citizens. In contrast to traditional neo-liberal perspectives, radical critical social and feminist theorists recognise the need to address inequality in terms of citizens' capacity to participate in any of these societies. Later chapters will explore how additional positive rights, such as social, economic as well as political and civil rights are required to establish equal opportunities for all people to carry out duties as well as the rights citizenship bestows upon them. For this to transpire, citizens

themselves as individuals, groups and influencers- e.g. politicians - have a fundamental role to play in developing and sustaining socially just, communities, where citizenship can be fully realised.

These provisions, according to radical theorists such as Freire (1972), should include access to informal and formal types of education for all people, which would 'liberate' citizens to participate on their own terms. Critical thinking skills alongside 'really useful knowledge' are arguably fundamental to this provision. In theory, radical and transformative forms of education could challenge traditional notions of citizenship education which have been criticised for teaching people to simply conform to rules and norms, from a specific cultural perspective. 'Universal differentiation' potentially could be realised through these dynamic forms of educative and democratic values and practises.

Overall, the thesis examines whether, then, 'citizenship' should be perceived as and supported on differentiated levels? It also questions whether it is necessary to recognise the varying and ever changing ways people can and do contribute towards their societies. Central to this question are the roles that the UK's governments and the Third Sector play in contributing to overall citizen participation in relation to these notions, particularly by establishing conditions where citizens have more equal access to resources and justice. The study aims to fill the gaps in knowledge regarding the capacity of the Third Sectors in the UK, particularly focusing on whether devolution in Wales can enhance citizen derived forms of active citizenship.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter outlines the overall methodological approaches that were used to carry out this study. It starts with an explanation of the research strategies and approaches which were chosen to address the following research question:

To what extent does the Third Sector's work within varying UK and Welsh Government policy frameworks encourage active citizenship?

A case study of the Worker's Educational Association (WEA) South Wales- in the context of devolution in Wales.

The critical analysis approach which was used to examine a variety of academic perspectives, the UK and Welsh Governments' initiatives and policies and the fieldwork data in relation to active citizenship, is set out in the first section of this chapter. This also emphasises the values which underlined the participative and democratic approach to the research. It highlights key theoretical debates regarding equality and empowerment of participants, as both an approach and theme central to the overall thesis, drawing on feminist theories of 'empowering research' such as those espoused by Punwar (1997) and Oakley (1982). Then it outlines why the data collection techniques specifically qualitative inquiry were employed. It goes on to describe the fieldwork that took place, including why the work of the Third Sector organisation, Worker's Educational Association, was critically explored as the case study. It explains how aspects of ethnographic research were used as a process of participant observation and interviewing.

The chapter also highlights how 'flexible emergent design' Patton (2003:40) was applied, when capturing the evolving government and Third Sector partner organisation's perspectives and policies on activating citizenship and community engagement. It then discusses the limitations to the study including

the challenges that I faced when acting as a critical friend to the Third Sector organisation. This includes a focused discussion on the complexities and dilemmas that emerged as both an insider and outsider participant observer to the WEA including those relating to perceived bias and the need for reflexivity. The methods used to code and analyse the data by themes are then outlined, followed by the later sections which outline the ethical practices and issues that were encountered. The research strategy then follows, summarizing the collaborative approach and overall purpose of the research.

2.1 Critical analysis as a research approach

A process of critical inquiry was used to explore the work of the Third Sector organisation- the WEA South Wales as well as critical inquiries into the UK and Welsh Government policies and initiatives that framed the background to this study. 'Critical analysis,' according to Patton 'encourages joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework to understand or solve organisational or community problems (2003:182)'. This type of analysis has taken place within a wider socio-political context which has been discussed in Chapter 1. Its overall aim has been to contribute to the academic body of knowledge regarding active citizenship, as a result of reflective practice and partnership collaboration with other researchers, academics, participants and practitioners.

The varying viewpoints and experiences of the study's participants that were examined highlighted the importance of capturing underlying perceived and actual barriers that curtailed active citizenship. It was therefore essential that different viewpoints were treated as valid at least for exploration and for examination as evidence. Maynard in Letherby points out:

'Although universalisations are untenable... it is clearly the case that while women, race and class are not unitary (categories) this does not mean that they are meaningless. Such terms stand for the social construction of a particular set of people facing-albeit with large internal differences- a common material reality because (it is) one based in a common oppression/ exploitation' (2003:56).

From this perspective it was necessary to acknowledge the underlying inequalities that different socially constructed groups face. Although each experience is unique, there are 'properties' which citizens share. It was therefore particularly important to recognise these experiences in terms of where detrimental and unequal treatment of these groups occurred and inequalities were or were not acknowledged. In particular this related to the work of Third Sector organisations such the Workers' Educational Association, which was explored in the case study as illustration of strategies to address such barriers.

Critical theories highlight the need to recognise underlying structural as well as personal power influences, values and perspectives when reflecting upon why and how people participate in societal activities. It was central to the processes of analysis to recognise the underlying power structures which influence how decisions are made and who they are being made by. Therefore according to Keller 'critical theory' or theories can offer this type of theoretical framework as it 'is informed by a critique of domination and a theory of liberation' (1989:1). It could therefore be argued that those that hold a disproportionate degree of power in the UK and Wales may create and disseminate a particular narrative which is perceived as being the truth in relation to active citizenship.

Critical theorists additionally argue that underlying theoretical frameworks based on values can positively contribute to social research. They also contend that it is 'impossible to remove the normative dimension from the social sciences because all knowledge has a normative intent', Heckman (2007) in Outhwaite and Turner (2007:535). In line with the view taken by critical theorists I have aimed to acknowledge my own values as well as scrutinize some of the underlying political perspectives of individuals and groups and political parties which shape society, whether these were produced consciously or sub-consciously.

2.2 Participative and inclusive research

In accordance with my understanding of the concepts central to my research - active citizenship in relationship to policies and practices - participation is arguably also central to the process of the research itself. House and Howe (2000) in Patton (2003:186) argue that 'inclusion, dialogue and deliberation' are required for critical analysis and fieldwork research. In order to present a democratic representation of perspectives a wide range of voices need to be heard throughout the entire research process. Alan Clarke (2005) recognised the importance of promoting of collaborative and pluralistic research in empowering stakeholders and reaching more democratic decisions about future actions. 'The notion that there is one 'right' or 'objective' interpretation of a particular programme is firmly rejected, in favour of a view that multiple participants will generate a plurality of perspectives'. According to Clarke 'decision making is all about conflict and negotiation' (2005:18). Patton also states that:

'A healthy democracy depends on an informed citizenry. A central contribution of policy research and evaluation, then is to help ensure an informed electorate by disseminating findings as well as to help the citizenry weigh evidence and think evaluatively,' (2003:188).

As Patton asserts, a genuine level of inclusion in the process can yield positive long-term educative and practical effects on those who are being studied. This approach reflects what Root describes as the methodology used in 'community based-studies' as they are seen as being 'less acquisitive and more open handed. Control over the agenda is shared. Power is distributed between the social scientist and (th)her subjects ... and emphasis on community reflects a growing interest in public participation in the development of science and public policy,'(2007:565). There has been a genuine desire for me as a researcher to empower participants, potentially creating opportunities for participants to develop new skills in critical thinking; challenging the perimeters of the research itself therefore, illuminating a deeper, more critical and engaging style of social research. Patton goes on to argue 'in-depth democratic thinking includes political sophistication about the origins and implications of the categories, constructs and concepts that shape what we experience as information and

knowledge' (2003:188). Indeed this has been central to the theme of democratic and experiential education as a central tool in activating citizenship, particularly amongst disadvantaged groups. Benn argued that 'citizenship skills are less likely to be learned through formal citizenship curriculum than through positive experiences of participation' (2000:255). Therefore I have felt that my approach as a researcher should also aim to implicitly and explicitly incorporate democratic praxis. Thus I have sought to enable opportunities throughout the research for participants to contribute, as well feeding back on research outcomes, including papers based on findings.

Clarke similarly asserted that stakeholders should be included in the research process and 'are not viewed as merely sources of data but are seen as having an important part to play in deciding the nature, form and consent of evaluation' (2005:25). Therefore participants and stakeholders were able to play a part in the shaping the research, which aimed to aid empowerment directly and indirectly as a practical and theoretical ideal. As an example of this process in practice, members of the 'Know Your Rights' community classes requested feedback from my research, which was presented to them. This process has allowed for mutual recognition of the validity of the research and the rights of the participants within the framework of critical dialogue.

It seemed apparent to me, then, that the approach that was required for this particular research project needed to simultaneously capture and openly recognise underlying political perspectives and values, whilst aiming to discover new avenues of critical thought. An 'empathetic stance, which seeks vicarious understanding without judgement' Patton (2003:4) was a useful approach when aiming to understand the perspectives of research participants, whilst being able to critically analyse the wider context of the situation. Whilst critically analysing policies and practices, I have disclosed my underlying viewpoints but also have aimed to work beyond implicit and explicit systematic bias.

Therefore the data was presented and explored through a process of reflexivity. According to Patton 'reflexivity reminds the qualitative enquirer to be attentive

to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic and ideological origins of one's own perspective and voice of those interviews and to those to whom one reports' (2003:65). This was an intrinsic element of the research as it enabled me to reflect upon my own ambiguous position as both an insider and outsider to the organisation, which is explained more rigorously later in the chapter. It allowed me to reflect on what was at times a challenging role, as it required both distance and closeness in terms of gaining a genuine understanding of the organisation's role and ability to promote active citizenship, within the wider socio-political context.

2.3 A qualitative approach to data collection and developing the research strategy

Qualitative research techniques were used throughout the study. According to Punch 'qualitative research covers a number of techniques- but principally observation, interviewing and document analysis' (1986:11). This form of in-depth research according to Collis and Hussey involved 'examining and reflecting on perceptions in order to gain an understanding of social and human activities' (2003:13). This use of qualitative methods contrasts primarily, although not exclusively, with the quantitative approach, which would focus on statistical evidence and analysis. It is generally perceived that quantitative analysis is largely limited to objective criteria as it 'concentrates on measuring phenomena'. 'Quantitative forms of inquiry' according to Layder 'are used most commonly to present 'macro' or 'large scale aspects of social organisation' (1993:117).

However, in order to understand the highly diverse and complex nature of people's experiences and behaviours in these particular contexts, the qualitative style of inquiry offers a more in-depth approach than the statistical based quantitative method of inquiry. The use of qualitative inquiry has enabled me to understand and present different perspectives relating to how and why process of policies and initiatives affect people's lives and how people influence them in return. The aim has therefore been to capture a multi-dimensional and

multi-faceted perspective through deep rather than a merely broad set of research approaches. As Patton argues 'qualitative data can yield deeper understanding and also political action'. Most fundamentally it provided a basis for flexible exploration as 'the researcher is able to capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view' (2003:20).

Qualitative analysis was therefore chosen as the main method of analysis. This offered the opportunity to explore the changing social patterns, identities and concepts to be critically analysed within the fluid social settings in which government decisions and Third Sector interventions have taken place. It involved data collected through interviews and fieldwork observations, which are described in more detail later in the chapter.

It was decided through a process of deliberation in conjunction with the research partners, that participant observations alongside interviewing would form a central part of the data collection. The purpose of which would be to generate data from first-hand experiences of an observer in relation to learners. The research involved semi-participative, rather than totally participative methods and therefore involved an ambiguous outsider/insider perspective (which is explored later in the chapter). This brought both opportunities for an alternative perspective to insider's viewpoints, as well as some tensions. Blackburn suggests that the outsider researcher role 'act(s) as a catalyst for local people to cohort with the information and analysis they generate' (1998:92). The study research drew on elements of participatory action research, in that in some instances this process has allowed other participants as part of the wider organisation and sector to reflect on their own longer-term goals. This could be perceived as drawing on elements of what has been described as participatory reflection and action otherwise known as PRA. Blackburn et al outline the underlying conditions for participation if it is to have positive long-term and empowering outcomes on those that in this case the research aims to effect:

'Participation has little meaning unless we, and particularly those in power allows others to 'take part', to set agendas, take decisions,

manage and control resources. To allow the other means to show him and her trust. People who feel trusted also gain independence; more than just participate in their own development, they make it' (1998:6).

It is these ideals that were aspired to throughout the research process and reflect the 'Take Part cluster's' fundamental principles. The research aimed to enable and empower participants, as well as highlight underlying inequalities. However, as the researcher it was essential to recognise that the framework of the research and that decisions regarding content inclusion were ultimately my responsibility. Ultimately, the participants' ability to influence agendas and decisions was limited, particularly where interaction with them was restricted by time and context. Therefore I acknowledge that the balance of power has remained in favour of the researcher, even where all attempts have been made to include and empower participants through the research process.

Through regular participation within community groups and classes, within the WEA South Wales descriptive and interpretive field notes were produced in order to provide evidence and a concrete basis to critically analyse the work of the charity and government. This took place within a process which could be described as 'emergent design flexibility' which involved 'openness to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and situations change' Patton (2003:40). This was an essential element of the research, as political, socio-economic constraints and situations change, a flexible and open approach was essential. A more static approach to research that involved community groups and politicians would have posed a higher level of risk to its completion, as well as more fundamentally lacking the ability to reflect upon the changing world. Rock agrees that 'social life is both 'incremental' and 'progressive'. Therefore if people's social lives are constantly changing, we must participate in this and record our experiences of these transformations, their effects on people, as well as their interpretations. He goes on to pronounce that 'knowledge comes from experience of understanding of detailed or meticulous inquiries through which we generate our understandings' Rock (2004:148).

Overall it was necessary as part of this process to ensure that the data collected was coupled with a wider and deeper analysis of diverse historical documentary materials, accounts from long serving members and data from the Third Sector at large. Thus it included examining previous research that has been undertaken by various government and Third Sector bodies including the Communities First programme (discussed more fully in chapter 4). This has placed the research within its wider historical as well as socio-political context. Sue Jones recognised 'a central part of the theoretical framework a researcher brings to preparing for and indeed analysing in-depth interviews must be awareness of the factors which effect the data their interviewees provide'(1985:49). Therefore outlining underlying socio-political, historical and cultural factors has been central to producing a critical analysis of government policies set out in chapters 3, 4 and 5, as well in the case study of the WEA.

2.4 The study context

The study began in September 2009 and has continued through to 2013. The research has been funded and supported by a CASE scholarship from the Economic Social Research Council, in collaboration with the WEA South Wales and Goldsmiths, University of London, as part of the research cluster Active Learning for Active Citizenship. 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' was a UK government initiative originated in 2004, as a Home Office- Civil Renewal Unit programme.

'Active Learning for Active Citizenship started from the principle that active learning for active citizenship should build upon existing models of good practice across the voluntary and community sectors, working in partnership with different forms of public provision' Woodward in Mayo and Annette (2010:53).

Research specific to the case study with the WEA and partner organisations, took place throughout the entire process, although the majority of formal courses and other activities were mainly attended between March 2010 and June 2011. These included observing and/ or participating in meetings, lectures and open days as well as some post-class interviews.

Additionally, the study involved interviewing civil servants from the Welsh Government and Westminster in the spring of (2012). These interviews took place after the General Election of 5th May (2010), the Welsh Government Referendum after March (2011) and the Welsh Government elections of May (2011). After long deliberation it was decided that these administrators would be interviewed after the (2011) elections, as this would allow for a more retrospective analysis of the policies and more importantly would not be disrupted by changing cabinets, agendas and priorities during the election campaigns. The rationale for and complexities involved in this process are discussed later in the chapter.

2.5 The role of the case study of the WEA

The 'case study' according to Gluckman (1940) in Outhwaite and Turner (2007:15) 'describes in detail a particular event or series of events, to derive from it broader inferences about social processes of the human condition.' It highlights the strengths and limitations of case studies, for example applying generalizable findings to the wider reach subject. Therefore this formed part of the reason to focus on one rather than many organisations as an example of the work of the Third Sector in Wales. The case study did however incorporate an examination of other organisations that worked in partnership with the WEA South Wales and therefore illustrated the overlapping nature of the work within the field. Robert Stake (1994:7) described how case studies can have 'general relevance... (and) the great strength of the case studies is that they provide vicarious experience, in the form of 'full and thorough knowledge of the particular.' In addition, aspects of the organisations' work were also compared in part to other organisations in the Third Sector such as a Council of Voluntary Services (CVS) in England.

The participant observations largely took place within a variety of activities at the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. The WEA was selected, in part as its long-term ethos was closely aligned with promoting active citizenship. According to the WEA South Wales Website {accessed 10/4/2010}:

'Our objective is the creation of an educated democracy in which participation in public affairs and the knowledge that it requires, are widely spread throughout the community'. The organisation has had a long documented history of encouraging active citizenship through its democratic approach to adult education according to Woodward in Mayo and Annette (2010:103) 'the mission of the WEA has included citizenship as a core principle since 1903.' Therefore the organisation had arguably been a forerunner of Third Sector initiatives and programmes aimed at encouraging active citizenship. Thus it should have provided a relevant gauge when discussing the influence of government policy and initiatives in relation to the work of the Third Sector in Wales. Significantly, the WEA South Wales was arguably particularly well placed if not distinctive as a Third Sector organisation, given its dual role as an education provider with a focus upon learning for active citizenship and its specific characteristics as a social movement with the wider aims of tackling political and social injustice. Therefore, it was perceived as potentially having the optimum chance of resisting co-optation by government agendas for 'responsibilising' citizens. If a social movement provider such as WEA were to prove unable to maintain its commitment to its particular mission and ethos, it would seem even less likely that other Third Sector organisations would succeed where WEA had failed.

But this was in no way to underestimate the challenges to be faced, as an organisation in receipt of significant amounts of government funds. These were to prove challenging even for an organisations such as the WEA with its historical connections with the Labour movement and thus its links with consecutive Labour based Governments in Wales post-devolution. Indeed these links afforded it considerable difficulties despite its potentially significant political influence. This reflects the contentious and complex roles of Third Sector organisations reliant on government funding, which seek to encourage citizens to critically question government positions. Likewise it highlights key challenges and tensions that have occurred in terms of the Third Sector's intensified relationship with government within the context of Wales and the UK at large.

2.6 Fieldwork – participant observation

'Fieldwork' according to Clammer involves a 'long-term period of social immersion in a particular setting, from which is generated the totalising and holistic descriptive account. This fieldwork draws on aspects of ethnographic research. The dominant ethnographic method used in the fieldwork was 'participant observation' (1984:68). Oakley and Callaway in Letherby claim that 'participant observation involves either close or superficial rapport with a variety of individuals' (2003:94). However the wider set of methods associated with 'ethnography' according to Willis and Trondman 'is a family of methods involving direct and sustained social contact with agents and of richly writing up the encounter, respecting, recording, representing at least partly in its own terms the irreducibility of human experience' (2002:394). It is therefore essential to convey that the research has utilised some ethnographic methods such as participant observation but has not aimed to present a highly detailed account of the specific culture or sub-culture of the organisation or wider community. Willis and Trondman (2002) have asserted that ethnographic enterprise is about presenting, explaining and analysing the culture(s) that locate experience and for Clifford and Marcus (1986) in Willis and Trondman (2002) 'makes culture rather than discovering or reflecting it'. It is for these reasons that the study has only drawn on techniques and aspects of ethnographic enquiry by describing some of the patterns within the organisation. However, as Wolcott pointed out 'if cultural analysis is not your goal, then ethnography is a misnomer, although you may draw upon ethnographic techniques in conducting your fieldwork you can claim with impunity to be doing exactly that' (1990:72).

This research has aimed to explore the effects and aims of particular activities and approaches within the WEA, but within the context of the wider Third Sector. It has not aimed to describe the everyday aspects of life within the organisation, only samples of their work were focused upon and full immersion within the organisation has not taken place. The wider questions always related

to how the work of the Third Sector has complemented, contradicted or undermined active citizenship in relation to government policies, practices and the wider political culture. It examines the WEA South Wales as a lens through which some of the tensions of the Third Sector within the UK could be perceived and analysed in terms of its work relating to active citizenship. This fieldwork study did however involve following the activities and progression of individual learners and groups beyond the formal classes. This added an extra dimension to understanding how and if the work of the organisation had contributed to active citizenship, as well as the broader context of the lives of participants. This however occurred on an ad hoc basis and only where I was made aware of and in some cases invited to particular situations or events. Participant observation across a variety of groups and classes enabled me to explore how citizens were learning to deal with different socio-economic, physical and cultural barriers to actively participating as citizens.

This participant observer style of research largely involved a semi-participative role, which enabled a high level of integration into the specific situations, whilst still maintaining the role of a more distanced researcher. This involved observing groups and individuals within the semi-naturalistic settings, such as community groups, meetings and classes. The use of observational research methods are according to Harvey 'used to elaborate an understanding that goes beyond surface appearance and thereby specifies the nature of the essential relationship of the structure under analysis' (1990:12). It involved participant observation in some groups over periods of time i.e. within a period of 3 years between 2009 and 2012, some of them up to 9 months. It did not intend however on making conclusions about aspects of culture within the groups, outlined in table 2 below.

2.7 Feminist approaches to the research

A main feature influencing this research approach draws upon feminists' perspective of empowerment through social research. Some feminists identify the need to undertake the research as much as possible from an 'insider's' point

of view rather than an 'objective' outsider, in that the researcher should aim to empathise with those being researched. According to Ann Oakley 'personal involvement is more than dangerous bias- it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives' (1982:58). I therefore have drawn upon these ideals and through this research I have aimed to capture where possible the 'voice' of the researched as well as that of the researcher. To this extent I have been far from a neutral commentator, but have played an active and intentional albeit distant role in the lives of those being researched.

My own experiences throughout the study, however took account of the experiences which Punwar described after interviewing women MP's in that 'interview rapport did not necessarily follow from shared experience of multiple identities'. She also recognised that 'the sharing of a gender or some other experience certainly can be used as a resource to facilitate closeness and rapport if both the interviewer and interviewee are willing' (1997:10). This was apparent in all the groups where I had shared some of my experiences of socio-economic disadvantage, cultural exclusion or my lack of access to legal rights. Here the participants were able to relate to me and in turn I could relate to them more readily. Therefore participants appeared more willing to share their own difficult or positive experiences with someone who shared experiences or empathised with them.

Critics argue that this approach is overly politicised and undermines the discovery role of the researcher by becoming interventionist if not deterministic in its approach. Hammersely for example, perceives that more distance between the researcher and the participant is required. The 'essence of ethnography is the tension between trying to understand people's perspectives from the inside while also viewing them and their behaviour more distantly' (2006:11). While it was very important to maintain a process of critical reflection regarding the relationships with participants, it was clear through my experiences, that there must also be a recognition that natural relationships developed where social research took place, however. In the overt research

environments relationships were sometimes complex and needed to be built on trust, understanding and openness. If these relationships had been one dimensional i.e. as a researcher I merely observed or retreated from interactive relationships, it is likely that participants' reactions and responses may have been more formalised and lacked the depth that was required for in-depth insights. Blackburn described some of the limitations to an approach of research participation which is 'passive' and 'participation in information giving' (1998:157), in that the perimeters of participation are pre-determined by the researcher and therefore lack of interaction may have provided more limited outcomes. It was apparent throughout my experiences as a participant observer that trust between me and other participants was essential and occurred as part of a natural process where some participants expressed their ease to be honest around me. This I feel would definitely not have taken place if I had taken a more formal and distant approach to the observation as I was invited back into the classes by the participants themselves and encouraged to participate in activities outside the WEA's remit. It was through these events that I gained a richer insight in to the lives and outcomes of the WEA's activities including witnessing how the participants had become actively involved in their communities.

2.8 Sampling

A process of 'purposive sampling' was carried out to choose groups highlighting varying subject matters, disadvantage and representing varying geographical areas of South Wales. As a partner in the research, the WEA South Wales organisation had an interest in allowing access to a cross-section of community groups that were likely to provide positive data. This control over access potentially benefited the organisation in terms of the provision of detailed analysis from the researcher on specific topics.

However groups were chosen as part of a process of deliberation with the WEA staff and participants and therefore the WEA did not overly influence samples. While these choices did not aim to represent all social cleavages, groups or

individuals that have experienced social exclusion or barriers to active citizenship, it did aim to examine the WEA's methods and abilities to engage some groups which had experienced exclusion or difficulties with regards to active citizenship and community engagement. Table 2 outlines the breakdown of interviews completed with WEA staff and members. The groups and participants are described below:

A group set in a semi- isolated estate located in the Valleys of South Wales, an area which has been rated amongst one the most deprived in the UK, according to the Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (2010). This has also been a target area of the Welsh Assembly Government's, Communities First initiative, which has aimed to encourage community engagement and participation. It provided a particularly valuable opportunity to explore the similarities and differences, as well as the scope for partnership working between a Third Sector organisation and government programmes, working in disadvantaged communities. This particular group had initially requested a class from the WEA on their legal rights as residents of the area. Thereafter an 8 week 'Know Your Rights' course was delivered by the WEA in their local area. Participant observation fieldwork occurred regularly with this group and continued after the formal classes ended. Alongside this interviews took place, which examined the influence of the WEA's work outside of the structured process, and the longer term impact.

In addition to this, I selected Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) training sessions for Community Learning Representatives (described in later chapters), usually delivered in the wider Cardiff area. These sessions were also observed in other parts of South Wales and were delivered with the aim of discussing how local issues relate to Global Citizenship. This example enabled me to examine the way in which the WEA integrates citizenship education within a local and global context. As chapter 1 and chapter 6 has explained, this was particularly relevant, given the increasing awareness of the links between the local and the global, and hence the importance of developing citizenship education that includes consideration of the global dimensions of active citizenship.

A further two groups were attended, which focused on a partnership with another Third Sector organisation, People First which aimed to enhance the lives of people with learning disabilities. Participant observations took place by attending The Disability Awareness Training Group, over a period of the entire 9 month course between September 2010 and June 2011. This was a WEA accredited course and involved people with learning disabilities training to understand how disabilities and other ascriptive characteristics can affect people's lives. The classes aimed to empower learners and their wider communities through enabling different forms of participation and well as sharing and developing knowledge, skills and experiences.

Also observed was a non-accredited WEA Music short course run in conjunction with an independent organisation called Advocats. Throughout this set of classes I joined participants between September and December 2009 who had a variety of learning disabilities, observing classes in which learners were encouraged to participate in a range of artistic, technical and reflective activities involving music. I investigated whether this non-accredited course provided educational opportunities for members to participate in ways that were not necessarily available to them through mainstream education. These formal sessions were followed up by attending some performances and open days that the group's members participated in this demonstrated how they had progressed and how they participated in society.

Interviews took place with two former participants of a number of WEA courses who went on to run social enterprise courses. These previous learners have since set up their own social enterprise providing free training for unemployed members of their Rhondda Valleys based community. This aimed to illustrate the on-going contributions that courses through the WEA had on individuals, as well as the social impact.

In contrast to these classes I participated in a WEA Community Development course. This required travelling a distance in the evenings. This I joined as both

a means to potentially increase my own knowledge in the subject, as well as to understand and critically examine the style and approach of education classes which had not been specifically recommended by the WEA as illustrations of their work. Attending this course enabled me to compare and contrast approaches, addressing possible biases that might have occurred had I only attending activities that were recommended. This experience highlighted some of the key challenges that citizens may have as learners and isolated members of communities. It particularly highlighted issues such as lack of clear and useful information regarding courses; access to transportation; safety of participants in attending the venues and costs and consistency in terms of the tutors' attendance. Had I had known all the details I would not have initially attended. Issues I experienced myself as a learner in this particular class reinforced concerns I had for other potential or current participants that may have faced the same or more detrimental obstacles towards participation. It highlighted some of the weaknesses and strengths of the WEA and other community education providers, which are discussed in the case study. It also raised questions about any organisation's capacity to provide necessary support and facilities to all citizens all of the time. However most of the problems I personally experienced with this class were recognised and addressed by the WEA in their overall work and other classes that I observed as is explained in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Table 1: Participants observations in WEA classes and activities 2009-2011:

Classes attended	Duration of study	Frequency
Advocats Group	3 months	3x 2 hour sessions
Know Your Rights/ Empowerment Classes	2-3 months	4x 2 hour sessions +post class meetings
ESGDC	6 months	Approximately 1 full day every other month
Disability and Equality Awareness Training	9 months	1 full day session per week

2.9 Interviewing

The research involved semi-structured interviews with civil servants, staff, members and visitors of the WEA and partner organisations. The civil servants represented educational and community development departments in the UK and Welsh Government in line with the general themes of the study, discussed in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Interviews took place after a process of formal written requests which were sent to staff members, politicians and civil servants. Interviews from class participants were requested informally by myself and usually also by to class tutors, although all participants were also asked individually and presented with the questions and outlines before they agreed to take part.

This process highlighted some of the traditional underlying imbalances of power between the interviewer and interviewee and thus the potential bias that arises from this imbalance. Oakley stated that 'in most cases, the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest her own personal identity' (1982:41). This was something that I was very conscious of throughout the research and attempted to breakdown some traditional hierarchies and assumptions about my privileged role as a researcher. This I did through numerous practices which were both consciously and sub-consciously enacted. I attempted to ensure that all participants were happy to take part and be interviewed and if not they were not pressured to do so. Participants were encouraged to set the boundaries of the interview, following up with their own questions. This however was limited by the fact that the broad questions were already presented to them often by email or through a group leader, the tutor or me. Although some politicians had been formally requested to participate in interviews all of those declined, the results of which are described later in the chapter.

The interviews always took place as one on one sessions and away from the influence of other people. One interview was however also attended by a

participant's carer. In most cases the interviews took place in public spaces or in or locations used by the WEA. It was however at the discretion of the participant as to where they would like to be interviewed. One member of staff was interviewed at his house. Other interviews took place in a library, a café, also in private rooms in the WEA offices and community centres, the Welsh Government and one took place outside one of the community projects.

Semi-structured interviews were used to complement participant observational fieldwork to focus on the general topics of the research and follow up in more detail the issues arising in the general observations. Semi-structured interviews according to May (2004:123) 'are said to allow people to answer on their own terms but still provide a greater structure of compatibility over unfocused interview'. By using this combined approach to data collection (observational and interviewing techniques), I had aimed to take account of participants in different situations and subject to varying external influences. As Sue Jones emphasises 'human beings, present different personae in different situations, to different audiences' (1985: 50). 'Each person is poly-vocal' according to Gergen and Gergen (2007) in Outhwaite and Turner (2007:446), in that 'each possesses a multiplicity of ways to tell the story'. It was therefore advantageous that participants were communicated with in a number of different ways, e.g. formally and informally as well as one to one and in groups. This approach allowed the complexities, contradictions and even underlying and hidden dilemmas facing policy and programme practitioners through the implementation process to be illuminated. As some of the post-class interviews have revealed, opinions and reflections evolved as the situations changed. However these varying lines of enquiry only took place with the case study's participants, as only formal interviews took place with civil servants.

These interviews focused on themes rather than exact systematic responses to questions. Presenting questions in a semi-structured way allowed the interviewee to explore alternative as well as personal lines of inquiry and open up new arenas of relevance. It encouraged open ended answers, but also allowed more importantly for the adaptation of variant language in the specific

questions. This has been extremely important when developing questions for participants from different backgrounds and with varying educational needs, particularly in instances where the concepts needed breaking down further. Re-defining or unravelling the concept of active citizenship has been important insofar as breaking down its key components has been central to understanding what it means to individuals and groups in theory and practice, as well as being able to communicate to research participants what the concept may mean e.g. how they get involved in their communities. This flexible approach also allowed participants to explain what it is that they may interpret as active citizenship, therefore allowing the voice of the participants to be expressed. The table below outlines the interviews that took place throughout the study.

Table 2: Interviews 2009-2012

Interviewees	Number of interviewees
Community Computer Care	2
ESDGC	2
Valleys group	6
People First Members	5
WEA staff	10
Government policy officers	3
Total	25

2.10 Analysis of data

The data collected throughout the study was organised and scrutinised through a process of coding and critical analysis. From the outset questions arose out of academic literature relating to active citizenship and community engagement. Key themes emerged representing the central facets of the main research questions. This included the exploration of varying perspectives of citizenship, government policies, political structures, democratic participation, as well as theories on education. The main themes which arose focused on prominent concepts and forms of qualitative analysis, particularly aspects of critical social

theory and elements of feminist interpretations of power relationships and equality. They reflected my pre-existing knowledge on community development, political theories, social policy and my interest in social justice, as well as new lines of enquiry such as educational pedagogies. Many of these themes were determined early on in the study, based on the literature review. However some developed over time as the research has unfolded and deeper and more varied perspectives have been unveiled, particularly through the observations. These general themes and underlying questions formed the basis of my approach to collecting the initial observational fieldwork data and the development of questions for interviews.

Interview questions were devised after a process of discussion and analysis with different research participants and as a result of continuous reflection of the wider literature available. Open ended interview questions which had been presented to WEA learners, staff and members as well as civil servants enabled further topics to emerge. The questions centred around themes such as research participants' understanding of active citizenship; partnership working with government and other organisations; issues around global citizenship; underlying barriers and challenges to active citizenship; the role of education and the influence of government policies and funding. In later interviews with WEA learners and the themes were then broken down further to explore more in-depth subject matters such as styles of learning and community contributions and types of democratic participation. Examples of the questions used in interviews with WEA staff and civil servants are available in appendices 2 and 3.

Overtime patterns and sub-themes emerged throughout and after the data collection and analysis process, including as a result of on-going collaborative discussions with the research partners and research cluster. After some initial fieldwork observations, basic coding and analysis took place almost immediately. Then papers were presented regarding these findings to the research participants, academics and even some government ministers. It was as a result of this constant process of coding and analysis throughout the study,

that I decided that using software package such as NVIVO may not be required for the process.

Overall coding involved cross referencing different types of interviewees and participants on thematic grounds, and the views and actions of staff, policy makers have all been compared to one another. The final stages of analysis process involved reassessing whether the findings required further codification in order to make conclusions relating to the underlying research questions.

2.11 Limitations to the study

It should be recognised that aspects of this fieldwork would ideally have taken place over a longer period of time. This type of research typically involves an 'extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and / or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents' Hammersley (2007:3). However the studies took a relatively open-ended and reflexive approach in terms of specific questioning and research structure.

This in itself presented limitations to the study, in that it did not fully encompass the end to end processes of forming and developing the community groups, ideas, outcomes, policies and perspectives that have been analysed.

Hammersley (2006) points out that 'limitations of time' 'can encourage a rather a-historical perspective, one which neglects the local and wider history of the institution studied'. It has therefore been imperative to the research that the context as well as the time, place; length of time the study and the socio-political background have been identified.

Flexibility was particularly necessary regarding adapting the focus on proposed research participants. I had aimed to interview people that would represent different age groups, genders, ethnic origins, socio-economic backgrounds and with different levels of physical and mental abilities. This was however limited

by the nature of the groups I attended and could have been more diverse particularly with regards to ethnicity.

A greater challenge arose though, regarding my initial intention to interview politicians. The purpose of this was to reflect on the recent and preceding governments' perspectives, policies and initiatives in relation to active citizenship and the role of adult education. Although it was taken into account that politicians would have continuously changed roles during the time of the research. This was particularly the case as the timescale covered a UK General Election (2010) and Welsh Government Election (2011), as well as numerous changes of ministerial responsibilities. However unforeseen unwillingness by politicians to be interviewed on this topic, created a number of difficulties that required an alternative approach to these aspects of the research. Therefore politicians did not form part of the study as initially planned. This meant that the research became re-focused on a small number of civil servant based interviews. These government officials appeared far more open and willing to participate and respond to my requests than political representatives from all main parties. Therefore a critique on government policies and initiatives utilised the somewhat more formal lines of the civil servants' perspectives. However, it included a wider critical reflection of the policies. In addition to this the critique of policies, quotes and speeches of political representatives have also been utilised in order to present an analysis of party political viewpoints. These were mainly outlined in chapters 3 to 5. These processes in turn illuminated some of the underlying issues of access to democratic representatives and citizens' ability to engage with the structures which influence their lives.

Early experiences and perceptions of a growing culture of openness and accountability in the newly devolved democracy in Wales had, over time and through reflection, been critically challenged through the unfolding experiences I encountered. The rhetoric and appearance of more locally accountable representatives at Welsh level was originally confirmed through experiences of politicians joining WEA classes, groups and events including meetings at the

Senedd (Welsh Government) building. It was at these meetings where politicians enthusiastically offered their time to be interviewed without prompting. These positive experiences of gaining access to political representatives were also confirmed through the intermittent attendance of political representatives at meetings outside of the WEA's remit.

However, my ability to engage with political representatives, it appeared, was, on reflection, usually linked to the connections I had with well-established organisations and influential individuals, thereby highlighting the imbalances of power that exist between those that do and don't have the resources to influence and access political representatives. Initially I planned to interview a cross-section of people from different political backgrounds but this was not possible as relevant political representatives did not agree to participate. Despite my knowledge of the political structures my ability to gain access to representatives was limited. This was highlighted by the lack of response by most politicians or their staff when interviews were requested from them - as illustrated in Table 1 in the appendices. This emphasised some of the perceived and actual barriers that still remained within the democratic system, whereby even some official practices of elected representatives and their staff remained inadequate in terms of their response to the people they were employed to represent. These experiences also underlined perhaps some of the inherent and often less visible barriers towards participation which will be further discussed in the following chapters.

2.12 Insider/ Outsider Research and sources of potential bias

As previously alluded to, I was introduced to the WEA as a complete outsider and therefore I had little initial knowledge or bias towards its working practices. It did however early on in the research process strike me as an organisation at least in theory which promoted the values and ideals which I could sympathise with. This early affiliation towards the organisation was made explicit from the beginning and I made a conscious effort to triangulate my findings and explore

without prejudice the actual views and practices it espoused to promote. My role was therefore easily expressed as a critical friend to the organisation.

My initial appreciation of the WEA's proclaimed culture and values was however coupled with low expectations and minimal knowledge of its application in practice. Underlying concerns and doubts regarding the organisation's capacity to encourage active citizenship and democratic participation amongst the most socially excluded, had been raised through review of the literature and first hand experiences of working within the Third Sector and government. The issues and challenges that the Third Sector faced were unexpectedly challenged by my engagement with the material and individuals that I met over time. In that despite the complex challenges that the WEA and its members faced, numerous positive observations illustrated how the organisation could empower even the most socially excluded learners to participate in education and social activities.

The somewhat positive reflection of how the organisation promoted its values was ultimately developed over the long-term experiences with learners, partners and staff members, usually independently reinforcing the views of the other. Anxieties that I had expressed initially regarding how I would potentially address issues that I could encounter with the organisation, were negated through the largely positive experiences that I had. Also the organisation encouraged honest and in-depth feedback whether negative or positive. This in itself presented further challenges when presenting my findings from a critical perspective, as I had had little to criticise regarding its work. Therefore it was essential that the process of research was broken down and explained in order to justify observations and conclusions that had been made over time.

Also there was little initial difficulty in gaining access to the WEA's activities, as I was welcomed into groups by staff and participants alike. I perceived myself as a 'privileged observer' and was careful to respect the participants as the organisation itself also appeared to. In one class the tutor ensured that all members of the group agreed to the presence of visitors and were happy to

allow them back. However complications arose as some gatekeepers who had been keen to involve or engage me in activities became less reliable in terms of passing on information e.g. telling me when groups were meeting. These relationships were at times complex as the individuals had provided early access into groups and initiatives. Initially helpful contacts had at times become barriers, preventing me from continuing my research in these areas. This was particularly difficult as I felt I needed to still contact them before joining their groups. In some instances group members/ former participants had taken over the role of leading the groups and classes, therefore new gatekeepers had emerged. These barriers to access were however overcome as I had managed to develop relationships with participants in addition to the initial gatekeepers and utilised alternative contacts to continue with the research. Where possible and appropriate, contact had been gained and maintained with some participants to develop an understanding of the impact of the experiences outside the formal WEA settings. From the outset new groups and relationships unfolded through willing participants including members of staff. This enabled me to directly access particular groups as well as gain in-depth information regarding the overall work of the organisation on multiple levels. These relationships had been openly developed, as regular discussions regarding findings and progress took place with members of the organisation at all levels. However, due to the natural fluidity of the organisation, including changing posts and roles, a flexible approach to developing new relationships with participants and gatekeepers was always required. These issues were also managed as I regularly met with the WEA's Chief Executive the process of constant collaboration between all partners was required to maintain a strong working and reflective relationship.

As the research has taken a semi-participative approach, my presence had been overt and has an impact on the natural dynamics of the settings. As a participant in most of the classes I fully engaged with the groups, but endeavoured not to specifically influence the content of the classes but to observe and if requested offer an outsider's perspective with a wider view of policy and practice. However, the intention of my research had been to critically analyse and raise questions regarding the social (micro and macro) structures

that influence active citizenship. The nature of my presence must therefore be recognised as intentional and cannot be perceived as a neutral researcher. Through varying the techniques that have been used, the intention has been to develop multi-dimensional participant perspectives. Tim May (2004:15) argues 'accounts of the social world must therefore be 'internalist' that is, arising from within the culture we are studying.' Nonetheless, the dual aim was to examine aspects of work of the wider Third Sector, whilst using in-depth examples of the work of one particular organisation.

Through an insider's perspective, I participated in aspects of experiential learning. This involved experiencing how it feels to be a learner and participant. On reflection, the research process revealed that it was in some instances my own ability to feel and act as an empowered active citizen that was questioned and reflected upon through this process of participant observation. The multiple disadvantages that I had experienced myself as a citizen when dealing with personal issues of exclusion from participation were coincidentally highlighted through the discussions and formal work in some of the classes. Instances where I had also lacked access to information on my legal rights were reflected upon in the discussions of the 'Know Your Rights' class. These experiences revealed a genuine level of empathy for people facing exclusion, as I had described timely examples to participants where I, as they, had been exposed to unequal access to knowledge or legal rights. This included rights as a resident and citizen when authorities threatened to demolish my home. WEA participants had become more empowered and were able to offer me advice and expertise, turning the role of the 'expert' researcher to the recipient of knowledge from those being researched. My role as a researcher therefore did not overshadow the human relationships which occurred throughout the process and it was perhaps due to these rich and informative relationships that I had been invited and involved in follow up activities which displayed key aspects of active citizenship. These activities included community events, performances and meetings. This allowed me to experience how I could be empowered through the same educational processes as other WEA learners, in that I was able to use the knowledge learnt to affect change in my personal

circumstances with a social consequence. Overall these experiences as both an outsider/ insider researcher enabled me to critically reflect on how policies and governments' initiatives could influence individuals within a wider theoretical framework.

2.13 Ethical considerations

The Economic and Social Research Council (2010:7) explains that 'research ethics refers to the moral principles guiding research from the inception through to completion and publication of results and beyond.' Ethical approval has been gained through the Goldsmiths' departmental ethical research committee; ethically the research adheres to both subject specific academic and Economic Social Research Council criteria, whilst also taking account of practical connections towards to the WEA South Wales organisation. The link with the WEA raises issues of direct bias towards the organisation, although it simultaneously provided checks and balances through the wider network of collaboration.

Although this research involved collaboration between myself and the WEA South Wales, with support from ESRC and the research cluster, a process of further scrutiny through triangulation was still required. Triangulation according to Silverman (2005:212) is the 'true fix' on a situation by combining different ways of looking at it or different findings'. This has aimed to provide the research with a level of albeit limited external and internal validity and scrutiny. This in turn would allow and expect a high level of ethical standards to be met as different parties with varying stakes in the process are involved in the design and analysis of the research itself. This has meant that my findings have undergone quite a high degree of scrutiny, particularly from the WEA. Some of the WEA's staff and participants have been presented with informal and formal papers, which have in turn been passed on to government ministers and representatives. While this has meant that the work has been subject to varying types of critical feedback, it also highlighted difficulties in producing a piece of research which fits the needs of all parties involved.

Likewise it raises issues about the threat of biased influence, where those that have a stake in the research will be scrutinizing it. As a researcher it has been important to maintain a balanced and thorough approach to both defend and challenge the research. Although, the WEA South Wales were keen to gain a critical outsider's perspective of the organisation, it is difficult as a 'critical friend' to realise where inadvertent biases towards or against them may have occurred the findings. This has required a process of reflexivity and purposeful distance from the organisation in order to explain the findings through a critical perspective. As Charles Taylor in May (2004:44) asserts 'there is nothing to stop us making the greatest attempts to avoid bias and achieve objectivity. Of course, it is hard, almost impossible, and precisely because our values are also at stake'.

It was essential that I maintained a high level of trust with the organisations that I worked with, and this is central to the completion of my research. This will have been achieved through attempting to maintain a respectful attitude towards their working practices and the confidentiality of their members. My research practices regarding personal data have adhered to the Data Protection Act 1998. Audio digital recordings of the interviews have not been shared and personal and private information will remain private unless previously agreed. I transcribed my own recordings. Copies all of all data have been made and storage of the paper based and digital data have been protected by passwords and will remain for my own personal use only. Identities have not been presented wherever possible.

The source of the data has been identified by referring to the date and context of the quote rather than using their names and personal information destroyed once the research has been completed. If there is a risk that the identity of the participant will be revealed through implicit or explicit means those people have been informed and have been given the option to withdraw. I have provided consistent and regular updates of my work as well as remaining open and

professional, by sustaining both a distance and empathy with individuals that I carried out research with.

It felt problematic to give the participants pseudo-names, as this may have further exacerbated the 'invisibility' they had sometimes felt. However this was coupled by the concern that it was imperative to protect the identities of participants, as I felt that they may have been vulnerable even more so to the systemic power relations that sometimes had caused or exacerbated their unequal status or ability to previously participate- e.g. disability or poverty. It was for this reason that I decided not to give the participants pseudo-names but to just provide a reference to the group, date and context that interaction or observations took place. It is also for this reason that the term 'subject' is not used. The term subject clearly strips the person of their multifaceted identity as if they were one dimensional and describes them in a way that provides the impression that they are perhaps inferior, a statistic or a component in a system. It was also important to recognise that without their consent the research could not have taken place and therefore they were not powerless subjects but willing participants. The term participant therefore is used to convey that the relationship between me and those that are being researched is interactive, intended to be equal and that they and I have agency in terms of their right not to participate but also how they are represented. These are of course ideals and despite my best attempts to enact this level of equality there were undoubtedly times where my ability to do this may have fallen short.

Due to the high profile nature of many of interviewees and research agents, I have maintained a high level of openness about the use of the material. I have offered and given transcripts to all of those that were formally interviewed and provided confidentiality as far as possible for all people that receive information from. Otherwise where it has been too difficult to ensure anonymity, research participants including policy makers have informed before interviews commenced and the research has been used.

It is possible that my analysis of government and Third Sector will be perceived as harmful or negative. However, I have aimed to limit the risk of this by ensuring that regular updates have been provided to organisations, underlying reasons for conclusions have been presented and an open relationship has been maintained with all agents as far as possible. All interviewees have been provided with an outline of the research and its purpose, this included adapting the language and wording of it for different groups. A printed declaration of my intentions has been provided to all participants. Therefore any specific information that will or has been be used will have gained informed consent by those participating. The intention has been to offer a high level of openness and respect to all participating in the research, taking particular care to protect the needs of more vulnerable participants. This was developed through a process of deep investigation into the wider issues that affect the participants. This should have prevented the risk of information being used in an incorrect or detrimental way. The aim of the research has been to provide constructive feedback and comments, as well as providing theoretically robust research.

2.14 Research Summary

Method	The research focused on a critical review of government policies and initiatives in relation to active citizenship and the Third Sector in Wales and the UK. It centred on the Welsh Assembly Government and the Third sector in Wales. This has included interviewing some policy advisors. A case study of the Third Sector organisation, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) South Wales, has been the focal point of the research. This study included participant observation of classes, training and activities, as well as semi-structured interviews with a focus on its influence on activating citizens through democratic education.
Stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature Review • Methodological perspectives and structure • Case Study- Worker's Educational Association including

	<p>ethnographic research and semi-structured interviews</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of findings • Interviews with civil servants in Wales and the UK • Critical review of government policies and perspectives • Presentation of overall findings • Conclusions
Rationale	To understand the practical and theoretical implications of government policies in relation to third sector's work in encouraging active citizenship.

This chapter has outlined my research strategy. The purpose of this which was previously explained has been to critically analyse the work of the Third Sector and governments with regards to encouraging active citizenship. The research focused on the policies and processes of the devolved Welsh Assembly Government and wider UK Government, as these have been implemented through the work of the Third Sector and community based citizenship education, with specific emphasis on the Workers' Educational Association, South Wales. I built on the theoretical perspectives explored in my literature review, the research further considered questions and themes highlighted in the literature review, such as the extent to which social justice and equality are prerequisites to active citizenship. It also identifies how different political and theoretical concepts of citizenship are evolving within local, national and global context- with a specific focus on the devolved government in Wales. I drew on interviews that I carried out with civil servants, to illustrate how governments have perceived and implemented policies in relation to active citizenship in chapters 3, 4 and 5. This was particularly relevant with regards to the extent to which education delivered through the Third Sector but on behalf of the government plays a role in increasing the ability of individuals to democratically participate as active citizens.

Also outlined are the research methods that have been used to understand and analyse these questions. A process of qualitative inquiry has been employed to analyse the data from interviews and participant observation fieldwork which

has been undertaken. This includes critical analysis methods, which outline the theoretical approaches and value system applied to the research. A process of critical review has been applied to government policies and practices; Third Sector practice (particularly the WEA) and the development of partnership working and research communities' with regards to involvement in the issues that affect local communities. It was intended to highlight some of the underlying power structures which influence the social relationships which exist and the effects they have on community based learning for active citizenship.

2.15 Conclusions

The decision to use qualitative methods such as interview and participant observations and critical analysis stemmed from the type of research question posed, in that it aimed to bring to light the challenges faced by citizens, governments, and the Third Sector regarding active citizenship. Likewise, the research highlighted tensions and synergies that existed where governments and Third Sector organisations work overlapped or undermined one another in relation to active citizenship. This was informed by critical examination of government policies, as well interviews with civil servants, with a focus on post-devolution Wales – outlined primarily in chapters 3, 4 and 5. This analysis combined with participant observations and interviews that took place within the Third Sector provided first-hand insights into how and if government policies and funding impacted on participants in Third Sector community groups in practice. The findings of this case study are outlined in chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9.

The collaborative nature of the research itself arguably encouraged a highly reflective and pluralistic approach, which aimed to illuminate underlying interpretations of active citizenship and practices from the perspectives of all stakeholders, particularly within the WEA. Consultation with stakeholders i.e. the research cluster as well as Third Sector organisations (staff and learners) was a continuous process, where multi-organisational perspectives were taken into account and contributed to co-produced knowledge. The findings and

academic insights discovered were made available through regular feedback sessions and discussion with participants.

The reflexive approach to the research involved identifying and challenging theoretical personal and systematic assumptions and viewpoints. Personal reflection was assisted by a process of triangulation, whereby varying perspectives contributed to the research, in that stakeholders have participated and contributed to the style and content of the research.

By taking time to consult multiple organisations and using in-depth participant and policy makers' accounts, it is hoped that the findings present critical representations of practices and outcomes. This multi-dimensional and inclusive approach to research has intended challenging and over-coming some power imbalances within the underlying social structures. By presenting alternatives to the status quo and empowering citizens through the research process it aimed to promote a genuine understanding of how to engage and empower citizens to act on their own terms.

Chapter 3: Democratic participation, governance and devolution in the UK

Introduction

Active citizenship is a concept which in essence entails participation. How citizens should and do participate is widely deliberated and relates to underlying ideological positions which aim to describe and promote certain types of citizens and societies. Central to these discourses are the varying notions of democracy and its links to active citizenship, which are explored throughout this chapter, with a specific focus on democratic participation within the UK. Some of the key debates around the types of citizen participation are examined, as well as varying approaches to addressing the 'democratic deficit', such as through devolution, which were introduced to chapter 1. It stresses UK citizens' unequal power to influence decisions which affect not only their lives but also others in their local, national and international communities. The second part of the chapter outlines the opportunities within the UK for citizens to democratically participate, highlighting contradictions within the structures and institutions which claim to promote and embody democracy. It questions whether devolution within the UK, particularly within Wales, offers an alternative avenue for 'deep' democracy, where meaningful participation can be nurtured. This draws on interviews that were carried out with a number of civil servants within the Welsh Government.

3.1 Critiques of representative democracy in the UK

One of the central concepts of modern political thought is that of democracy and its role in enabling individuals to participate in the decision making processes which govern their lives and the societies that they live in. However, the various interpretations of democracy have long been debated from the time of its origins in ancient Greece. As referred to in chapter 1, democracy in its earliest forms was perceived as the domain of elites, with only a small proportion having the right to make decisions which affected the populations as a whole. These conditions have continued throughout history, as State's which

claim to be democratic, have still not enabled all of their populaces to gain equal rights to participation.

The modern liberal perception of democracy has commonly involved, 'a rule of law, promotion of civil and political liberties, free and fair election of law makers,' Young (2002:5). The liberal approach to democratic participation relies on tacit legal and civic rights for citizens, focusing on participation in legal and political institutions, usually through elected representatives. Saward points out that 'the dominant modern narrative of democracy has been characterised by the advocacy or acceptance of primarily representative institutions' (2003: 120). Despite an array of democratic institutions and procedures having been developed in the modern western world in particular e.g. wider franchise, more democratically elected parliaments at European and national level, there appears to be a growing level of disengagement with the formal types of democratic participation however. As chapter 1 has already suggested, this perception of the 'democratic deficit' is illustrated though factors such as recent UK voting patterns, which are outlined later in the chapter. Some of the reasons for this perceived lack of engagement are explored subsequently in this following section.

Critics of the representative system of democracy assert that it contributes to this lack of participation. 'It is seen on the one hand as involving public debate and direct participation of the people themselves in decision-making and, on the other, as combining the separation of the people from their government' Hindess (2000:290}. Governments for decades have acknowledged, if not emphasised, the rise in political distrust, sometimes creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Parry asserts that 'greater transparency in government might help to assuage political cynicism which is the dangerous extension of what can often be healthy distrust. Transparency in government would also be accompanied by an education in political understanding for the political media and the public alike' (2003:43). It is clear that some of the cynicism itself derives from the media's representations of the political systems. A report by the Hansard Society (2001) concluded that 'there is a sense that 'politics' is familiar (not least

because of national media coverage) but at the same time it is seen as being distant and having little direct relevance to, and impact on, people's day-to-day lives'. Recent episodes publicised through the media such as the MP's expenses scandal in 2009 and the Leveson Inquiry from July 2011 have exacerbated the underlying distrust of politicians and the way they work with the media. It has highlighted the inherent undemocratic flaws in the political and power structure which exist across the UK and within the wider global political culture.

Contrary to certain claims made by the media and members of the political elite, the Power Commission revealed 'the myth of apathy'. Through extensive research The Commission discovered that despite popular preconceptions:

'The British public is not apathetic... Very large numbers of citizens are engaged in community and charity work outside of politics.' It also reveals that 'involvement in pressure politics such as signing petitions, supporting consumer boycotts, joining campaign groups- has been growing significantly for many years... interest in political issues is high'(2006:16).

The indication that traditional ideologies and partisan politics no longer appeal to the majority of the electorate offers one explanation. Kennedy argued that another contributory factor is that there is a fundamental contradiction in the reality and rhetoric of democratic choice. 'It is about feeling that there is no choice, despite living in the era when CHOICE- is the dominant political mantra- there is very little on offer as the main parties seem to be much the same'(2006:10). This was found to be particularly relevant during the 2012 local elections where the choice of candidates were severely limited in some electoral wards in Wales. For example in some wards it was only the Labour Party that was represented in party political terms. Other candidates were just labelled as Independents. This also highlighted other significant barriers to voter turnout, in that many voters had not received information regarding the mandates and views of candidates. It therefore appears that ensuring the electorate are aware of democratic processes, structures and concepts from the onset gives people better opportunities to engage with the political processes and issues that affect them. This in turn should provide greater levels of

accountability. Overall this illustrated an example of where political literacy has been undermined by an 'information deficit'. The role of education for democracy is further discussed in Chapter 5 and throughout the case study.

Kelly stresses another dilemma for the electorate, as manifesto commitments are often not fulfilled once governments have been elected. 'It increasingly appears to be the case that once a government has been voted into power it takes the view that every voter, however he or she actually voted 'shall authorize' all subsequent actions' (1995:9). This was the case where the UK Liberal Democrats' mandate included a flagship policy to reduce tuition fees for higher education. However, once in power in the Coalition Government with the Conservatives party after the in 2010 election, they voted to introduce increased fees of up to £9000. These stark contradictions between promises and practice could explain some of the electorate's apprehension to participate in formal political processes, as well as to be engaged in general political life, at local or national levels.

This also underlines the inadequacies of democratic structures and practices, reflected in the UK's wider political culture. Lockyer and Crick point out that recently, 'the Party' reinforces a mode of hierarchical politics; its focus is on winning elections rather than acting to contribute to civic capacity; or offering a forum for local debate or engagement in working with community groups' (2010:1). These conditions exacerbate the distance between the electorate and the democratic institutions.

Radical theorists such as Delanty also attempt to unpack the roots of disengagement and the complexity of identities and power based inequalities often over-looked by liberal theorists (2000: 46-47). A vital component of active citizenship according to Paterson (1997) and Allen (1998) is 'dissent', in that genuine liberal democracy if it is to represent all voices is not merely about consent. Nye argues that 'people are not losing interest in politics. They are, however, more cynical about orthodox democratic politics. They are interested in questions that are not always on the political agenda,' (1997:253).

Cousins also described recent rises in single issue or direct forms of participation such as petitions or referendums as 'the 'hollowing out' of democracy'. He claimed that what 'lies behind the decline in trust in institutions and is also implicated in another striking process... (such as), the growth of 'alternative avenues and targets of political expression and mobilization' (2011) {accessed 2/3/2013}. In contrast to parliamentary derived forms of direct democracy, noticeable increases have occurred in protest driven participation. Comparing figures from the World Values Surveys and the Political Action Survey in 1974, Cousins stated that 'three times more people are signing petitions and joining consumer boycotts' (2011). These have been accompanied with a simultaneous resurgence in less formal direct forms of protest. Statistics from the British Attitudes Survey illustrated that between 1983 and 2006 the numbers of people attending peaceful demonstrations had grown from approximately 2% and peaked at around 12%, most of these targeting governments. This has become particularly prevalent for those who lack the political or financial power to influence change through the formal representative processes of democracy. Thus, democracy is not merely about being able to express your opinion or even for the voice to be heard but also to challenge the underlying power structures that exist. Danahar and Mark argue that 'as long as one class of people- whether monsignors or millionaires- hold a monopoly on power, democracy is compromised' (2003: 296). They convey a sense that political structures must be held to account to ensure that the balance of power exists in all societies, in order for democracy to be an efficient mechanism to promote active participation.

Therefore it has been increasingly recognised that many citizens are not empowered or motivated to participate in democratic systems which claim to represent them. In order to counter these dilemmas, more inclusive and participatory approaches to democratic participation have become increasingly drawn upon amongst a cross-spectrum of political theories and parties. Alternative approaches to liberal theories of democratic participation which

claim to enhance democratic participation and increase engagement are discussed below:

3.2 Alternatives forms of democratic governance and participation

The Ministry of Justice stated that the 'traditional British view of citizenship is a status which is conferred on all people who live within that society and are assured as a right of birth' (2007:758). This conveys a passive if not tacit approach to citizenship, based entirely on the state based rights. Critics argue that democracy should involve more than hierarchical representation in political institutions and abiding by laws. Instead it is fundamentally about participation and engagement in the decisions that affect citizens. They question whether government centric forms of representative democracy can effectively reflect the desires, viewpoints and needs of the populations it claims to represent and whether it is able to facilitate and encourage democratic participation overall:

'Democracy is not about representative government, and it is not about an elected aristocracy or oligarchy (government by the few). To experience democracy we would need to create conditions in which democracy could break out. Often this involves working with the existing system to institutionalise democratic processes. Therefore ways are needed so that democratic processes can be built into existing forms of government, through improved forums of public participation' (Carson 2012, website {accessed 24/1/2012}).

In line with these arguments, there has been growing interest in the various forms of participatory democracy. It has been perceived as a means of enabling more inclusive and productive ways of increasing citizen participation, as well as making societies more just and government action more legitimate. Green asserts that citizenship must involve 'people working together to determine the course of their own lives, fighting for rights and justice in their own societies are critical at holding states, private companies, and others to account'. Meaningful and effective citizen participation from this perspective should involve more than the formal institutions and processes associated with representative democracy. 'The system- governments, judiciaries, parliaments and companies- cannot tackle poverty and inequality by treating people as 'objects of

government action or other action' Green (2008:12). Otherwise representative democracy alone creates and sustains cultures whereby people are not actively engaging in the decisions that affect their lives, it is where 'politics is reduced to the depoliticised issue of governance', Green (2008:13). Democracy according to some theorists should therefore be perceived as a way of life:

'A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity,' Dewey (1966).

Therefore the knowledge and skills required to fully and democratically participate can be achieved through learning in a wide range of situations. Central to this is that citizens at times need to go through a process of empowerment, even at the most basic level, to be able to make wider social and political contributions. Commentators such as Benn reflect on how some people need opportunities to learn how to participate. 'Citizenship skills are less likely to be learned through a formal citizenship curriculum than through positive experiences of participation,' (2000:255). Theories and policies that support education as an essential component of active and democratic citizenship are considered further in chapters 5 throughout to 9.

Radical critics recognise the limitations of less participatory styles of citizenship. P B Clarke critiques what are perceived as accepted norms regarding citizenship as a status rather than an active and evolving notion, which embraces humans as empowered agents in their own and other's lives. 'Citizenship too often emasculates and enervates rather than emancipates and energises. It supports a conception of democracy that remains less unfinished business than business scarcely started, and it invokes a conception of politics that is exclusive rather than inclusive'(1998:2). In line with more participatory styles of democracy, Clarke goes on to imply that there is a direct if not intrinsic link between democratic participation and alternative notions of active citizenship.

'Democratisation... is active participation in a significant and relatively autonomous way in shared aspects of the world. To be involved in one's own life instead of being disengaged from it is to be an actor rather than an unwilling or distanced spectator,' (1998:19). This form of democratic participation could be aligned with other social notions of active citizenship, some of which are described below.

Other forms of democratic participation have aimed to complement and deepen these interpretations of social and community democratic participation. This is reflected in P B Clarke's notion of 'Deep citizenship'. He describes this as 'the activity of the citizen self-acting in a variety of places and spaces. That activity shifts the centre of politics away from the state and so recovers the possibility of politics as individual participation in a shared and communal activity', (1998:4). Central to this concept of 'deep citizenship', the individual participates as a social agent, reflecting and acting as a dynamic force for both themselves and others. This notion of the social citizen differs from neo-liberal citizenship, concerned only with individuals' own views and needs. Here it is recognised that the contribution that an active 'deep' citizen makes has wider social implications than the atomistic, often self-preserving nature of citizenship which is aligned only with institutions and passive rights.

Those also optimistic of the role of democracy believe that it is already taking new forms. 'Democratisation' according to Mayo 'has been placed on the agenda, globally as well as locally, with potentially enhanced scope for citizen involvement and community participation, internationally' (2007:96). Advocates of participative and deliberative democracy note the potential long-term benefits to democracy. 'Participation can nourish democracy, providing people with opportunities to learn active citizenship in practice far fuller lessons than those offered simply by voting for elected representatives' Holst (2002:42).

Measures which aim to include citizens in the shaping of policies and decision making processes have become gradually recognised by policy makers and have in some cases formed aspects of new democratic processes. Some of the most

popular approaches include deliberative democracy which is briefly outlined as followed:

3.3 Deliberative democracy

‘A democratic system’ according to O’Flynn ‘is deliberative when decisions are arrived through a process of public reasoning and discussion to which each citizen can freely contribute but is equally willing to listen, and reflect upon opposing views’ (2006:7). In most representative democracies citizens rarely have the opportunity to form, discuss or even understand most of the laws that govern their lives. Therefore one of the main functions of deliberative democracy is to make political systems more transparent and responsive to the needs of the citizen. In this sense political decisions would be subject to heightened levels of scrutiny by its critically thinking citizens. It ‘places new stress on accountability as the on-going giving of accounts, explanations or reasons to those subject to decisions’ Saward (2003:123). Proponents of deliberative democracy believe that it can address certain issues regarding the practical functioning of democracy including ‘the need to respond constructively to social diversity, to redress hierarchical relationships between identified groups, to promote equality and social justice, as well as the more general concern with deepening democracy’ O’Flynn (2006:3). A central concern of those promoting deliberative democracy is the notion that citizen’s voices are often unheard and have little or no impact on policies.

‘Deliberative democracy’ according to Young ‘is a means of collective problem solving which depends for its legitimacy and wisdom on the expression of criticism of the diverse opinions of all members of the society,’ Young (2002:6). This can involve citizens participating in democratic activities such as parliamentary committees, citizen audits, also through new avenues of political debate. Theorists such as Vandenberg argue that in the information-technology age the Internet has enabled ‘Cyber-citizen’ or ‘netizens’, to participate in a new era of trans-national citizenship (2000:291). This provides an arena for Social Political and Citizenship Education otherwise known as (SPACE), where agendas

can be created by citizens rather merely deriving from political or powerful elites. However, this paradoxically empowers some citizens but further ostracises those without the financial, cultural, physical and educational capacities to participate.

This highlights that citizens do not always have the knowledge, time or resources to participate in political debates, but may aspire to contribute. This is particularly pertinent when citizens have experience or expertise to contribute, which is not reflected in government research or by professionals. The application of deliberative democracy in practice is analysed throughout the study and is further explored chapter 4.

3.4 Civic and civil engagement

Civic engagement 'involves public participation in a process of governance and democratic structures and processes and the development of active and empowered communities which facilitates and implements local and national policy making,' Packham (2008:29). Therefore civic engagement, according to this premise, is a central component of active and democratic participation in any society, thus any active citizen essentially always acts politically. Crick re-asserts the centrality of participation in this political and social process arguing that 'democracy cannot survive and society cannot be sustained without civil and civic engagement' (2008:3).

The dichotomy between civil society and representative democracy in the traditional sense implies that you are either inside or outside the official formal system of governance and at times this only proves to exacerbate the disassociation of citizens from governance and government. It could therefore be argued that genuinely inclusive, deliberative and participatory democratic practices would enable moves towards ensuring that governments are more responsive to the multiplicity of citizens which it represents. In this model of democracy the individual plays a central and conscious role in public affairs

regardless of the sphere or locality by recognising the political impact of their own thoughts and actions on others.

‘Deep citizenship cannot be separated from self-hood... the self... a component of it arises as an overlay on aspects of experience. That experience takes place in a number of domains, the largest of which for most people falls under what used to be referred to as civil society. That category is outmoded... in a classic sense. Civil Society is now better argued as a political society, as a polity and the selfhood that arises in such arrangements is a citizen self’ P B Clarke (1998:118).

Also, arguably the underlying presumption that democracy should still be described in terms of some form of hierarchy when referring to ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’ theories itself needs to be revisited. Elements of the Third Sector offer an alternative to this approach referred to as a ‘flat hierarchy’ whereby all members of an organisation or society have equal status but different roles. This offers a space where the individual member (citizen) can potentially perceive their own role as equally important as those around them. Therefore the notion that there needs to be an equitable distribution of power and resources embedded as a cultural norm in order to encourage democratic participation, is a theme which is explored throughout the study.

Thus, the study questions whether full and active citizenship can be realised, unless these current hierarchies of power are challenged and society values citizens’ rights above the supremacy of financial and political institutions. According to this premise citizens would normatively be perceived not merely in terms of electoral participation, but as integral and active constituents of democracy.

3.5 The balance of power and democratic participation

Critical social theorists argue that the imbalance of power and resources amongst citizens has been fundamental to the democratic deficit. A study by Parry in 1992 found that ‘the extent to which he or she possesses the resources to act’ is a key determinant in terms of whether people participate in democracy (1992:19). Dorling argues that ‘the greatest indictment of unequal

affluent societies is for their people to be, in effect disenfranchised, to think they can make no difference, to feel that they are powerless' (2010:131). Therefore by redressing these imbalances of power and fostering genuinely equal politics citizens can potentially become more active and empowered. Obstacles that curtail people's ability to fully participate are examined as a recurrent theme throughout the study.

A system where high levels of inequality are acceptable leads to inadequacies in social justice, which in turn leads to less democratic politics. 'In sociology' according to Roxana in Trifonas 'power is viewed frequently in macro terms, as a property of social structures and institutions' (2003:206). This contrasts with 'the notion of power as dynamic relations, which is enacted in interactions'. Roxana ascertains that 'we need to develop a critical awareness of the power dynamics operative in institutional relations- and of the fact that people participate in institutions as unequal subjects' (2003:214). A balance of power is perhaps a pre-requisite for citizens to feel empowered to make meaningful contributions. Central to this notion of the balance of power is the concept of social justice, which is discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

Some critical social theorists contend that underlying power structures are most significant in shaping perspectives on an individual and societal basis. However Michel Foucault (1977) in Layder (93:161) clearly argues that power does not itself 'derive from institution or person, but circulates throughout the whole of society'. It is therefore not a stagnant or predetermined force and can instead be harnessed by groups or individuals who often appear to lack the means by which to challenge socio-economic norms and cultural practices and perceptions. This idea is tested throughout chapters 6-9, which explore the WEA's ability to empower those who have traditionally lacked power or resources to contribute on their own terms.

In summary then, within the recent representative systems in the UK, governance appears to be a remote and at times irrelevant concept, particularly for those that lack the resources to participate. Critical social theorists and

feminists alike affirm that inequalities are embedded in the democratic institutions and appear to undermine the capacity of all citizens to equally participate in democratic processes at all levels. Inequality in its many guises also therefore reduces the capacity of democracy to properly function as means of ensuring justice for all of its citizens. Therefore alternative avenues for democratic participation have been sought and more inclusive and participatory forms of democracy have been advocated. Devolution has been perhaps the most significant measure implemented to redress this democratic deficit, the initial impact of which forms a central aspect to the discussion below.

3.6 The UK's Democratic Systems and participation

This section explores the specific democratic systems and institutions throughout the UK and focuses on whether and/ or how far they have been able to encourage and support democratic participation as an element of active citizenship. Varying perspectives are presented to provide the variety of solutions to what appears to be an increasing divide between the electorate and the political systems which proclaim to represent them. It examines whether devolution as a measure adopted by Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, has developed a greater capacity to encourage active citizenship and democratic participation than the system of centralised government from Westminster. Also it explores whether the new layer of government in Wales, specifically, provides positive avenues and opportunities for the people of Wales to participate in democratic life. It questions whether the elected Welsh Governments which have comprised of Labour, Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru representatives have tackled the 'democratic deficit' in Wales, since the people of Wales voted 'Yes' in the referendum of 1997. The outcomes of interviews with Welsh and UK civil servants have contributed to this section, highlighting the perspectives of the government officials.

3.7 UK Electoral systems

The correlation between the UK's democratic systems and the underlying political culture has strong implications for the ability and willingness of citizens to participate in democratic practices. The electoral systems across the UK's nations vary (particularly since devolution in the late 1990s) and appear to have evolved to be more representative, where new avenues for democratic representation have been implemented.

The UK Parliamentary system entails each of the 650 Members of Parliament (MP's), representing the House of Commons being elected through the First Past the Post (FPP) system. This contrasts with the electoral Additional Member systems adopted by Wales and Scotland in 1999, which comprise of the traditional (FPP) system to elect constituency representatives and a form of Proportional Representation (PR)- the List system to elect further party members. In Wales 40 candidates are elected to represent constituencies and 20 through the party list system. The list system uses the d'Hondt method which aims to ensure that the share of the vote that each party receives is reflected in the number of seats they receive. Advocates of the proportional representation system claim that PR produces elected officials who are representative of a wider range of the electorate and not a small minority or majority. However voting levels in all of these administrations remained relatively low, as illustrated subsequently.

One of the more contentious issues of democratic representation in the UK wide government at Westminster is that its second chamber comprises of the unelected House of Lords. The nature of this has long been perceived as a contradictory undemocratic anachronism. Significantly this institution has continued to have the ability (albeit limited) to block the progression of legislation once it has been passed through the elected House of Commons through a number of means.

A clear example where the imbalance of power and the unaccountable nature of the unelected chamber demonstrated a culture where patronage trumps democracy was 'in a vote in March 2007'. 'The commons approved an 80% elected and 20% appointed Lords by a majority of 38, and it preferred a fully elected House by a majority of 113. In a similar vote a week later, the Lords rejected both, although it did show some support for the former (114 in favour and 336 against) Parekh in Facey et al (2008:97).

It was therefore no great surprise when in 2012 a bill to reform the House of Lords which was initially in the Coalition Government's Bill, was undermined by the unwillingness of Conservative backbenchers as well as lacking support from Labour MP's who would only vote for a fully elected chamber. Consequently the House of Lords remained a completely unelected body, therefore further weakening the trust between the electorate and the Westminster Government.

3.8 Democratic representation and voting patterns

Formal indicators of democratic participation such as voting patterns, illustrate a complex political culture, where participation needs to be examined on different levels. Voting patterns in the UK indicate a general decline. According to the Electoral Commission (2011) in the UK had decreased at general elections from 77.7% in 1992 to 59.54% in 2001. Nonetheless, it had slightly risen to 65.1% in the 2010 election. Despite the establishment of devolution, voter turnout appeared better at UK wide elections than Welsh Government elections. Since its first election in 1999, where there was an initial 46% turnout, it dropped to just 38% with an average turnout of 42.25% over 4 elections. At European Union elections, turnout levels were far lower peaking at 38.52% in (2004) decreasing to 24% in (1999). The average UK turnout over 7 European elections was 33.53%. Local Government election turnout figures also reflected this overall lack of participation. Turnouts in (2008) Local Government elections were 43% in Wales, 58% in Scotland and just 34% in England. The Guardian 4 May (2012) reported that 'only one eligible voter in every three participated in the local elections, the worst turnout percentage since 2000'.

There are many explanations for these patterns, but as the statistics suggest, there is a growing disengagement particularly amongst younger generations in voting at elections. Just 44% of 18-24 voted in the 2010 General Election, in contrast with 76% of those aged 65 and above. These perceptions were reiterated through a study by the Hansard Society (2001) into decreasing democratic and political participation. As previously alluded to, contrasting with this trend it appears that participation in alternative types of democratic practices has risen, such as with social forums, single issue campaigns and online petitioning. This illustrated how citizens could be democratically active in a wide variety of ways not always recognised by official indicators established by governments or elites.

These figures also imply that voters perceive the decisions made at UK Government level to be more important than those at the devolved level. Despite these trends it appears that in Wales, people have been more inclined to support the Welsh Government since its establishment. The initial referendum in 1997 for devolution was just 50.3% of those that voted in favour of devolution. In the 2011 referendum for Wales to have law making powers, the voters in favour rose to 63.5%. Nonetheless, participation levels in the referendum were just 33%.

These official figures and voting patterns alone however do not present the whole picture of citizen engagement and participation within the devolved nations. Other initiatives and factors need to be considered in order to analyse the capacity within the democratic structures of these nations, to enable citizen participation, some of which are outlined below.

3.9 Devolution and Democracy

Simon Hughes, Liberal Democrat optimistically argued that 'the more devolution there is, the more interested people will be in using it and voting to influence it' Hughes in Facey et al (2008:279). This is perhaps an over-simplistic perception of devolution however. Devolution in the UK has theoretically presented the opportunity for more democratic representation at the level of

the constituent nations, as previously referred to in chapter 1. This in turn should allow for easier access to politicians with potentially greater power over policy decisions. However, the validity of this assumption should be questioned by scrutinising whether devolution actually produces a more substantive and empowering democracy. It also remains questionable whether citizens within Wales and Scotland are actually more engaged in society, whether politically or socially.

Therefore the implications of devolution in Wales are examined in terms of their ability to encourage deeper and more meaningful democratic participation and civic engagement. Devolution in Scotland and Northern Ireland are not explored in any detail here, due to space limitations and the Welsh focus of the study.

3.10 Glass walls or glass ceilings? People, power and devolution

Since the arrival of devolution in the UK in 1997 there have been strong claims from its advocates that it heralded a new era in British politics. Lord Ellis-Thomas, the first Presiding Officer for the National Assembly for Wales declared that the Senedd (the Welsh Parliament) building which opened to the public in 2006 would be the 'people's parliament'. In theory it would facilitate a greater level of democratic transparency and accountability. The vast glass structure and internal wide open spaces potentially allow for the people of Wales and visitors to enter parliament, meet Assembly Members and see democracy at work. The opportunity for people in Wales to meet elected representatives locally or attend subject or regional committees has potentially been made more practical with a political centre of power based in Wales, rather than London.

The Welsh Assembly, later to become the Welsh Government (in 2011) would provide Assembly Members with the right to initiate and carry out for the first time primary legislation, in the 20 devolved areas. Therefore the establishment of primary legislation in turn could be directly derived from the people of Wales,

as constituents have the right to raise issues through petitions which will later be debated and perhaps form the tenets of a new bill.

The All Wales Convention was a national consultation carried out across Wales in order to find out the views and understanding of people in Wales regarding the powers of the Welsh Assembly. A report on its findings was published in November 2009. During an interview with a government representative who had worked on the All Wales Convention, she reflected on the process of devolution and how changes in cultural perceptions and democratic behaviour take time:

‘Wales is a very small country... It is because of that, that it is much easier to engage with citizens... people know each other very well... It is much easier to phone up somebody here and say can you help with x than potentially it is maybe in England where the place is so much bigger they would not know who you were... this is the 13th year of devolution this year and it is only now that it is starting to change. People have started to realise that the government sits here in Wales and it isn't the UK government. It is starting to recognise a little bit better, who the First Minister is; what he is responsible for and that people are starting to recognise that health and education specifically are devolved issues so that the people responsible for their delivery are now here. Therefore I also think that has helped citizenship because it makes it more recognisable and I think having been seen to be delivering and being seen to be responsible makes you tighten up your game. There is no hiding behind walls anymore it is a very open environment we have now it certainly has increased citizenship,’ Interview Civil Servant (8/5/2012).

From this perspective, Wales has a greater capacity for democratic and citizen participation due to its size and culture, a point echoed throughout the study by civil servants and WEA representatives alike. This view, however, has been questioned in practice and theory, as this study revealed that gaining the attention from politicians even in a small country is not necessarily an uncomplicated task. Furthermore an individual or group's ability to influence the outcomes of policies remains limited, too often still based on pre-existing contacts and relationships that organisations and individuals have with those in power. This was highlighted in Chapter 2, regarding contacting Assembly Members and MP's and later re-emerges in the WEA study.

Meanwhile one of the main issues that arose from the All Wales Convention was that of people linking their understanding of personal issues with wider political decisions and understanding. A civil servant stated that the aim of the All Wales Convention was about:

‘Getting people to understand politics with a small p. One of the events we had was we went to an integrated family centre in Merthyr. We asked them about politics and the Welsh Government and almost entirely the first reaction was that “we don’t do politics”. Then when we asked about things “like do you care about how your child is educated and what the school is like? Do you care about how often your bins are collected? Do you care about the state of your house, the local graffiti?” When you started to frame it in terms of their day to day activity they had an opinion on that.” I care about this”. It was about recognising that what they cared about was politics,’ Interview civil servant in Wales (8/5/2012:4).

Some of these views were reiterated by the Chair of the All Wales Convention- Sir Emyr Jones Parry, who reflected on the original findings of the consultation in a report. He claimed that the initial system of devolution, due to the ‘opaque and complicated legislative processes between Wales and Westminster, produced an ‘information deficit’ (2/6/2009). It highlighted how overly complicated processes have undermined full democratic participation and resulted in a deficient democratic system, particularly regarding a well-informed citizenry.

Reflecting on their work within the Welsh Government, an officer acknowledged how lack of transparency, accessibility and communication between citizens and the political system acts as a fundamental barrier towards citizen engagement. It was proposed that the antidote to this was in part a process of education for both citizens and government. ‘What can I say is that it makes it more relevant to them and easier for them to understand? Interview civil servant (8/5/2012:7). The role of education in relation to Welsh Government policies is further discussed in chapter 5. It is clear however that through the Convention, the National Assembly for Wales did attempt to redress some of these issues and engage people on complex political issues. It was also recognised that it was necessary to attend different locations across

Wales and directly approaching the public and creating an arena for debate, it could aid a more legitimate democratic system and better informed citizens. However, these measures were implemented long after the initial devolution settlement and after the Government of Wales Act 2006 had already been devised by the Welsh Government officials. This process of consultation would arguably be more beneficial if it was adapted and developed as an on-going process to increase engagement, democratic participation and understanding of political issues.

It was therefore evident that many of the fundamental barriers that people faced when participating in the political system were recognised within the Welsh Government. It was also apparent that opportunities to help shape policy and to participate in aspects of democratic life have been encouraged through particular initiatives in Wales. These include the Petition system, where all petitions which are submitted and address issues that are within the Assembly's remit will be discussed in the Petitions Committees. A similar petition system had more recently become UK Government practice, although that system more arbitrary in terms of responses made to the electorate in that only if an issue gets 100,000 signatures it will be considered for debate in the House Commons.

Other methods which have allowed for direct or indirect political representation of its citizens include the Welsh Government committee structure, whereby members of the public can attend subject specific committees which decide on the details of legislation. Previously, in 1979 the UK Government introduced select committees for policy making and they have played an increasing role in media reports of detailed policy scrutiny. Likewise, the National Assembly for Wales also initially introduced regional committees to discuss policy issues throughout the different regions in Wales, where the public would be able to attend and ask ministers and policy staff questions in their own localities. All of which are currently televised and records of the proceedings are available online.

It does however also seem apparent that despite various levels of devolution throughout the UK, the democratic system remains complex, where the power lies is often difficult to decipher- even for the most discerning and well-informed citizens. Trench outlined some of these ambiguities in the appearance and reality of devolved powers in the UK.

‘Westminster remained formally and legally sovereign and has continued to have a huge influence across the UK... this is partly because of England’s size with 85% of the population and slightly more of its gross domestic product. It represents a degree of institutional overlap and interpenetration between devolved and non-devolved functions. Finance remains in the UK government’s hands’ and although block grants give the devolved a great deal of spending autonomy, they also remain tied to the UK public finance system, ‘Trench in Facey (2008:70).

The Sewel convention provides for Westminster to legislate for devolved matters. Until 2011 it has decided on a case by case basis whether legislative powers should be conferred on the National Assembly, (ibid).

Despite criticisms that the devolved administrations are mere talking shops, there were however clear distinctions between some of the decisions made at the devolved government level and those of Westminster. In a number of cases the new governments introduced progressive measures to combat inequalities and encourage citizen participation. The One Wales agreement between Labour and Plaid Cymru in 2007 committed to a referendum on full law making powers which had been set out in the Government of Wales Act 2006.

From 1999 onwards there have been a number of policies and initiatives that have been distinctively Welsh in origin or have contrasted greatly with those implemented at Westminster. These have included the payment of Higher Education tuition fees over £3000 per annum for all Welsh students in Wales and England 2010, in contrast to the introduction of tuition fees up to £9000 per annum for English students. Furthermore the introduction of free health prescriptions for Welsh residents; the earlier introduction of the smoking ban in Scotland and Wales (2005) and charging for plastic carrier bags in shops in

Wales (where proceeds are intended go to charity). Many of the changes have resulted from campaigns by the electorate of Wales.

However the influence of elected decision makers in the Welsh Government has remained limited, as it has lacked the power to decide on underlying financial policies. Unlike in Scotland it has not have any tax raising powers, although some further powers were granted after the recommendations of the Commission on Devolution in Wales', report on fiscal powers 2012. However, it is still subject to the underlying budgets and block grant systems decided by Westminster. Most of these grants are distributed through the Barnett formula² which bases the receipt of finances on the size of the population rather than need. Therefore there remained significant inconsistencies between the desires and needs of the electorate in Wales and decisions made on their behalf at Westminster. This could be measured in part by the most recent political composition of the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament. The Conservative Party and Liberal Democrats together made up less than 25% of AM's and 15% of MSPs 2012. This contrasts with Westminster where these parties had in 2012, 56% of seats and overall power over Westminster policies and therefore devolved budgets.

Since 2010 the UK Government announced significant reductions in welfare spending. In comparison to other areas of the UK, Wales has received significant levels of welfare provisions, largely due to higher levels of disadvantage and unemployment since the 1980s. Trench argues that despite advances in democratic accountability and power however 'devolution fails to act as a bulwark for the welfare state in Scotland and Wales... the limitations on the powers of the devolved governments mean there are many things that they might want to do but cannot' Trench in Facey (2008:72). Certain limitations of devolution in Wales have however more recently been recognised in the Empowerment and Responsibility: Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales review

² Barnett Formula – a block grant allocated by Westminster for devolved administrations, based on population percentage of the UK. It accounts for around 50% of the government expenditure in Wales.

from the Commission for devolution in Wales in 2012. This report suggests further powers to be devolved to Wales, including powers over taxation.

In November 2006 the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament assessed the work of the Scottish Parliament in terms of democratic principles. He declared that it 'delivered well on three principles- accessibility, accountability and equal opportunities but achieving the fourth principle, sharing power between government, people and Parliament has remained elusive'³⁻⁴ George Reid (2008:3-4). This criticism could also reflect the inadequacies relating to power between citizens and government within Wales. Some of these issues are discussed in more detail in chapter 4.

3.11 Devolution, Inclusion and Representation

Traditionally the UK has a poor record of representing minorities including women. In 'government at any level in 2010, the UK ranked 15th out of 27 EU members states in terms of women's representation in national parliaments' Rona Fitzgerald in Crick and Lockyer (2010:75). 'In 2005 women made up 20% of the House of Commons (highest ever proportion of female MP's) and less than 2.3% were ethnic minorities', Phillips in Facey (2008:282). At local level 30% councillors were women and 0.9% ethnic minorities, (ibid) (2008:283).

Devolution however has helped to paint an alternative picture of political representation. In Wales in 2003, 50% of Assembly Members were women. This decreased however to 40% in the 2011 elections, where 24 out of 60 AMs were women. Due to what was perceived as controversial positive actions on behalf of the Welsh Labour Party, the 'twinning' system, helped produce the female ratio of Welsh Assembly Members was 50:50 in 2003. Christine Chapman- Welsh Labour recalls how 'the Assembly was born from the Government of Wales Act 1998, which contains an equality clause bestowing a duty on government to take a proactive stance and promote equality for all persons and in respect of all government functions'. She highlighted that Plaid Cymru also adopted a policy of "zipping" for the 2007 elections, whereby women automatically received first place on the regional lists' Chapman (12/2/2012).

These policies have been perceived as relatively short-term measures to promote a change in culture towards more equal representation for men and women. Therefore in 2007-2010 the National Assembly for Wales created the Step Up Cymru to encourage people from under-represented groups to participate in democratic institutions and as active citizens. This followed an initial Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales' initiative called Operation Black Vote which aimed to encourage more democratic participation by black and ethnic minority citizens. In 2012 2 out of the 60 AMs were from an ethnic minority background. Whether Step up campaign has any lasting success in encouraging people to participate from under-represented groups is an on-going question. However recognition that particular groups lack the power or knowledge to participate is a first step to acknowledging the inadequacies in the current systems of democracy.

This inclusive and pro-active approach to democratic participation is reflected the strategic aims in the Welsh Assembly commission's equality scheme. Its Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives emphasised how equality could play an essential role in ensuring citizen participation: 'The Welsh Government is working hard to deliver on our commitment to ensure that every citizen has the opportunity to contribute to the social and economic life of Wales' (2012:8). One of its primary focuses was the Vote 2011 campaign aimed at encouraging a wider range of people to vote though producing materials in different formats. The former Presiding Officer, Lord Dafydd Elis-Thomas claimed that 'one of our key strategic aims is to increase participation in the political process among the people of Wales – including under-represented groups such as disabled people' (6/9/2012). This incorporated a widening participation event which was organised to encourage democratic participation amongst disabled people. These initiatives could be perceived as attempts to implement measures which encourage inclusive and 'differentiated' forms of citizenship within Wales.

Although there have been clear attempts to encourage deeper and more meaningful democratic participation by the National Assembly for Wales the formal participation rates have remained low however. Also these measures

alone do not address fundamental socio-economic inequalities, which also impede participation and engagement. The barriers to participation linked to inequalities and social justice are addressed in more detail in chapter 4.

3.12 Conclusions

Participation, particularly democratic participation is a central aspect of active citizenship if interpreted as an active and reciprocal social concept. Democratic participation has been broadly accepted as an inherent feature of active citizenship by radical and liberal commentators alike, as it ensures that people are able to contribute to the political decisions and debates that affect them and others, acting as agents in their own lives. However as critics of liberal notions of democratic participation argue democratic participation should be embraced beyond a set of formal functions and more as a way of life. In this sense it would normatively be enacted in a wider participatory sense rather than citizens merely being represented by politicians elected and largely unaccountable for a number of years.

Governments which have been comprised of all the mainstream political parties in the UK have recognised the implications of the democratic deficit within the UK and the impact it has on citizen participation in political processes and overall political legitimacy. These governments have ostensibly attempted to address some of the factors contributing towards this deficit in participation by implementing constitutional changes and introducing new policies, and initiatives to encourage higher levels of participation and engagement. This has included a renewed interest in the de-centralisation of powers. Most notably devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales are the main arenas for this relocation of powers. The extent to which citizens have been empowered through these new layers of government requires long –term evaluation, as each institution varies from the next, evolving at various speeds and holding different powers. However there are indications that within the new democratic institutions there is a greater potential for civic and civil engagement, as the elected representatives and public servants are closer to the people they are elected to represent. In some instances actions have been

taken to address barriers to representation and participation. However despite some optimism less visible cultural and political barriers to participation have remained. This also highlights how many powers that these devolved institutions have gained have been undermined by central government and unelected organisations which over-ride social, economic and political decisions. These inequalities and social injustices are examined further in the following chapter, which sets out the specific policies and initiatives that have been implemented within the UK to encourage active citizenship and community participation.

Chapter 4: UK Governments' policies: active citizenship and community engagement

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the main policies and initiatives which have set out to promote active citizenship and community engagement within the UK, complementing measures such as devolution previously explored in chapter 3. It concentrates on the policies of the post-Thatcher era under the New Labour and Coalition Governments in Westminster in contrast to those established by the Welsh Government. Central to this discussion is the impact that social justice and equality has on the ability of citizens to participate, building on key themes explored in previous chapters. It questions the underlying ideological motives of different governments when introducing policies which have aimed to encourage wider and deeper participation and greater community engagement. These discussions draw on the interviews that I have carried out with civil servants that worked within the UK and Welsh Governments outlining the perspectives of government policy officers in areas such as local government and communities. It examines the wider socio-political implications of the main initiatives and how the aims of these initiatives have been undermined by other political and socio-economic government structures and decisions.

4.1 The impact of social injustice and exclusion on active citizenship

From the late 1970s overall growth in wealth in western societies disguised the re-emergence of socio-economic inequalities and undermined much of the progression that societies' had made towards more egalitarian, democratic and participatory norms in society. Many politicians, particularly in the post-Thatcher era have emphasised the impact that 'social justice' has on participation, often re-defining the concept in line with their own ideological positions. 'Social Justice' is a contested term increasingly used by commentators from a cross section of the political spectrum. However from the

social democratic perspective, it incorporates principles which aim for 'the fair and equitable distribution of social, environmental and economic resources between people, places and generations' Coote (2011). 'Social justice' according to Griffiths is understood to be what is good for the common interest, where that is taken to include the good of each and the good of all, in an acknowledgement that one depends on the other' (1998:95). This notion of social justice deems that by ensuring that everyone has equal access to power and resources then society as a whole is better. Therefore those that promote this version of 'social justice' believe that 'the good of the individual inevitably has implications for the good of the communities' Griffiths (1998:12).

During the timeframe of this study 2009-2012, the UK was one of the most socio-economically unequal countries amongst the world's wealthier states³. My Fair London, a group which formed part of the Equality Trust movement argued that empirical research findings illustrated that imbalances in socio-economic power can have detrimental effects on the democratic system and society as a whole. This can exclude individuals and groups from participating in society. 'Over-concentration of economic power distorts democracy- wealth buys government through campaign contributes, lobbying, and the revolving door system, where retiring senior politicians and civil servants can step into well-paid jobs in the private sector because of their inside knowledge and good contacts' My Fair London (2012:22).

Across the UK at large, according to the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) UK report (2013,) 12 Million people 'are too poor to engage in common social activities considered necessary by the rest of the population' (2013:1). Also a third of the population do not have the basic resources to function in society such as the capacity to afford certain essentials such as housing, clothing, heating without accumulating debt and receiving benefits.

³ According the Spirit Level (2010) the UK is one of the most socio-economically unequal nations in the world (it regularly appears in 2nd place behind the USA in charts based on OCED figures).

The New Economic Foundation outlines what has long been argued by those who recognise the causes and impact of inequalities on citizens' ability to participate in society:

'Not everyone has the same capacity to help themselves and others. How much capacity we have depends on a range of factors. These include education and income, family circumstances and environment, knowledge, confidence and a sense of self-efficacy, available time and energy, and access to places where decisions are taken and get things done. A combination of socio-economic forces, working across and between generations, results in some having much more and others much less. While their inequality persists, people who have the least benefit least from the transfer of power and responsibility, whilst those with higher stocks of social and economic resources will be better placed to seize the new opportunities' Coote (2011) {accessed 17/11/2011}.

This perspective highlights how underlying socio-economic, cultural and political power inequalities affect the ability of citizens to participate in society. It alludes to the multiplicity of problems that occur when citizens become socially excluded. Certain policies and initiatives to tackle this form of injustice are examined below. Overall the chapter aims to highlight how different UK governments have attempted to challenge social injustice and encourage grassroots level community participation in relation to different concepts of active citizenship.

4.2 UK Government policies, social exclusion and citizenship

It has long appeared evident that social injustice and inequalities often create or sustain conditions for social exclusion. Thus New Labour Governments acknowledged that central to enabling citizens to participate was the need to address social exclusion. The Government's In Control White Paper (2008) stated that 'social exclusion and the distribution of power affect the ability to become active citizens and so stifle the ability of some to reach their own and communities potential.' In 1997 the Social Exclusion Unit was established in order to address some of the barriers to inclusion such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown were named as contributory factors. Its remit covered just England. In (2001) the Preventing Social Exclusion report was published which

outlined inter-related issues of social exclusion, particularly as a result of poverty, which had doubled between 1979 and 1995, (2001:2). The motivations for tackling social exclusion underlined Labour's dual and sometimes contradictory priorities in improving the lives of its citizens, but equally sustaining the dominance of the market economy. In its own words it claimed that 'when the Government came to office it made tackling these interlinked problems a priority, because of the huge human costs to individuals and society, and the impact on the public finances and the competitiveness of the economy' (2001:3).

A number of measures were established to tackle the problems contributing to or resulting out of social exclusion. These included providing positive rights and support to those with mental health issues, those within the Care system, the homeless and those without access to transport. Most of these measures however focused on getting people back into employment or obtaining skills and qualifications. This reflected Labour's emphasis on the citizen as a worker. This perspective was explained in Tony Blair's first speech as Prime Minister he declared that 'work is the best form of welfare, the best way of funding people's needs and the best way of giving them a stake in society', in Hale (2007:127). Hale reflected on New Labour advisor Henry Tam vision which pointed out that 'those that cannot or will not get a job and thus play by the rules of the economic game are by definition (on New Labour's understanding of inclusion) excluded from the whole spectrum of society,' Hale (2006:138).

There were significant attempts to improve the minimum living standards for those in work, such as through the introduction of the national minimum wage as well as a range of tax credits. However, there was also an underlying tone accompanying these policies, which indicated that citizens would have to abide by the rules set out in order to receive any of the apparent rights to be included in society. The Social Exclusion Unit stated that:

'A rights and responsibilities approach makes government help available but requires a contribution from the individual and the community. So, under the New Deal benefits can be withdrawn if people do not take up opportunities; Educational Maintenance Allowances are conditional on

attendance and performance; Individual Learning Accounts match a contribution from the individual and the Government; new funding for neighbourhoods is conditional on community involvement'-The Social Exclusion Unit (2001:5).

This approach overlooked certain structural inequalities which had been created and perpetuated under governments, including their own. Provisions for those that faced disadvantage such as unemployment and sickness benefits, free education and maintenance grants were no longer seen as a right but a privilege to be earned. Social exclusion remained a central theme during the Labour administrations. Although attempts were made to alleviate poverty and reduce inequality most underlying power structures and financial markets largely remained unchallenged throughout the Labour administrations.

Lister observed that New Labour frequently (spoke) the language of welfare 'dependency' (2001:430). The very premise of the welfare state has been undermined with this shift from equal 'rights'. Fairclough 'suggests that such language constructs social security claimants of subjects rather than citizens' (2000:106&42) in Lister (2001: 430). This clearly has a fundamental impact on how citizens perceive themselves and others and therefore the ways in which they participate in society. Nancy Fraser highlighted the divisive effects that some well-meaning policies may have had:

'Affirmative redistribution (such as means-tested benefits) in general... aims to redress economic injustice, although it leaves intact the deep structures that generate class disadvantage. The result is to mark the most disadvantaged class as inherently deficient and insatiable, as always needing more and more. In time such a class can even come to appear privileged, the recipient of special treatment and underserved largesse,' (1997:24).

Taxation according to Lister is a central mechanism by which inequality can be reduced and made 'the case for redistributive taxation as an expression of our responsibilities as citizens to each other'. Lister criticised the early Blair Governments for 'not addressing wider inequalities', by over-emphasising:

'Equality of opportunity in the context of economic and social structures that remain profoundly unequal is likely to remain a contradiction in

terms... What is at issue is not just the exclusion from the bonds of common citizenship of those at the bottom, but also the way in which those at the top can exclude themselves from these bonds and there by fail to acknowledge the equal worth of fellow citizens' Lister (2001:438).

These issues resonated throughout the economic crises from 2008, when the gap between the wealthiest members of society and the least economically able were further exacerbated. Based on a Sunday Times report, The BBC declared that despite the financial downturn from 2011-2012, 'the combined worth of the country's 1,000 wealthiest people is £414bn, up 4.7%' BBC website (28/1/2012) {accessed 8/6/2012}.

Small attempts by New Labour Governments to rebalance the economic inequalities in the UK, by reintroducing the 50% tax rate for those earning over £150,000 in (2009) for example, have been largely reversed under the Coalition Government. Chancellor George Osborne's decision to end the top 50p rate tax in his March (2012) budget, illustrated his priorities. Despite proclamations that the Coalition Government's policies aimed to create a 'fairer society', many of their policies clearly favoured protecting the rights of the wealthiest to the detriment of the increasingly disadvantaged. One of the Liberal Democrats' flagship policies to take those earning under £10,000 out of income tax was however adopted by the Coalition. At the same time, Prime Minister David Cameron revealed he was considering scrapping most of the £1.8bn in housing benefits paid to 380,000 under-25s, despite rising costs in rent and rising unemployment levels', Helm and Colman, (24/4/2012) {accessed 10/11/2012}. Despite this increase in wealth, overall 'wages after inflation are now down by an average of £1,300 since David Cameron got into Downing Street, yet bank bonuses soared to £4bn in April' Chris Leslie in Merrick (21/7/2013) Independent website {accessed 8/8/2013}.

The Welfare Reform Act 2010-12 has gone further to emphasise the difference between what the Government deems as worthy and unworthy citizens. Those reliant on benefits will be subject to greater restrictions and at times humiliating and ostracising measures such as the vouchers rather than cash to

buy restricted goods. The emphasis on conditions relating to the unemployed and those in need of extra governmental support is highly apparent in the Coalition Government's 'Welfare to Work' policies including the Work Programme scheme launched in 2011.

This inequality of resources has wider implications for the way in which citizens interact and treat one another, resulting in lack of respect for others that have far less or far more socio-economic resources. 'Poverty that mostly results from inequality, comes in the form of a new kind of exclusion; exclusion from the lives, the understanding and the caring of others,' Dorling (2010:91). In a Beverage Lecture at the Royal Statistical Society, Dorling stated that the '1% of people take home 15% of the income' (27 June 2012). There have been growing pressures on the most socio-economically disadvantaged to make greater all around contributions to society. These expectations which largely focused on financial contribution through work, overlooks the multi-layered inequalities and its effects. Dorling illustrates how there have been rising poverty levels for those in work and disproportionate expectations regarding their contributions in 2003 'the poorest 5th of people had to work 7 days, to receive what the top 5th earned in 1 day' (2010:123). The exclusionary effects that unequal financial resources have on a person's ability to participate as fully as others, accentuate the unequal distribution of other essential resources which are required in order to participate such as time, knowledge and skills. The WISERD report on inequality (2012) also highlighted that in 'being in work does not necessarily provide a route out of poverty, with 13% of in-work households in Wales living in poverty' (2012: xvi).

It seems apparent that where inequality persists, citizens who lack opportunities and resources sometimes become further disengaged, disenfranchised, angry and even violent. The 2012 Equality Trust report into the London riots argued that inequality in the UK contributed to and may have underlined the reasons why citizens acted in these ways,⁴ website {accessed 2/3/2013}. This form of citizen action contrasts with the type of participation

⁴ In Wales, inequality is less compared with England and particularly the major cities in England where the riots took place- only small scale disturbances occurred.

desired by politicians and most citizens themselves, but does however reflect the need to address social injustices. It is argued that education enables people to find alternative ways of expressing their frustration and challenging societal norms; this is explored in more detail in the case study and chapter 5.

Notably, even where UK Governments have established initiatives and policies to encourage greater social inclusion, the increasingly high levels of inequality have undermined these efforts. Fundamental to this problem is that underlying economic systems have remained largely unchallenged, issues which are subsequently discussed.

4.3 Privatisation and citizen's participation

Consecutive UK Governments have been criticised for their willingness to protect market capitalism and the elitist culture it sustains, over and above the needs of citizens. Critics argue that short-term funding patterns are determined by the market driven culture, which establishes competition between different organisations and groups. This often creates negative and anxious citizens, unable to bring to account and trust the services they use and contribute to and thus are less able or willing to participate in society at large:

‘The process of widespread socio-economic atomisation... has brought about community and individual crises: shifts and changes in major services, the consequences of privatisation, have resulted in widespread confusion: people no longer know who runs their local FE college, their local health service, what their local council is doing and how they can interact to improve services and representation,’ Rooke in Mayo (2010:145).

The negative effects on unfettered and under-regulated capitalism were perhaps illustrated most poignantly by the International Banking crisis 2008 and the pro-austerity attitudes that have dominated mainstream politics in the UK since. Most notably the Conservative Party has capitalised on the banking crisis to promote further privatisation and the accumulation of individual wealth. This stance was confirmed by Conservatives David Cameron and Nick Herbert who expressed their desire to continue to reduce publicly run services by opening them up to competition from the private and Third Sector. The justification for

this has been to de-centralise power away from the central UK state arguably giving citizens more choice about their public services. 'With a natural scepticism about big government and a belief in empowering the individual... we have promised radical reform in the public services, opening up public sector monopolies, enabling companies and Third Sector organisations to deliver services, and giving the consumer a real choice over publicly funded services' (2008:119). However, unlike public companies, private companies are subject to far less public scrutiny and work under short-term rather than long-term goals. The bidding processes often lack transparency and consistency tending to prioritise profits over efficiency, safety and sustainability. In these circumstances citizens usually have even less choice over where their money is spent and far less power over service provision. Overall it tends to exacerbate the inequality between those who have the resources to access services and those that don't.

4.4 Engaging and empowering communities: New Labour approaches?

Meanwhile against a background of persistent structural inequalities which had been amplified during the 1980s and 1990s, consecutive governments have emphasised terms such as 'community development', 'community engagement', 'community involvement' and 'community cohesion', to capture a desire for a socially minded citizen. Under the direction of Tony Blair, the New Labour Government called for a different approach to citizens and their communities, and the so called 'third way' was adopted. This revived emphasis on 'community', in the post-Thatcher era captured the sense that the traditional notion of society and community has in many situations diminished.

The new Government, as previously alluded to in chapter 1, recognised that action needed to be taken in order to encourage greater community cohesion and reduce the 'democratic deficit' which appeared to have worsened significantly under the previous Conservative Governments⁵. New Labour's rhetoric, policies and funds around citizen engagement focussed on civic

⁵ Factors such as higher crime rates, socio-economic inequality, unemployment, low voting levels were relevant indicators of the 'democratic deficit' and lack of community cohesion.

renewal and civic engagement. These aims were generally promoted across different government departments and with varying emphasis. This included under the Education and Employment Department, Department of Work and Pensions and the Home Office under the leadership of David Blunkett, as well as the Department for Communities and Local Government, under Ruth Kelly and Hazel Blears, amongst others. The programme of civil renewal aimed at linking the public, private and voluntary community sectors with citizens.

During this time there was a recognition that government departments needed to work together in order to achieve a renewed and cohesive 'British' identity and encourage specific notions of active citizenship and community engagement. This was demonstrated specifically in the earlier years of the New Labour Government according to a previous UK civil servant during an interview. He pointed out that 'by 2005 we produced a Together We Can' action plan, 12 government departments, 64 actions/ programmes'. (11/4/2012:2). The impetus for this holistic approach however appeared to have dissipated in the later years under Secretaries of State such as John Denham, who focused on more specific issues of inclusion such the 'disenfranchised white working class' Interview civil servant (11/4/2012).

As referred to in chapter 1, in England capacity building and regeneration programmes were implemented to attempt to regenerate and engage communities. Most notably, Single Budget Programmes and New Deal for Community programmes, Local Strategic Partnerships, and the development of local authority 'community strategies'. These capacity building programmes, according to the Building Civil Renewal document, (Home Office , 2004) aimed to 'enable people to increasingly do things for themselves and the state to facilitate and enable citizens to lead self-determined, fulfilled lives for the common good'(2004:2). In Wales in parallel the Communities First programme was established (which is discussed later in the chapter). However these programmes for the most part have so far yielded minimal successes, as despite significant investment the programmes have generally lacked the ability to fully engage the 'hardest to reach' communities and individuals. In contrast the Taking Part and Active Learning for Active Citizenship programmes took an

alternative approach as these community based programmes built on pre-existing networks and the work the Third Sector. These programmes utilised educational approaches to empower individuals and often with 'hard to reach' communities. These programmes are discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Also a 'programme called civic pioneers which identified model Local Authorities in civil renewal and community empowerment were taken over by 18 authorities that were identified as empowering authorities as models for others to follow,' Interview Civil Servant (11/4/2012:3). Here the Government still decided on which authorities displayed best practice in accordance with their own agendas. Therefore it appears that despite all attempts by the Labour Governments to engage local authorities and partners and to encourage joined up working, that the approach of the Government remained 'top down' in style. The centralised overtones of the policies emphasised a further need to address the power imbalance between local, regional and central governments.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's assessment of the role of local initiatives in combating social exclusion and promoting active citizenship in 2003 found that:

'National government and its programmes generate a large number of barriers to the development of more effective joint working at the local level through the proliferation of initiatives, different funding and performance monitoring systems, lack of local flexibility and by a lack of central co-ordination ... the main contribution government can make ... is to create a period of stability in terms of new social inclusion interventions and in the operating rules for existing ones' McGregor, et al (2003:1).

It therefore seems apparent that New Labour recognised a need to re-engage and regenerate communities with social rather than individual notions of citizenship, which was illustrated through high levels of investment into various programmes. However many of the policies that New Labour Governments put in place to encourage community participation across its departments, were undermined to some degree by its top down approach. These initiatives placed high expectations onto local people and authorities, whilst prescribing from the centre what local communities should do. Notably, where the Governments

appeared most successful it had engaged with grassroots Third Sector organisations, building on their capacity to reach the most isolated and disengaged communities. These tensions were replicated if not exacerbated under the Coalition Government, as discussed below.

4.5 Centralism and localism: contradictions in government policies

Opinions from a cross section of the political spectrum have highlighted the need for political decisions to be made at a more local level including de-centralisation of power. Following on from devolution in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Westminster Governments continued to emphasise the need to de-centralise decision making powers to local government and beyond to encourage more direct forms of decision making.

In the 'Power to the People' Power Inquiry, Kennedy stressed that the state belongs to the people. 'Government is too centralised and representative democracy needed to be enriched and new ways found to engage the electorate on important issues between elections,' (2008:44). Crick and Lockyer also argued that 'a requirement of greater citizenship participation is the dispersal of power from central institutions, not just from Westminster to devolved assemblies, but from 'stifling central bureaucracy' to civil society, and within political parties from leaders to membership' (2010:1) .

Consecutive New Labour Governments espoused the case for the increased role of local government in involving and enabling local people to participate in the governance of services. So UK Labour Governments from 1997 until 2010 introduced a number of measures that encouraged local authorities in England to be more responsive and democratically inclusive of communities. In 2001 the Labour Government claimed that 'communities need to be consulted and listened to, and the most effective interventions are often those where communities are actively involved in their design and delivery, and where possible in the driving seat', A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal (2001) Cabinet Office - Social Exclusion Unit (2001:19). This however represented a somewhat contradictory shift in the governance structures,

whereby the central government determined actions expected by local government, while failing to implement the same level of consultation and transparency at Westminster.

In July (2008) the community empowerment White Paper, 'Communities in Control: real people, real power' was published. This built on ideas in the local government White Paper, 'Strong and Prosperous communities'. Proposals included devolving more power from central government to local councils and local people. The Government suggested that these policies aimed to support more people to become involved in the democratic process and thus by empowering them, would increase community cohesion, reduce extremism and improve local services.

The 'Communities in Control' White Paper (2008) then outlined the duty of local government to involve citizens in decision making processes. It introduced:

'A new duty for councils to respond to petitions, ensuring that those with significant local support are properly debated. Local authorities should respond clearly to petitions, for example those dealing with empty properties, transferring the ownership of a building to the community, or participatory budgeting. If people are not satisfied with a response to a petition, they could ask for it to be debated in full council' Communities and Local Government, (2008:5).

An abundance of rhetoric surrounding increased 'localism' placed greater expectations on local authorities to provide services which would react to the needs of local citizens. Initiatives brought in under New Labour included 'participatory budgeting process which was another thing that was very much pushed as part of community empowerment... Regional empowerment partnerships... we funded through Community Development Fund,' Interview with civil servant (11/4/2012:3). Greater responsibilities have however not necessarily been met with greater levels of power for local authorities or the people they represent. Central government directed policies have often contradicted their aims. A government report (2006) on Labour's 'Why Neighbourhood's Matter' emphasised that despite attempts to de-centralise power, there was 'a culture of compliance to meet central government targets

that undermines local residents' faith in local devolution and their confidence in the commitment to make local decision-making real' White et al (2006:77).

This deficit of power is illustrated in the 2009-10 Citizen Survey which declared that only '37% of people felt able to influence decisions affecting their local area the lowest since 2001' (2010:10). The most important factor influencing community and civic engagement appears to be the level of trust that people had in institutions. 62% of people had trust in the local council compared to only 29% in Parliament, illustrating how central government needed to focus on its own relationship with citizens.

The Conservative party's rhetoric under the leadership of David Cameron has also heavily emphasised a localism agenda. In line with this notion Cameron asserted that:

'Decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the people affected, and that the people who take these decisions should be accountable for them. This means a real transfer of power from central government to communities... It means trusting those communities to take those decisions- even if as a government you don't like the consequences', Cameron (2008:119).

Although measures have been put in place to ensure that local government authorities publicise some of their accounts, the Coalition has simultaneously reduced the capacity for accountability by allowing: 'local bodies (to) be able to appoint their own auditors from an open and competitive market,' Pickles- Local Government Minister (7/11/2012). Critics such as Newman have argued that power has therefore actually been re-centralised in more subtle forms whereby 'limiting the scope for participation to contribute to more open and reflexive style of governance' (2010:163). The Coalition Government have largely decreased powers available to local government and reduced its power through further centralised fiscal and political measures. This is most apparent in that local authorities faced budget cuts up to 25% over four years 2010-2014, Alcock (2012:7). It should be noted however that these measures were specific to England, as local government is a devolved responsibility. However a process

of further centralisation of decisions has also occurred in Wales, decisions which are discussed later in the chapter.

In 2010 the Conservative- Liberal Democrat, Coalition Government implemented a freeze on council tax in England, which was initially intended to last between 2011 and 2012 but had been extended further. In line with this policy, local authorities that did not increase their council tax would be rewarded with a further grant worth 2.5% of their allocations. It therefore appears that regardless of local need, councils have been subject to highly centralised and politicised measures. Samir Jerai pointed out that this has deepened rather than alleviated the democratic deficit. 'In terms of democracy, it has led to a heavily centralised system of control complemented by the capping of council tax at around 3.5%,' *The Guardian* (15/10/2008).

The Coalition Government's approach to community empowerment and localism, it has been argued, focuses on the individual and their community responsibilities, rather than enabling citizens to participate in wider society with the support of government. In the words of a senior civil servant who worked on these projects:

'The whole emphasis is... on reducing the size of the state and increasing what is done in the name of community. Increasing what is done by the community is not invalid in itself at all, but a) ignoring the whole of the democratic relationship of citizen influence and engagement and all the rest of it on the one hand and b) expecting, believing that in all communities the state does not need to play a role in the way of resourcing- in the way that it is not providing or expecting to produce all the resources that are needed,' Interview with former civil servant (11/4/2012).

Crick and Lockyer have also argued that greater power and responsibility should be devolved down to local level, but that this would likely lead to less consistent provision. 'If there is to be genuinely local decision-making, communities will have different priorities and capacities; therefore there will be differences in the provision of even universal services' (2010:2). This approach could arguably undermine the potential for more rather than less social justice, as it could

further curtail the right to equal opportunities for citizens to participate, if some basic and consistent provision is not available to all.

Overall consecutive governments post 1997 have in line with increasingly popular notions of 'localism' attempted to de-centralise certain responsibilities to Local Government and non-state actors, although this has rarely been met with the devolution of powers and resources. Indeed the language of governance has been used in some cases to justify the transfer of responsibility to individuals and non-state actors without empowering local forms of governance to encourage and implement citizen-led initiatives.

4.6 Ignoring the Big Society?

The Conservative Party led by David Cameron from 2005, devised the notion of the 'Big Society', which attempted to evoke an image of UK's citizens participating in the governance of their nation and communities. As chapter 1 explains Cameron proclaimed in 2010 that 'the change we offer is from big government to Big Society' (2010: vii). The Invitation to 'Join the Government' the Conservative Party's manifesto encapsulated evocative language of empowerment and change, appearing to embrace post-Thatcherite notions that 'there is such a thing a society'. A speech by David Cameron emphasised that the 'Big Society' 'it's just not the same thing as the State', December 6th 2005. This new rhetoric appeared to acknowledge that society's transformation should be brought about by citizens themselves and not the 'top down' decisions of government. 'Real change comes when the people are inspired and mobilised, when millions of us are fired up to play a part in the nation's future' David Cameron foreword (2010) accessed.

This 'empowerment' rhetoric was however rooted in the policies of the Thatcherite era of the 1980's and 90's and continues with the ideological arguments and policies of classical liberal economics and 'self-help'. Hence the recent Conservative Party presented itself in antithesis to the 'individualistic' nature of the previous Conservative Government, whilst continuing with

policies which aim to further privatise state functions and decrease the state's role in social and economic redistribution of wealth and power. Woodd emphasised how 'during the 1980s the Conservative Government's approach denied the importance of community as 'political developments were centred on individuals and families pursuing their own interests in the context of the market' (2007:8).

Principally the Conservative Party's central argument for curtailing state intervention on social, economic and legal matters is that the power should be given to people at more local levels. Also that an 'over inflated state' has apparently curtailed the private sector's ability to function at its full capacity. Thus according to the Conservative Party public sector workers have taken away skills from the private sector. The 2010 manifesto claimed that:

'We will use the state to help stimulate social action, helping social enterprises to deliver public services and training new community organisers to help achieve our ambition of every adult citizen being a member of an active neighbourhood group. We will direct funding to those groups that strengthen communities in deprived areas, and we will introduce National Citizen Service, initially for 16 year olds, to help bring our country together' (2010:37).

The focus of the Coalition Government's development of the 'Big Society' has been the Big Society capital fund. Launched in 2012 'the fund will back social enterprises that prove they can repay an investment through the income they generate', {accessed 4/11/2012}. This fund is apparently independent of government, where 60% of its shares are owned by the Big Society Trust, a private limited company comprised of executives from business, government and social roles. The rest of the share is owned by 4 main UK banks. Critics argue that smaller charities and projects are unlikely to benefit, as they do not have the constant stream of funds required to compete for funding or repay loans.

Other Big Society's critics such as Coote (2001) argue it 'pays no attention to forces within modern capitalism that lead to accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few at the expense of others. Nor does it recognise that the

current structure of the UK economy selectively restricts the ability of citizens of participation'. In fact it is argued that it exacerbates social exclusion and undermines attempts to establish equality of opportunity:

'There is nothing in the government's plans to encourage the inclusion of outsiders, to break down barriers created by wealth and privileges to, promote collaboration rather than competition between local organisations, or prevent those that are already better off and more dominant from flourishing at the expense of others... The responsibility for tackling poverty and inequality cannot be left solely to those who are disadvantaged and disempowered,' Coote, New Economics Foundation (2001) accessed {17/11/2011}.

Therefore wider systemic inequalities can be expected to continue to have an impact on more localised attempts to empower and transform citizens and their communities, in that 'if change is created at local level only, it will not survive in a system where equality is endemic,' (ibid). Thus it is perceived that 'democratic government is the only effective vehicle for ensuring that resources are fairly distributed both across the population and between individuals and groups at local levels. It must ensure that fundamental rights and capabilities of all citizens are protected from incursions by powerful interest groups', (ibid). From this perspective the role of the state is central in ensuring that equal opportunities for all citizens are provided, which contrasts with the neo-liberal priorities of a small state. 'The state must ensure that services are in place to meet people's essential needs regardless of their means (e.g. health, autonomy, education, a fair living, income, care housing and security),' (ibid). Coote concludes that crucially 'action by business or the Third Sector organisations can supplement but cannot replace these functions, not least because they usually serve sectorial or specialised interest, rather than those of the nation as a whole', (ibid).

Likewise if the Conservative Party's rhetoric regarding the rise of the Big Society has any credence, in that decisions are made by the citizens they claim to represent, then it does not appear to explain how it ignored the widespread protests in 2010-12 regarding the increased university fees and cuts to public services. There appeared to be no attempt by the Government to re-engage with the debates and listen to the concerns of citizens including public sector

workers. Davies et al (2012) reported that 'in Wales alone budget reductions would amount to 7% over 4 years, with a £400 million reduction in the year 2011/12'. Therefore these decisions to reduce expenditure in certain parts of the country without any democratic mandate appear to further exacerbate the democratic deficit and undermine citizen participation.

A senior civil servant, who worked under Labour and the Coalition Government in roles promoting 'active citizenship', summed up the 'two significant differences' in their approaches, in that the Coalition Government's programmes towards community engagement involved:

'No money or very little money, not on the same scale and not even the belief that money is necessary or important, (Coalition). On the other hand this is getting away from democracy really, if you like citizens engaging and working with and influencing the state, but instead citizens and communities doing things for themselves with no reference to the state and the state is left out of the picture. That is where we are now,' Interview previous civil servant (11/4/2012).

However it was important for this civil servant to emphasise the ideological differences even between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats whilst in government:

'Within the present government there is a mixture of those who are committed to deficit reduction as there isn't any money and there are those that think that there shouldn't be any money. Those who regret the fact that they cannot provide more resources and those who actually think they shouldn't be doing it anyway even if there wasn't a deficit to reduce,' (ibid) (11/4/2012:7).

Overall it appears that there is little evidence to counter the notion that the primary motivations for the UK Conservative Party's 'Big Society' are to reduce the role of the state in providing welfare and ensure that individuals regardless of their circumstances look after themselves.

4.7 The Welsh Government: a new approach to active citizenship and community engagement?

Since the arrival of devolution in 1999 certain differences between the political cultures of the Welsh and UK Governments have become more apparent.

These divergences were exposed in the varying measures and policies even within the different arms of the Labour Party. They also revealed how the overarching influence of the Westminster Government remained a dominant factor in the devolved administration's ability to create a more equitable nation and empower its citizens to become more active.

The Anatomy of Economic Inequality in Wales- the WISERD report (2011) revealed that in slight contrast to the rest of the UK, Wales has been more equal in terms of the widest gaps between those that had the most and those that had the least. This was because 'overall levels of inequality within Wales are not as wide as in the rest of the UK as Wales has relatively few people who earn the highest salaries or who are 'very rich'. Those who are among the wealthiest 10% of people in Wales have around £100,000 less total wealth compared to the wealthiest 10% across the UK as a whole' (2011:xvi). It should be noted however that according to the Wales Online' 62% of Welsh wealth is owned by just 20% of the population, while the worst off fifth possess 0.5%' {accessed 8/1/2010}. Wales also has some of the highest levels of poverty and unemployment with most statistics showing that at least 1/5th of people in Wales are considered to be living in poverty.

In Wales, as it is elsewhere, those citizens who are socio-economically disadvantaged by one measure are often further disadvantaged by another such as disability, gender or ethnicity. People who are disabled, according to the Disability Discrimination Act, and have a work limiting condition experience most disadvantage in relation to employment. Seventy four per cent are not employed. This is more than 3 times the overall UK proportion of 22%, Davies et al (2011: xv).

However unlike most UK Government representatives, Leighton Andrews, then the Minister for Education and Skills in Wales argued that the competition between service providers had a negative impact on equality and social justice:

'The reality of the present crisis induced by unregulated markets- may enable us to focus more closely on the real limits to markets, the real limits to individual choice, and the need for real limits for competition...

That means ending unnecessary and obligatory competition between individuals and institutions, and a lot more focus on collaboration for national goals', Andrews (2010:6).

Through its policy documents, the Welsh Government has emphasised an ostensible commitment to active and empowered citizens, underpinned by a fair, just and equal society. Previously referred to in chapter 3, it claimed that the Government of Wales 'lays a distinct and special responsibility upon the Assembly over the pursuit of equal opportunities' (2010:26). It argued for 'every person (to have) the equal chance to participate and has equal access to services. It is about integration, valuing difference and focusing on the shared values that join people together,' (2009:6). The Welsh Government's commitment to end child poverty by 2020 followed on from the UK Labour Government unaccomplished target of halving child poverty by 2011. These targets have been incorporated into the 'Tackling Poverty Plan' and wider 'commitment to social justice'. The Welsh Government has likewise claimed to 'promote social inclusion and independence and to promote the participation and empowerment of the individual' (2010:18).

The Welsh Labour Party in 2010 published their Quality of Life, Sustainable and Vibrant Communities in Wales. This vision emphasised a desire to create an 'economically, socially and environmentally just nation of citizens able and willing to contribute to their communities; is a fair, just and bilingual nation, in which citizens of all and backgrounds are empowered to determine their own lives, shape their communities and achieve their full potential.'(2010:4). There was also recognition by the party that to fully and positively engage in society certain pre-conditions have to exist. They outlined their vision for 'genuinely sustainable local communities based on a principle of well-being' (2010:4). The ideals that the Welsh Labour Party, whilst in government, recognised that citizens required positive rights and support rather than merely formal legal rights and expectations:

'A positive physical, social and mental state; it is not just the absence of pain, discomfort and incapacity. It requires that basic needs are met, that individuals have a sense of purpose that they are able to achieve personal goals and participate in society. It is enhanced by conditions

that include supportive personal relationships, strong and inclusive communities, good health, financial and personal security, rewarding employment and a healthy and attractive environment' Welsh Labour (2010:5).

It therefore appears that the Welsh Labour Party and its previous Plaid Cymru partners in government recognised social justice as a pre-condition for full and active participation by citizens in society. The Welsh Government's approach towards inequalities appears to have been more consistent and pro-active according the (2011) WISERD report. 'Although the UK Coalition Government has chosen not to 'commence' the Socio-Economic Duty in the Equality Act 2010, Wales has pursued a mainstreaming approach to equality since devolution, which has intended to promote equality using all policy levers across all devolved portfolios' Davies et al (2011:2). Despite this, even in Wales this Public Sector Duty only extends to 'provide significant opportunity to consider the connection between social divisions and economic outcomes for individuals'. The underlying socio-economic inequalities between individuals and groups in Wales are therefore only dealt with on an ad hoc, reactive and inconsistent policy basis. The 'social and economic policies have become treated as separate spheres, whereas they can be viewed as intrinsically linked; denial of recognition (or negative judgement, prejudice and discrimination) can lead to inequitable opportunities to learn and earn' Davies et al (2011:5).

The ability of the Welsh Government to address Wales-wide socio-economic inequalities has been limited by the absence of powers over taxation and welfare spending. However on some levels their policies to recognise the barriers to social justice and active citizenship have appeared to go further and in alternative directions to the corresponding governments at UK level. The Welsh Government has proven that it has the capacity to make a significant impact on inequalities within Wales but requires a more cohesive approach across departments. Its ability and willingness to address these underlying imbalances, particularly in terms of its policies regarding education and the role of the Third Sector, are discussed in more detail in chapters 3 and 5. The following section specifically examines the Welsh Government's strategies regarding community engagement and community participation.

4.8 Community empowerment and engagement in Wales

Devolution, in Wales had perhaps negated some of the reasons for further de-centralisation and in some areas such as local governance encouraged a move towards integration of local authority services. However the Beecham Report (2006)- 'Making the Connections- Delivering Beyond Boundaries' emphasised a need for the Welsh Government to provide better communication and co-ordination of public services , whilst simultaneously aiming to become 'citizen focused'. The focus was on the introduction of Local Service Boards aimed at linking the work of local and central government together across government departments.

The ability of the Welsh Government to potentially enable its citizens and encourage community engagement has been dependant on a wide range of factors, bound by wider structures and economics. However within the Welsh Government's 20 devolved areas lies the responsibility for local government and communities. Therefore within this remit there have been opportunities for the Welsh Government to enable people to participate in society at grassroots as well as a nation-wide level. In its Community Strategy (2009) it envisaged a country 'where all citizens are empowered to determine their own lives and shape the communities in which they live' (2009:i).

One of its flagship programmes- Communities First was first established in 2001 and aimed to regenerate the 100 most deprived areas in Wales, as identified in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, website {accessed 5/6/2010}.⁶ It 'aimed to contribute, alongside other programmes, to narrowing the education/skills, economic and health gaps between our most deprived and more affluent areas' (2012). An integral part of its objectives was to empower local people to help regenerate their own communities and address issues relating to socio-economic deprivation, as previously referred to in chapter 1.

The extent, to which the Programme has actually empowered citizens, remains a central question. Since its review in 2011 the focus of the Programme has

⁶ The initiative has been funded through objective 1, European Development Funding, which requires match funding from the Welsh Assembly Government

changed from capacity building to tackling poverty. The Welsh Government introduced a process of 'programme bending', in that all departments across government would prioritise the needs of those that lived in Communities First areas. This reflects the Welsh Government's overall priorities, as the impact of high levels of poverty has continued to curtail community participation at even a basic level. The programme's structure however remains based around the most deprived geographical areas rather than national inequalities. Despite the Communities First Consultation (2011) review having highlighted the need to expand the scope beyond the original geographical areas and for government departments to work in partnership with one another to deliver an anti-poverty agenda, structural inequalities are not fully addressed. Lister points out that 'many of those that live in poverty' 'do not live in the most deprived districts and the main causes of their poverty are national (or global) not local' (2001: 432). Therefore there appeared to be a need to address national and international inequalities coupled with local community engagement and action. This tension between providing national directives and empowering people to influence local structures and services is a key challenge for both Welsh and UK wide governments.

In light of this, an interview with a Welsh Government official revealed how it was recognised that the Welsh Government has needed to constantly re-evaluate its way of governing, in terms of balancing the citizen's needs for empowerment and providing consistent and supportive government policies, guidance, regulation and action:

'I think we started off as a Welsh Government, ... wanting to be very actively involved, I think we have now moved to recognising the role of government is probably best at a little more distance. That we need to empower local organisations to take responsibility and to look after their own affairs, but I don't think we will ever go all the way' Interview Welsh Government Officer (9/2/2012:2).

This highlights areas of tensions in the aims and unintended outcomes of policies. The Welsh Government aspired to encourage citizens to be involved more in the governance structures and local communities, however there was

also a drive and perceived pressure to continue to centralise processes and policies from the 'top down':

'If we have been criticised it is (that) we haven't been firmer where things have gone wrong, we have probably been a bit too hands off and said we don't want to be 'top' down and we don't want to be big brother government telling you what to do... We have had some people saying what you are doing is leaving us at a local level coping with some of these problems by ourselves, when we actually want you to step in and give us some support and say, we are not putting up with this,' (ibid) (9/2/2012:7).

This government official did acknowledge the difficult yet essential role of the government in ensuring that it takes a balanced approach to community engagement by supporting rather than co-opting communities:

'The very sterile debate between bottom up and top down, (which) achieves very little. What we actually need is a search for some common ground between communities and local people on the one hand and a wide range of strategic bodies and agencies including government departments but also other national bodies and various forms of expertise identifying what we collectively want to do particularly in the case of the Communities First, in the most deprived areas. What we want to do is tackle poverty, what we want to do to make the lives of the most vulnerable people in Wales better,' (ibid) (9/2/2012:7).

In order to achieve these outcomes, according to this government official, the government programmes also needed to work in partnership and listen to those communities' views. They needed to 'harness the real resources that are there within communities but harness them alongside all the investment we are putting in to statutory structures, into national regional agencies,' (ibid) (9/2/2012:8).

Despite genuine attempts by citizens and UK governments alike, the inability of governments to provide consistent aims for regeneration and community programmes, as part of an empowerment agenda is perhaps one of the main barriers towards success. It is clear that at UK wide and devolved levels, the short-term nature of many of the community regeneration programmes and funding streams including the constant changing of staff such as development workers and government ministers has been undermining the stability of the

long-term programmes. The processes have rarely involved from the outset consulting communities and giving citizens a voice to participate in shaping the programmes. Holman (2001) in Lister (2001:440) also alludes to how 'the involvement of these communities in the drawing up of the national strategy has been limited. Instead communities are consulted sometimes long after and if at all after the processes begin, with predetermined criteria subject to the government's wider objectives. Some of these issues had been recognised in the recent 2012 review of the programme and within the Communities department within the Welsh Government, as an interview with a civil servant revealed:

'Although Communities First currently aims... to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in Wales, we are doing that very explicitly in a programme whose motto includes "involving local people in whatever we are doing" ... a reasonably well defined role for community involvement... active citizenship, ...would be a pretty relevant term to the whole process. We are looking at the ways in which local people as in residents and community organisations, which have a part to play in whatever it is in and not just... "service users", "customer", but as people who are helping to form services, people who are shaping them, people who are driving them forward, leading them, people who are actively involved in developing new ways of doing things and as volunteers helping to contribute to that. So it is not just passive recipients, those people are absolutely essential to making it happen whatever it happens to be,' Interview- Welsh Government official (9/2/2012:3).

It was therefore acknowledged that if citizens were to be expected to make a positive contribution towards their communities and society then they must be allowed and supported to do so. Similarly it implied that governments should enable citizens to contribute in ways which have meaning to them. In that the aim of the programme according to a Welsh Government officer was in theory to deeply empower citizens to become self-sufficient. 'We will achieve much more if the local people really feel they are in control and they aren't 100% reliant on our funding. The ones who say to us if you take our funding away, we will carry on anyway,' (ibid) (9/2/2012:3-4).

Since the onset of devolution there have been high expectations about partnership and 'joined up working' between all sectors even where they have

varying cultures, motivations and funding mechanisms. This has been reflected in some of the practices across the National Assembly for Wales, with the aim to become more inclusive of different groups and individuals.

‘The governance requirements in Wales for engagement with underrepresented groups to inform policy (for example through the Voluntary Sector Partnership Agreement), the equalities infrastructure (the crosscutting National Assembly Standing Committee on Equality of Opportunity) and the redistributive intent of many major policies (characterised as ‘clear red water’ in the first two assemblies) Davies et al (2009:6).

It was documented by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2003:3) that partnership working between organisations, individuals and government programmes has often been difficult and in some cases intractable, particularly where there have been no historical relationships, no shared information or objectives and no resources to enable its facilitation. This point was reiterated through an interview with a civil servant in Wales: ‘we very often spout mantras about partnership working and in particular partnerships between public sector, voluntary sector, Third Sector and communities and indeed the private sector’(9/2/2012:4).

Individuals can also have an impact on ‘co-operation’ which ‘depends on healthy attitudes and a healthy approach and if you are actually involved with people whose attitudes are self-serving or actively negative,’ (9/2/2012:5). Therefore it was appreciated that a deeper recognition by policy-makers is required regarding how public and at times private actions have a social impact. This is a challenge for citizens and government together, in that where an individualistic culture is dominant there is little space for discussions and actions that incorporate the social element of decisions, actions and policies. This is where the role of education is significant a factor which appeared to have been largely peripheral to the earlier work of the Communities First Programme, where many resources focused on skills for employment- often where there was no work available.

The Welsh Government accepted that in order to address some of the underlying issues affecting engagement and regeneration, then fundamental

inequalities and barriers needed to be addressed on a Wales wide basis. This required an even closer partnership between different government departments as well as with other public, third and private sector organisations. 'What we are about is trying to reduce poverty in Wales, specifically the most deprived areas in Wales. Under that we have the 3 main outcomes which are: health and wellbeing; education and skills and employment and the economy, that far, fixed and firm'- Interview civil servant (9/2/2012:9). It appears that the deep-seated issues relating to high levels of deprivation and unemployment require a longer-term approach. The Communities First Programme, even 12 years on, appeared as if it was in many ways in its infancy at tackling the underlying barriers that curtail people from participating as active citizens. A nation-wide, cross-departmental approach which addresses injustices and inequalities particularly socio-economic conditions seemed appropriate if citizens were going to be fully engaged and empowered.

In summary then, there have been high levels of financial resources invested into certain community based empowerment and regeneration programmes in Wales such as Communities First. These have been established since the introduction of devolution and share many similarities with those in England and Scotland. However, in contrast to some of the policies at UK wide level, the rhetoric at least continued to point towards greater recognition by the Welsh Government of the need to address the wider context of social justice, although high levels of socio-economic deprivation still curtail people in Wales from actively participating in in all areas of life. There is some evidence to suggest that on a micro level some individuals and communities have become more empowered and active, by gaining skills, working in local partnerships and establishing community based projects. However the extent, to which citizens have become enabled to engage with their communities and effect change within the wider society in the longer-term, particularly without continued government funding, remains uncertain. Tensions have continued to occur between the government-led, 'top down' nature of the programmes and the desire to engage citizens and their communities, to actively participate on their own terms. Central to a longer-term approach to enabling active citizenship at a

grassroots level, appeared to be an underutilised space within these programmes for education for active citizenship, aligned with more traditional models of empowerment through community development, despite the positive experiences of English based programmes such as ALAC and Take Part. The evolving role of governments in relation to the Third Sector and education are discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Also how the Welsh Government works in partnership with the WEA in this context to enable active citizenship through community-based education is discussed in chapter 9.

4.9 Conclusions

The value of using or reinventing wide terms such as 'active citizenship' has been particularly recognised within political circles from 1997 onwards. Community centred notions have stood in contrast to the citizenship rhetoric during the Thatcher era which placed an emphasis on the individual as a 'patriotic' or 'neighbourly' citizen. The initiatives and policies under New Labour Governments did ostensibly recognise the need to address fundamental inequalities and issues of social exclusion although many fell short of delivering real empowerment to people to enable them to fully participate. Its focus on employability rather than wider forms of citizen participation undermined many of its attempts to reignite community engagement and create a more equitable environment for citizens.

The post-Thatcher Conservative Party which coined the 'Big Society' also attempted to distance itself from the party's individualistic rhetoric. However it implemented policies which have overlooked the underlying reasons for the lack of community engagement and active citizenship and have re-emphasised the needs of individuals to simply look after themselves with little if not reduced support. Its wide-scale cuts in public funding and the continued privatisation of public services have largely further undermined social justice and equality and therefore the ability of people to participate in meaningful ways.

However there is evidence that devolution in Wales has in some cases provided political space for alternative approaches to engaging citizens at local and

national levels. The Welsh Government has recognised some of the underlying barriers towards citizen participation, including the effects of socio-economic inequalities. Although the influence of programmes in Wales such as Communities First largely reflected those across the UK during the New Labour administrations, clearer differences and tensions have further arisen since the election of the Coalition Government. However the impact of UK Government's policies particularly regarding unemployment and welfare benefits are felt deeper in areas such as Wales where there are higher levels of deprivation and social exclusion. Despite lower levels of socio-economic inequality within Wales, poverty levels for Wales remain higher than in most other parts of the UK. These socio-economic conditions are intrinsically interwoven with wider UK structures and policies, even at European and global levels. Although Wales achieved primary legislative powers, the task of encouraging active citizenship for the Welsh Government therefore appears even greater on some levels than in other more prosperous parts of the UK. The views that emerged from interviews with the Welsh Government Civil Servants did however point towards some reason for optimism, as they recognised that a devolved Wales did have a greater capacity to challenge these inequalities. These ideas and theories were tested throughout the research.

Chapter 5: Active citizenship- the evolving role of the Third Sector in the UK

Introduction

This chapter examines the evolving role of the UK's Third Sector and voluntary associations, in relation to their approaches towards promoting active citizenship. It explores the complexities and tensions of what has been an increasingly close relationship between many Third Sector organisations and the Westminster and Welsh Governments. It questions how these cultural changes can have a wider impact on how organisations within the Third Sector promote democratic participation and empowered forms of active citizenship. Specific attention is given to how growing pressures to conform to government agendas and directives have compromised the independent and critically challenging functions of the Third Sector. It highlights how these issues have emanated primarily from the Third Sector's increasing reliance on government funding, as well as mounting competition for resources, alongside rising expectations on 'volunteering' and the Voluntary Sector to provide public services. In turn, it examines whether devolution in Wales, has provided greater scope for the Third Sector to act as an independent voice for citizens, able and willing to challenge government policies and wider structural inequalities.

Central to the contribution of the Third Sector is how it utilises education to empower and enable citizens to act. The discussions later in the chapter draw upon the work of theorists such as Freire's, who argued that the purpose of education is to liberate rather than control citizens through enabling critical consciousness. It goes on to examine examples of recent programmes and initiatives in conjunction with the Third Sector that have been implemented to encourage citizenship as an active rather than passive status, comparing Welsh and Westminster Governments' approaches. These discussions draw on interview accounts by civil servants, who worked in government departments that implemented Third Sector and educational policies in Wales and England from 1997 onwards.

5.1 Defining the role of the Third Sector and voluntary activity in the 21st Century

The roles and definition of the Third Sector are widely disputed. However in line with most definitions, the UK's Third Sector Research Centre stated that it comprises of 'organisations operating outside the formal state or public sphere that are not trading commercially for profit in the market. This means charities and voluntary organisations, community groups, social enterprises; cooperatives and mutuals,' {accessed 13/12/2012}. It is also broadly accepted that the Third Sector is in essence largely 'value' rather than profit driven. Unlike other public and private organisations the Third Sector is typically involved with 'voluntary associations...(which) enable citizens from a wide diversity of social, economic and political backgrounds to come together and deliberate issues such as the provision of public services, gender equality, healthcare, education, the environment and so forth,' O'Flynn (2006:141). Thus aspects of the Third Sector have traditionally played an important role in enabling citizens to freely associate, support one another and challenge where necessary the status quo.

There is also much speculation about the role of the Third Sector and voluntary activity in relation to active citizenship. Although not all voluntary action is linked to the Third Sector, a significant amount of formal volunteering or voluntary activity takes place through it or alongside it. Crick pointed out that 'all citizenship must involve at some stage volunteering, but not all volunteering involves citizenship'. In his view, active citizens are critical and seek to understand, and sometimes feel the need to change, the social conditions they encounter, 'by legal and peaceful means'. Volunteering becomes citizenship when the volunteers are well briefed on the whole context' and 'are free citizens acting together' and 'they should never be cannon fodder, however worthy the organisation they work for' Crick (2002:2) website {accessed 8/9/2012}.

The issue of independence particularly for non-state organisations and activities has been increasingly highlighted by commentators such as O'Flynn who argued that:

'Civil associations must be at least partly self-supporting `because otherwise they become overly dependent on state support which, in turn may compromise their independence... this might be avoided by moving from direct to indirect support for civil association. Where governments can create consultative bodies open to all on an equal basis,' O'Flynn (2006:141).

In this context there have been growing concerns that governments have been transforming the relationships between the voluntary sector and the state to the detriment of the independence of civil society. This situation can undermine the balance of power between citizens and the activities they engage in outside of the state's direct remit. This includes their ability to critically challenge the state. Critics such as Jochum, underline apprehensions regarding these changes:

'Government is re-engaging citizens with decision making processes and sharing rules and responsibilities between citizens and the state... as a result volunteers are becoming instruments of government rather than a force for change. The Government's attention is on how citizens relate to the state and its institutions rather than how they might relate to each other', Jochum et al (2005:11).

Therefore the voluntary and independent nature of the Third Sector's work has come under question, as changes in the UK's political culture have seen the Third Sector increasingly influenced, co-opted or even subsumed by the state. Thus it appears that the ability of the Third Sector to provide space for independent and challenging thoughts and actions by citizens has become increasingly threatened.

5.2 UK government policies: changing dynamics with the Third Sector

In recent times both the Third Sector and voluntary activity in general have attracted increasing attention from UK governments. New Labour policies and initiatives placed the Third Sector at the heart of active citizenship and

community engagement. Following on from this, the Coalition Government heavily influenced by the Conservative Party placed more emphasis on the term 'civil society' rather than the Third Sector. This was reflected in its replacement of the Office of the Third Sector, which was initially established under the Labour Government, with the Office of Civil Society. Despite this shift in emphasis, Third Sector organisations amongst others, individuals and contracting companies have increasingly been expected to provide public services, in place of the government. Issues raised in chapters 1 and 4, together with later in the study of the WEA.

This had already become increasingly evident following the introduction of the Compact⁷⁷ in 1998, since then there have been mounting demands and expectations by UK governments for the Third Sector to provide government services. From this period the New Labour administrations were 'characterised by high levels of Third Sector partnership and an increase in financial support from the state,' Taylor et al (2012:1). Although distribution is uneven, by 2008 charities in England and Wales received £12.8billion from the state, 36% of their income, Clark et al (2010:43) in Alcock (2012:3).

Despite many 'not for profit' organisations and charities preferring a more 'arms-length approach to their work from government, a significant proportion of these organisations in the UK and in particular Wales, rely directly or indirectly on some level of government funds. In turn where governments provide financial assistance to organisations, it is highly probable that there will be some level of prescription regarding the delivery of services. 'When the state becomes a major (perhaps even the sole) funder of an organisation, tendencies that might have existed for campaigning and confrontation will almost inevitably be tempered', Crowson et al (2009:9). In some cases it is difficult to differentiate between whether an organisation is an arm of government or independent. Critics argue that Third Sector organisations have been utilised and at times manipulated by the state to take on responsibility for providing

⁷⁷ The Compact was a UK Government (Home Office) initiative which outlined relations between the state and the Third Sector.

basic government services and in turn diminishing their ability to critically challenge State policies. A 'Threefold role' has been identified for Voluntary Organisations, 'beyond contracted service delivery: to help provide a welfare safety-net where funded services are either inadequate or fail; to contribute expertise to community organising; and to support a small infrastructure for organising volunteers. These roles are not new but further illustrate a re-shaping and domestication of community action, deflecting it from oppositional campaigns,' Milbourne and Cushman, (2013:5).

Until recently the Third Sector primarily worked with governments to help to identify and find new ways to fill gaps in the public sector's provision. This focussed on alternative and specialised areas of provision with non-mainstream groups such as homeless people. The justifications for this, was that according to the perspective of a previous civil servant:

'The government is not very good at delivering programmes itself. It is very bureaucratic, it gets hung up with procedures and accountability and it's inflexible and it is a big machine, you have long hierarchies ending with the minister. So if you want a flexible creative responsive sort of programme then you find the Third Sector partnership to deliver it for you... So I think there is the strongest argument that working in partnership in this sort of area is much better value for money-'
Interview Civil Servant (11/4/2012:6).

Thus in order for this relationship to achieve the best outcomes for citizens and all sectors concerned, he suggested a more equal and open partnership style of relationship would be required rather than the Third Sector being perceived as a mere instrument of the state.

UK governments since the early 1990s have urged and facilitated the Third Sector alongside the private sector to take on mainstream provision of public services however. These initiatives initially focused on areas such as social care and health and were implemented through measures such as the 1990 NHS and Community Care Act and the market-making strategy in social care, Macmillan (2010:5). While the Third Sector may often be well placed to provide these services, there is contention regarding the scale, expectations, accountability

and responsibility that the state may place on non-statutory and voluntary activities. Critics argue that Third Sector organisations have been utilised and at times manipulated by the state to take on responsibility for providing basic government services and in turn diminishing their ability to critically challenge state policies.

The ostensible economic advantages of utilising the Third Sector it could also be argued, is one of the prime motivations of the Coalition Government's focus on the Third Sector. Central to their White Paper, *Open Government* (2011) and the *Work Programme* it focuses on the 'Big Society' to mend the economy and get people back to work. However as Taylor et al pointed out 'deep cuts' orchestrated by the Coalition Government in public spending had implications for Third Sector organisations delivering public services. This is particularly relevant regarding government cuts to Local Authorities, of up to 25% over 4 years, as local government has traditionally been a major supporter of the Third Sector, Alcock (2012:7). In this case the cuts have the most negative impact on the smaller more local organisations. Foreseeing some potential impact of these cuts, the Coalition Government did establish a Transition Fund worth £107 million to help organisations plan for future funding, Alcock (2012:80).

Concerns have also arisen that many organisations particularly the smallest in the Third Sector are unable to bid for large 'prime' contracts, in this increasingly competitive market. This has conveniently provided a space for the private sector to bid for government contracts, organisations which usually prioritise short-term profits over quality provision and accountability to citizens, which relates to issues previously discussed in chapter 4. 'Market competition and private enterprise are now positioned as the answers to resolving service problems more efficiently and VOs have been relegated to unpaid community work or remaining as corporate sub-contractors,' Milbourne and Cushman (2013:2). This transition appears to leave little space for free thinking citizens and groups to challenge the government, as the contract based culture indicates that those that question government policies are more unlikely to receive continued funding.

It may well be befitting for the Voluntary/ Third Sector to personalise the provision of services. Unlike the state however, the 'the voluntary sector has no commitment to equity in service provision' Milligan (2001) in Clifford (2011:3). In many cases, Third Sector organisations are concentrated in areas where financial and other resources are more abundant. This in turn can further exacerbate the inequity of opportunities between areas of low and high deprivation to participate or receive support from non-state organisations, Mean et al 2005; North and Syrett in Clifford (2011:2). These trends open up much wider questions about government's roles in supporting voluntary action at all levels of society.

In conjunction with this shift in provision there have been growing concerns amongst a wide array of commentators that initial principles of the welfare state have been gradually eroded by governments from all UK parties, Lister (2008), Packham (2008). The Third Sector appears to be unintentionally playing a central role in the transition from rights based public provision, to a situation where basic services are contracted out to a wide range of non-state providers. 'Rather than providing welfare,' Packham asserted that governments are 'now drawing on the constituents of what were elements of independent civil society, the community and the voluntary sector, to provide services and carry out activities on the state's behalf.' Packham also points out the 'dilemma facing professional workers and volunteers who are increasingly asked to carry out the requirements of government's determined priorities. This trend is counter to the ethos and principles of youth and community work, which has been rooted in a commitment to self-identification of the needs and consequential actions' (2008:34). Salamon (1987) and Bryson et al (2002) argue that government welfare should not be substituted by the Third Sector and that equally government has an important role in providing financial support to the sector to ensure gaps in provision can be addressed. 'The resources are frequently not available where the problems are most severe' Salamon (1987:40).

Where government's strengths complement Third Sector weaknesses, government is 'in a better position to finance needed services; and is 'in a better position to ensure the equitable distribution of those resources among parts of the country and segments of the population' Salamon (1987:45) in Clifford (2011:4). These issues have to some extent been recognised by governments, as the focus on certain regeneration and community based programmes that utilise aspects of Third Sector provision has been in the most socio-economically disadvantaged areas. These programmes' ability to engage and encourage long-term active citizenship within the context of social justice, specifically in Wales was discussed in chapter 4 and will be explored more fully in subsequent chapters.

5.3 'Voluntary' activity and active citizenship

The transformation of the relationship between the Third Sector and governments couples increasing expectations towards citizens in general, as earlier sections have argued. Despite claims that society has become more apathetic and more disengaged, there is strong evidence to prove that a significant proportion of people across the UK still take part in a whole range of voluntary activity. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2012) estimated that around 19.8 million people formally volunteered in the UK between 2010/11. However the Citizenship Survey's 2009/10 stated for England and Wales 'the group that are least likely to volunteer regularly are those that live in the most deprived areas' website accessed 9/10/2012}. One of the reasons for this, it states, is lack of access to social networks and social engagement. These figures may however not include most of the informal voluntary work that occurs on a daily basis such as looking after or providing support for neighbours, relatives and other members of the community. Hence 'questions tend to record the formal associational activity of those of higher socio-economic status, the informal neighbourliness of localities with people of lower socio-economic status is less well captured, Williams (2003) in Clifford (2001:2). This is in part due to the fact that 'organisations (such as informal community based groups) which are below the (regulatory) radar will not be

registered with the Charity Commission, McCabe and Phillmore (2009) in Clifford (2011:2). It should therefore be recognised that underlying socio-economic and personal circumstances of individuals and groups can act as barriers towards participation, as well as formal recognition of a person's contribution towards society.

UK Governments have placed growing expectations on those with the least resources to participate in 'voluntary activity' in pre-determined ways, focusing their attention on welfare recipients. Through various initiatives including the UK's 'Work Programme' the term 'volunteering', has in some instances been adapted by governments to compel citizens to carry out unpaid work, undermining the very essence of what is considered voluntary activity. This prescriptive approach can have detrimental and disempowering effects on the most disadvantaged in society in the long-term. 'Volunteering is often being used in a punitive and compulsory manner, which puts the interest of the state and the generation of state capital to the fore and threatens the nature of voluntary activity' Packham, (2008:38). Hence the dilemma that has arisen around voluntary activity is that any government programme or assertions that claim that people should volunteer undermines the core of that premise. Also 'being told that volunteering is good for you or the community will not ensure participation unless there is prior capacity, drive or motivation to get involved' Garratt, D and Piper, (2008:56). So the notion of voluntary activity can only remain valid if it is as the result of free choice of the individual and cannot be something that citizens are expected to participate in. These expectations raise serious questions about the nature of volunteering and the independent role of the Third Sector and may also prove counter-productive in encouraging active citizenship.

'Active citizens' according to the New Labour definitions, 'should restrict their activism and work in partnership with the local government and national state, or follow the middle classes and become volunteers, consumer lobbyists, and givers to charities and media appeals' Grayson in Mayo et al (2010:160). However Labour's David Blunkett acknowledged the overly zealous focus on

civil society: 'Government ministers have become preoccupied with the civic renewal agenda as a means of raising participation, reducing crime and promoting voluntary activity', (2001, 2003) in Pattie et al (2004:2). While the UK New Labour and Coalition Governments alike have recognised the positive attributes associated with particular types of voluntary activity, there have appeared to be simultaneously unrealistic expectations about what can be achieved through these activities alone.

It is perhaps due in part to the economic impact that voluntary activity has had on the UK that has been of particular interest to consecutive governments. The 'Active Community Unit calculated the 'economic value of volunteering as an estimated at £40 billion,' Hale (2006:128). The NCVO more modestly placed the figure around £23.1 billion for 2009/10. Indeed the economic significance of the voluntary sector was particularly evident during the recession of the 2008, when the Labour Government- (specifically the Office of the Third sector in conjunction with the NCVO) called an immediate recession summit. An action plan arose out of the summit which emphasised wide-scale reforms such as mergers and collaborations and a focus on issues such as unemployment and social enterprise. The Third Sector in response utilised this opportunity to call for greater investment and a social investment bank, Rees (2012:2). The Government reacted in February 2009 through the Real Help for Communities: Volunteers, Charities and Social Enterprises (£42.5million bundle) to provide a short-term boost. This clearly illustrated the depth of mutual dependence that the two sectors had become accustomed to within this period and the wider expectations that the government had on the Third Sector to help it through the recession. Critics argued that these measures did not go far enough to make fundamental reforms or financial longer-term commitment and it was 'not necessarily relevant for all Third Sector organisations' Taylor et al (2012:2).

5.4 The Welsh Government's 'alternative' approach to the Third Sector

This section focuses on the relationship between the Third Sector, citizens and the government in Wales, exploring claims that devolution has positively

influenced alternative relationships and practices to those at Westminster. Historically there has been a strong Third Sector within Wales. The legacies of its co-operative movement and community based miners' institutes were forerunners to the National Health Service and universal provision of free-education and libraries. Therefore, there should be a strong capacity for the Third Sector in Wales to be able and willing to both constructively challenge and work with the Government in Wales. This situation is examined through the Third Sector's presence in Wales and Welsh Governments' approaches to the Third Sector.

Since its inception the devolved government in Wales has stressed the importance of its relationship with the Third Sector. Its pro-active approach was captured by the Voluntary Sector Scheme, which was set out under the initial (1998) Government of Wales Act. It 'placed a statutory duty on the Welsh Assembly Government to promote the interests of voluntary organisations in the exercise of all of its functions', Clause 114. It also imparted greater expectations on the Third Sector to provide public services and support government programmes. 'Whilst acknowledging the independence of the sector, we hope that it will join with us to transform Wales to be a self-confident, prosperous, healthy society, which is fair to all', (1998).

In 2008, it set out *The Third Dimension: A strategic Action Plan for the Voluntary Sector Scheme*, which re-iterated 'the sector will always be independent, but has a vital role to play in delivering the 'One Wales' programme of Government, Gibbons (2008:3). In theory, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) also recognised the importance of the Third sector in empowering citizens to challenge and hold to account the democratic structures and representatives:

'We ... firmly believe that a Third Sector that involves and empowers citizens and communities is one that contributes positively to democratic governance locally and nationally. Such an approach does not undermine the responsibilities of elected politicians or democratically run public institutions. It encourages a more participative form of representative democracy in which people and politicians are closer in contact' Gibbons (2008:8).

Central to this commitment is the idea that the Third Sector requires a partnership with and not subservience to the state. A number of forums were established to create a dialogue between the Government and the Third Sector, these included The Partnership Council Forum set up in 2000, later to become the Voluntary Sector Partnership council in 2007. An interview with a civil servant reflected upon the Welsh Government's commitment to the voluntary sector, for example emphasising the need to 'develop a long-term partnership with the voluntary sector, including co-operatives and care providers,' Interview Welsh Government Officer (8/5/2012:1).

However, increasing concerns have also been raised in Wales regarding the dependence of charities and non-governmental organisations on government funding, wielding perhaps undue pressure to conform to government agendas. Figures from the Charity Commission (2012) confirm the largest charities in Wales include the Arts Council for Wales; The National Museum of Wales; Wales Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action, receive up to 100% of their funding from government. These are however largely seen as public organisations. These patterns reiterate issues regarding the independence of the Third Sector organisations. This includes the co-option by government agendas, impacting on its ability to challenge policies and initiatives, as well as its sustainability when reliant on government funds.

Nonetheless, the Welsh Government's Review into funding patterns of the Third Sector was commissioned as a result of on-going deliberations by the Third Sector Partnership Council (TSPC). In 2008, the TSPC discussed issues highlighted in a paper prepared by the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) entitled, 'The political economy of funding the Third Sector in Wales: Towards a new Paradigm?'(2010:1). It recognised that 'Statutory funding to the Third Sector has been unevenly spread. Larger Third Sector organisations are more dependent on public sector funding and account for the large majority of public sector spending on and through the sector. This is true in Wales and for the UK as a whole,' (2010:3). This reiterates wider issues about the unequal access to power that certain Third Sector organisations have over others. Dicks

in Chaney pointed out 'that claiming partnership with the 'voluntary sector' as a whole, and drawing on values associated with community voluntary activity, the Assembly may find it all too easy to cherry pick a (relatively) small number of organisations with which to work with closely. Such organisations could be expected to be among the better established, politically articulate and well-resourced' (2001:117). These issues are explored in chapter 9, focusing on the relationship between the WEA and the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government's review did however indicate that it wanted to reassure the Third Sector that they would not overly interfere in how it delivered services on its behalf. 'It is perfectly acceptable for the public sector to procure a service which specifies inputs - "the how" - as well as outcomes in some circumstances, but this should be the exception rather than the rule' (2010:6). However conversely it emphasised the expectation of the Third Sector to 'compete for' and 'deliver public services' (2010:9), reflecting issues at UK wide level. Unexpectedly, there was a direct correlation between the main premise of how the Big Society and the Third Sector would be financed in Wales. This included '(funds from dormant bank accounts) to pump prime investment based approaches with the clear objective that they should become self-sufficient as part of a broader funding infrastructure' (2010:10). These proposals illustrated some surprising similarities in approach towards the Third Sector across the UK, even between different political parties.

Also in a similar vein to the Westminster Governments, the Welsh Labour Party placed a specific emphasis on access to volunteering opportunities. Their proclaimed aim was to 'encourage and reward volunteering- to underpin the values of mutual and co-operative principles that can improve the well-being of communities across Wales' Labour, Improving Public Services consultation (2010:7).

However there have also been clear policy divergences between the two governments in relation to the Third Sector.

‘Devolution has had the effect of opening up new policy spaces’ for the Third Sector actors to engage more directly with government in the three devolved administrations, assisted by the smaller scale of government here and the fact that major umbrella agencies were organised on national lines... Politics and policy has begun to diverge... The Big Society agenda was not a feature of the election campaigns in 2011, and has largely been rejected by the administrations elected as a result of them’, Alcock (2012:5).

In England a number of measures were implemented to invest in the Third Sector, to engage citizens such as the Future Builder’s Fund; Change-Up the Take Part and Active Learning for Active Citizenship initiatives, although all of these programmes were closed or significantly altered after the 2010 Coalition Government’s Spending Review. They are discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

In contrast, these measures were not implemented in Wales though. The level of funding available to these organisations would have been difficult to match in Wales, largely due to the limited funding structure.⁸ Therefore while Wales offers a greater aptitude for organisations to get to know one another and influence the government, there appeared to be less capacity for the government to financially support nation-wide initiatives. This highlights issues relating to the Welsh Government’s ability to support the Third Sector, particularly in times of austerity. These issues which are explored further in chapter 9 examine the scope of the Welsh Government to financially support the Third Sector.

In summary, New Labour and the Coalition Governments have provided many areas of the Third Sector with uneven levels of government funds to deliver government programmes, some of which was to encourage citizen participation, as well as to provide basic public services. In this era the Third Sector’s workforce and responsibilities had initially expanded significantly, whilst usually being tied to varying degrees to government agendas. This increasingly close but often unequal relationship between the state and the Third Sector has arguably closed down on space for dissenting voices which the

Third Sector has traditionally incubated. By incorporating views of marginalised or radical groups into government led initiatives, it compromises the autonomy of the Third Sector, volunteers' and radical perspectives. As a result of the UK wide Coalition Government's cuts, many areas of the Third Sector even in Wales have become more vulnerable and pressurised to adhere to government directives but with less financial resources. These expectations and changes also pose a real threat to plurality in democracies and the ability of citizens to express their views and rights through the Third Sector's structures.

The role of critical educational provision (through the Third Sector), is a case in point. This has been perceived as a mechanism to provide longer-term opportunities for citizens to gain knowledge and power to challenge governments and act on their own terms. The capacity of governments and the Third Sector to provide this form of education is examined throughout the next section.

5.5 Education for active citizenship

The nature and purpose of education relating to the benefits of citizens and society has long been debated. Radical social commentators such as Freire and Bourdieu asserted that education can be a fundamental tool which can liberate citizens, enabling them to challenge the unequal power relations which exist in society. Conversely, education can also reproduce existing unequal social relations. The role that government plays in education is thus contentious as it is questionable whether governments will or can genuinely promote education which enables critical thinking. The evolving role of the UK's Third Sector in providing education is therefore central to this matter, particularly during an era where the Third Sector is increasingly influenced by the state. In this section the Wales and Westminster Governments' education policies and initiatives are discussed in conjunction with the style and provision of education emanating from the Third Sector.

Freire (1972), Bourdieu (1977) (1983) and Passeron (1977) argued that education has been utilised as tools for the social reproduction of values and ideas by the ruling class. Those with the most power have the ability to construct and embed through education, realities which suit their own interests. The most powerful citizens can use state policy as a mechanism to legitimise the 'banking concept of education' which 'in conjunction with a paternalistic action apparatus within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of 'welfare recipients'. 'They are treated as individual cases, as marginal men who deviate from the general configuration of a 'good, organised and just society, 'Freire (1972:55).

'All educational contexts are imbued with unequal distribution of power that produce and reinforce various forms of marginalisation and exclusion. Thus a commitment to redress these power relations (i.e. equity in education)... requires us to question what we take for granted, and a commitment to a vision of society built on reflection, reform, mutuality and respect in theory and in practice... it is a lifelong challenge', Roxana in Trifonas (2003:216).

Therefore, according to Freire, the purpose of education is to liberate. 'Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transfers of information,' Freire (1979:53). In contrast to traditional forms of 'education' it is in his view the practice of freedom- as opposed to practice of domination,' (1979:54). Freire developed the concept of 'conscientization' which refers to the ability to perceive and reflect on 'social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against oppressive elements of reality', Freire (1972:15). This is the means by which people would apply their education to become 'free' and active citizens.

This radical style of education was previously foreshadowed by Gramsci who 'saw in the education and cultural formation of adults the key towards the creation of systematic and effective counter-hegemonic action. The attainment of intellectual and moral reform entailed a lengthy process of education characterised by what Raymond Williams would call the 'long revolution'. 'Adult education in its many forms, formal, non-formal and informal, was to play an important role in this process. Organic intellectuals engaged in this

lengthy process of working for social transformation, were to explore a number of sites with the potential to serve as sites of transformative learning', Peter Mayo (2010b:35). Therefore from these radical viewpoints the role of education is a process of evolution and transformation. It requires constant re-evaluation of the individual and their society. It is a central mechanism by which we can understand our roles as citizens and enable us to become active agents.

5.6 Democratic learning for active citizenship

Intrinsically intertwined with the concept of citizenship is that of democracy, as a lived experience as discussed in chapter 3. Education has been perceived as the means by which people develop the capacity to participate in democracies. Dewey being one of its eminent exponents argued that the ideals of democratic education and equality are indivisible:

‘A society which makes provision for participation for all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder’, Dewey (1966:19)

Ranson also perceived its ‘task as being to help adults as well as young people to develop the attitudes of mind- for example reflection, tolerance, imagination, sympathy and respect- as well as the capabilities to take part in democratic process’, Ranson (1998) in Gass (2002:19). Democratic learning practices have been widely accepted across the Third Sector as being the means by which people become empowered through learning.

The Active Learning for Active Citizenship Report argued that:

‘Learning should be driven by the needs and aspirations of learners and negotiated between participants and providers, beforehand... based on a desire for social justice, fairness and respect with an active view of learners, respecting and building upon their existing knowledge and skills rather than ‘deficit model’ of individuals and communities being in

some way inadequate and in needs of treatment,' Woodward (2010:55-56).

Democratic learning is therefore taught not simply as knowledge of systems and theories but as a way of life, embedded as a concept of equality in practices, from this perspective. A particular civic skill which is necessary for deliberative democratic engagement is that of 'civic listening' and not just 'civic speaking'. This would include levels of emotional literacy and inter-cultural understanding', Lockyer (2010:134).

This type of learning for participation has also been referred to as 'experiential learning', which defines learning as 'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience', Kolb (1984: 41). It therefore implies that learning takes place throughout life and occurs where opportunities are available for people to take part in decision making processes, whereby people apply knowledge and skills they have learnt regarding the world they live into the decisions they make in their everyday lives.

A central premise of education for social justice and democratic participation is to value difference as previously referred to by Lister (1997) and Young (1990).

'Pedagogies of difference would highlight the need to acknowledge the specificity of difference as well as the need to try and bridge the negative value of difference that create competing theoretical and pedagogical discourses conducive neither to the principle or educational equity nor to education for social justice,' Trifonas (2003:3).

The extent to which these forms of transformative education styles and approaches have influenced government policy is discussed in the following section.

5.7 Active Learning for Active Citizenship

Third Sector organisations such as National Institute for Adult Community Education (NIACE), have long believed that adult education brings wider

benefits for society. Therefore government should commit 'to cross-departmental funding where they would share outcomes and benefits'. They claimed that the 'adult population needs to be confident and capable, engaged and empowered, enterprising and curious, cultured and reflective and tolerant and inclusive' (2010:2).

UK Home Office's Civil Renewal Unit- Active Learning for active Citizenship (ALAC) was specifically set up to develop the work and relationships between the Third Sector, government and citizens. Labour's Home Office- claimed that its Civil Renewal Unit 'Active Learning for Active Citizenship' (ALAC) programme will develop a capacity to engage in deliberative democracy at local level', Mayo (2010:22). ALAC was based on the Freirian approach to community learning. 'Central to these community developments principles practice is that work is collective, participatory and inclusive and involves people in an active educational process. It aims to bring about social justice, critical awareness, transformation and change,' Packman (2006:12). The intention of the programme was to 'build upon existing models of good practice across the voluntary and community sectors, working in partnerships with different forms of public provision' Woodward, (2004:6).

As a government initiated and part funded scheme it aimed at 'encouraging participation in a broad sphere of existing political activity not just learning how to participate in existing structures... it was hoped that participative processes would be deepened and democratic processes strengthened building on existing democratic processes , facilitating political literacy as well as civic action', Woodward (2010:10). Most fundamentally and perhaps radically 'ALAC was premised on the view that participants are not deficient in ability, knowledge or understanding; rather they are positioned in unequal power relationships that block their potential for taking positive action for change', Woodward (2010:109).

Due to the programme's reported success in different regions throughout England, it was followed by the 'Take Part' initiative and the National

Community Empowerment Partnership in 2008. Take Part was established by New Labour in conjunction with other Third Sector and state organisations to 'provide programmes of active learning that enable people to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to become active citizens- who are able to make an active contribution in their communities and to influence public policies and services', Potter (2010:78).

There is also evidence that embedding active citizenship into other subjects has been possible as the WEA England with the support of the Government at Westminster implemented a programme. This was described in an interview with a senior civil servant that had worked under the Labour administration as follows:

'The empowerment programme which funded the WEA to test out ways of building active citizenship learning into programmes focused on health and IT and well as citizenship itself. That was all a clear learning focus, all about piloting programme modules that could then be used across the WEA system and broader. So there certainly was an important learning,' Interview civil servant (11/4/2012:4-5).

The ALAC and Take Part programmes were principally built on partnerships with pre-existing Third Sector organisations, although Take Part involved an increased level of prescription from New Labour Governments. In contrast the Community Leaders Programme (set up by the Coalition Government) focused on placing new leaders in to communities to encourage active citizenship within the confines of the Coalition Government's agenda. Despite some involvement of Third Sector practitioners in its development, there appears to be little effort to work with pre-existing Third Sector networks (such as those developed under previous ALAC programmes) as part of this initiative, as well as limited educational opportunities beyond training. Therefore despite some contradictions in New Labour's attempts to empower and encourage citizens to actively engage with society, there appeared to be more of a willingness to work with Third Sector organisations in more flexible and open organisations.

5.8 UK Governments' approaches to third Sector citizenship learning

In line with the New Labour mantra 'education, education, education', there was a revival of the recognition of education as a fundamental tool to enable citizens to contribute to their society whether socially or economically. Despite this some of the underlying contradictions in New Labour and UK Coalition policies such as the introduction and increase of tuition fees for Universities in England and Wales, have arguably stripped away at the notion that education is a right for everyone regardless of socio-economic background.

Theoretically, New Labour's rhetoric recognised that education has an eminent place in enabling people to actively and effectively engage in their local and wider communities. David Blunkett outlined key government themes involving the potential of education in shaping the lives of citizens and their communities in the UK. It involved 'a shared belief in the power of education to enrich the minds of citizens; a commitment to develop a mutually supportive relationship amongst the members of democratic communities and a determination to strengthen citizen's role in shaping the public realm', Home Office (2003:89).

In line with this approach, '1997 marked a turning point which emphasised learning to support economic growth and reduce social exclusion e.g. 'outreach' work in people's own communities, Bowen et al (2004:39). It was claimed that 'students from non-traditional backgrounds are significantly more expensive to recruit and progress'. This it was argued was due to the fact those that faced social disadvantage tended to be harder to engage; require new ways of working (e.g. smaller groups); more overall support e.g. childcare, transport, advice and additional tuition, Bex et al (2002) in Bowen (2004:40). Specific questions relating to the provision of bespoke support for those who faced additional barriers to participation are explored in chapters 8 and 9.

In 2009 New Labour outlined their plans for adult education through a £20 million 'Transformation Fund'. This was to support innovative informal adult and community learning projects across England. The funding criteria

specifically asked projects to develop ways of engaging new people in learning, especially people who face the greatest barriers to becoming learners'. The Active Citizenship Education Project, led by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in England and Scotland formed a partnership that brought together organisations and professionals involved in citizenship education (2010:7). An important legacy of Transformation Fund investment is the way that short-term projects have highlighted the need for more citizenship learning,' (2010:10).

Under the Coalition Government the emphasis was placed on initiatives such as the National Citizen Service and training community organisers, however there was also an on-going ostensible commitment to adult education as David Cameron claimed:

'Adult education has a really important role to play in encouraging active citizenship. I am not just talking about what people learn specifically, but how that learning makes them feel. It means meeting people and discussing what has been going on in the world, boosting your belief in what you can do,' Cameron, (May 2010).

The reality however has been more contradictory and complex, as spending on education has increasingly focused on employability skills rather than wider education purposes and has appeared to have actually become more centrally controlled and prescriptive. This has become particularly prevalent in policies for Higher and Further Education, with up to 80% decreases in funding for Arts, humanities and social sciences under the Coalition Government. Sarah Hale argued that in order for society as a whole to benefit the approach towards education needed to be wider than its recent focus on employability:

'Education should be about equipping people with how best to deal with life, job related skills being only part of that... most important high quality education which exercises the imagination and develops attention to detail. As well as enhancing empathy and compassion, imagination can be applied to solving community problems,' Hale (2006:143).

A previous civil servant compares the varying approaches towards education between the New Labour and Coalition Governments and expressed concerns over the Coalition Government's approach towards citizenship education, as follows:

'The present government's problem is not really recognising the need to resource learning, although there is still commitment in the Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) Department, which is where adult education sits. There still is some sort of commitment there I think, with some of the adult learning organisations like NIACE and the WEA particularly', Interview Civil Servant (11/4/2012:4).

Therefore it appears that various governments have with some remaining commitment participated in rhetoric regarding education for empowerment and engagement. However the overarching educational policies and structures in many instances have undermined these ideals, particularly where its prime focus remains concentrated on education for employability.

5.9 Welsh devolution and education for active citizenship

Since the arrival of a national government in Wales, there has been some distinction between the educational policies and initiatives in Wales and at Westminster. These differences point to some important divergences in ideological positions between the two layers of government, as well as imbalances of economic and political power across the UK, in relation to citizen participation. The Welsh Government's specific approach towards encouraging active citizenship through participation in education is examined in more detail throughout this section.

Due to cuts in the allocated funds from Westminster, education budgets in Wales were reduced by £4.1billion in 2012 from 2011 and amongst other government departments have faced a large reduction overall of £6.2billion from the public sector. Even though educational provision is a devolved responsibility for the Welsh Government, the reduction in overall spending of £164 million in 2012, has had a direct impact on the funding available for

education as well as other related services including local authorities, social services and health. These departments had all previously provided indirect and direct funding for the delivery of education and welfare provision through the public and Third Sectors.

The low levels of literacy and numeracy, particularly amongst socio-economically disadvantaged groups in Wales, create important barriers to citizen participation. The Poverty Site (2012) stated that '50% of the working-age population in Wales lack basic numeracy skills, a higher proportion than in any of the English regions apart from the north east'. This compares with the average for England which has been 46%. The site also states that '25% of the working-age population in Wales lack basic literacy skills, again a higher proportion than in any of the English regions. The average for England as a whole is 16%'. Other data emphasises how the lack of basic skills varies between areas, there is a direct correlation between lowest levels of basic skills and the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation. 'The Valleys areas (Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Torfaen and Neath Port Talbot) had the highest proportions of people lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills. In addition it claimed that 'those without Level 1 in basic skills are less likely to participate in adult learning, thus reinforcing the disadvantage they already experience by having low skills levels.'

In recognition of this severe impairment to participation, the Welsh Government mainly led by the Welsh Labour Party, in partnerships with the Liberal Democrats in 2001-2003 and Plaid Cymru from 2007-2011, displayed a commitment to learning with an aim of increased community involvement and participation. A number of Welsh Labour documents such as *Winning Wales* (2002) and *the Learning Country* (2001) and its revisions in (2006) and (2010) were coupled with a wider call for 'A Revolution in Education' in the consultation document for *Improving Public Services* (2010:4). Throughout these initiatives there was an emphasis on education for wider social purposes such as social justice and 'closing the equality gap' (2010:5). This included

widening participation in further and higher education, especially for those from disadvantaged areas.

In 2010 the National Assembly for Wales set out a programme for education and lifelong learning in 'The Learning Country'. It recognised that 'inequalities in achievement between advantaged and disadvantaged areas; groups and individuals must be narrowed in the interests of all' (2010:13). The National Assembly for Wales urged a change in the behaviour of institutions in order to ensure that equality of opportunity for learning was available to all. 'The Government of Wales Act lays a distinct and special responsibility upon the National Assembly over the pursuit of equal opportunities. Unconscious institutional and other barriers to learning must be progressively removed' (2010:37).

The Independent Task and Finish Group Report on the Structure of Education Services in Wales (9 March 2011:4), stated devolution in Wales should allow the people and decision makers in Wales to directly impact on educational provision and achievement, reflecting a democratic style of education and governance.

This suggested that the Welsh Government's ideal role for citizens would be to play an interactive role in the process of governance through the education system. The central core of the Chair's message implied that social equality should be perceived as central to the purpose and process of ensuring all people in Wales play an active part in society:

'Wales surely cannot accept, as some still seek to do, that children from more deprived backgrounds are somehow doomed to fail. That has never been the 'Welsh way... Indeed it is the opposite of that we have always as a people seen education as transformative and the key to social mobility,' Chair of the Task and Finish Group on the Structure of Education Services in Wales (2001:5).

Here it implied that underlying socio-economic barriers should be recognised and not prove to be permanent obstacles to all citizens to reach their full potential. There were clear points of divergence in educational policies between

Wales and Westminster which had the potential to impact on the opportunities for individuals and groups to participate within a framework of social justice. This included the Welsh Government decisions to retain maintenance grants and allowances for further and higher education for less well-off students, Universities fees cap at £3000 and refusing to introduce free schools and league tables.

The Welsh Assembly Government also claimed its objective was 'to democratize the intake to higher education', which related to their ambitious targets to widen participation throughout education' (2010:5). Welsh Labour's rhetoric appeared citizen centred, claiming that they desired an 'education system that fits around the needs of individuals and not vice-versa (2010:5). There was specific recognition in its 'Improving Public services', policy that its education system should play an intrinsic role in democracy. 'Offering flexible accessible-learner centred provision, to contribute to reviving and sustaining of communities and shaping of a democratic, civilised and inclusive society' (2010:8).

However, complications occurred within the wider framework of Westminster policies. An education officer at the Welsh Government highlighted some of the difficulties for the young government, when carrying out policies within the somewhat complex layers of government, as follows:

'Where we do potentially have difficulty to some degree is in things like ESOL for instance, where the education side of it is devolved but issues around the UK Border Agency are not and so the UK government can introduce conditions attached to residency, which we then have to work within the boundaries of but sometimes can be in conflict with our own policies,' Interview Civil Servant (8/5/2012:4).

It is therefore apparent that despite some attempts to encourage a more democratic and inclusive approach to and through education there are restrictions within Welsh Government educational policies. Also, importantly these limitations lie within the context of wider UK wide and global economic and political constraints.

5.10 Lifelong learning and active citizenship within the Welsh context

Lifelong learning in Wales has appeared to be held in high regard with the devolved government, with recognition that adult and community education can have a significant impact on the lives of citizens in Wales. Welsh Government policies have documented that adult education can have wider benefits for individuals and their society. Adult community learning (ALC) has been defined by the Welsh Government as 'flexible learning for adults, delivered in community venues to meet local needs', *Delivering Community Learning for Wales* (2010:3). Lifelong learning and ALC consistently re-emerged in Welsh policies and initiatives as a mechanism by which the people of Wales would be encouraged to participate and where greater equal opportunities would be offered. The Welsh Assembly Government's ambition is for a self-confident, prosperous, healthy nation and society', Andrews (2010:2). In the *Learning Country*, it claimed that their 'vision of a society in which learning throughout life is the norm, where the people of Wales are actively engaged in acquiring new knowledge and skills from childhood to old ages. Adult Learning is central to that vision' (2010:1).

Changes brought about under the Welsh Governments, did however raise questions regarding the extent to which it could deliver on these visions. In 2001 under the *Learning and Skills Act 2000*, the Welsh Assembly Government brought together the funding councils for higher and further education- the National Council for Education and Learning. This included 25,000 adult community learners. As a result it was claimed that 'much community based learning became ineligible for funding. There was (also) a shift away from community based non-accredited learning and towards provision through further education institutions', Bowen et al (2004:44). Alongside this process of centralisation and focus on further education rather than community education were higher expectations on the Third Sector to deliver education. Within the Third Sector there had been an increasing 'reliance on funding from Welsh Assembly measures (which) have been complicated and linked to short-term

funding streams such as Communities First (previously discussed in Chapter 4) and European Social Funding,' Bowen et al (2004:47).

In contrast to UK Government initiatives there has been an emphasis on reducing competition between Third Sector providers. The Welsh Government conveyed an understanding of the negative impact of the contract and competitive culture on Third Sector providers: 'Partnership working is far easier to facilitate when organisations and individuals are not forced into competition for resources but encouraged through incentives to work collaboratively. In the contract based culture, short-term gains have been prioritised over longer-term investments in to key services, including education,' Interview Welsh Government Officer (8/5/2012:1). Further examination of these tensions regarding pressures on Third Sector providers are highlighted in relation to the impact they had on the work of the WEA South Wales, in chapters 7 and 9.

Despite the differences in political cultures, the emphasis of the Welsh Government like the UK largely focuses on skills for employability. 'A successful Welsh economy is reliant on higher skills... only through investment in our most precious resource people- can we realise Wales 'full potential' Prosperity, Work and Network (2010:10). This focus on employability was however set within a context of 'wider ambitions of social justice and fairness' (2010:11). A Welsh Government officer confirmed that employment remained the focus of the Welsh Government:

'For us as a government a lot of that is about trying to get as many people back into the workplace or in some cases even being introduced to the workplace for the first time because when they are in the workplace they are engaged in society and working helps that. Our job is to work with organisations like the WEA, like the Third Sector also Further Education institutions, local government both through our remit to them when it comes to the funding about being very clear about what we expect from our funding and helping them to understand what it is that we want and being very clear about that', Interview Welsh Government Officer (8/5/2012:3).

The continuous focus on employability was tempered by the Welsh Assembly Government's claims that it also acknowledged other social priorities for ACL.

The Delivering Community Learning for Wales- policy statement emphasised that:

‘ACL... is not primarily concerned with addressing national skills shortages in occupational areas identified centrally by the Welsh Assembly Government. It is about a tailored range of learning opportunities determined by local providers to meet local demand, which in the case of publically funded programmes, ought to be targeted at those in greatest need’(2010:4).

In line with these wider benefits, there was also recognition of the importance of ‘softer skills’ such as increased confidence and motivation in order to encourage participation. Likewise there was specific reference to the Welsh Government perceiving ‘citizenship’ as a core skill and one of its 6 key purposes (2010:6). These were to ‘contribute to reviving and sustaining of communities and shaping of a democratic, civilised and inclusive society’ (2010:8). They asserted that ‘we want to create a culture which values ACL, where individuals are supported to manage their own learning, and where learning opportunities are coherently and collaboratively developed to enable learners to achieve their full potential,’ (ibid) (2010:11). These aims have long been associated with certain Third Sector organisations, particularly those which have championed community development approaches such as the WEA. These policies therefore indicate how the culture within these organisations has influenced areas of government initiatives.

This was perhaps expressed through a specific type of educational provision, known as (ESDGC) Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship, gained state funding and implementation across Wales (some funding has also been available in England). Third Sector organisations such as the United Nations Association and the CEWC- the Council for Education in World Citizenship and the Welsh Centre for International Affairs in Wales, have long promoted different forms of global citizenship through education. This commitment demonstrated a heightened recognition that we live in an increasingly inter-dependent world, which requires greater levels of understanding in order to participate. Bennell & Norcliff argued that the

embodiment in Wales together with a revised curriculum ESDGC in Wales (2007:1) 'reflects the forms of transformative education'. In that the focus on ESDGC in an evolving curriculum in schools and adult education:

'Is on the development of a range of skills, values and attitudes... stresses the importance of research, critically considering evidence, seeking patterns, making connections, thinking laterally, forming opinions, respecting others and the world around us and taking action,' Bennell and Norcliff (2007:2).

The application of ESDGC through Third Sector organisations such as the WEA is reflected upon in chapter 7.

On the whole, there is evidence that ACL for citizenship has been recognised by the Welsh Governments as integral to its vision, but there appears to have been no longer-term mechanisms to protect it. The decline of Westminster funding and local authorities' budgets has seen that Adult Community learning has been increasingly provided and funded through the Third Sector as well as short-term government grants and initiatives. This has led to an increasingly inconsistent pattern across the field of providers perhaps counter-productively competing for resources.

5.11 Conclusions

There is evidence to suggest aspects of the Third Sector's provision in the UK, particularly those that use education to enable and empower citizens can and has made a positive contribution to promoting active citizenship. It is an arena where some of the most socially excluded citizens have had the opportunity to be heard or participate in society, regardless of resources and on their own terms. Despite this, provision has been inconsistent and often absent where it is needed most. Unlike the state there is no obligation to provide equal support to all citizens, as independent organisations within the Third Sector are not accountable to the public at large. It thus appears essential that the state continues have an intrinsic role in the provision of basic welfare services, as well as education.

However the increasingly distorted line between the UK's Third Sector and governments has changed this dynamic and raised critical questions about the nature of civil society and citizen engagement. Transformations in these relationships have provided a new space for different sectors to work in partnership with the state. Where the Third Sector provides specialist provision it complements the state. In this situation the state could play a central role in providing financial and corporate support to Third Sector organisations and voluntary activity, to ensure that there is more equitable voluntary sector provision as well as more routes to participation- particularly for the most disadvantaged areas and individuals. It is clear however that there has been mounting pressure from UK wide and Welsh Governments on Third Sector and voluntary organisations to take on services initially provided by the state. Increasing levels of funding from Government have been coupled with higher levels of control over the work of the Third Sector. In turn it has arguably left minimal space for citizens to challenge governments and act on their own terms through the Third Sector.

Through policy documents and interviews the Welsh Government gave the impression that it has recognised the distinctive role that the Third Sector plays in delivering key services to people particularly socially excluded citizens. However, a mixed picture of co-option and partnership has arisen and requires on-going scrutiny. Since its inception, it has developed a close relationship with the Third Sector, drawing on its expertise particularly in areas such as adult community education. Welsh Governments have also emphasised the need for adult education to play a central role in establishing equal opportunities for all of its citizens and have invested in some Third Sector organisations such as the YMCA and WEA to deliver it on its behalf⁹, while continuing to reduce the role of local authorities to deliver community based education. Despite this, the focus remained on education for skills and employment, reflecting wider UK priorities. This has arguably undermined some of its wider objectives for

⁹ These organisations have also traditionally been funded by governments across the UK

education, such as to empower and engage its citizens within a socially just context.

Therefore the Third Sector remains in an ambiguous situation. The price of increased financial support from governments for some Third Sector organisations is coupled with less control over their own agendas, perhaps weakening of their capacity to enable the voices of critical citizens to be heard. It has also further concentrated the political influence of some Third Sector organisations (usually the largest) at the expenses of the smallest and more bespoke organisations. These issues are explored in further detail through a study of the WEA South Wales in the following chapters, questioning how far it has managed these tensions. It examines the limited capacity of the Third Sector within the context of UK and Welsh Governments' frameworks to influence to encourage meaningful citizen participation.

Chapter 6: The Workers' Educational Association and active citizenship

Introduction

The following chapters outline findings from the case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. This aims to illustrate how it was in many ways representative of – yet also in other ways different from other Third Sector organisations in the UK. In particular the case study focuses upon how the WEA South Wales aimed to empower its members to become active citizens, while contending with pressures to conform to government agendas. Also how it promoted equality through its educational practices while fulfilling government priorities.

In chapter 6, the WEA South Wales case study is introduced exploring the historical principles of the Workers' Educational Association within the UK, which have influenced its practices in previous and recent times. The chapter then places its focus on the work of the WEA in South Wales from 2009 until 2012. It specifically examines the type of citizen participation the organisation aimed to encourage through maintaining the dual purpose of the organisation as both an education provider and social movement. The chapter then explores varying concepts of active citizenship, by discussing the perceptions of WEA and its partner organisations' staff and participants, highlighting key themes and consistencies or differences across the organisation. It considers how far the democratic structures of the organisation can encourage democratic participation and transformative education for its members and if this democratic ethos is reflected in its educational practices. This illustrates the scope of its work as a Third Sector organisation, despite tensions with governments' policies towards citizenship and education.

6.1 The Workers' Educational Association: background and context

The Workers' Educational Association (WEA) is a long established Third Sector organisation with charitable status. Its prime function has been as an adult

education provider within a wider social movement. The movement from its origins proclaimed a clear social purpose, its founders believing in the potential of education to transform and improve the lives of the economically disadvantaged and its ability to transform the whole of society for the better. Their website stated that:

‘Founded by Albert Mansbridge in 1903, the association was created as an alliance between labour (working classes) and learning (universities). The WEA’s ideological roots are shared with a clutch of 19th century initiatives, such as the Mechanics Institute, the co-operative movement and popular public lectures on science, all created to encourage and support the desire by working people for further learning through their lives,’ {accessed 6/7/2011}.

It could be argued that a number of the WEA’s original goals had been achieved insofar that, according to Price and Williams writing with reference to in England (2007:153), ‘in the post-World War Two period the advent of universal secondary and higher education vindicated and completed the work of the WEA’. However, Richard Lewis cited and highlighted the on-going challenges that the WEA were confronted with in the post-war era:

‘Full employment and a huge expansion of higher education in the 1960s and 1970s confronted the WEA in Wales and eroded its role as an opportunity agency. However the changing nature of work and especially the growth of female employment and the wider equal opportunities debate provided the Association with new challenges’ Roberts (2003:212).

Despite advances in the provision of universal education, there have still remained widespread socio-economic divisions and inequalities. The Office of National Statistics stated that participation rates in Higher Education in the UK stood at only around 12% in 1974, therefore still reaching only a small proportion of the population. Consequently further work was required to enable generations of citizens to reach their full potential. The continued need for challenging social injustice through education was highlighted in the 1970’s when the WEA gave the Russell Committee evidence. Price and Williams in England described how ‘in addition to liberal education and work with trade

unions, it had expertise in developing greater social and political awareness and in taking education to socially and culturally deprived communities' (2007:154). By its own admission this highlighted the on-going desire that the WEA had to engage citizens in political discourse, as well as to influence the underlying social structures, in order to enhance social justice.

More recently during Tony Blair's time as Labour Prime Minister in 2002 he also appeared to recognise the essential role of Lifelong Learning and the WEA in the education of adults, as well as its wider contribution to social justice and indeed active citizenship:

'Learning through life has never been more important. We live in an increasingly competitive world where skills are the key to maintaining and improving our standard of living. But lifelong learning is much more. It contributes to our quality of life. It promotes active citizenship. It can help us end social exclusion by giving individuals and communities real hope for future prosperity and well-being. This is why we in the UK are working to create a learning culture, in which all participate, and from which all benefit. The Government acknowledges the important contribution of the WEA has made in the UK', Blair in Roberts (2003: vii).

New Labour's approach to education under Tony Blair arguably steered education policies away from traditional Labour movement notions of education as a right for all with increasing a focus on skills for work. Despite this, it is clear that he recognised the positive contribution and long-term influence of the WEA, in that it had a long history of providing adult education, with wider social purpose. For this reason, it appears it was both at odds with and in line with consecutive UK governments, in that the WEA has historically aimed to both support and challenge government agendas.

6.2 The WEA in the UK- a focus on Wales

Accounts show that the WEA has played a distinct and constantly evolving role in the political and educational history of the UK over the last century. Lewis in Roberts stated that in Wales, the organisation delivered programmes so that

‘per head of the population, far more people participated in the classes of the WEA in Wales than in any other part of the United Kingdom’ (2003:198).

According to records and their website ‘the WEA in Wales came into being in 1907, four years after the WEA in England’ accessed {6/7/2011}. Until 1990’s the WEA was a UK wide organisation, comprising of a federation of regional districts. However due to political and financial pressures mainly deriving from the government the organisation split into independent bodies. In 2012 the WEA was divided into four organisations- two associations in Wales, which were to amalgamate in 2013, also one organisation in Northern Ireland and one covering both England and Scotland. It has been argued that changes to the funding regimes, and the division of the regions, generated greater challenges for the separate organisations to hold onto their underlying missions. This was since funding was re-directed away from informal, community based citizenship education, into more centralised, predetermined forms of education. Following the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, a new funding regime was introduced in 1993. As in England, the Welsh districts and Coleg Harlech, (a North Wales residential college for adults) ‘became a designated institution.’ This meant that they were no longer directly funded through central government. ‘Instead’ as Price and Williams in England recalled ‘they were funded on the same formula as the newly-created Further Education College Corporations by the Further Education Funding Council Wales (FEFCW)’ (2007:153). This had major implications for the WEA as it was now to compete for funding with mainstream further education providers and therefore became subject to most of the same rules and regulations.

From 1993, the then WEA in Wales was divided between the WEA North Wales, and the WEA South Wales. At this time Coleg Harlech was still a separate body. From 1997 North Wales:

‘A number of changes were introduced very rapidly. This included a revision of the constitution that created a smaller and more accountable management committee. A complete re-evaluation of the curriculum was undertaken in the light of the funding methodology and tight

controls introduced on class sizes and the cost effectiveness of learning programmes,' Price and Williams in England (2007:160).

As a result of increased financial difficulties the WEA North Wales and Coleg Harlech eventually became one organisation in 2001. Since that time Coleg Harlech North Wales WEA and WEA South Wales have been run primarily as tertiary education providers. The emphasis in both the North and South Wales WEA divisions has remained focussed on attracting 'second chance learners.', which involved providing people with another opportunity to participate in education that may have been 'failed by (mainstream) education in the past' Price and Williams in England (2007:161).

The underlying philosophical differences between the two organisations have become more acute since 1997, however. Whilst there were some similarities in response to these funding changes, there were also several significant differences too. It appears the WEA South Wales adapted more flexibly to take advantage of alternative funding streams available to them, such as capitalising on European Social Funding Objective 1 funding opportunities. This included extra funding for the most socio-economically deprived areas in South Wales including the South East Wales, Valleys, West Wales and therefore targeting those areas most in need of opportunities, Price and Williams in England (2007:157). Unlike CHWEAN, the WEA in South Wales has arguably also maintained a more traditional ethos towards the structure and purpose of the organisation, insofar that it has aimed to continue to promote itself as a social movement. It also remained governed by a democratically run elected board and continued to be responsible to its members, in the branches throughout South Wales. The North Wales organisation in contrast appointed its governing structure instead of continuing with an elected governing body.

Despite these differences the North and South divisions of Wales WEA both have been subject to increasing financial and political pressure from the Welsh Government to amalgamate into one nationwide organisation in 2013. It has been due largely to these pressures that the organisation's founding principles have been potentially under threat of being compromised. This has been

particularly relevant in regards to the changing culture that has occurred within the North Wales division of the WEA:

‘The WEA’s and Coleg Harlech have been burdened by the level of reporting for data and for systems of control, governance and audit. As small organisations they are subject to the same level of reporting and monitoring as much as larger institutions. A need to operate within the ethos of further education has caused a narrowing of the curriculum... and a stronger emphasis has been placed on qualifications as an end goal’ Price and Williams in England (2007:161).

The continuation and increased levels of government influence with regards to the nature of the work of the WEA, as well as the sustainability of the organisation as a democratic, Third Sector body are discussed in further detail subsequently.

6.3 The WEA and working class culture in Wales

The extent to which the WEA South Wales has maintained an underlying and continued commitment to education as a mechanism for social change has been examined throughout the research. Its focus on social justice rather than education for ‘domination’ or ‘domestication’ Freire (1972) it has been argued, sets itself apart from many other education providers and Third Sector organisations. It considers itself as much a social movement as an education provider and has traditionally worked in local communities, bringing education to the learner. Its impact on the educational and political culture in South Wales has long been speculated upon and as Richard Lewis (in Roberts) observed ‘it is widely believed that nowhere in Britain did the Workers’ Educational Association make more of an impact on social and political life in the Twentieth Century than in Wales’ (2007:198). These underlying commitments have been perhaps particularly marked in South Wales, due to its historical links to working class education. There was a strong historical precedent within Wales for learning, political activism and self- realisation.

Based around the early Trade Union movement in the 19th Century, working class people sought to educate themselves and their families and provide equal

opportunities for their own and future generations. Wales' strong working class roots are intertwined with the industrial revolution and the conspicuous social changes that took place. These communities sought and developed co-operative systems within their own communities to provide educational, cultural and basic health provisions for all. Progressive campaigns such as those enacted by the Chartists in the 19th century epitomised the depth of political and social education that existed amongst the working classes in Wales, long before the state had provided universal education. Therefore it is no surprise that the WEA in Wales would become central to working class education.

It could be considered then that Wales has a strong history of grassroots, self-organised democratic education and that this continues to be an influencing factor in the organisation's desire to maintain its strong links to active citizenship and education for a 'social purpose.' One long-term tutor elaborated on this:

'If you think about the Independent Labour Party for example which was rife in this area, and would take that on board to this area of political citizenship, of the quest for female suffrage, of the equality of opportunity in education... there is a notion of good citizenship enshrined in there' Interview WEA Tutor (23/9/2010).

Richard Lewis (in Roberts) reiterates this historical connection to a self-enabled collective and critical learning culture, as described in the Fifth Annual Report of the Workers' Educational Association for Wales (1911-12):

'The WEA in Wales evolved in the context of a traditional democratic culture that revered learning and literacy, founded in large measure to be pre-dominant(antly) non-conformist... it fostered and reinforced the growth of largely untutored book learning. In the mining valley towns and villages especially, the self-taught well-read working man constituted a small, often significant minority' Roberts (2003:198).

The central role of the WEA within Wales' historical learning culture was reiterated by Wales' then Minister for Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning and Welsh Labour's representative Leighton Andrews in a speech in 2010:

'We have a distinctly Welsh tradition... of adult learning with institutions which held a unique historical place in... the emergence of Wales in the last century. The WEA; the institutes; the involvement of Trade Unions... all them looking for the potential of the ordinary person to engage and thrive through learning,' Andrews (2010).

This underlying culture, it could be argued, has a significant although perhaps diminishing influence on the ethos of the WEA South Wales even in its current form. Lewis in Roberts highlights these consistencies and concluded that:

'Despite shifting agendas and priorities, and through various debates about its role and relevance, the WEA in Wales has retained its distinct identity and its engagement in political life. Perhaps nowhere is the extent to which the WEA in Wales is still woven into the fabric of Welsh public life more visible than in the way that so many of its former employees from the late 1970s have become prominent local, national and even international politicians,' Lewis in Roberts (2003:212).

Despite a history of grassroots educational culture, Wales still suffers from poor levels of literacy and numeracy however. This is particularly prevalent in areas of high deprivation, as was previously discussed in chapter 5. Therefore the case could be made for the WEA to continue to focus on these deprived areas and individuals, which is explored further in chapter 8.

6.4 The case study of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales

The research explored the extent to which the Workers' Educational Association South Wales encouraged and enabled active citizenship and community engagement through its work as an adult education provider with a wider social purpose. It also reflects on the challenges the organisation faced when attempting to deliver its ideals within the wider socio-political climate, taking account of the tensions and competing pressures on Third Sector provisions and adult community learning in challenging times. The research explores the claims by the organisation that 'it aims to support the learning and skills development and prosperity of the population of South Wales in order to promote citizenship, cultural enrichment, social justice, health and well-being,' {website accessed 2011}.

It examines how the organisation worked in partnership with other Third Sector, private and public organisations to provide local and specialised provision for a wide variety of participants, with particular emphasis on 'hard to reach' communities. Additionally it highlights some of the fundamental challenges that exist when enabling citizens to become active and to what extent the WEA South Wales has attempted to overcome underlying barriers to participation. Fryer asserts that there are some fundamental principles and approaches that need to be applied by lifelong learning providers, when seeking to encourage active citizenship:

'Any approach for underpinning citizenship and belonging with lifelong learning will have to demonstrate its capability of serving principally as an enabling and empowering framework, likely to help learners advance their interests as citizens. It will need to show that it can be applied in ways that meet learner's needs, interests and priorities and which facilitate the full expression of their identities and sense of belonging,' Fryer (2010:213).

The research considers the practices of the WEA within the context of these key principles. It also highlights some of the central political and financial challenges that the WEA would need to address in order to provide the level and type of education it has claimed to offer in order to promote social justice and active citizenship. Its relationship with the Welsh Government is given particular attention in chapter 9, as the research examines the role of the organisation within the context of Welsh devolution.

In the initial stages of the fieldwork, I was aware of specific structural barriers faced by deprived and marginalised communities in South Wales, as well as the challenges posed as a result of public policies. This included the implementation of social welfare policies that were reinforcing negative stereotypes for disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities, discussed in chapter 4. Challenges faced by Third Sector organisations that were increasingly dependent on public funding were referred to in chapter 5. This was at a time when government agendas were focusing upon reducing public expenditure and targeting employability, leaving correspondingly less scope for the wider

educational agendas of organisations such as the WEA. Whilst there seemed to be some space for such agendas within the context of devolution in Wales as discussed in previous chapters, this also seemed to be relatively limited by the funding system that underpinned the Westminster Government's continuing influence.

So when I compared the WEA's aims and objectives with this reality, my expectations of what might be achieved in practice were relatively low. As the following sections illustrate however, despite my deepening understanding of the barriers to be faced, I was also increasingly surprised by the achievements of the WEA and its participants as they struggled with these challenges.

The research participants- groups and individuals

As chapter 2 has explained in more detail, the research has focused the study as a participant observer in a cross-section of classes and activities. The following classes formed the central part of the study:

Disability and Equality Awareness Group/ People First (participants with learning disabilities)
Education for Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development (Cardiff area)
Know Your Rights (Valleys group a socio-economically deprived community)
Advocats Music Group (participants with learning disabilities)

Interviews:

Community Computer Care Social Enterprise
GliN Communities First/ WEA 1 year Funded Programme in South East Wales

The following discussions include material from semi-formal and informal interviews from WEA South Wales staff and participants of these classes and groups. Also, the research findings have been triangulated as a result of other forms of feedback and evidence from WEA staff and from participants, and

findings from my own involvement in the process as a critical and reflexive friend to the WEA South Wales.

After a process of consultation and reflective discussions with staff and members, these groups were selected as some exemplars of best practice, in terms of their ability to fulfil the WEA's criteria and illustrate aspects of active citizenship. These examples demonstrated their work with some of the most disadvantaged groups such as those with learning disabilities and deprived valleys communities. They also demonstrated topic specific relevance such as the global citizenship classes.

Other classes and activities outside of those formally agreed with the WEA were also attended, providing a wider basis for scrutiny and understanding of other examples of the WEA's work, enabling me to check for possible bias in the WEA's own suggestions. Throughout the process of participant observation, the work of the WEA overlapped with other Third Sector and public organisations and thus the findings were at times representative of the input of experiences of multiple organisations. These partnerships are highlighted within the findings and in chapter 7.

6.5 The WEA South Wales and education for active citizenship

As a long-established community based organisation, the WEA South Wales in its own words aimed to provide 'education for participation, whether in local communities or in a wider democratic sense,' website {accessed 10/7/2011}. Therefore democratic education and participation could thus be perceived as central to its desired outcomes and practices. It claimed that 'it is responsive to the needs of individuals and their communities for liberal and other education'. It provided these services through what could broadly be described as a liberal style of education, using community development techniques. The extent to which the role of democratic education and social justice was apparent throughout the case study of the work of the Workers' Educational Association

South Wales is explored through the following accounts, from the WEA itself and from other stakeholders.

In 2011 the Workers' Educational Association South Wales described itself as:

'A voluntary movement committed to the promotion and provision of educational opportunities in the widest sense, with due regard to Welsh language and culture, and the diversity of communities based in Wales, and is concerned particularly with those outside traditional education provision,' website {accessed 11/6/2011}.

It was proclaimed that from the establishment of the movement for the WEA there has been an assumed link between education and active citizenship. Thus, education would be the vehicle via which active and full citizenship could be achieved. This would occur through providing all adults with equal opportunities to education. Their ultimate aim has been to achieve social justice and this was expressed through their objective, which was described as 'the creation of an educated democracy in which participation in public affairs and the knowledge that it requires, are widely spread throughout the community' website {accessed 16/9/2010}.

Traditionally this viewpoint has endured from as far back as 1943, as Gass (2002) described 'its principle object is to train capacity and develop the power of criticism and of independent and constructive thought directed to social action'. The means by which the WEA has endeavoured to promote active citizenship, according to Fieldhouse has been 'the government of the student by the student' (1996:188). This is conveyed through the WEA's South Wales', Learner Involvement Statement in 2012 which affirmed that it 'is committed to providing an excellent effective learning experience' through a number of key practices including: 'Supporting learners individually and collectively to be actively involved in the learning dialogue'. Therefore the WEA has long aimed to promote democracy as a learnt practice as well as a principle.

Fryer also asserts that this style and approach to learning can encourage active citizenship, 'the kind of learning that is likely to stimulate the development of

active citizenship and facilitate the democratic exploration of diversity of identity and culture will need itself to incorporate active engagement and exploration on the part of the learners, rather than mere reception of authoritative transmission' Fryer (2010:224).

Central to what has traditionally differentiated the WEA South Wales from other education providers and some Third Sector organisations is that it has aimed to deliver education as democratic praxis. This is in line with the community development style of education. Roberts reaffirms that 'from the outset the Association was based on democratic principles' (2003:1). The WEA South Wales claimed that the 'the Association remains a voluntary organisation, run democratically through its branches and members, with many WEA learners actively involved in planning new learning' {accessed 16/7/2011}. The extent to which learning through different democratic styles and processes occurred was explored through a process observing WEA activities and intervening staff and members. However, the way in which the staff and members conceptualised active citizenship overall is first examined.

6.6 Concepts of active citizenship in the WEA

As chapter 1 sets out, citizenship has been a contested concept. Those approaches that are particularly prevalent include liberal, civic republican/communitarian and radical perspectives. The broadly 'civic republican' protagonist Bernard Crick views active citizenship less as a 'subject for the classroom and more of a life skill' based on participation, in Mayo and Annette (2010:23-24). This interpretation focuses essentially on the active rather than passive concept of citizenship, therefore implying that citizenship cannot be full or fulfilling without a level of activity and participation. Thus the rights and status that are bestowed on the citizen by a state can only form part of the overall concept of citizenship. This inherent link between action and citizenship was expressed repeatedly throughout the research into the work and views of WEA Members and participants. For example, a staff member described active citizenship in terms of a process that 'is about moving from being passive to

active and not letting things be done to you and actually thinking “no” ... I suppose the confidence comes into it then when you have been knocked back and still keep going because that is hard to do sometimes’ Interview staff member (23/9/2010:7a).

The complexity comes in pinpointing exactly what active citizenship involves and how it can be enabled and encouraged. Traditionally many social scientists and politicians have argued that this involves people taking on ‘civic roles’, such as taking part in community meetings, becoming magistrates, politicians, school governors and mentors. These activities broadly correspond with the type of ‘civic republican’ view of active citizenship which had become the most popular definition associated with New Labour Governments. However, although formal roles are important, this interpretation often overlooks the more subtle and at times more crucial part that people play in making positive contributions to society at large in alternative and informal ways. This WEA staff member conveys a more radical viewpoint than in arguing that active citizenship goes beyond these basic formal tenets as it is ‘very important it is about engaging people in whatever that community is... Active citizenship isn’t just at the community level at all. It is right through’ (24/9/2010:1). This perspective appears to reflect the WEA’s broad grassroots definitions and an overall more liberating and empowering approach to education and active citizenship.

This had traditionally been a fundamental aspect of the WEA’s somewhat more radical educational aims, insofar that it believed that political and democratic education is a central facet to active citizenship and a key transformative tool for social change. Another WEA member of staff similarly reiterated that active citizenship is about more than taking on formal roles in society:

‘There are ways that people can be active citizens in terms of discussions, in that it is less of being a community activist in development terms but where people are talking to others about their role in society and the impact of policies on them. So they don’t have to be going out with banners marching and community action... but challenges perhaps racism or sexism and encouraging others to question and understand their role in society. So for me it is an educative

discussion and information as well as doing something about the situation that you are in,' Interview staff member (27/9/2010:1).

This somewhat broader definition of active citizenship reflects the multi-layered concept espoused by Lister (2003), recognising the variety of actions which can positively contribute to change in society. From this and a variety of perspectives active citizenship is not and cannot be something that is bestowed upon you, you acquire or simply display overnight. It is a process and as many commentators maintain, central to that process is education. Being an active citizen involves a type of education which evolves over time and involves challenging and being challenged on a personal and social level. This viewpoint aligned with Freire (1972) and Bourdieu (1977), was expressed by a long-term tutor of the WEA. 'It is an educational process for sure. It is a learning curve to get people to think of themselves as a citizen and what responsibilities as well as rights that the concept holds for them,' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:1b).

WEA participants also perceived that active citizenship is no easy task. As a Community Learning Representative stated:

'What it does involve is dedication... because there are some days especially on a winter's evening when you think I have had enough of this I just want to stay in and watch television. Then you get up and go to a meeting of some sorts whether you take part in a meeting or just by going there to give solidarity to some of the people' Interview CRL (9/5/2011:9b).

The idea that active citizenship takes commitment, if not at times bravery and sacrifice has been emphasised by a WEA staff member as follows. 'You have to be there when the chips are down, be counted with your hand up more often than not. That is a hard task in this day' (23/9/2010:10b). For another active member, it in essence involves social actions, 'it is knowing that you have helped someone' (9/5/2010:9b). The idea that active citizenship is about behaving in a way that helps others was reiterated by this member who succinctly described it as 'to try and support others' (9/5/2010:9b). This

perspective reflects the social and reflective notions of 'deep citizenship' described in chapter 3 by P B Clarke (1998).

A number of staff members each separately reiterated that the individual's ability and belief to make an impact on the world around them is central to active citizenship. It is 'being engaged in things around you and thinking you can change things for the better and not being afraid to have a go at it' (23/9/2010:1a). It implies that a sense of belonging and self-actualisation are required in order to engage in activities for change. 'If we have the tools and the confidence' according to another staff member 'to make the right changes we can improve our lots significantly, whatever, our circumstances, financial, academic, whatever' (4/10/2010:1). One of the main functions of the WEA, according to this staff member is to help people believe in their own potential to change things. 'I think there is a feeling that society has become passive and that things are done for and to people. As far as I am concerned I see the WEA as a vehicle for changing that attitude' (4/10/2010:10).

The terminology of 'citizenship' itself can be a barrier, as the cultural context needs to be considered. A long term tutor reflected on this as follows, 'it is well embedded in French and cultural thought. It is very much a stock concept well understood in European continental thought and action. Less so in British, but surely what kept Merthyr Tydfil going in the 1930s was good citizenship' (23/9/2010:3b). However, the term is being redefined by government and mainstream political culture and therefore possibly has a new meaning for younger generations. Nonetheless as has been argued in chapter 1, British people often still have deferential perceptions of the concept and that if the meaning is determined by government and not citizens themselves, it lacks the capacity to empower citizens on their own terms. A tutor pointed out that learners were 'quite often thinking that the terminology around active citizenship is out of their league. Believing they don't have a role in it and not realising that they are very often active citizens' (24/9/2010:2). This is reflected in Frazer's perspective, in that 'citizenship is identified with a particular class

identity and a deferential attitude to certain values (hierarchy, respectability and the like) which should be contested' (2000:96).

For some members of the WEA political citizenship is the ultimate form of active citizenship as it requires the individual to reflect on and influence the political context of their lives in relation to others. Alongside this perspective is the view that active citizenship is always about social context and involves a level of collective reflection and action. For example, one staff member asserted that:

'I think for me citizenship as a concept is inevitably about political relationships; it is about relationships between individuals and the state or groups of individuals and the state... I think it should be seen in terms of collective relationships as well... I think it follows that active citizenship should involve activity by groups in relation to political processes in relation to the state,' Interview staff member (16/9/2010:1).

While undoubtedly the relationship between the citizen and the state is significant, particularly regarding the direct impact of government policies on people's lives, political relationships also exist on a multitude of levels and influencing power structures can take many informal and formal methods. This has been increasingly so as political boundaries increasingly transcend the state. Thus the political relationship between the citizen and state is one of many, and as previous chapters highlight, this includes devolved and global levels of governance. Political and cultural relationships and identities are constantly evolving and therefore the concept of what citizenship can involve can also reflect this transient form.

Ultimately citizens are individuals, and, whether acting in singularity or as a collective, possess different needs and capabilities. The contribution that each citizen can make is arguably more usefully perceived within these terms, insofar that citizens can only give as much as their ability and resources allows them to do so. There is a need to take into consideration the underlying situations and conditions which each citizen faces in order to understand the level of contribution that they make whether politically or socially. This multi-layered

perspective also reflects the concepts of Lister (2003:68) and Young (1990:48) of 'universal differentiation' and 'differentiated citizenship'.

Possibly key to the idea of active citizenship then, as many members have articulated, is the notion that that active citizenship is fundamentally a social and political concept. Acting as part of a collective could arguably again describe this process in forward looking if not ideal terms. Active citizenship could be considered as acts, which aim to support individuals or groups or influence change in society in conscious and positive but also a wide variety of ways and on different levels. The degree to which the WEA attempts to recognise, address and sometimes challenge the different types of political and social relationships is further explored in the following findings.

6.7 The significance of being an organisation with a democratic structure

Through examining its practices and statements of purpose, the WEA South Wales between 2009 and 2012 aimed to promote democratic and voluntary participation on a structural level. It sought to advance democratic education through both theory and practice and encouraged its members to take a key role in educational choices and the way in which the organisation is governed. All learners had the opportunity to become members (for a small fee of around £3) and therefore possessed the potential opportunity to be elected to the governing body and to influence the way in which the organisation is run. Members were also encouraged to set up and participate in local and virtual branches or groups, which had the right to make decisions about courses and community activities, with the eventual aim of being self-sustaining. The WEA website stated that:

'The WEA South Wales is governed by a Council of 25 voluntary members, representing Branches, affiliated organisations and individual members who meet at least 6 times during the year. Their role is to provide the democratic governance of the organisation, ensuring that it meets its mission, adheres to its values and ethos and to the regulations of its funding bodies,' website {accessed 16/7/2011}.

The Council in 2011 had five Committees which reported to the full council. They also included co-opted members with specific specialisms. Their role has been to advise upon the development of strategic plans, make certain that the learners' voice is heard, monitor and scrutinise plans and policies, and ensure that the WEA South Wales was meeting its targets and those of its funders. The role of the branches has been an important part of democratic process in practice, as one staff member explained that 'they actually have branch meetings and they decide on their own learning and they also decide on social activities, visits trips and I think that by doing that they are building up the soft skills like having a say, perhaps for the first time' interview staff member (23/9/2010:1a).

Another member of staff separately reiterated that 'I think that the organisation itself has quite an open sort of culture and itself encourages active citizenship through the way we elect our governance and our council' (interview staff member 24/9/2010:2). The opportunity to be a branch member potentially enabled people to continue their education outside of the formal educational activities. It also provided a platform from which members were able to influence decisions made regarding education in their community as well as at a regional level. A staff member explained that 'the mechanism of branches means that we can encourage people to stay affiliated to us and members of us. So that friendship that has been forged by learning a subject together, whatever the subject was. It could be maintained and then that could grow into something else' (4/10/2010:2-3).

There were however, concerns amongst staff over the diminishing amount of members that created and sustained branches. A number of explanations could be provided for this downward trend. Over the last 3 decades changes in the political culture have led to greater scepticism towards participating in formal democratic structures and processes more generally, highlighted in chapters 1 and 3. This has included the dramatic decline in industrial employment and hence the influence of the Trade Union movement, particularly in South Wales.

There has been a decrease in political party membership and a move towards single issue politics. In addition there has been a dramatic emphasis away from what have been traditionally considered local and national issues to recognition that wider 'global' issues can be equally as important. Therefore it could be perceived that members became sceptical about participating in traditional branches. There was however evidence of attempts to rejuvenate participation through the democratic structures of the WEA, by creating new avenues for participating. 'There has always been a tradition in the WEA of grassroots learning' according to one staff member 'they look to localities, and we are trying to reinvigorate branch membership, branch structure where democratic voice calls the shots' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:3b). This had included as stated by another interviewed staff member 'study groups or even clubs in some areas' (27/9/2010:2).

It could also be perceived that combining the roles of the General Secretary and Chief Executive, ensured a certain level of accountability to the organisations' members and was important to the practice and promotion of democratic values. Additionally maintaining a democratic structure remained of central importance. Faced with The WEA's AGM and annual conference 2012 at Llanhilleth, the WEA reiterated its commitment to democratic accountability and participation as part of its structural makeup when amalgamating with North Wales. It stipulated that it required, at least in part, a democratically elected structure whilst under pressure from WEA North to change into a non-elected appointed governing body. This would have been made up of 19 representatives, 10 elected, 8 appointed and 1 ex officio.

This underlying approach shows a commitment to the principles of democratic education through embedding democratic voices based entirely on voluntary participation within the official decision making processes. It demonstrated the potential impact that participating in a democratic structure can have on the wider political system and learning. However the future of this democratic structure has been uncertain with the merger with the CHWEAN which is further discussed in chapter 8.

6.8 Political education in the modern WEA

Political education has been a central but widely debated aspect of the WEA's provision and remained a significant factor throughout the study in relation to the notion of active citizenship. This reflects key aspects of the underlying ethos of the WEA from when it was established. There have always been struggles between those that believe its purpose is to promote 'liberal' education and those that argue for more specifically ideological political education. Some staff members perceived that society does not provide the tools for contextualising beliefs within the wider political framework. For example a staff member stated that 'there needs to be an acknowledgement of the political context of community activity and the political relationships that people are involved in and what we belong to is essentially a political community,' Interview staff member (16/9/2011:2).

Despite a traditionally strong political educational culture in Wales and the UK referred to earlier in the chapter, there appears to have been some fragmentation of political consciousness. This, according to a long-term member, could be largely attributed to factors including a 'decline in engaging with political parties with low membership and a decline in trade unions both of which were training grounds for people to think and learn about political ideas and skills'. In their view it is not merely the political knowledge and skills that have diminished but 'people's expectations of democracy' (16/9/2010:6). This in itself could therefore be perceived as a 'cultural barrier' (ibid).

However, there appeared to be sound examples where the WEA was bridging the gap between the understanding of some political concepts and the development of democratic consciousness. A member of WEA staff described a previous research project, which highlighted the experiences of members of two South Wales WEA branches, as follows:

'In some of the cases of people I interviewed their involvement in a democratic structure within the WEA played a significant part in them becoming more involved in their community, because they learned how

to behave democratically. That also raised expectations in how they should participate in wider society and how there should be opportunities to contribute and have their voices heard in a wider world' Interview Staff member (16/9/2010:2).

This illustrated what could be perceived as the process of 'self-actualisation,' and Freire's (1972:15) concept of political 'consciencisation,' whereby participants have become more aware and politically active due to their involvement with the WEA. It also signified a direct link to active citizenship, by providing an initial step to get involved in the WEA and community activities.

Lack of political education in itself could be perceived as a barrier towards participation in society on many levels. Findings from the Power Commission agree with this perspective as it concluded that 'many people feel they lack information or knowledge about formal politics' (2006:18). Some staff perceived the WEA's work as a means of overcoming the inactivity levels of many disengaged citizens, as a staff member stated:

'People are confused by some of the concepts that come out by the government or some of the large issues they perhaps don't understand the big issues of society....they think "I can't have view or get involved"... so it is confidence, so it is part of what the WEA needs to do is to help people understand how they fit into society and how they can cope with some of the bigger concepts' Interview staff member (27/9/2010:3).

A staff member felt strongly, during an interview, that political education should be an intrinsic element of an individual's educational development, to the extent it could have been perceived as potentially as important as other 'basic skills' including literacy and numeracy. For this member 'political literacy... is a matter of justice as well, an entitlement' (16/9/2010:9). Courses which explicitly discuss politics have continuously been offered across the WEA South Wales and have taken a number of forms such as history, politics, and sociology and citizenship classes and are available at different levels. This includes courses such as 'Citizen of Wales', which was 'about understanding the Welsh Assembly Government' and 'Know Your Rights', where legal and political rights and organisations are taught in a local and international context (23/9/2010:9b).

Certain WEA members, for example Gass (2011), claim that the WEA appears to have become less overtly ideological compared to its earlier years. However it was clear that for some participants becoming a student with the WEA has changed their perspectives towards society and their own role within it. One Valleys group participant, for example, confirmed the provision of political education within the WEA as follows. 'We do engage to a degree in political learning' (3/2/2011:5). This participant went on to express the importance of being empowered in order to understand her circumstances and the lives of others within a political context, in order to be able to question and if desired change the system. She alluded to how education can provide the tools to transform people's lives, although recognising that it can also have negative effects. She explained that by raising people's political consciousness it can provide more challenges for people, as they then may have to choose whether to act or not to act in difficult circumstances. This participant asserted that 'because when you open your mind up and you see the unfair distribution of wealth, law, power and everything else then you have to ask yourself is it better not to know?' (ibid). Ultimately the participant's words suggest that everyone has the right to be educated, as central to her belief that education can empower people, but with it comes responsibility and at times sacrifice of contentment. 'You are in a situation whereby you are trapped and you can't do get out of it. Then on the other hand, it is good to educate, some of the others' (3/2/2011:1). This reflects the liberating style and purpose of education espoused by Freire (1972), as it aims to free citizens from the entrapments of their circumstances. However it also illustrates how education is a process which can at times be painful and difficult and which requires the ability and willingness to challenge yourself and others.

More subtle forms of political education were present throughout observations of the WEA's work. Corresponding with this multi-layered notion of political education, Andrews previously argued that the 'best political skills are everyday skills; the skills of dealing with power, sharing information, negotiating, managing and smoothing away conflict, determining priorities for action' Andrews (199:197). In the People First group participants, (also

referred to as committee members), were encouraged to vote on small issues regarding content of classes or planning activities (23/11/2010). Also, formal political processes including elections as well as politicians and institutions have been topics of discussion, in classes, groups and public lectures.

Members of the group also experienced aspects of the democratic system first hand. The tutor asked 'what is voting?' The class's response was 'voting is about saying what you want to happen' (11/1/2011). After consultation, members of the group also declared that all of them usually vote in elections, (this is a statistic much higher than average). Aspects of the referendum for Wales Law making Powers on 3rd March (2011), the Alternative Voting system and Welsh Assembly elections on 5th May (2011) have been examined in detail by the group. This included the election systems and the arguments for and against proposed changes. Selection of candidates also provoked some insightful perspectives. 'What have these people done for me?' one member asked (11/1/2011). According to the tutor, confidence, self-worth and education are all intertwined with the concept of democratic participation and active citizenship. 'I think a lot about voting is that maybe people don't understand or think that maybe one person can make a difference' (12/7/2011:3). Education in the view of one staff member is arguably central to the process of understanding 'your right to take part, your right to learn and your right to have a say whether it is in your community or just anything' (12/7/2011:3).

Gradually with exposure and encouragement to engage in democratic practices and access to political knowledge of political processes and issues, participants of the group felt more willing and able to express their political opinions. One member told the group that what they 'do not think is right is that they are cutting back on the vulnerable and all the bankers will still get their bonuses' (25/1/2011). Group participants were also given direct access to their political representatives for example, as their local Assembly Member had attended classes, open days and has met them at the Welsh Government. Again a two way informal process of communication was been encouraged, whereby group members ask questions and in turn describe their work (22/2/2011). The ability to engage with their local political representatives, particularly with the

devolved Welsh Government illustrated how democratic participation could occur as both practice and educational experience.

One participant of the group had been a representative of All Wales People's First Committee and asserted that she became a member and got involved as a result of doing the classes. 'I am on the all Wales People First Forum, I took over as a committee member' (24/4/2011:2a). The All People First website stated that the 'All Wales People First is the united voice of self-advocacy groups and all people with learning disabilities in Wales. It shares knowledge and information to achieve equal rights and a positive image' website {accessed 6/6/2010}. Its committee members have contributed towards policies and campaigns some of which are then passed onto the Welsh Assembly Government. The committee produced a manifesto which was presented to the Welsh Assembly in March 2011 which focused on the 'social model of disability'. This concept recognises that society contributes to the exclusionary effects of disability and aims to identify systemic barriers and negative attitudes which prevent full participation for people. It also contributes to the Learning Disability Implementation Advisory Group (LIADG), and the Welsh Government's initial strategy 'Fulfilling the Promises' on learning disabilities.

The People First group also took part in the '(L)DIAG) conference, which was made up of people from all areas of society working with people with learning disabilities. Each representative fed back the work of the group to his or her organisation and represented the perspective of his or her organisation to the group' website {accessed 7/6/2011}. The LDIAG conference on 9th November 2010 emphasised the importance for 'people with learning disabilities to speak up for themselves'. It provided a professional arena for people with learning disabilities, politicians, governmental and advocacy organisations to debate the fundamental issues that affect people's lives on a daily basis. 'How to make decisions' and 'what to do about cuts in services' were the main themes of the event. Participants were also asked by a LIADG Officer to consider 'why people with learning disabilities should get involved with politics?' Answers were given by participants including: 'people should be happy with policy directions', in

that people do perceive that they have a right to be represented by their government. They identified their democratic rights and responsibilities as citizens, and declared that 'it is part of our responsibility to vote' and that 'it is important to participate in politics as law makers make no attempt to include people's views that have learning disabilities' Speaker LDIAG Conference (9/11/2010). Retrospective evaluative comments were made by the People First group and it was agreed that one of the most positive features was that 'everybody could have a say' (17/11/2010).

The citizen's 'voice', was clearly of central concern, a desire to actively participate in politics at the most formal level was also expressed as one participant of the conference declared that 'they had hoped to run in the next election' (9/11/2010). Central to the conference was the idea that 'participation is a right.' The process of making decisions can be empowering in itself, as one People First participant claimed that 'making my own decisions, makes me feel wonderful' (17/11/2010). However it was also recognised that there are times when decision making can be challenging and therefore people 'would like a bit of support' in order to be able to make them, (ibid). Elements of citizen activation and methods of empowerment within the People First group are further discussed subsequently.

Overall it was apparent in the activities and classes observed, that the WEA encouraged at least in its widest sense, political and democratic education. Learners had the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of political systems and were empowered to discuss their opinions and viewpoints including with political representatives. Staff and learners alike were urged to think and participate democratically even in small ways.

6.9 Critical and democratic education- theory and practice

Critical thinking is at the core of what Fryer perceives education needs to invoke, when helping to establish citizens' embodiment of freedom, duty and obligation:

‘At the heart of any notion of citizenship... stand the twin ideas of independence and autonomy... For citizens to operate freely in the world, they must be free from undue interference- whether it be from the state or the undue incursions of others into their independence... independence of mind- the ability and confidence to assess situations, review evidence and argument, weigh opinion and express a point of view- is of crucial importance’ Fryer (2010: 218).

Central to the concept of education as a tool to enable people to critically think and reflect on their own situations is the idea that education should involve being taught ‘how to think, and not what to think’. This principle has been central to the WEA’s long established commitment to critical thought. The extent to which the WEA in South Wales has actually been able to encourage and develop participants’ capacity to think critically is further explored.

There are a number of skills aligned with critical and democratic practices and systems. Deliberation and participatory styles are central features to democracy at a micro and macro level. ‘Deliberation,’ according to Basleer and Humphries, enables the development of awareness and self-confidence ‘the aim of consciousness raising conversation is to enable people to come to voice and to enable aspects to emerge’ (2000:29). These techniques were observed across WEA South Wales classes and groups, as open discussions about a wide range of social and political topics relating to people’s lives occurred. According to one staff member, critical education was central to the WEA’s ethos. ‘I think a pre-requisite for political activity is that they learn how to think critically and those kinds of critical thinking skills tend to come where the curriculum provides opportunity for people to explore ideas, and how to express opinions and take part in a debate’ Interview staff member (16/9/2010:2).

Another staff member, for example, described what they perceived the process of education through the WEA involved: ‘It is about starting that critical thinking really and engaging with them in knowing that they have got a say. As well as that we also do, citizenship courses, politics courses’. In their view the WEA’s approach was to provide various activities to develop skills in critical thinking. ‘So the ordinary provision is very much about engaging people about critical

thinking, having ownership and having a say in things' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:2a).

This type of critical thinking was demonstrated, in practice, at the People First group. Regular debates took place on whether issues reported in the local and national media were reported legitimately, as members reflected on the relevance of these issues to their own lives. As a member of the group declared, following such discussions: 'The media is powerful and may not always say the truth or all the sides to a story' (23/11/2010). Here participants were encouraged to review current opinions and reflect on their own experiences and thoughts. Through this process it became clear that over time they were able to cultivate independence of thought and express themselves more freely.

Central to the concept of critical thinking according to some WEA staff, is the provision of social science, humanity and arts based courses for everyone. In the words of one long term staff member: 'A liberal curriculum is more likely to provide those opportunities than a practically based one, but that doesn't mean you can't find ways of introducing it into practical based subjects. Humanities and social sciences provide an easier opportunity to stimulate that kind of debate', (16/9/2010:3). This viewpoint was reiterated by members of the Valleys group who conveyed their desire to learn more about society, legal and political systems, in order to question and understand them. As one member explained 'we are currently doing the second part of history we are also going to be doing sociology and crime... they give you an insight of what society is really like' (3/2/2010:3).

The education provided by the WEA, according to another member of the Valleys group, bears out the view that critical education has an intrinsic part to play in activating citizenship. 'I think it is to provide options and opportunities for people and to encourage people to take on board things that they might never have taken on before. Like our history class is good. Sociology has started up now we even have a councillor starting on that course' (2/3/2010:4). This learner went on to go show scepticism towards government policies and

approaches with particular references to the Coalition and previous Conservative Governments as well as some criticism of the Labour Governments' policies on education. These opinions had been formed from the experiences of the learner and had developed after participating in many WEA courses and activities and reflecting on her own circumstances:

'What future are our youngsters going to have? What have they got to look forward to? It is bad enough living on these estates, with anti-social behaviour...To me Cameron will sooner or later take us back to slum days..., because I can't see people being able to pay for this and pay for that because- we are not all in it together. He is no different to Margaret Thatcher because what the Conservative (party) want is for you to fend for yourself with a minimum amount of help from them... What happens to the likes of us who can't pay insurance for our health? Where are we going to get the money from? The likes of us, all we are, are products of reproduction. So we can bring our children into the world, socialise and raise them ready for work, then they are going in factories for minimum wages and the inflation goes and it (pay) doesn't even give you enough of a rise to combat that inflation. So to me it is just, like I said maybe if you get educated, it is a good and in other ways you feel even more trapped' Interview Learner (2/3/2010:10).

This type of critical consciousness expressed by some of its learners, highlight issues faced by the WEA, particularly where its members critically challenge government policies. Potential restrictions on content, where governments provide financial support for classes, especially those for active citizenship and social studies, could influence the type of citizen that governments would like to create, such as the passive or 'responsibilised' citizen discussed by Clarke (2005:451). However the WEA has countered this by ensuring the democratic structure and voluntary nature of the organisation allows for independence of thought and more liberating methods outside of government's direct influence.

This democratic structure has also been complemented by public lectures on contemporary political debates. These lectures have been free to all members of the public, although they are usually attended by a small gathering of regular attendees. The topics are suggested by members of the public and have a tendency to draw upon more radical and critical perspectives, which have usually been presented by academics, normally free of charge. Lectures from

the series- Issues of Our time, included topics such as: 'From Financial Crisis to Public Sector Meltdown'. These types of democratically based educational activities have offered an opportunity for all members of the public and not just those which belong to academic institutions of South Wales to access critical and generally alternative academic perspectives.

Throughout the observation of classes, it was noted that the WEA modules were usually delivered through a democratic teaching style and practice which appeared flexible and reactive to the needs of the learner. Learners were encouraged to develop a sense of ownership over their classes and the tutor facilitated a learner- centred at times learner-led approach. For instance, the tutor of the People First Group reiterated this point in numerous implicit and explicit ways and asked 'whose group' is it?' 'That members are responsible for it', that they are 'coming to their group with their rules' (17/10/2010). Also this approach was exemplified by setting up a list of mutually acceptable basic rules to follow and determining much of content of the class. This included 'agreeing to disagree' and to 'challenge prejudice' (1/3/2010).

These examples illustrated how democratic educational practices within the democratic structure and wider social movement, encouraged critical thinking amongst WEA members. It highlights how the WEA enabled citizens to critically challenge government policies, even where government funded its educational provision, thus countering concerns that governments had co-opted the WEA's activities.

6.10 Transformative and empowering educational processes in the WEA

A recurrent theme, discussed by both staff and participants, was that grassroots empowerment can help transform society in positive ways. Central to its mission the WEA South Wales' website stated that it explicitly seeks to 'empower learners in and through their learning' {accessed 6/7/2010}. There was a well-documented belief amongst many WEA staff and members that an effective way to promote an 'educated democracy' and empowered citizens is

to treat all members as equals. Roberts claims ‘the principles of equality between the partners in a learning contract remains the same’ as it was over a hundred years ago (2003:1). It was a clear intension through its structure in South Wales that equality was both desired and has in some areas been achieved. This is expressed through one staff member’s observations: ‘I suppose we use this term ‘the learner’ all the time, but actually they are not ‘the learner’ they are our friends, they are us. They are the WEA’ (10/4/2010:7). According to one staff member (24/9/2010:4) ‘we employ tutors who are very supportive and understand about active citizenship, even if they don’t understand it in formal terms’. This perception was reiterated by another member of staff reflecting on the inclusive learner-led and learner centred practices of the WEA. ‘It has always been the learners’ choices what learning we actually have’ (12/7/2011:2).

From the perspective of one member of staff, change has to come from the grassroots, ‘if you want to change lives then it is bottom up, it has got to be. It is not about legislation and authority’ (4/10/2010:6). The WEA’s approach to empowerment, according to another staff member attempts to do exactly that:

‘I think that with the WEA something that has always impressed me is their value system. You know it is about empowering the person on the ground to take control of their lives and to better themselves and you know those values always comes across in WEA events. You feel being with the WEA, like you are a part of something bigger,’ Interview Staff member (10/9/2010:1).

The non-hierarchical approach to learners is arguably more difficult to be attained in terms of staff, as professional pressures create some barriers between different grades, reflecting the competitive nature of the workplace business model. Nonetheless, one member of staff described how WEA staff members were consulted in processes and policies that affected them, which in turn could have had a potentially positive impact on the learners. ‘I have noticed ... that the HR department has been redoing their policies and they have been sending them out to tutors for their views and thoughts.... I think that they

are being open and honest about what they are putting forward' Interview staff member' (12/7/2011:4).

In the classes and activities observed, an egalitarian approach was generally encouraged by tutors and members to ensure that all participants of the group and visitors were treated with the same respect. The WEA provided a variety of opportunities through educational activities including residential weekends, conferences, trips and celebrations. According to a staff member (4/10/2010:5) 'we are using these activities to create an ethos of belonging'. Members of the People First Group declared that visitors are 'all welcome' (17/11/2010). The tutor reiterated how it was the members' classes and encouraged them to make decisions regarding who attended and what they wanted to do during each session. It was also important that 'all visitors and learners to be participants of the learning group' (19/10/2010). This integrative and interactive style of learning aided a non-hierarchical environment which encouraged participation by all members.

This course also explored aspects of daily life and vulnerabilities that are often overlooked by other learning providers including 'emotional physical and financial abuse' (2/11/2010). When addressing some of these subjects, members of the group were encouraged to speak out and complain, reporting any issues that they felt compromised their rights and feelings. As one group member asserted 'care means more than just food and shelter, it is about rights and respect' (2/11/2010). Participants expressed why they felt it was important to give feedback to people and service providers. Members responded that it was 'get it out your system' and 'to change things' (11/1/2010).

It was also claimed that this egalitarian environment across the WEA encouraged further acts of support and equality, conveyed by the fact, as one staff member states, 'we have many cases where people pay for one another' (4/10/2010). This staff member claimed that the part that the staff played to help embed and encourage equality is an invaluable asset 'you value the contribution that people make, because they are buying into the principles of

the WEA so soon after joining things because they can see its value' (4/10/2010:13).

It can be perceived that equality and empowerment more often than not go hand in hand. In order for people to feel able to be empowered to act, equality of opportunity is arguably an essential pre-requisite. 'Empowerment' according to Woodward 'is not something that is done to participants by educators by politicians or others. Rather it takes place through more subtle processes whereby people come together to recognise their own situation and develop the ability to do something about it as part of an educational process' (2010:114).

There were some examples where people had been motivated to take part in WEA activities by a need to challenge power structures and strive for equality. The motivation of one participant to request and undertake WEA classes was described as 'to learn to act' (21/4/2010). This, it could be argued, is a central premise of active citizenship, thus helping to transform people from passive to active citizens. It was as a result of some initial WEA classes that this participant had gained some basic skills as well as interest in social issues. The educative process itself had enabled this participant to become a critical and autonomous learner, able to motivate other learners and take lead roles the community. This included initiating and tutoring classes and leading community projects. It had also empowered the learner to challenge power structures at local levels. The WEA has therefore in some ways acted as a vehicle which has enabled citizens to develop skills and knowledge through education to take on an active, self-determined role for social change. The active citizen is thus not only able to provide support to others, but is also playing a more strategic role in social and political relations.

This desire of participants to influence decision making processes directly is conveyed by a member of staff who described some of the WEA's experiences of delivering workplace training for trade unions:

'A lot of the people in that group who are Wales' union project workers and Union learning reps and they are all looking at learning opportunities in the workplace. A lot of them are from public sector unions like PCS, Unison, RMT, UNITE and what they have been asking for is lobbying courses... know there are going to be TUC rallies but people want to do something themselves. They want to know how to lobby their MPs, how to form a lobby group and how to campaign... They want to do something, they don't want to wait and have all their jobs cut,' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:9a).

According to a People First participant 'the only power (the Tutor) has is to set work in advance'. Learners in the People First group were also members of the WEA South Wales (reflecting the overall make up of WEA classes). The use of terminology is also an important factor in empowering the learner/ citizen, as each person was described as a member, which implies that they each have an equal stake in the organisations they belong to. Group members discussed terminology and its empowering and disempowering effects on their lives, such as being described as a 'service user' and 'handicapped' (1/11/2011). These impersonal terms can have more profound effects on a person than is first recognised. It was agreed that most members of the group work generally preferred the term 'worker' as this had more positive connotations. 'Workers' according to the group 'are seen as being in a better position than a service user' (22/2/2011). The term 'worker' implies that 'that they are there to help.' Essentially members perceived the term 'worker' as conveying a sense of equality with others as 'they are the same as anyone without a disability'. There was a general consensus that they wanted to be valued for their contribution to society instead of being labelled as dependents. A number of members said they 'liked the word independent' and that 'worker sounds more independent'. Negative labels were also discussed regarding social stereotypes aligned with people with learning disabilities as they felt they were at times 'labelled as scum, as a number' (ibid). These reactions reflected the influence of how some government rhetoric and media representations, discussed in earlier chapters can impact on how citizens view their roles and worth in society.

Across the WEA activities that were observed, an egalitarian approach to its members and visitors contributed towards an environment where its learners

were empowered to participate on their own terms. It was evident, on multiple levels, that learners were encouraged to give voice to their concerns, particularly regarding wider social and political matters. This provided an arena for transformative experiences where learners were empowered to learn how to act and influence change.

6.11 The value of experiential learning

Fryer stressed how experiential learning played a central role in active citizenship:

‘Part of lifelong learning’s promise must be its potential connection with action. That means linking learning to the lives of citizens as they struggle to achieve, and enjoy forms of citizenship and action through which they hope to realise their ambitions, express their identities, give meaning to their lives and exercise greater influence over their worlds’ Fryer (2010:220).

This reflects Kolb’s view which was previously referred to in chapter 5. He described the learning process as ‘involving a combination of participants grasping and transforming knowledge through experiences that emerges through a process of reflecting, understanding testing acting and reviewing one’s situation or position’(1984).

On reflection it appears a key feature of the educational process for the WEA in South Wales was helping people understand the political and social context of their own lives. Participants were provided with numerous opportunities to learn through experiences including class and non-class based activities. The experience of participation according one staff member ‘helps members to have the confidence to get involved’ (27/9/2010:2). Through enabling learners to take control over their own learning ‘we are encouraging people to be active learners rather than passive learners. They are not just receiving but from the very start they are participants in the learning processes (ibid). It is recognised that many citizens are not aware of their political rights, as they feel distant

from the political bodies that represent them, as another long-term staff member recalls:

‘The amount of people I have met who have not been to parliament at Westminster. It is our government and the Wales’s Assembly is our seat of Welsh Government. It is beholden to us. We are not foreigners, we are not guests there we are entitled citizens,’ Interview staff member (23/9/2010:9b).

This idea of promoting active citizenship implies that active citizenship can be understood on multiple levels and from differing perspectives. Thus as one senior member of staff conveyed ‘ideally you want active citizenship to be embedded in everything that you do’ (24/9/2010:4). Therefore, according to that staff member, it was delivered through both formal and informal means. ‘What you are trying to do is tell people about their rights and responsibilities and give them the confidence to take it forward and be active citizens’ (ibid). At the heart of this ethos is the idea that ‘you should think about being active citizens through all the things you do’, rather than merely learning about it as a more abstract concept. This staff member perceived that ‘the problem with having classes in active citizenship in a way is that you take it away from the context of their lives’ (ibid). It therefore seems necessary that to understand how to be an active citizen a certain amount of practical application and experience is essential. This point is expanded in the following section. ‘Genuine active citizenship’ according to this staff member ‘is a little bit of learning and then a bit of practice’ (24/9/2011:6). Wider learning including political and social education can contribute to contextualisation but the active in ‘active citizenship’ implies lifestyle choices and reflexive experiences.

Discussing formal educational opportunities with a local dimension had also been a successful method by which members became enthusiastically engaged in the subject matter. An introduction to the History and Development of Modern Wales WEA course ignited lively debates about local historical places and people and provided a practical insight into what would be taught on the course. The discussion was also followed up by a visit to the Pierhead Building in Cardiff, where a display of famous Welsh historical figures and events was

attended (1/2/2011). This provided context and enabled learners to reflect on the content of their course in relation to real life examples.

6.12 Conclusion

These findings illustrate how WEA South Wales' staff and members appeared to conceptualise active citizenship in broadly social and political terms, in line with more radical perspectives of citizenship. They highlighted how 'differentiated' notions of citizenship could be used to describe the varying needs of citizens and forms of participation observed and described. Staff and members alike explained how they were encouraged to act as democratic and self-determined agents whilst being conscious of others. This was evidenced throughout the activities observed where the WEA had attempted to encourage democratic participation and critical thinking through its practices and structures. Although there appeared to be a decline in the traditional branch structures, new avenues of participation, such as though its virtual branches, had been established. Its desire to retain its status as a member-led social movement with a democratically elected governing body placed it in quite a unique and at times divisive position. Despite opposition from the WEA organisation in the North of Wales, the South negotiated to retain the democratic aspects of the organisation during its merger discussions. Meanwhile it informed and involved its members on all proposals for change, thus embedding the democratic principles of the organisation in theory and practice.

A contentious issue that was raised by WEA members was the call for more overt political education within the WEA, such as a re-focus on social and political studies which were reminiscent of the organisation's political roots. This call for the WEA to become more specifically political, whilst not new, reflected wider concerns discussed in previous chapters regarding the UK's democratic deficit. In terms of overt political education, there appeared to be little if any evidence of a strong party political ideology of the type that was reported to have been apparent in their earlier work. This would arguably reflect the changing political culture, as well as pressures on the content of the curriculum from government. Nonetheless, there was clearly a dedicated drive

towards 'deliberative' and critical styles of political as well as democratic education, based on enabling participants to have the knowledge, skills and experience to participate in political debates and processes. There were also many examples of the association promoting similar underlying values that were central to its ethos when it was first established, particularly regarding social justice. It placed a great emphasis on learner-led community derived educational activities aimed to empower its learners to become active and fulfilled citizens.

Chapter 7: The WEA: partnership working and community engagement**Introduction**

This chapter explores the extent to which the WEA South Wales has worked in partnership with various Third Sector and public organisations to promote community engagement and grassroots forms of active citizenship. The chapter questions whether pressures derived from governments to engage in further partnership working have created greater opportunities or challenges for organisations such as the WEA. It considers claims made by the WEA regarding the extent to which their work in partnership can empower ‘hard to reach’ communities and individuals, who are often overlooked by other mainstream education providers or programmes. This includes exploring how the WEA has worked with the Communities First programme in areas with the highest levels of socio-economic deprivation. Then it examines whether its programmes, delivered in partnership with other organisations and community members, have addressed gaps in community engagement and inequality. It specifically focuses on initiatives such as the Community Learning Representatives programme, which utilised community partnerships to promote grassroots engagement. Likewise it examines whether by embedding Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship throughout its work, it encourages partnerships at local and global level and recognises citizenship within communities in both local and global contexts.

7.1 Partnership working and its impact on active citizenship

In order to reach citizens from all backgrounds and social cleavages across Wales, it is arguably valuable to work with specialist organisations which are embedded within those communities. The degree to which the WEA has worked alongside and in effective partnerships with organisations and individuals to promote active citizenship was critically investigated.

Throughout the WEA's history it has been well documented that it has worked with other organisations and movements which have broadly promoted and held the same and similar values, as previously mentioned in chapter 6. Recently, its website claimed that: 'It delivers its work through (the) local branch structure and partnership working with community and voluntary organisations in the workplace, and other providers, including the voluntary sector, local authorities, further education colleges and universities' website {accessed 6/7/2011}.

During the period covered by the study, the WEA South Wales worked in partnership with a plethora of local and national organisations including People First, MENCAP and the Stroke Association, as well as the emergency services and social services. Furthermore, it has been part of wider Third Sector networks including National Institute for Adult and Continual Education in Wales (NIACE) Dysgi Cymru and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA). Through the accounts of members and participants it is clear that it has also worked with local Third Sector umbrella organisations such as Voluntary Action Cardiff (VAC) and Gwent Association for Voluntary Services (GAVO). It has developed a strong relationship with the Open University and maintained some levels of partnership working with other Lifelong Learning departments in South Wales' Universities, with the aim of contributing to widening participation in higher education. Additionally, the WEA has shared resources with Welsh Government funded programmes such as Communities First and The Coalfield Regeneration Projects. It was evident that these partnerships occurred despite some underlying tensions and at times competition for resources.

In South Wales the WEA has also maintained its strong links to certain trade unions and the co-operative movement, delivering training on their behalf as well as promoting political and work based education. Many of these organisations presented their work together at open days, some of which formed part of my observations.

Interviews with staff and participants illustrated that that there were positive and negative outcomes for the WEA when having to adapt to continual pressures and changes to work in partnership. For the WEA across the UK, particularly from the 1980s onwards, partnership working appears to have been central to the WEA's continued existence as an organisation. Gass highlights some of the increasing challenges accompanying this growing trend from the 1980s:

'During this period pressure was also mounting on adult education providers to collaborate in order to make better use of resources and to save duplication. Not only was this time consuming in view of the additional meetings that had to be attended, but it posed the challenge of how one could simultaneously co-operate with others whilst retaining the distinctive identity and profile of the WEA- a challenge that has intensified as collaborative working has assumed even greater significance in contemporary public policy,' Gass in England (2007:142).

Despite these challenges, there was evidence throughout the study though that the positive benefits of the WEA's partnership working did largely outweigh the negative elements that it also brought. Some of the varying facets of partnership working from the WEA's perspective were conveyed through a member of staff's account:

'The WEA has always had a history of partnership working. Basically we are a small organisation and because we don't have huge college buildings and our own premises we have always had to work in partnership and rely on the good will of others but that has increased dramatically over the years. If we work in partnership we can do so much more together and we have got some really strong partnership working with adult community learning partnerships. With Communities First groups, people like the Stroke Association we have got a social enterprise we work with. Crafts for Everyone.... None of us on our own could do those things, but by working in partnership and often it will be 'I can pay for a tutor', somebody else might say "I can pay for the crèche... I can provide a free room" and then by doing that we can do it. But none of us on our own can, there are far more opportunities for sharing resources... So by working in partnership you can avoid duplication and we can also highlight the areas where they are missing out and you can spread your resources and make course provision more even,' Interview staff member (20/3/2010:10).

In the recent era then it has arguably been necessitous to continue to utilise good partnerships to fulfil the potential of the WEA and interconnecting organisations. It had not merely been a resource sharing exercise, which had undoubtedly been practically and politically expedient, but, as staff members explained, it had also enhanced some fundamental aspects of the WEA's mission to help produce an educated democracy and active citizenship. It seemed apparent throughout the study, that the association through its partnerships enabled depth and breadth of delivery to physically and socially 'hard to reach' groups and individuals. The high level of partnership working was illustrated by the number of communities and the range of groups and organisations that the WEA worked with in South Wales. It has also appeared to embed through practice the sharing of ideas with other organisations and a further culture of learning from other organisations' best practice and new ideas. As one staff member claimed:

'We are active in every geographical and local authority area, learning network where we operate. So the system sends us into partnership at one level, where to receive funding we are expected to cooperate. To plan programmes together to help resource each other depending on the size of the organisation, but then there is another type of partnership. We have also got the voluntary sector, the Third Sector and the trade union partnerships, they are all great,' Interview staff member (4/10/2010:15).

According to this member of staff the WEA has taken a highly flexible yet strategic approach to partnership which can produce useful results for everyone concerned whilst ensuring that their principle aims were not compromised:

'I think we are good at working with whoever we can... sometimes piggy backing, sharing cost burdens, the angst and the glory. We can push citizenship... as a good government agenda in enhancing citizenship- the understanding of it, as part of the educational learning process, the literacy, numeracy, with citizenship and understanding of what it means. With employability, with sustainability, with the green agenda, with community re-enhancement, with reinvestment, with personal self-esteem with all these tick boxes that nobody could dispute and is done on a cost-effective basis' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:8b).

This staff member emphasised that understanding and respecting the needs of their partner organisations has been an essential factor in generating successful long-term outcomes. 'Where partnership is at its best, where it is valuing what we both do and can offer, but recognising the limitations' (ibid). Issues raised by Alcock (2012) and Mean (2005), previously discussed in chapter 3, re-emerge here, questioning the ability of smaller organisations, when in partnership with larger organisations, to gain equal levels of influence. 'Partnership working has too often been dominated by the more powerful partners and has not 'delivered' especially for the community and service users who are now a required part of most partnerships' Balloch and Taylor (2001:8). Although this mainly concerns the relationship between governments and the WEA, it also relates to how the WEA enabled smaller organisations to influence overall agendas. This is perhaps where the WEA differed from many other large organisations, as it retained long-standing partnerships with many organisations that had shared fundamental ideals. Although its priorities and approaches often differed from its partners and even within the organisation, these accounts implied that the WEA has been an adaptable partner, as it was able to work in a variety of environments and still produced the professional outcomes required. Alongside this it has sustained its underlying focus as an education provider with a wider social purpose. It was perhaps its ability to promote its key values through its work, while still fulfilling the practical/ formal criteria that enabled it to continue as both a social movement and an education provider, which has received high levels of government funding. Likewise it identifies some of its most fundamental challenges though, as its beliefs could at times be compromised if delivery of education for skills and employability superseded the organisation's ability to promote critical thinking and social justice.

As governments across the UK, even in Wales, have placed mounting pressures on the Third Sector to carry out work on its behalf, it has been crucial therefore that the WEA has continued to work closely with other organisations that were both able and willing to support its underlying aims and ethos. Increasing concerns that Third Sector organisations have faced pressures to compete with other organisations for government support have been expressed, leading to

'increasing divisions' however. Such concerns have relevance here. Calls have been made for Third Sector organisations 'to find spaces for resistance and to operate with alternative models may now require new alliances with "like-minded" ' organisations' (Milbourne and Cushman, 2013:26). It is important here to recognise that these types of partnerships had long occurred within the WEA's wider social movement, including its long-term partnership with some trade unions as referred to below:

'We have really strong partnership working, we are the main provider for UNISON in South Wales we are running this UNISON Return to Learn course. It has very much got an agenda of active citizenship, because the stuff it covers is very much about self-confidence, recognising what skills you have got, getting people writing creatively, getting people to do interview skills and training people to do a project either in their community or workplace, something that they care about, showing them how to do the research, how to do the interviewing, how to write it up,' Interview staff member (23/10/2010b:10).

The continued partnership with some trade unions reflected the WEA's historical practices in co-operating with other organisations that were willing to challenge government policies and to encourage democratic active citizenship at grassroots levels. It was this ability to work with different groups of people and adapt to a constantly changing social and political culture that had at times, in the words of long-standing members, been central to success if not survival. The WEAs' relationship with the trade unions against a background of wide-reaching cultural changes was reflected upon for instance by England, previously a long-term tutor organizer and warden of Coleg Harlech:

'The work with trade unionists from 1954-75 was seminal for the post-war South Wales District... In 1979-80 trade union and industrial studies teaching accounted for 24% of the District's provision... By 1989-90 work with trade unions was fractionally above 3% of the District's work. Yet working with the unions and with trade unionists in a targeted way is now embedded in the District's work. The unions have had to make adjustments since 1979 and the decline- of collective bargaining in the private sector has made unions more conscious of the role they can play in providing learning opportunities for all their members... The development of workplace learning representatives has opened the door to a range of possibilities in which the WEA can collaborate,' England (2007:136-7).

This clearly illustrates the WEA's willingness and adaptability to work with a wide variety of particular groups and organisations which share underlying values and objectives within the public and Third Sector. It also highlights some of the challenges that have unfolded within the wider political culture, such as adapting to the diminished power of workers in the post-industrialised era. These partnerships therefore demonstrate a continued commitment to work with organisations within a wider social movement, to enhance the ability of often 'hard to reach' and least powerful citizens to participate more fully in society.

7.2 Communities First?

The Communities First Programme was a government initiative set up in 2000 which aimed to reduce poverty and encourage community empowerment and engagement. The role of the Welsh Government in relation to the programme was examined earlier in chapter 4. The WEA's partnership with the Communities First programme is complicated to assess, as its relationship with the programme varied dramatically between Communities First wards. In addition its long-term aims of regeneration and community empowerment were more difficult to measure over shorter periods of time.

Significantly though, the programme's remit overlapped with that of the WEA's, as they both aimed to deliver aspects of community engagement and empowerment. The Communities First programme described itself according to its website in the following terms:

'Communities First is about people challenging the barriers, whether they are real or perceived which prevents residents from fulfilling their potential and from effecting change where they live. It is about supporting community groups and individuals to find their voices and use their skills and experiences to change, challenge and negotiate and jointly plan for the benefit of their communities,' website {accessed 7/10/2011}.

The citizen and community-led rhetoric that was espoused by the programme's organisers ostensibly correlated with the WEA's and therefore it appeared that the programme potentially could have produced effective partnerships. Thus, the sharing of resources, including development workers, tutors and venues was a pragmatic if not essential course of action, when trying to engage with communities. Although its partnerships varied widely across South Wales it emerges then that, where possible, the WEA did attempt to work with Communities First. This was despite the WEA's reservations about the programme's approach towards community development which was seen as concentrating on capacity building for skills and employment, rather than wider community empowerment.

As referred to in Chapter 4, the programme started in an ambiguous position, as it aimed to promote grassroots community regeneration from a government-led 'top down' perspective. According to one staff member who had worked in partnership with a number of Communities First areas:

'It took them a couple of years to even get around to education. When Community First was first set up they were identifying problems in the community that could have been anti-social behaviour such as dog mess in the street. It has taken a while, even for the best ones, to come around to realising that to re-generate an area you have to re-generate the people. But to be fair in Merthyr there is a great ACL partnership and we decided that everybody should have the chance to do community development,' Interview staff member (23/9/2011).

The difficulty in engaging some communities, it could be argued, derives from lack of experience in delivering long-term regeneration initiatives and from prescriptive government funding which has been largely focused on employability. As the study reveals these pressures were also apparent in the WEA's own work. One staff member describes some of the difficulties that they had experienced when working with the Communities First Programme, as follows:

'When we first met with people from Communities First they welcomed the idea of a project that would be broader than existing adult education. That would involve active citizenship, community leadership

and they talked about the active communities theme within the Communities First programme, but as time has gone on they keep coming back to employability in the conversations,' Interview staff member (16/9/2010:9).

However, positive outcomes and relationships between certain Communities First areas and the WEA had developed over time and with perseverance. There were examples that I witnessed, where staff and members together helped facilitate these more positive relationships by gaining the trust of local people and encouraging further community engagement. Where the Communities First programme sometimes lacked more specific expertise in education for community development, this provided an obvious arena for partnership working, whereby the WEA provided educational experience in working with and empowering members of local communities. The WEA delivered this through the provision of education using a broadly community development model and encouraging grassroots community involvement through its work.

The following experiences of WEA participants are examples of positive partnership working in practice. A Community Learning Representative recalled that 'I was signposted here as I was doing various courses here and then got to hear of the WEA. One of the things I was doing was with Communities First' (9/5/2011:2). Also the 'Know Your Rights' group provided an example of where a strong relationship had developed between the Communities First team and the residents of that area. Over time with the aid of WEA and Communities First representatives, members of the group created a positive and effective partnership. This partnership delivered benefits to the valleys town, including the provision of facilities (venues) and extra support from the community development worker. The flexible and locally based educational opportunities that the WEA provided complemented the Communities First Objectives and provisions. This included ensuring that 'facilities exist to provide access to lifelong learning and community education at all levels and in places which are acceptable to the community,' Communities Next: Welsh Assembly Government (2008:46). Over the period of the course, members of the group who were at first reluctant to engage with the formal Communities First programme had

become actively engaged and were attending meetings on behalf of the Tenants and Residents Association and Boards as representatives of the area.

The WEA's Getting Involved in Newport project also aimed at developing these partnerships and addressing disadvantage and disengagement from the grassroots. Two WEA staff coordinated a specific programme which aspired to promote learning opportunities in Newport's Communities First areas.

Throughout this initial 1 year project, WEA staff developed partnerships with 8 of the most disadvantaged areas of the city. According to their figures in September 2012 it achieved over 400 new learners and 80 people becoming community activists. This information was derived from a development worker's interview (5/9/2012). Despite some initial doubts about whether the WEA was committed to include the most 'hard to reach' communities, it was apparent then that through this project the WEA development workers had attempted to engage more members of disadvantaged and 'invisible' communities including the homeless, with the potential to develop further partnerships with specialist groups.

On reflection there was also a recurring emphasis on the need for the Communities First programme to be more transparent and consistent. The short-term funding streams often resulted in constant staff changes and lack of planning of long-term projects and goals. These issues resonated throughout the Third Sector. In summary then, although the WEA were able to encourage participation in partnership with some areas of communities First work, it was also clear that wider socio-economic inequalities and barriers such as poverty needed to be addressed on a wider Wales if not UK wide level, previously referred to in chapter 4.

7.3 Can the WEA empower communities?

The WEA proclaimed that through community development- styles of education it could empower and engage communities. The 'WEA seeks to empower students in and through their learning and is committed to providing education

for participation, whether in local communities or in a wider democratic sense' website {accessed 6/7/2010}.

The People First partnership which has been discussed throughout the study, demonstrated that they were working in collaboration with a wide spectrum of community based professionals to encourage grassroots engagement. This included training for social workers, fire officers, research students, nurses and community police officers. This also involved working with the police to work on training exercises, including police interviewing, and emergency scenarios. This mutual interchange, according to one learner, 'helps them to help us' (11/1/2011).

Other examples of partnership working with service providers included awareness training for members of People First / WEA in self-protection, particularly regarding hate crime with the police. Examples of how this positively impacted on the behaviour of People First members were clear, as all new visitors to the group were asked by its members for forms of identification regardless of whether they were wearing uniforms or appeared to be official guests or representatives. Likewise discussions also took place throughout the classes, regarding the complex nature of 'trust' and 'power'. These discussions encouraged learners to question authority and enabled learners to challenge society's structures (12/10/2010). On a number of occasions when police officers were present, group members were encouraged to discuss 'barriers' to communicating and approaching the police. Some learners described how their physical or learning difficulties could impede their ability to 'talk on the phone' (19/10/2010). These practical interactions between the police and community members arguably raised the level of understanding and challenged the perceived distance between people in authority and citizens.

Also a social work student, who attended a People First session herself, explained that it had helped her to re-evaluate the 'power balance' between professionals and clients and how she would thereafter consider their personal identities when working with them. She declared on reflection that it is 'about

seeing people as individuals' (22/2/2011). These classes had essentially provided an arena for people often unheard to express a direct 'voice' to those who would provide 'care' and 'support' for them in the future. This mutual exchange offered an opportunity for service users and providers to gain a deeper understanding of their respective needs and professions. This illustrated how it had been possible for governing structures and service providers to consult different groups to empower communities and citizens. This could be interpreted as an example of how the WEA has facilitated what Putman describes as 'linking capital' (2000). This is where groups and individuals engage and influence those with greater levels of power.

Members of the group were also on some occasions consulted by local authorities and service providers regarding issues such as transportation costs and regeneration schemes (26/11/2010). This process was requested by the People First tutor after previous discussions, whereby staff members were consulted about proposals and initiatives to save money and improve services. During the discussions with members of local authorities and service providers, personal as well as collective opinions appeared to be taken into account.

When group members were consulted by the local day centre services regarding probable cuts to transport provision for instance, a range of viewpoints were put forward. The group's members talked about their fears as well as the positive changes that could occur. When discussing whether wheelchair users and people with special needs should have specialised transport provision one member declared that 'I am capable, other clients aren't. If it came to it I would give them my seat,' (11/1/2011). The group concluded that the way forward for themselves, but not those who were less mobile or independent, would be to 'undertake training, carry a mobile for emergencies and that the bus staff should have disability awareness training' (ibid). It is clear that some of their opinions were taken seriously, as members of the group were provided with practical training to travel independently. This style of educational experience has potentially wider and long-term benefits to the individuals and communities they belong to, as it provides a direct link between service users and providers.

Another example of empowerment through participation occurred as a representative from GVA Grimely, a property consultancy, presented to the People First group a questionnaire regarding the members' thoughts and feelings on 'community cohesion'. The Welsh Assembly's definition of community cohesion was discussed, according to the Welsh's Government 'Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another' website {accessed 9/2/2011}.

Throughout this process participants were potentially able to contribute to future town planning initiatives by describing their experiences of their living environment. Participants were encouraged to provide first-hand accounts of their experiences, including harassment, crime and anti-social behaviour. This included accounts of 'being bullied' (8/2/2011). The group's members also reflected on how some 'attitudes have changed' and how their work through the WEA and People First had made a positive impact on their own and other's lives, as 'they don't have problems when they go out any more' (8/2/2011).

Another area of community empowerment occurred through participants becoming teachers themselves. The act of teaching appears to have had a transformative effect on both the teacher and their communities. In this particular case, members of the People First group demonstrated through teaching in schools in their local communities how stereotypical roles could be challenged and people with learning disabilities could be empowered to share their knowledge, skills and experiences in order to change people's attitudes. This process had for some members aided heightened self-esteem, and helped to challenge prejudice, proving that people with disabilities may be best placed to deliver specialist training and teaching in schools. In these classes young students and their teachers were encouraged to discuss and learn more about disabilities of all kinds including learning sign language, discussing hate crime

and labelling. Additionally students had been able to see positive role models in people with learning disabilities, as one student reflected that 'I thought it was good that they use people with different disabilities' (5/4/2011).

These forms of educational experiences had also helped to break down barriers and created new opportunities for people to participate in previously peripheral subject areas. Additionally these opportunities provided an arena whereby people who have been traditionally excluded from much mainstream work, could make a positive contribution. 'Going into schools' according to a group member makes them 'feel important, as if I am one of the teachers. It feels really nice. I love it' Interview WEA Learner (26/4/2011:1c). One member talked about how people in their local community had been abusive, but now treat them in a different way 'because (they) taught in schools, they see me and know to talk to me' (8/2/2011).

Student evaluations of the classes revealed the positive impact they have had on providing educational experiences for young people. As a result of these classes, school students displayed high levels of reflective understanding, empathy and knowledge. For instance, a student reflected that 'this session has changed the way I think about others' (10/6/2011). The type of education went beyond students receiving knowledge about disabilities. A student reflected on their changed attitude as follows: 'I thought the teachers were very brave to talk about learning disabilities. The session gave me a new perspective on disability. Just because people have disabilities, it doesn't mean that they should be treated differently,' (5/4/2011). School teachers also expressed what they perceived as the positive impact that this type of educational experience has on students and the wider society, as one recalls the experiences. 'Personal stories have a good impact, real life examples, (of) hate crime that happens in their area (10/6/2011).

Overall these community based experiences have illustrated how the WEA and its partner organisations in collaboration with service providers, have empowered certain individuals and their communities through a process of

interactive and grassroots education. It also demonstrated how the WEA enabled its members to engage and work in partnership with more powerful individuals and structures, thus potentially influencing social change and the balance of power.

7.4 WEA engaging the grassroots via Community Learning Representatives

The WEA introduced a number of community based initiatives which aspired to provide grassroots and sustainable forms of engagement. A flagship course which aimed to impact on activating citizens and their communities was the Community Learning Representative programme. This was initiated by the WEA, based on similar trade union courses. It involved Community Learning Representatives providing advice to people in their own local communities regarding learning and community activities. A staff member described the purpose of the courses as follows:

‘We had a lottery project to train up community learning reps in the community. The WEA already train more union learning reps in Wales than anyone else. I thought “well why not take that idea out into the Community, so people can help their colleagues, neighbours and friends and people that may not be in unions and help them find the right education or training courses”. Because I think sometimes that if you are putting out a posh prospectus, and people have low confidence and aspiration and you have got a picture of a really flash college on the front and a posh prospectus that is often not going to engage the hardest to reach learners. What works best with them, we have discovered, is really they need word of mouth, encouragement, they need the sort of metaphorical arm around the shoulder to say “yes of course you can do this course and I will help to overcome your barriers,” Interview staff member (23/2/2011).

Community Learning Representatives, according to another staff member, are the key to transforming local communities. They sought to provide a link between community development professionals and representatives and those people who live in the area. ‘The community learning representative course... is a really good way to engage communities and for them to take ownership for their own learners. That was how I became a tutor through that course’ (10/9/2010:5).

This staff member had initially trained as a Community Learning Representative and explained how the course could be provided in every community, especially areas facing various forms of disadvantage. 'What we wanted to do is to get a community learning representative in each street. Go into a community... put some information out there. Get out and talk to them, then bring them together as a community, a group of community representatives in each community' (10/9/2010:5).

She went on to explain that when reflecting on her experiences, some of these communities and individuals were 'very isolated' and 'trust' is often only attained by the people 'from that street in order to open those doors to other people... You know word of mouth is the best form of advertisement really,' (ibid). The research illustrated how training people to work within their own communities is arguably an undervalued resource then as the community professionals are often brought in from outside. This simple, cost effective way of engaging individuals and communities could potentially resolve some of the issues that citizens have with official and political structures, as 'top down' approaches to community engagement become replaced by an approach which promotes equality between community members. This tutor argued that 'there have been a lot of things over the last few years that have made people not trust in organisations and society, so you have to be close to them to engage them' (10/9/2010:6).

Throughout the interviews and classes observed the WEA's Community Learning Representatives initiative, including a South Wales internet based network, appeared to provide a sustainable approach to grassroots level community engagement. It intended to empower local people to provide support to others within their own communities, building on their own knowledge and skills. There was evidence that this approach had long-term benefits for CLR's and other community members, some of which are described below.

7.5 Education for Sustainable and Development Global Citizenship- local and global community partnerships

The extent to which the WEA has embraced the concept of global citizenship or what they also call 'global learning' and how it has encouraged it through its work has been considered through identifying the way this has been incorporated into its practices. 'The WEA' according to its website, 'sees commitment to education for sustainable development and global citizenship (ESDGC) as integral to its mission' {accessed 6/7/2010}. The WEA South Wales increasingly recognised, throughout the study, the value of investing in and promoting active citizenship as a global concept and working with local, national and international organisations to engage with the issues at a grassroots level. A staff member claimed 'a strong element of active citizenship is through the ESDGC teaching that we have been doing and through projects that we have been running' (24/9/2011). Another member of staff reaffirmed the centrality of ESDGC to the WEA's work whatever the subject. This was reflected in the organisation's claim that 'ESDGC practice shares a similar approach to Community Learning as it recognises the importance of a learner centred-approach which encourages critical thinking and aims to empower the student. ESDGC is not just about knowledge, but is also about values, attitudes and skills' website {accessed 6/7/2010}. Another staff member outlined how ESDGC had recently been embedded into the overall approach of the WEA as follows:

'We do a lot on ESDGC... We have got an ESDGC Development Worker who has now developed a toolkit... and we have trained all our tutors up. For example we have had tutor days about two weeks ago and we have embedded Welsh culture, language and politics. We'll have shown the tutor how they can use these extra units on any curriculum course and given them ideas and resources about bringing the wider world in to all areas of the curriculum,' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:2a).

Notably the WEA has shown theoretical and practical commitment to global citizenship, by developing strategic partnerships across the globe. This was illustrated by the 'trans-national global learning project' (2010:1) described by the WEA as involving '10 countries across Europe, South America and East and West African rural areas'. Through this project the WEA aimed 'to develop a

common understanding of global issues relating to food sovereignty' (ibid). It produced an 'educational toolkit' which was developed for use with 'young adults and community based organisations incorporating global citizenship, engaging in decision making linked with global issues'. One of the project's key aims was to increase the volume of active citizens in addition to understanding practical, social, political and environmental issues (2010:4). Likewise it worked in close partnership with organisations such as Sazani Associates, which according to its website at the time was an 'international not for profit research and development organisation' based in Pembroke {accessed 3/10/2011}. They worked 'with strategic partners in terms of the global citizenship agenda and has been for the last 2 and half years or so on' (24/9/2010:7).

This approach to developing strong international links has been typified through the WEA's investment in staff placements to Africa and Eastern Europe, as described by a staff member who worked on these projects. 'You could argue, I suppose, that my placement to Uganda has been about encouraging active citizenship, in that I came back and talked about the rights and responsibilities and issues with whoever would listen and feedback on that,' Interview staff member (24/9/2010:7).

In light of these projects it appears that the WEA South Wales has considered the challenges of education as a global and well as local subject, central to which was knowledge sharing activities across its partnerships. According to a Community Learning Representative and member of the WEA ESDGC Cardiff group, active citizenship involves 'sharing knowledge' (18/4/2010:5). From this perspective education should be an on-going process and the WEA's role is to ensure that this is enabled. This member went on to describe the ideal process of global active citizenship. 'As long as it is done sustainably... so it carries on and on and that is what we need it to be, so more people are interactive and proactive in this area' (ibid). This member perceived that education has a central role to play particularly regarding environmental issues. They argued that:

'Some of the people in the WEA should go into schools and explain what goes on and why to the next generation. So I am thinking what they can do is teach them things for the future. They can teach people in schools to keep things sustainable. It is all very well learning things in a class, but we need to pass on the knowledge,' Interview CLR (18/4/2010:5).

This was a Community Learning Representative who had attended the ESDGC sessions and had then become involved in the new virtual ESDGC branch of the WEA. This enthusiasm to get involved with further educational activities in schools conveyed a sense that members of the group have been motivated to activate citizens on a deeper level. A new virtual Community Learning Representative network had also been perceived as a way of finding out about what is happening in other areas. Another active member explained that the WEA's Community Learning Representatives have their own yahoo site where you can look in and see what are other groups are doing,' (9/5/2010:3). This participant described the course as:

'Fantastic' ... being as you have a good debate with all the other people (CLR's) who are participating and you can find out just what is needed around the world... A sense of understanding starts developing.... Other people do things completely different, so if you understand their culture you can really understand their ways of life. It should benefit your country as well as theirs, indeed each person', Interview WEA member (9/5/2010:5).

As a result of their participation on the course, they recalled how they had started to frame their other community work in terms of a 'global' context. In that they perceived the work that they were participating in at local level had wider relevance. 'What we are trying to do is get everything mixing as 'global', even if it is only local. You get your local area and then you globalise it. So everyone knows what is going on, rather than everybody doing their own little thing,' (ibid). This CLR believed that through taking a holistic view and working in close partnership with companies, community groups, the police and volunteers that 'the area is becoming much better. Everything is chipping away, as the area's crime rate is coming down tremendously,' (ibid).

In turn developing the ESDGC skills and knowledge of WEA staff appeared to be central to these processes, which also provided opportunities for sustainable and cost-effective methods of educating participants at every level. These approaches and motivations were described by a staff member as follows:

‘It is a WEA concept to embed those concepts of a world citizenship and we have an understanding of what that means, food sovereignty, climate change, and all the massive issues of globalisation within every class as a learning objective. The WEA tries with whatever the subject is to press the subject of citizenship, in its curriculum as delivered there on the ground,’ Interview staff member (23/9/2010:4b).

In summary, observations throughout the study revealed that the WEA’s approach to local community based learning within a global context portrays the WEA as a local organisation with a potential global reach. Its desire to embed the principles of ESDGC into all of its work, including its partnerships, demonstrates its willingness to engage its learners and members with the wider concepts of ‘global active citizenship’ and therefore the universal but ‘differentiated’ values and principles linked with human rights, equality and empowerment.

7.6 Conclusion

The study revealed that despite underlying pressures derived from governments, the WEA’s specific approach to partnership working was perhaps intrinsic to its success in encouraging active citizenship within specific communities. There was evidence to support the claim that the WEA South Wales was particularly effective at working in close partnership with a variety of Third Sector organisations, likewise local authorities, trade unions and other education providers on a local, national and international level. The organisations’ ability to effectively engage and encourage community participation was witnessed through their overall approach towards community-led, democratic educational practices and partnership working. Through these methods it aimed to promote self-sustaining community education and groups through the implementation of initiatives such as the

Community Learning Representatives programme. These measures conveyed the WEA's desire to enable long-term community engagement beyond their formal educational provision, based on partnerships with community members. In particular their work around global citizenship, although not unique, demonstrates a progressive approach to constantly evolving issues at both a local and global level, as part of their wider perceptions of active citizenship. The WEA has done this by focusing on the life skills and values which permeate national and perceived borders and by embedding these into its overall framework. By incorporating these fundamental approaches across its work, it was potentially less reliant on short-term government funding and the restrictions this imposed.

It was clear that despite some negative issues with partnership working, the WEA has had a long history of effectively working in collaboration with small and large, Third Sector and public sector organisations alike. Likewise it seemed apparent that the most successful partnerships were those that it had shared deeper connections with or had developed over time such as with trade unions and People First. Throughout many of the activities observed, the WEA's partnerships with bespoke organisations provided participants with basic tools to participate more fully in community life. This was particularly effective where the WEA facilitated access to professionals and influential bodies, thereby developing the capacity of its members to engage and even educate decision makers. Also by working with smaller more specialist organisations, the WEA has gone some way to dispel concerns regarding the dominance of larger Third Sector organisations within Wales. Similarly it illustrated how, in contrast to or in collaboration with government-led 'top down' initiatives, grassroots and community based activities could more often empower and engage citizens to participate in society.

However despite these positive illustrations of community engagement there was also a need to further examine some of the fundamental inequalities and barriers that WEA participants faced as citizens within these communities. The following chapter explores the underlying obstacles that people have had to

overcome and the extent to which the WEA South Wales's claims of empowerment and enablement were implemented through their work.

Chapter 8: Active Citizenship: Obstacles and Outcomes

Introduction

In this chapter the perceived and actual barriers that curtail people from fully participating in education and as active citizens are explored through examining the work and relationships of the Workers' Educational Association South Wales. These obstacles and barriers are related to underlying socio-economic and cultural inequalities created by factors such as de-industrialisation in South Wales, which have been exacerbated by public policies such as restrictions to benefits and access to education. These structural barriers should also be understood in terms of their influence on more personal issues such as confidence and aspirations which similarly needed to be addressed. Therefore the chapter examines how the WEA's staff members recognised these barriers and attempted to create opportunities to enable citizens to overcome these obstacles through educational provision as well as part of its wider social movement. The chapter underlines the tensions that the organisation faced when encouraging radical educative practices as a means of redressing social injustice. I explore the way in which the staffs' views were reflected in the experiences of participants in terms of limitations to their ability to participate in or influence political systems at local and national levels. These themes build on the arguments made by Fryer (2010) which aim to set out how the role of lifelong learning and addressing inequalities can enable citizens to become more active.

8.1 WEA staff' and participants' views on barriers and opportunities for active citizenship

Regardless of each person's desire to engage with society, external and internal factors more often than not determine the extent to which people can and do actively engage at various levels. The capacity of education, in this case adult education, as a mechanism to overcome fundamental inequalities of opportunities underlies the central premise of the research. 'One of the

principle objectives of learning', as Fryer asserted 'is to free individuals and groups from circumstances or conditions that restrict them- whether such restrictions are mental, physical, organisational, social, cultural or political'(2010:221). The work of the WEA is therefore potentially an important indicator of whether Third Sector adult education providers can act as enablers to give citizens more opportunities to become actively engaged in their societies. The National Institute of Adult Community Education Dysgu Cymru is the Welsh arm of NIACE, a non-governmental organisation which works to promote adult learning. It emphasised that a central determinant when evaluating the success of an adult education organisation was whether providers have aimed to 'help those adults who have benefited least from their initial learning and face particular barriers to study' (2010:2). It is against these principles that the recent work of the WEA South Wales has been analysed.

8.2 Socio-economic barriers and how were these being addressed?

South Wales, particularly since the 1980s onwards had been deeply affected by processes of de-industrialisation. These changes have had a particular impact in former mining valleys and steel towns, reducing economic opportunities and undermining self-confidence and morale in these areas. This was the background against which the WEA South Wales in recent years set out to promote its mission. Like an increasing amount of third, private and public sector organisations, however, the WEA had itself been facing mounting pressures - to deliver more with less financial resources. The emphasis on reducing the UK's state's deficit post 2008 has been coupled with prioritising the reduction of the role of the state with regards to welfare and public service provision, as referred to in chapters 1 and 4. Reductions in the education budgets by the UK and Welsh Governments were elaborated on in chapters 5 and 9. On reflection then, one of the most challenging but fundamental elements of the WEA South Wales' work has been to provide free or low cost education for people who may not usually be able to afford it – whilst continuing to go beyond government priorities in relation to more narrow vocational agendas.

The provision of affordable and accessible education for people from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds was central to the WEA's founding principles and the organisation intended for this to remain a fundamental priority within South Wales. How then, despite these pressures could the WEA in South Wales continue to maintain these principles – in terms of considering apparently small factors (such as meeting transport and caring costs) as well as addressing the wider picture of socio-economic inequalities?

These provisions remained under threat, particularly if government funding were to be further reduced or completely withdrawn- reflecting the picture across the Third Sector. Whilst recent pressures were particularly serious, it should be recognised that throughout the documented history of the association there had been few times when they had not faced financial difficulties and had always been reliant on some UK or Welsh Government funding. So the WEA did at least have some experience upon to which to draw in facing these challenges.

There had been many examples throughout South Wales where socio-economic disadvantage created, sustained and exacerbated other forms of personal barriers to participate in many of areas of life. A senior member of staff reflected on some of these underlying and interconnecting barriers linked to the socio-economic position of people that lived in South Wales:

'The biggest barrier in the valleys... is lack of aspiration.... by the 80s when there was a huge pit closure programme, there are a lot of valleys communities that have never picked up properly after that. There are a lot of people that started on the dole and then were deliberately moved on to incapacity benefit. I think because they have been detached from the work environment, they are depressed and they have got stress issues. Depression, mental health issues, are huge you know... So I think that is the biggest barrier (is) self-actualisation, also to come out and actually be different,' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:5a).

This illustrates how WEA staff recognised the need to address overlapping socio-economic issues and how they impact on people's aspirations. Creating

opportunities for those who do not have access to resources, it could be argued, is a central feature in enabling citizens to participate. A prerequisite to encouraging involvement is an appreciation of the barriers that citizens face. While some barriers are undoubtedly more visible than others, subtle differences in socio-economic status can make great differences to the opportunities on offer. Whilst these barriers were particularly evident for those out of paid employment they were also being experienced by those in paid work too. Referenced in chapter 4, this especially involved those in the most vulnerable positions in the labour market. A member of staff outlined the ways in which the organisation attempted to address these issues in particular by utilising its strong links to trade unions as follows:

‘I think by working with the trade unions we give the people in the workplace a chance that never usually gets a sniff. Normally if you look at say a big council’s training budget, I think you will find that once you are at even junior management level you get plenty opportunities for training courses and professional development. We are a very flexible provider and by working with the trade unions we can reach the people who perhaps others can’t. If people have got basic skills issues they have probably been covering them up for years and the last thing they are going to do is to go to their HR department or training manager and say “I have got basic skills issues,” (ibid).

The work with the Valleys group in one of the most deprived and semi-isolated parts of South Wales emphasised how the WEA South Wales set out to work in communities that have often been overlooked and undervalued within the wider society. These were areas which could be perceived by some people as written off by mainstream education providers. These barriers were cumulative, mutually reinforcing and persistent. This WEA participant reflected on how much their physical and socio-economic environment created barriers for those living there:

‘The stresses and strains of living on an estate like this, is awful. I was born on this estate and I have seen over the years changes in so many ways. There may be an improvement in the way in which the estate itself looks but you can’t hide facts with cosmetic surgery, the problems are still there,’ Interview WEA member (3/2/2011:5).

According to this learner the most influential factor in creating and sustaining social problems had been 'unemployment', (ibid). This lack of availability of paid employment opportunities or even unpaid opportunities was reiterated in an interview with a staff member as a key factor in undermining citizens' ability to make an active contribution to society. 'Maybe for people to play active roles in society there needs to be those roles out there... They have got to be real and authentic and meaningful roles not just set up for small periods of time,' (12/7/2011:5). This had been an increasing challenge for individuals and communities in a socio-political climate where, as the same participant described 'there are so many organisations that are folding and ending whether that is the voluntary side...there does not seem to be hardly anything, whereas there it was full of manufacturing a few years ago. Where are there any opportunities for people? I don't know?' (ibid).

Members of the Valleys group added further emphasis to the importance of the idea that people's perceived and actual circumstances can act as inhibitors towards participation. They identified some of the fundamental practical and cultural barriers which inhibit citizen participation and progression in community and political life, linking socio-economic barriers with the obstacles presented by public policies on social welfare benefits, discussed in chapter 4. 'If you try and get people involved in something, then they think "I can't because my benefits will stop or this will be stopped". There is a fear surrounding that. So I think they have got to look at other ways,' Interview WEA member (3/2/2011:11).

Similar views were reiterated by people who have volunteered with groups across other areas of Wales and for other charities such as Community Service Volunteers (CSV). People who claimed sickness or unemployment benefit feared participating in voluntary activities in case their benefits were stopped. The interviews exposed key contradictions and inadequacies of the UK Government's welfare system. In many cases social policy and the UK's approach to the provision of benefits actually curtailed the ability of citizens to play an active and fulfilling role in society, in that basic welfare provisions have

become perceived as privileges rather than rights to enable citizens to lead a dignified and fulfilling existence.

Previous writings have relevance here such as those by Lister (2001), Hale (2007) and Fraser (1997) discussed in previous chapters 4 and 5. They highlight the inherent flaws in the liberal welfare state, which both stigmatize and entrap people reliant on the benefits that are meant to provide security and support for everyone. The experiences of some learners stressed how policies which restricted benefits and the right to welfare have at times appeared to ensure that governments have had control over how citizens participate in society, such as through paid or unpaid work. This has often led to the stigmatising and devaluing citizens' typically unrecognised contributions when requiring government support. The result has been clearly disempowering for citizens but also for the wider society.

These issues also reflected the long-term challenges faced by the WEA. As a Third Sector organisation it has not had direct influence over the socio-economic decisions made by governments and the market, thus was under increasing pressure to reduce expenditure. Therefore the political function of the WEA South Wales re-emerged as an element of central importance, as it aimed to promote social justice through its multifaceted role incorporated in being both an education provider and a social movement. In this way, the WEA contrasted with other alternative Third Sector organisations which have encouraged active citizenship through community development styles of practices such as a comparable Third Sector community education provider the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). The WEA also attempted to influence change through its direct links to government, by lobbying government ministers as well as from a more distant approach through its educational provision and public lectures which are discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 9. However the organisation's actual ability to address wider political issues of inequality directly and indirectly could be called in to question. Its close relationship to the governments in the UK and Wales has arguably at times inhibited its ability to fundamentally challenge the government's policies and

initiatives and therefore its genuine capacity to encourage democratic citizenship. This inherent tension is examined later in chapter 9.

Former participants from other groups have similarly confirmed how socio-economic disadvantage can form barriers to full participation but also, conversely, how education through the WEA has enabled people to overcome these obstacles. For instance two participants from an area of high unemployment undertook a number of WEA Social Enterprise courses. As a result they had felt empowered to set up their own social enterprise 'Community Computer Care'. This then provided an opportunity to deliver what the founders described in an interview as 'hardware maintenance and support, web design and programme training for the long-term unemployed' (16/2/2011).

The participants described how, despite having some IT qualifications, many employers had been looking for programme specific qualifications, which were too expensive for them and indeed for most people, particularly in that disadvantaged area to afford. Trying to gain employment within the prevailing climate of high unemployment had been very demoralising for them, as for many members of these communities. One of these participants explained 'most employers don't give them a chance'. In an area such as Rhondda Cynon Taff, the unemployment rate for 18-24 year olds was the highest in the UK, according to University of Glamorgan Statistics (2/2011) website {accessed 02/2011}. Therefore work experience was a highly valued asset, despite its lack of financial reward or support. It was these considerations which played a strong factor in how the social enterprise was set up and run. It was explained by the two men that even though the enterprise had been making some profit, in order for it to remain sustainable and grow to give other young people opportunities, they had paid themselves and continued to pay themselves just the basic minimum wage. They planned to continue to do this until they were able to afford to receive a reasonable but still self-imposed limited wage. As one of them explained, they didn't need to 'earn a great deal but were happy to just be earning enough' (16/2/2011). It appeared that the opportunities that were

given through the WEA in conjunction with other government funded training and support had enabled them to enact active citizenship on multiple levels. It not only provided the opportunity for paid work or training it also provided the local community with role models for change. Likewise the positive impact that the enterprise had on the environment was that it produced 'zero waste', demonstrating how with the right support citizens' contributions can have far reaching benefits. The Social Enterprise progressed during the study, to expand, to the point that eventually involved setting up a local shop which sold recycled goods and reconditioned products.

In summary then, it was evident that most WEA learners in South Wales regularly faced barriers to participation resulting from underlying socio-economic inequality. These viewpoints and experiences that had been expressed by the WEA members and staff provided an important insight into underlying reasons why people felt unable to participate in society. In response, the WEA recognised many of the debilitating effects that this has on individuals and their communities and therefore focused their resources on people that required multi-layered support within its wider social movement.

8.3 How did the WEA recognise multiple forms of disadvantage and discrimination?

In some areas of Wales the barriers to participation were multifaceted and were at times overwhelming for some of its citizens. As Bedford et al had already identified, there were cross class barriers for women in particular such as:

'Lack of confidence, lack of qualification, not being able to articulate ideas and concerns clearly, depression and isolation, lack of knowledge and opportunities, lack of transport, inaccessibility of venues; making assumptions about women because of their culture; lack of support from employers; cost involved; financial dependency etc.' Bedford (2010:192).

However, social and financial barriers faced by working class people in general could, according to a member of WEA staff, act as a 'bigger barrier for women...

because particularly women in a family, they tend to put everybody else first' (23/9/2011:12). Gender prejudices which many working class women faced have been highlighted by feminists such as Skeggs (1997:2004) for example. She underlined how embedded cultural beliefs which described working class women's primary roles as involving caring, have sustained stereotypes about how women can and should or should not - participate in society:

'The historical legacies which denote the working class as deficient, but with potential for future reform; which locate respectability with domesticity and which locate caring primarily as a responsibility are institutionalised in the organisation and practices of contemporary courses. The importance placed on moral responsibility... generates a form of productive power whereby working class women can gain positions of respect and responsibility from being seen to care,' Skeggs (1997:54).

Some aspects of the WEA's work clearly did attempt to redress some types of inequalities and stereotyped positions. For a range of activities including open days, classes and residential weekends the WEA offered crèches, childcare and transport costs, to ensure that parents and in particular women were not disadvantaged by their caring responsibilities. The importance of these issues was recognised by a female member of the ESDGC group for instance. She stressed how important childcare provision had been for her and how the flexible community based classes and branches had made the difference for her being able to participate in her community and in educational activities. The increased contribution of this particular Community Learning Representative was apparent throughout the study, with this basic support she was able to take on key roles in her community and later even formal roles within the organisation.

Also despite media representations conveying images of 'irresponsible worklessness' across Wales, many people in the most deprived areas of the UK had been taking on increasing caring responsibilities for relatives and even neighbours. As one WEA staff member explained, this was particularly prevalent 'for middle aged learners, it is that so many more people have caring responsibilities' (23/9/2011:5a). This was in part because of a growing elderly

population but also the costs of care for those who needed it were beyond the means of citizens themselves or their relatives in these areas:

‘Certainly in the workplace learning courses people are saying “I can’t come in the evening - I have to get home to look after older people”. There is a lot more people doing childcare now, because younger people can’t afford the childcare, quality childcare is not cheap and if you are on a minimum wage job the only way you can exist is if Mum or Dad help out’ Interview staff member, (ibid).

These experiences also reflect the perceptions of some commentators who recognise that the mutual understanding, respect and empathy expressed in caring can be perceived as important if not crucial elements of active citizenship. As Jill Bedford et al points out ‘citizenship can be seen as a continuum rather than an all or nothing affair, often reflecting demands of caring or other obligations which could also be interpreted as the exercise of citizenship obligations’ (2010:201). The recognition of caring as an intrinsic quality in itself can also act as a transformative tool when engaging individuals and groups and enabling the passive citizen to become active and fulfilled. In that by acknowledging the importance of caring it allows for citizens to convey their contribution to society in less formal means. It also emphasises the value of social relationships and how it contributes to the well-being of communities reflected in Putman’s notion of ‘social capital’ (2000).

Arguably the effects of systemic inequalities which exist in communities all over the UK and beyond were more prevalent in areas where the non-economic role of citizens were not recognised or valued. It was apparent that the WEA attempted to appreciate the non-economic value of education by continuing to provide liberal, arts based and experiential educational opportunities alongside more vocational courses such as IT. In many cases the organisation endeavoured to recognise the multiple disadvantages that people faced in order to enable them to participate in activities that were appropriate to their specific needs and interests at the time.

Whilst identifying the positive contributions made by WEA initiatives and approaches in these ways, however, it is also important to re-emphasise that WEA's provision was only observed in some areas as the research was limited to a few groups. Although other groups were observed that had not been recommended, these additional observations did not include access to outreach work with some of the most disadvantaged groups. Therefore it was difficult to assess whether the WEA was able to address issues of exclusion from participation so effectively for some of the most vulnerable in society such as asylum seekers and refugees. Nonetheless there were examples given by staff, regarding initial work with homeless charities and disabled groups that they had no previous links with. Also its work with the Stroke Association involved activities with people in hospitals and the housebound. It was evident overall, that many areas of discrimination were challenged through the WEA's educational provisions as part of the wider social movement such as socio-economic and gender inequality as well as racism. The emphasis on promoting an environment that accepted and at times promoted 'difference', was central to this work.

8.4 How far can educational provision backed by support structures make a difference?

Central to appreciating how to effectively engage and communicate with learners according to Fryer is that some of their fundamental concerns and needs have to be recognised. 'Learners may need some educative assistance in working out exactly what constitutes their interests, needs and priorities. This will require the exercise of supreme professional and technical skill,' (2010:213).

Across Wales the WEAs had to a large extent focused its resources on what had been termed 'hard to reach' communities and 'second chance learners'. So how did the WEA address the needs of those defined in this way?

A recurring theme emerged that for programmes, courses and initiatives to have been successful in motivating and encouraging further participation, that

individual's needs and desires had to be recognised and addressed. This reflects the principle of 'differentiation' as determined by Lister (2003) and Young (1990). It was clear through observing classes as well as carrying out interviews with participants and staff alike that they perceived the value in providing people with time, space and support to discover what works best for them. It was evident that in order to provide genuine equal opportunities for people to participate in learning and thereafter their communities, one size does not necessarily fit all. In many cases, if not most, WEA courses were attended by people who had been signposted through prior WEA and community courses, activities and development workers. In certain instances it was also essential that participants were given extra options and encouragement, rather than being told or directed down a particular path which would have been unlikely to benefit them or society in the longer-term. A WEA learner/ Community Learning Representative also conveyed this point:

'There is no use saying to someone "I think you should go in for this". Instead they would be motivated to participate through a more natural introduction to education. They will suddenly click, even when you do a first aid course someone might think "that is the one for me," Interview CLR (9/5/2011:2).

The provision of taster or introduction courses was a popular way within adult education to ease participants back into education. According to this participant 'that is where the WEA is helping people. It is giving what they may call the taster courses,' (ibid). This method according to this long-term member had been the key to getting people to take that initial step:

'We try to say "well give it a go"... "Look you don't have to sign up for 6 to 10 months, just come in and does it once, meet people'. Once we have got them in, what we tend to do is say "we have got one more course, would you like to come on this?" Interview CLR (9/5/2011:2).

Similarly this member perceived that there had usually been a natural progression for most people to carry on participating in learning or community activities. 'For anybody first going it is making the first step'. This participant went on to describe how positive this process can be:

'For most people once you start off you get that thirst for something a bit more. You want to go on and progress, if you can offer them free courses, which the WEA do, they then do because they have met a few people and they have got out and about. They want to go on further and further. For instance, lots of people don't think that they can get into college or get into university or anything like that. Once they get on track they will go,' Interview CRL (9/5/2011:1).

For many learners within the WEA, it was the first time that they would have achieved or progressed in the educational system at all e.g. some if not many would have been described as Not in Education Employment or Training (NEETSs)¹⁰. The WEA received government funding to target this particular group of people amongst others facing disadvantage or perceived as requiring extra support or motivation to actively engage in society. For many such citizens numerous underlying environmental, social, physical or mental barriers have curtailed their ability to successfully participate. A staff member reflected that there was a need for some if not most learners' educational experiences to be perceived holistically and the WEA in her words provided where possible bespoke support and consistency:

'The highest success rate was always with continuity - that is when people came to the WEA classes with the support of a development worker. People didn't know it was a development worker, they just knew it was somebody who was from the office who came in. That personal support and interest was enough to keep you moving on' Interview staff member (4/10/2010:4).

Throughout the research, the WEA had invested in various forms of additional educational or personal support such as the recruitment of community development workers. These provisions were often paid for through partnerships with Communities First as well as via other Welsh Government and European Social Funds. The WEA had claimed that this additional support was at times the determining factor in motivating learners to complete courses and thereafter progress on to other opportunities. As a staff member reiterated 'that little extra support outside the class was a key for keeping people on the programme' (4/10/2010:4).

¹⁰ NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is a government derived term sometimes perceived as derogatory term to label those 'other' who are not officially recognised as making a contribution to society.

Some staff also perceived that encouraging social interaction was also a fundamental component of the WEA's work, as one staff member stated- 'I think really it is the social stuff that (what) makes WEA different from other providers and I think sometimes it is the glue that holds people together. You know going away on visits together is not scary if you are going with a group that you know' (23/9/2010:13a).

This point was confirmed by a member of the People First class, 'I enjoy the company very much so. I would not come here if I did not have the company' (26/4/2011:2d). Intrinsic to that particular class's high attendance and success could arguably have been what I experienced as the generally friendly and supportive environment provided by the participants and the tutor's inclusive approach, which was consistently witnessed throughout the 9 month study. As a tutor similarly reflected it was the 'equal relationship that encourages people to come back as well' (12/7/2011:4). For another one of its members the companionship and support was undoubtedly the reason why they enjoyed participating in and were motivated to attend the classes. This member explained that 'I love coming up here, to meet everybody and help people up here' (26/4/2011:2d).

It was revealed through the experience of WEA members/ learners when interviewed that the WEA often provided extra support, including specific services to individuals, which made a subtle but often crucial difference to the initial and/ or continued involvement of participants. It was recognised by one member for example that: 'the WEA do try wherever possible to give you expenses. It is very good - it is a feather in their cap (9/5/2011:5). This member went on to say that 'they give you nice little refreshments, again they try to look after you', (9/5/2011:8). This feeling of being cared for had evidently been significant.

As a number of WEA staff recognised more generally 'people are more likely to learn if they are having fun, by them gelling together people relax and a lot more learning takes place, when people are actually comfortable'

(23/9/2011:9). These positive principles and approaches to practices appeared to be shared by many participants and staff alike when they revealed their experiences of WEA courses:

‘All the WEA instructors, tutors and the like... they are not condescending to any of the group or look down and say “you are dull” or whatever, they do accept that people have their frailties so they help them out tremendously and to put it in a fun jovial sort of atmosphere that is how we start to try and get going on basic courses’ Interview CLR (9/5/2011:5).

These reflections may sound somewhat idealist and I had questioned how such WEA aspirations might actually be experienced in practice before I started on the fieldwork. However my experiences of attending sessions with some of the most stigmatised and disadvantaged group of learners with learning disabilities did actually concur with such reflections from the members themselves.

Participants were genuinely being treated with respect, evidently enjoying their participation in group sessions. As the tutor also observed ‘I notice myself that a lot of courses are attended by people who would probably find it difficult to go to colleges because of travel or maybe because of their confidence in even going to ‘college’ (12/7/2011:3). This was about addressing both practical as well as more personal and motivational barriers.

Members of the Valleys and the People First group similarly asserted that they would not have been able to attend courses had they been based in the local college or university as they simply did not have the financial resources or the transport infrastructure to support their journeys. The importance of such practical barriers, potentially compounding further obstacles emerged from my own personal experiences as a participant observer. This unfolded when travelling over 40 minutes to evening classes – often in bad weather and after dark. This amongst other reasons led to my own decision to stop attending WEA classes. This issue of transport and the importance of locally accessible provision were acutely relevant due to the specific geographical settings and transport infrastructure within South Wales, particularly in the more deprived areas of the South Wales valleys. Expensive, infrequent and inconvenient public transport around the more remote areas of South Wales would leave

citizens feeling isolated and frustrated and would exacerbate concerns and barriers towards participating in activities.

However as previously suggested, the capacity of the organisation to continue to provide local community based venues for the classes and activities raised concerns regarding the heightened costs that this could entail. As the WEA had virtually no buildings of its own it had to rent facilities and provided transport costs for tutors to get there. These costs had often been met by partner organisations, including other organisations reliant on government funding. Therefore these resources were derived almost entirely through government funds and were increasingly vulnerable in the context of austerity.

On reflection, specific and bespoke structures and practices had been in place to support WEA learners' varying needs, including those outside of ordinary educational practices. Here it seemed apparent that the WEA was able and willing to work in local communities to recognise and address the plethora of barriers to participation that they were facing. As the research revealed that truly active and autonomous citizens could not easily fit into a narrowly defined set of prescribed criteria of activity. Their motivations and the types of educational activities they engaged in needed be placed in the specific contexts of their lives and could be subject to a wide variety of personal, social and financial circumstances and influences. Where government derived funding had been adapted by the WEA to these varying needs such as through bespoke courses, they had proven successful in connecting with some of the most disengaged. Overall, there was evidence that the more opportunities, knowledge, skills, resources and support that citizens received within the WEA and from its partner organisations the more likely they were to be engaged in activity of a social nature at whatever level was appropriate to them. Consequentially this raised wider concerns about the sustainability of this type of bespoke provision as most of the funding available for this support was provided by short-term funding streams deriving from EU and UK Governments.

8.5 Confidence & Self-esteem

Perhaps, fundamental to the success of community engagement and active citizenship from both an individual's and collective perspective is the attribute of confidence, to participate and influence change. This is arguably central to community based organisations, and government bodies' role in activating citizenship. Fryer recognised that it is a key principle for lifelong learning that 'the learning involved could consist of raising consciousness, enhancing self-esteem and self-confidence or developing better understanding to barriers to autonomy' (2010:221). This catalytic attribute had been recognised as a key asset to learners' development amongst members of the WEA and played a central role in its underlying approach to teaching and learning in the activities I observed. An experienced staff member emphasised this point:

'That word confidence... I suddenly realised is the key to everything the WEA has been doing in the... region. It's bringing people in - supporting them. Often with support workers, because of the discrete groups we run for people with mental health and stroke issues and with learning difficulties. Even when they are not discrete groups, you see how people hold themselves back for fear of failure. Once that confidence is in place and that support not just from the tutor and the development worker, it is from the class and it is the snowball effect. Once it starts to work you can't stop it and it rolls,' Interview staff member (4/10/2010:2/3).

Above all else the central role of the WEA has been perceived by a senior staff member as:

'Supporting people in having self-confidence and supporting them in going to ask for things and to get people to listen to their needs... I think really it is the self-confidence bit which is very, very important. It is that sort of thread of belief through the organisation that it is possible to act for yourself and that gets transferred out to people you work with' Interview staff member (24/9/2010:2).

The WEA's role in enabling people to participate in community life more generally, according one tutor, had taken a multi-faceted approach to the learner's needs. 'Through providing education at a community level, tutors are very flexible and so they will often address lots of other things with those

individual learners such as confidence, self-esteem and motivating them to go into other things' (10/9/2011:1). These softer skills such as confidence have often been recognised across the adult education sector as a significant aspect to community development. I witnessed how these types of skills were promoted, as they reoccurred as a central tool in enabling members to feel able to participate across a wide range of WEA activities. This was evident in the presentation of and reflection on different styles of interaction such as 'passive, assertive and aggressive.' These forms of communication were discussed in the People First Group in order for members to reflect on their own personalities and ways of expression with a view to learning how to communicate more effectively. This reflexive style of education also formed part of the formal accreditation of WEA modules such as 'Better Communication: How to be Assertive and Confidence Building Skills'.

I had initially questioned the effectiveness of these types of modules. There was however evidence of some of these skills being exhibited through the interviews that I carried out as well as from my own observations over the fieldwork period. For example, one learner described to me the outcomes of their learning. 'I learnt how to speak up for myself and how to speak up for others. I certainly learnt how to be assertive. It has helped support me when I go into schools, to talk to students in a school,' Interview with Learner (24/4/2011:1).

An active member of the ESDGC group also described how the classes gave people opportunities to participate, on their own terms, but recognised that the 'biggest' barrier' according to this learner was 'being shy and not taking the first initial step,' Interview with CLR (18/4/2011:8).

Throughout the interviewing process and WEA classes I observed, learners themselves repeatedly identified confidence as central to their own progression. As one Valleys' learner asserted during an interview for instance, 'confidence is a massive issue' (2/3/2011:4). In this context it was essential that all learners were given the time, space and the support required in order to develop at an individual pace. This learner went on to express their concerns

regarding the length of the courses: 'I think 10 weeks to learn something, is not really (long enough). It is not a long time to go in-depth with what you are trying to learn, especially if you are not confident and at the end of it you have got to write something on paper,' (ibid).

So there was some shortfall in provision of bespoke support. However a surprisingly positive 'can-do attitude' amongst WEA's staff and learners alike was also observed. This was most noticeable in the classes with some of the most disadvantaged groups and did appear to demonstrate how the WEA had attempted to enable citizens to fulfil their potential. As a staff member explained, the WEA's approach to learners was perceived as believing that 'with the right mechanisms you can do it' (4/10/2010:2/3). Inherent to this attitude was an incremental approach to learning, as another staff member conveyed:

'You start at point one and then the confidence builds but it is a developmental process. It doesn't happen overnight. They have to have self- belief to continue on the course when it becomes difficult. I think that is one of the things that the WEA has always been good at,'
Interview staff member (4/10/2010:4).

This was particularly evident in that each member of the People First group was encouraged to contribute in their own way and time, whilst being mindful of other's needs. According to a group member the support given through the classes ensured that they didn't 'have any problem, because no one ever rushes me and I can sort of take my time, which is why I can support others who might not be as confident' (26/4/2010:5). Education in this context was therefore perceived and delivered as a transformative process which evolved over time.

There was already some evidence to suggest that providing learners with what are considered by some as the essential tools to be 'effective citizens,' that is 'confidence and knowledge' can have positive outcomes. Previous research by one staff member of the WEA demonstrated a direct link between the work of the WEA in providing 'knowledge and confidence' and activating citizens, although this could take a variety of forms and outcomes:

'The research I did into two branches of the WEA where it was clear that... a significant proportion of those that I interviewed became more active after they became WEA members... their activity did involve but not always involve political campaigning. So their skills developed, their confidence developed, their knowledge developed through their involvement with the WEA' Interview member (16/9/2010:2).

Overall it was apparent that the WEA prioritised addressing the shortage of 'softer skills' such as confidence and self-esteem through a wide range of activities and classes that were observed. Thus by recognising that these skills are essential for citizens to participate even on the most basic level, it enabled some of the most disengaged members to find their voices and make wider contributions to their own and others' lives.

8.6 Reflecting on alternative experiences of WEA

There were examples, in a small number of different classes where learners felt let down or isolated when tutors were unreliable or didn't inform them of their forthcoming absence from the next class. This only occurred on a limited number of occasions and did not reflect what was experienced as an overall considerate and inclusive attitude towards participants. Nonetheless, this did raise some interesting and important questions.

In certain cases the effects of tutor non-attendance appeared to have been negative, potentially undermining the WEA's overall ethos of caring and concern for learners. In some instances classes that I independently attended, a decision to stop attending was made by the participants when tutors did not attend. This highlighted some of the negative effects of the WEA's particular style of education which was often highly flexible and encouraged freedom of expression by tutors and participants. Such a relaxed approach to content or attendance would at times lead to some lack of coherence or at least the impression of an unprofessional organisation. This was the potential downside of the WEA's informal, community based and participative approach although it

should be emphasised that these problems occur in organisations across all sectors.

Some of the negative effects emanating from this were however offset by the more positive outcomes that I also witnessed. The WEA's participative style could also result in groups becoming relatively self-sufficient and empowered to meet their own learning needs. One particular example highlighted how autonomous a specific group of learners had become when their tutor did not attend their class. Those learners within the group had been previously encouraged by the tutor to research and present material, as well as to determine aspects of the subject matter, lead classes and follow up with action outside the group. This style of education then enabled participants to continue the class in the tutor's absence, as the group felt confident to progress with learning. While still feeling let down by the tutor they had gone on to turn the situation around in positive ways. In fact it could conversely be seen as a positive example of how empowered and active the class members had become.

Such autonomous acts by members of WEA groups were demonstrated on another occasion when I observed the group presenting a document to their tutor (21/4/2010). This document included a list of positive changes to their local environment that should occur, in their view. This was with regards to their rights as tenants and residents of that area. These recommendations included a request for more direct access to the officers from the relevant housing authority which made decisions on their behalf, as well as holding to account the authorities with regards to their rules and regulations which were meant to protect them as residents. These were forwarded to the relevant local authorities. This initiative was taken entirely by the group members themselves, some of whom had previously lacked the confidence to speak out at all, as I had also observed. This process illustrated how inadvertent circumstances coupled with the right educative tools enabled previously passive citizens to become active.

Participants' reflected on how their own experiences had often acted as a motivational factor to take part in WEA classes and thereafter their communities. When reflecting on incentives for learners, for example, a staff member recognised that a key motivational factor for some people to start getting involved in their communities was through them challenging authorities and injustice on issues relating to their personal situations or communities. These motivations were outlined during an interview with a member of staff, 'when people who they know are not getting a good deal perhaps they have never felt really strongly about an issue before but they will start to take on officialdom... I think it is, especially when people feel driven to get a better deal' (23/9/2010:6).

Therefore the motivations for many learners to get involved with the WEA, even at the outset, were often driven by a desire for social change. It appeared that with a little encouragement and support learners with different aims felt empowered to challenge wider political and social systems. Thus the WEA in these circumstances acted as a vehicle for citizens to become autonomous agents by providing them with the basic skills and knowledge to become active citizens and groups.

8.7 Overcoming the obstacles to active citizenship and the wider benefits of learning

Academics and practitioners alike have recognised the wider benefits of learning on individuals and society at large. For example a report by the Institute of Education into the wider benefits of learning concluded that the 'sustaining effects of education are that it transforms people's lives but also enables them to cope with the multifarious stresses of daily life as well as continuous and discontinuous social change: and contributes to others well-being by maintaining community and collective life,' Grundy (2002:7).

The degree to which the WEA incorporated approaches which addressed a whole range of physical and mental capacities was examined. Barriers created,

through language and communication, have acted as a form of exclusion for many learners, particularly for those who lacked some basic skills. These barriers were recognised during the Valleys' and People First classes including difficulties in understanding formal and informal documents for instance. Participating in consultation processes and associated societal practices could be difficult especially when people have a disability. Official documents and forms were often for a range of reasons inaccessible without the aid of the tutor to explain and support participants. Reasons for this inaccessibility included problems as a result of visual impairment, reading and writing capabilities, complex processes and overly complicated language. For example the group was asked about the new Disability Living Allowance form and how to make it easier to fill in. A participant asked 'why can't someone come out and tell us what it is about', (15/02/11). They went on to consider how the government 'could make it easier' to fill in forms. They also questioned whether the government would actually 'listen to opinions', which conveyed an underlying scepticism in terms of whether what they contributed would make a genuine difference to government decisions and practices.

As a result of these discussions the tutor facilitated additional sessions, whereby participants were able to discuss issues such as the Disability Living Allowance with those that administrated it (25/4/2011). While this did not change the underlying bureaucratic system, it did enable participants to engage with those responsible for administering it, giving an extra level of accountability and a direct route for the participants as citizens to challenge the processes and decisions which affected their lives. Such exclusion from understanding formal processes did however raise wider issues regarding why citizens are so often unable to participate in many democratic and social processes, often expected of them. Where people are unable to engage with materials or processes through lack of educational skills such as illiteracy, innumeracy, or knowledge of the system as well as other physical, social or economic barriers then the system itself fails those it proclaims to support. These cases illustrate the importance of the work of organisations like the WEA, which facilitate citizen

engagement for individuals and communities that government initiatives and provision alone seem unable to reach.

Participating in community learning through the WEA according to a number of staff and participants had both direct and indirect health benefits for learners. One member of staff declared the WEA's approach enabled people to participate in educational activities in ways that are most appropriate to those learners. 'People will come along to something that is not threatening. So that is part of it and also with older learners it keeps people out of the doctors' surgery, gives them something to go to. There is a social aspect to part of group' Interview WEA Tutor (23/9/2010:9).

Therefore it was perceived that the health benefits could have a virtuous circle of positive effects and directly impact on the ability of citizens to actively engage in society. This was apparent in particular classes where health inequalities were prevalent. Different aspects of health and disability had been discussed openly amongst the People First group and class participants were often trained to discuss them in primary and secondary schools. This was epitomised by some of its members helping to establish and be trained through a programme developed called Challenges Attitudes through Training (CATT). Members who themselves experienced learning disabilities discussed and taught students and teachers about disabilities in general as well as setting it within a context of their own personal experiences. Topics such as epilepsy and hearing impairments had been taught by these People First members, sometimes drawing on their own personal experiences of a particular illness or disability.

These educational practices not only aimed to provide awareness of different conditions, how to deal with them and their wider socio-economic effects on the individual and society. It also arguably enabled positive improvements to the health of participants in a number of ways. This included improvements to mental health as conditions were understood better by sufferers or the people around them. This I witnessed first-hand where people with similar conditions supported one another and encouraged participation in classes. According to

the Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning in NIACE DYSGYU Cymru (2010:5), adult education contributes to improved wellbeing and mental health, in that 'women with level 2 qualifications have a 15% less risk of depression'. A People First member raised this point and described what they felt were the health benefits of communicating with others and being part of a group. 'People need to communicate- talking to people is the best medication' (4/11/2010).

WEA participants provided other examples regarding the benefits of education for a wider social purpose. 'Education' and 'communication,' according to one Valleys group participant, were fundamental tools in helping others, including politicians, empathise with how people in these disadvantaged circumstances feel and live (3/2/2011:8). Empathy as emphasised by Faulks is a central method for 'a developed sense of citizenship' (2001:51). These participants had joined the WEA courses aiming to challenge some of the local and personal issues that arose out of the fundamental socio-economic inequalities and unequal life chances that different communities were facing. Some of the participants felt that education would give them the knowledge to change their own and others' lives. As one participant asserted, their own situation provided an illustration of how education can help challenge systemic inequalities:

'It is social injustice. It is the same as the law. Those who make it are those who can break it. To me there is a massive social injustice, there always have been and there probably always will be. Unless people like us get educated and understand how the system works,' Interview WEA member (3/2/2011:8).

This participant of the Valleys group, stated that they would 'hopefully be going to do a conference' and invite local academics' the purpose of which would be to discuss the problems that the people of their area faced. 'The only way is to go up and say it, is to say it from your heart. So we are trying to do that' (3/2/2011:6). Here it was identified that part of the process of creating social justice is giving people a voice, a view which has clearly been identified as a method of empowerment by feminists such as Oakley (1982). Despite some deep-set socio-economic barriers within the same community, throughout even

a short process of observation, I was able to witness that some participants in this semi-isolated village had actually increased their capacity and willingness to enhance the quality of life for themselves and others that lived in and around the area. For example the tenants and residents group, according to an interview with a resident in the area for example, aimed to 'try to improve the environment' with the help of the WEA and a government funded scheme called the Groundwork Trust (3/2/2011:5).

Participants of the Valleys group also described some of their recent work with the community, as a result of their increased knowledge, contacts and confidence. They were embarking on a holistic project, aiming to work with local public services, volunteers and groups to provide better care for vulnerable people.

'We are also trying at the minute, putting together a business plan for carers. All we want to do is give them good quality care time, because people always make the mistake that as long as you are feeding their body it is fine. Our intentions are to feed the body and the mind,'
Interview WEA member (3/2/2011:2).

There was clear evidence that, despite all the challenges, education in this particular instance had played a central role in providing opportunities for a range of residents to become actively engaged in improving their own physical and social environments which was also on their own terms.

The research revealed then that over time classes and activities offered by the WEA for groups that were often excluded from mainstream participation led to wider benefits for the individual and their communities. Where I observed groups over extended periods of time I witnessed how many members became more confident and willing to participate in initially small ways but often leading to activities with a potentially wider social impact or purpose. Through recognition of people's and group's specific needs, bespoke community-led educational opportunities, enabled participants to feel empowered to challenge and support their own communities. In some cases this clearly was helpful in

raising awareness of health conditions and developing community solutions to support the most disadvantaged members of their own communities.

8.8 Progressing and contributing as learners and citizens

Progression in some form or another has always been a professed aim for the WEA South Wales. Its founding principles involved enabling working class people to attain greater levels of education with the potential of attending higher education, and this had remained central to its proclaimed ethos. The introduction of Higher Education Fees under the New Labour administration in England and Wales then further increased fees under the Conservative- Liberal Coalition Government, had created further barriers to learning. However the concept of progression has always been wider than education for employment or even for formal education achievements. 'Education for education's sake', can have much further reaching implications. One of the key aims the WEA claimed was to ensure that its members would achieve some level of active citizenship. A staff member conveyed their perception of this process as an ideal for its members:

'They become tutors or they become class leaders, whereby the WEA has come to a finite end, it is over to the community to provide self-help. ... They establish themselves on their own they have got the wherewithal and the confidence to fundraise enough to keep the venue going, because the venue relies upon them' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:9).

In this case members would take on formal roles within their community, sometimes providing education and classes themselves. There was indeed evidence that this regularly occurred and was encouraged where learners felt willing and able to take on these roles. Certain learners from all the classes that were observed had become informal or formal tutors themselves, often teaching subjects that they learned through the WEA and partner organisations. They did this by undertaking training, often provided through the WEA, to be community tutors. This included participants having taken the (PTLLs) Preparing to Teach in Lifelong Learning qualifications. These are short 30 hour teaching

courses leading to qualifications which enable people to teach in lifelong learning subjects in communities, bringing their own life skills to their communities. This transition was described by a WEA staff member as follows:

‘We have run PTTLs courses in the community for learners who have been with us for a while encouraging them to train as tutors. Some of whom have carried on teaching, because we work closely with occupational therapists, with mental health services we trained a group of Occupational Therapists as well, so that they understood the learning process, so that they really knew where to signpost people on or to take learners’, Interview staff member (4/10/2010:7).

There were specific examples of where the WEA had provided the initial and transitional opportunities for participants to gain access to knowledge and education where they had not before. The emphasis that these processes placed on small steps into education and social participation is intrinsic to the community development style of education. An active member of the Valleys group, who had started off with no formal educational qualifications, described the transformative journey of participation through the WEA below:

‘The first one (course) I ever done was a citizenship course, then after that I went to Tredegar, bearing in mind that I left school with nothing. You know I would not have been able to write an essay or things like that, so for me (this) has been big steps,’ Interview staff member (3/2/2010:2).

The same learner had gone on to be a highly active and central figure in their community. They were thereafter driving change forward and encouraging inter-generational community projects, delivering courses and supporting individuals and groups in a wide range of projects. They had also conveyed a deep sense of having gained reflective and analytical skills, whereby they could describe their own experiences of living in disadvantaged environments.

Similarly a member of the People First group recalled a desktop publishing course run through the WEA, which enabled them to describe the stigma and discrimination they had encountered throughout their earlier life. This led them to write and publish a book of their experiences. ‘It was through that,

that we started the Changing Attitudes towards Training project, when we go into schools and talk about disability awareness' (26/4/2010:1).

Another participant described how learning through the WEA had changed their life:

'I would say that from those courses, they offer so many things where I now feel a much stronger person because of it. Through meeting people I feel like I am a lot stronger now. That I can deal with things better. It taught me to be a better person' Interview learner (26/4/2010:7).

This learner had become a member of the All Wales People First Group described in chapter 6, which aimed to influence government policies and public attitudes towards people with learning disabilities. It was evident through discussions and interviews with the member, that they had gained skills, knowledge and friends. She reflected that it 'has helped me with meeting new people' (24/4/2011:2). Also that it had provided her with access to contacts through the networks they had been introduced to through the WEA and People First which enabled her to participate in ways that were appropriate to them. An example of what Putman had coined 'bridging capital' (2000).

The widespread of activities that Community Learning Representatives had become engaged with as a result of their WEA training, was also evident. One staff member recollects the variety of roles that many CLR's had taken on:

'The thing I was going to say about the community learning reps course, is that lots of people have gone from that to get jobs, in Community First Forums, to be Members of Community First Forums. We had a progression route they could either go on to mentoring or working collaboratively in your community, so I think that is active citizenship as well. Once they have done that they found that confidence then to sit on Community First Boards' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:2).

These types of outcomes clearly fulfilled some of the WEA's and the government's key objectives to engage citizens and encourage civic participation. However they also demonstrated how they had provided education for employment opportunities, which contributed to their capacity to

continue to receive high levels of government funding. The implications of these funding pressures are discussed in more detail in chapter 9.

It was however evident that in a plethora of cases, an evolution of activities as well as deeper levels of participation was enabled by the WEA by working alongside other organisations. This empowered citizens to get involved at the level and in the variant forms that were appropriate to them. One of the most striking examples of the progression of a group of people that had not participated in mainstream education or in some cases social activities was a music group which was comprised of people with learning disabilities. The purpose of the group has been described by the organiser as aiming to change attitudes so that participants of the class were defined as 'artists first and not people with learning disabilities' (21/1/2011). This short course led to numerous community based performances and high levels of satisfaction from participants and the audiences alike. Positive behavioural changes were also observed, as members of the group became more engaged in activities both inside and outside the group. The group exemplified how non-academic courses enabled the inclusivity of citizens that had often been excluded through background or ability to participate in learning and then to make a wider social contribution.

The overall level of progression and clear examples of active citizenship throughout the case study highlighted how the WEA were able to facilitate and enable citizens to participate in a wide range of ways. Despite underlying barriers and obstacles to participation it was observed that for many learners taking part in classes, as an initial step often resulted in deeper social consequences with longer-term benefits for society. Here active citizenship was enacted as a process, often taking years to develop but with specific help and support within a learner-led environment the WEA, repeatedly enabled citizens to become active regardless of the starting point of its learners. It did however leave unanswered questions regarding the overall contribution to societal change that these members could make within a system which remained largely inaccessible or unrepresentative to most of its citizens.

8.9 Conclusions on the WEA's ability to address barriers faced by participants

Despite increasing financial pressures apparent across the Third Sector, it was evident on a wide range of levels, that the WEA demonstrated its ability to support and enable some citizens, particularly in the most disadvantaged areas in South Wales, to overcome inequalities in order to engage as active citizens. The ability to address issues of social inequalities and social exclusion will nonetheless remain an on-going task. It was however evident through many examples of its work in partnership with individuals and groups in communities and across South Wales as a whole, that the WEA recognised both perceived and actual obstacles to participation. This included socio-economic, cultural, physical, mental and as well as personal barriers. Across its provision, particularly through partnerships, there was evidence from the interviews and from my observations, to support the view that the WEA did provide some key tools to enable citizens to overcome barriers to active participation at a whole range of levels in society. This was often conveyed through relatively subtle forms of achievement and progress, such as personal and community achievements which had often undervalued by mainstream education providers and measures of success. The WEA's approach resulted in some of those people who required extra support becoming enabled to take the initial step to participate in education and/ or flourishing as active citizens when provided with tailored support within an appropriate environment. This captured the WEA's capacity and willingness to encourage active citizenship beyond the basic remit of a further education provider and even many Third sector organisations.

It should be recognised however that many of its support workers and development officers were funded directly or indirectly through government. Therefore without this extra funding this type of support may not have been available. This in itself raised fundamental questions about how dependent the WEA has been on the financial support of governments and the wider implications that had on its ability to challenge government agendas.

There was also a range of evidence gained throughout the study which conveyed that while the WEA was bound by delivering these government objectives such as skills for employability, they were also able to act with a wider more critical purpose. There was an explicit and implicit acknowledgement throughout the organisation that each person's contribution had to be valued within their own particular context. Throughout the WEA then there were clear examples where they had attempted to take into consideration the challenges each person or community contends with. This illustrated what Lister (2003) and Young (1999) described as 'differentiated citizenship'. This viewpoint was epitomised by one of the WEA's tutors as follows: 'It does not matter how small their contribution is or how large that contribution - it is all worthwhile and it all adds up to a bigger picture,' Interview WEA Tutor (12/7/2010).

It appeared that many of its staff and members within the WEA South Wales strove to treat each learner as an individual with their own particular needs and abilities, with the intention of helping them to fulfil their potential. Evidence emerged that many learners as citizens had been enabled to make a personally relevant social contribution.

It remains uncertain however as to whether these WEA learners will have been able to have any profound impact on the system at large and whether the barriers that they have faced will remain in place for future generations. The WEA's education provision in South Wales certainly emerged to have had an impact on many citizens' ability and willingness to participate in society. However whether it is able to contribute to enable and encourage challenges to social injustice on more fundamental levels is further explored with regard to relationships with government in the next chapter.

Chapter 9: The WEA South Wales and the role of government**Introduction**

This chapter focuses on a critical examination of the relationship between the WEA South Wales and UK Governments, primarily the Welsh Government. This study concludes by discussing the ambiguous position that the WEA as a Third Sector organisation has been in when claiming to promote empowering, democratic and even radical forms of active citizenship whilst subject to the wider socio-political conditions. It specifically scrutinises the concerns and challenges regarding instability and unsustainability of its funding streams due to its high dependence on government funding. This financial reliance highlights potential tensions regarding the Welsh Government's control over its priorities as an adult education provider. It raises questions concerning the extent to which the WEA South Wales has been able to function as a challenging and democratic force, while delivering services within the prescribed remit of government agendas such as skills for employability. Then it examines the advantages and limitations of devolution with regards to enabling democratic grassroots participation through education. A particular focus is on the space it allows the WEA to carry out its own distinct objectives. This highlights the complex and at times extremely challenging role of the WEA South Wales amongst other Third Sector organisations, when encouraging active citizenship within a climate of centralised government control and economic competition.

9.1 Tensions and challenges for the WEA South Wales

The tensions and challenges that have been faced by the WEA South Wales are examined in the following section in terms of its relationship with the Welsh and UK Governments, as well as with its sister organisation Coleg Harlech Workers' Educational Association North (CHWEAN). This section also explores devolution in Wales since 1997 and its impact on how far the WEA South Wales might potentially be able to continue to contribute towards active citizenship and an educated democracy. Education is one of the devolved responsibilities of

the Welsh Government and therefore its relationship has been particularly relevant as despite this relative autonomy the Welsh Government has continued with the UK Government's focus on education being primarily for skills and employability. In summary then, this section explores the intersections between the pressures from Westminster policies and their impact on devolved government in Wales. It questions how far devolution might be creating more scope for organisations such as the WEA to encourage active citizenship, whilst taking account of the parallel pressures from the Welsh Assembly in relation to its objective of bringing both sections of the WEA, North and South, under one umbrella, in Wales.

The WEA South Wales has been in an ambiguous position as an independent Third Sector organisation aimed at promoting social justice through education and a wider social movement, and simultaneously having been almost entirely funded through the Welsh Government's Department for Skills and Education (DfES). According to the WEA South Wales: Report and Financial Statement 31st July in 2010/11 83% of its funding derived from public sources. For around 3 years until 2012 up to 80% of its funding was derived directly from the Welsh Government. This however dropped to 69% in 2012. This was partly due to overall UK and Welsh Government spending cuts and therefore DfES funding was reduced by 1.33% in (2012) and a further reduction in Welsh Government funding was set out over the next 2 years. According to Leighton Andrews, the previous Minister for Children, Education Lifelong Learning and Skills the Welsh Government's Education budget for Education 2011 would have been reduced by £1.8m over 3 years. As previously alluded to this will have been primarily the result of cuts deriving from Westminster.

This high level of financial dependency highlighted tensions regarding the role and relationship of the WEA with governments, particularly concerning how government funding has been justified and maintained. Throughout the study it was clear that the WEA displayed strength in its ability to be both pragmatic and creative in receiving strong governmental support in terms of funding as well as political influence. It nonetheless, somewhat unexpectedly, simultaneously

maintained key elements of an independently minded Third Sector organisation embedded in a democratic structure and grassroots ethos, which was able to encourage direct active citizenship through democratic participation and critical thinking. This careful balance raised questions regarding the sustainability, ethics and philosophical justifications of an education provider aiming to promote social justice through democratic and at times oppositional positions to government. These issues were examined further by discussing the dynamic relationship between the WEA and the political structures and parties across the UK and particularly in Wales.

The WEA South Wales has had longstanding political as well as financial links with the government at UK wide, local government and more recently the Welsh Government and even at European Union level. As earlier outlined, this relationship was emphasised by Tony Blair, who stated during his time as the UK's Prime Minister that 'we recognise the WEA's unique position as the largest voluntary provider of education in the UK. We help fund its activities through both central and local government' (2002) in Roberts (2007: vii). In 2011, this situation applied to most divisions of the WEA in the UK and was no different in Wales, where the Welsh, EU and Central UK Governments provided a significant amount of its annual income through direct or indirect methods.

With a turbulent and ever challenging financial position, the WEA South Wales' reliance on state funding has so far been a significant element to its ability to remain a prolific education provider. Issues highlighted by Hodgson (2009) regarding the receipt of government funds to provide increasing levels of professional and administrative staff, in order to respond to bureaucratic pressures from governments, were relevant here. This over-reliance on government funding for survival was similar to many organisations in the Third Sector and its overall relationship with the state particularly since 1997, as discussed in chapter 5. Such dependence has already been apparent to some extent at least, throughout its previous history. Roberts recognised this somewhat ambivalent and unusual position: 'For most of its existence, the

Association has been both a voluntary body and a component of the state education system' (2003:2).

As earlier chapters explained, the WEA has also relied on indirect financial support by working in partnership with community organisations, themselves partly financially supported by Welsh Government schemes such as the Coalfield's Regeneration Fund and Communities First. This dependence on wider state funding highlights the indirect and long-term influence that governments have already had over the WEA's organisation, provision and sustainability. It has long been acknowledged that by providing support for the WEA, the government could be able to contain or even co-opt more radical forces within the movement. Therefore it was perhaps no great surprise that governments comprising of all parties had continued to support it financially – but with potential strings attached, pressurising the organisation to prioritise particular government aims and objectives. It is important here to note that despite the WEA's reliance on state funds, it had however always maintained a non-governmental element to its funding. This included fees from some courses it provided such as and trade union training. Therefore, it had also remained partly independent of governmental influence.

9.2 The WEA and the challenges of public policy regarding education

The WEA in Wales had historically been directly affected by the major structural changes in State provision of educational funding, in a similar vein to other education and Third Sector organisations, which were previously discussed in chapter 5:

'The landscape steadily changed so that with each reorganisation- from Welsh Office to the Further Education Funding Council Wales, to ELWa (the National Council for Education and Training Wales), and in 2006 to the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), government agendas increasingly focused on vocational skills' Price and Williams (2007:161).

From 1993 the newly established Further Education Funding Council for Wales allocated funding through the Recurrent Funding Mechanism (RFM) based in England 'on the number of students enrolled, subject area, the hours of study taken and qualifications obtained' Gass (2007:144). This was to replace block funding from the Welsh office or local authorities. 'Nonetheless, the WEA and the YMCA were accorded special status in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 as organisations that could be funded for non-accredited work.' Gass stated that 'since the 1990s... the policy emphasis... has been to prioritise economic at the expense of social goals, emphasising skills for employment and economic competitiveness rather than learning for a social purpose and democratic citizenship' Gass (2007:151).

This was particularly problematic for those who believed that the government's focus on vocational and basic skills undermined the wider social purposes of education. According to one long serving WEA member (16/9/2010:3):

'Since the early 80's the curriculum has been constrained enormously, mostly since 1992 and steadily afterwards. There has been a policy driver which has been reinforced with funding drivers towards a vocationalism and a qualifications based system of education; which is largely dominated by what you could call an economic agenda rather than a social purpose agenda or notion of learning in terms of the sort of broad curriculum that you would hope for in a civilised and enlightened society' Interview staff member (16/9/2010:3).

It appeared that its ability to act as an independent organisation, which was able and willing to teach 'how to think and not what to think,' has been a progressively more challenging objective. Since the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 was put into place, there has been an increase in influence of the government in specifying how, what and where funding was provided for. Whilst the WEA was still funded to provide non-accredited education in England (2007:145) Gass explained how 'the number of such classes would be capped... WEA members made the case that non-accredited learning both as something valuable in its own right and a stepping stone for those who would be put off from starting if they were expected to seek accreditation'.

The impact that devolution has had on the provision of education and encouraging citizen engagement in Wales is more difficult to determine than may have appeared on the surface. As chapter 5 illustrated, distinctions have been made between education policy decisions made in Wales and at Westminster level, such as the Welsh Assembly Government's decision to continue to heavily subsidise the fees for Welsh students in Higher Education from 2010, in contrast to the Coalition Government's dramatic increase in fees in England. However during times of austerity, even where the Welsh Government's priorities may have differed from those at Westminster, it has been more difficult for the WEA to retain government funding particularly for non-vocational subjects. The overall cuts in Welsh Government budget from 2011 onwards were coupled with greater pressures to produce a potentially more skilled workforce, which would in theory aid economic recovery through increased levels of employment.

Political and social commentators and WEA members alike have questioned Westminster's and the Welsh Government's ethos towards the purpose of education, debates earlier explored in chapter 5. As previous chapters demonstrate, WEA staff members argued that non-accredited, arts based courses were often required to re-engage or establish initial engagement with some people where other methods had not worked. A WEA staff member questioned the Welsh Government's prioritisation of education for employability skills, over education for wider social purposes, as follows:

'Art and history courses.... are exactly the sorts of courses that the government really doesn't want to fund. I think the government's interpretation of adult learning is Skills agenda... Get them to learn maybe communication skills, IT, basic skills....I know it is essential and I know it is good for jobs, but it is not the whole story. Really education is not just about that, it is about helping people to think and be able to change their own lives and another thing in the valleys is that there is very low self- confidence and aspiration and by widening people's horizons you can make them think there is a big world out there and there is no reason why they shouldn't be part of it and raise their aspirations really' Interview staff member (23/9/2010a:3.)

Another member of staff supported this point by reflecting on the reality of the cross-spectrum of learner's needs.

'It is well known that in the WEA there is a cache of learners who are the totally wrong age profile for returning to work... but look to the WEA as a social net that is a citizenship of sort. Cookery classes, local history they are not for employability but they are for maintaining a health agenda... liberal education. It is an out-moded term because it can't quantify the outcomes on expenditure' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:9b).

Their experience of working successfully in disadvantaged communities had provided a plethora of examples that an alternative approach to engaging individuals was necessary. As a member of staff asserted:

'We could advertise basic skills courses all over the valleys and people would stay away in droves, because they don't want to. They are not ready to expose themselves... I think the big problem at the moment is funding. People tend to especially some politicians... look at adult learning as just the skills agenda. It is (about) making people always ready for the next job' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:9b).

There was however some level of recognition by the Welsh Government that education had a wider social purpose beyond employability. Its recent policies stipulated that adult education providers such as the WEA South Wales could provide up to 20% of its educational provision as non-accredited courses. So with a limited scope, careful planning of the Open College Network (OCN)¹¹ modules, even accredited courses provided by the WEA had been adapted for the needs of the learners, without academic skills. This was evident across the WEA South Wales' provision, where for example OCN modules had been made available at a basic level, e.g. People First classes. In another instance practical music classes were provided for members of the Advocats group where the WEA funded short courses, for those with learning disabilities. This meant that the WEA was able to engage disadvantaged individuals and communities, which fulfilled their own as well as government's inclusivity objectives. A civil servant who was interviewed confirmed the Welsh Government had recognised the

¹¹ OCN (Open College Network) An accreditation service through a national framework of local *Open College Networks*.

value of this type of non-accredited or informal types of education provided by the WEA, as follows:

‘Within our remit we have a responsibility to provide as many avenues as we possibly can for people to engage and which is why we try and encourage our providers to offer as broad a range of subject as possible... So we try to encourage our providers to think about who they are providing for and the WEA excel at that. In as much as they have a good understanding of who their learners are and where they need to learn. You know we have a lot of examples of good practice in Wales. So that is one of the key things that is about making it easier for people to be engaged,’ Interview civil servant (8/5/2012:2-3).

Therefore despite concerns regarding UK wide and the Welsh Government’s prescription of course content, as well as the increased emphasis on accreditation and skills for employment, the WEA had adapted its practices in order to maintain key elements of education for a wider social purpose. It had utilised its expertise embedded within its partnerships with the Third Sector and the Welsh Government to get the most out of the funding available in order to reach a wide array of learners.

9.3 How far might devolution help to offset political and financial pressures?

An underlying question emerged concerning whether the Welsh Government should continue to fund the WEA as a Third Sector organisation. The prime justification has been as previously stated, that it provided educational opportunities for socially excluded and ‘hard to reach’ individuals, that other mainstream or alternative organisations have been so far unable or unwilling to do. Therefore the WEA has had an advantage in this field as according to another staff member. ‘The government is too far away from the ground. Whereas organisations like the WEA who have regular contact with these communities, they are very much aware of the needs and you know they are able to engage with these communities,’ Interview staff member (10/9/2010:2).

There was acknowledgement amongst some WEA staff, that when requesting and expecting significant levels of government funding, this posed a significant dilemma, though, as one staff member asserted:

‘When the Assembly was established, one (of) its founding objectives was the promotion of active citizenship, by all people of all ages. So that is something the WEA and the Assembly share... I think politically, there is always going to be a question around the extent to which the state, can promote things that might end up threatening the state or attacking the state... they are not going to want to spend money on group(s) of people that are going to criticise them. The other part of it is a question that all sorts of voluntary organisations face. If you accept money from the state, to what extent are you being co-opted?’ Interview staff member (16/9/2010:8).

The financial power of the Welsh Government to influence the composition of both CHWEAN and WEA South Wales in itself highlights their relative lack of autonomy and over reliance on state funds. Although it also emphasises how well the WEA has maintained high levels of government support, as the internal affairs of the organisations still largely remained with their governing boards and/ or members. However the Welsh Government’s desire to create an all Wales body has to some degree overlooked the historical and practical implications for both organisations with their differing perspectives and varying structures for management and democratic accountability (the latter having been valued more greatly in the case of the South Wales WEA). This led to tense and on-going discussions between them.

In the WEA South Wales Annual General Meeting (2012) the WEA South Wales proposed that in the event of the intended merger initially due July 2013, that the all Wales organisation would need to maintain at least in part its democratic governance board, described in chapter 6. The concept of the social movement had remained embedded in the WEA’s South Wales’ ability to act as a democratically representative political voice for its members, and this at times created tension with its role as an adult education provider carrying out the government’s agendas and targets. This capacity to act as a democratic and challenging force could be further threatened with the amalgamation of the two

organisations, particularly as CHWEAN had initially opposed a democratic governing structure.

This all related to previously identified tensions. Members of the South Wales WEA had raised particular questions about the type of relationship that the organisation had with the governing parties and key political actors in Wales. In its mission statement (2011) it claimed that ‘the Association plans to be a key player in the Welsh Government inclusiveness strategy for Wales’ (Workers’ Educational Association South Wales Ltd 2011:2). While the desire to contribute to the Welsh Government’s Labour-led agenda genuinely appeared to fit in with the WEA’s long-standing ethos regarding inclusivity, it did nonetheless raise fundamental concerns regarding who was ultimately controlling its political agenda and mission. It highlights the extent to which the WEA South Wales had become both dependent on and at times subsumed by the wider governmental expectations. This could also however reflect the tensions inherent in its historical and ideological affiliations and well established political connections with the Labour Party – also typically the main party of Government in Wales. This had been based on the longevity of its work in working class communities as well as the plethora of high profile figures, particularly in Wales, who had previously worked in or with the WEA. This had included previous UK Labour leader Neil Kinnock and the former Welsh Assembly Government First Minister Rhodri Morgan. This has perhaps helped to explain how the WEA has maintained its close connections with the Welsh Government, specifically regarding its ability albeit seemingly limited, to influence the Welsh Government’s adult education agenda.

Concerns regarding this close relationship were to some extent counter-balanced in as far as the organisation also strove to maintain a separate identity as a social movement including maintaining a basic level of non-partisan relationships with other policy makers. The reality transpired that key members of the WEA supported a cross section of political parties such as the Liberal Democrats, Plaid Cymru and Conservatives, in fact, as well as there being members supportive of more traditional affiliations with the Labour Party. This

meant that the organisation was at least to some degree able to influence and gain attention through a cross section of political actors across the Welsh political parties. This pragmatic approach by the WEA has reflected its tendencies towards liberal rather than overtly politicised education, referred to previously. This was evidently coupled with the personal skills and organisational abilities of the General Secretary who was demonstrably successful in negotiating WEA's priorities and ideas with cross-party politicians. The General Secretary stated that fundamental to her role was that she has been "responsible to the governing body to ensure that the ethos and the values of the WEA are maintained" Interview staff member (27/9/2010:1). She went on to describe their own function "as an advocate for the WEA" she considered herself as 'the public face with senior civil servants, with politicians and with negotiating political responses that are favourable to the (WEA). In discussing policy areas with civil servants... and for taking the agenda forward in promoting an educated democracy', Interview staff (27/9/2010:1).

It appeared that this leading role aimed to contribute towards and represent the democratic structure within the WEA. The role also sought to ensure that the voices of its members were represented amongst policy makers at a local and national level. This relationship alludes to a capacity that other smaller or less powerful organisations perhaps lacked (Milbourne and Cushman 2013). However, its sustained partnerships with small, bespoke and community based organisations provided a link between these less powerful organisations and the governing structures with Wales at least.

The WEA's place on the Voluntary Sector Partnership Council set up in 2007,¹² which regularly meets with the Welsh Government has also provided a direct route to influence government' initiatives and policies, Dicks et al in Chaney et al (2001). These forums were introduced as a part of the Voluntary Sector Scheme in the early years of devolution, to solidify the relationship between the Welsh Government and the Third Sector. This ability to shape Welsh Government agendas and policies was illustrated through documents such as

¹² The Voluntary Sector Partnership Council 2007, replaced the Partnership Council Forum 2000,

the (Nov 2010) 'Delivering Community Learning for Wales'. This policy paper placed the wider benefits for lifelong learning as central to the Government's approach to adult education as a means by which it could encourage and achieve higher levels of social justice. While this document illustrated the contributions the WEA had made to government policy it also raised a number of key questions regarding the sustainability of these relationships with government, however. Despite strong ties with governments, these relationships were still very susceptible to change. Important affiliations and the WEA's ability to negotiate with political actors have been mainly reliant on central figures within the organisation itself. Its ability to maintain government support from key decision makers remained a vulnerable aspect of their sustainability when inevitable staff and member changes take place. This does however reflect the reality for other organisations reliant upon strong relationships between individuals to retain government funding too. It also exposes the imbalance of power that exists across the sector as each organisation has to compete for both the political ear of the government in terms of relevant policy developments and in order to gain financial resources.

A picture emerged which portrayed how the devolved Government in Wales worked in partnership with certain Third Sector organisations more than others. Dicks et al in Chaney et al (2001:113) previously alluded to how the formal mechanisms within the National Assembly for Wales such as meetings by invitation only, further encouraged engagements with the Third Sector based chiefly on pre-existing relationships and long-term connections. So far it appears the WEA has maintained a high level of influence through key individuals and previously developed relationships, including those referred to earlier. However like all like all relationships it is vulnerable to change and highlighted key areas where greater openness in Welsh Government's' practices is required.

However, regardless of its relationship with any particular Government, the WEA identified that its work has contributed to long-term Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales' strategies, which have been promoted under

both Welsh Labour and Labour- Plaid Cymru Governments. It perceived that it has been in a unique position of being able to provide widespread and long-term benefits to society through education. As previous chapters illustrate, the evidence demonstrated that it was able to play a distinct role in delivering and even influencing aspects of the government's agenda on social justice higher education (widening participation) and regeneration.

The WEA in South Wales achieved this primarily on the basis of its experience of delivering opportunities for 'hard to reach' areas and citizens particularly by utilising partnerships at local level, including with government programmes such as Communities First. In 2011 according to the WEA 57.5% of learners came from deprived areas, 41.1% of its learners had started their courses with no qualifications and 22.5% were not employed and seeking work. They had attained an 87% success in their courses with a 96% completion rate. This had been particularly relevant in terms of the Welsh Government's ability to engage with the electorate and particularly those who were socially excluded significant, issues which were explored in chapters 4 and 5.

It was through these positive examples of engagement that many socially excluded learners and members of the WEA believed that their work should speak for itself when it came to proving itself for government support. The study revealed that its methods had produced both short and long-term positive outcomes, often exceeding expectations in terms of engaging and maintaining citizens within education and wider community involvement. As one member reflected on the expectations of the WEA:

'I suppose what I want from the government as well, is an expectation for us to deliver high standards... I think it is true that for everything to work, for people to value what we are doing and to enable governments to fund us, then everybody needs to see the wider picture' Interview staff member (4/10/2010:10).

Previously examined WEA practices had appeared to have enabled community wide benefits as well as providing skills for work. Therefore, as one WEA

member explained, they had desired and required the government to recognise the benefits that it was providing society, in a more holistic way:

‘We are a provider of social justice at our core and we would be looking for a wider number of departments within the Assembly or across the UK to recognise that they have a role to play in the funding that that we do. If it were to be recognised that what we do is as much around social justice, health and wellbeing around the whole active citizenship agenda then we would be looking for that wider grouping of departments to support us. We would argue for a ‘citizen’s curriculum, I think what we are asking for is for government to be more joined up. So in Wales... we are saying they could re-look at the funding that they have put into Communities First and learn from the empowerment fund,’ Interview staff member (27/9/2010:4).

Although there had been much contention around the subject, one member of staff perceived that an all Wales WEA could have provided a stronger platform on which the WEA could have promoted its key values in relation to the Welsh Government. ‘It would be better in an all Wales organisation, presuming we could hook up. Things are different in different communities and in different areas in Wales... Rural (areas) are different from Cardiff say’ (24/9/2010:5). Therefore, from the perspective of this staff member, the WEA had been well placed to deliver programmes of education in communities that required alternative and extra forms of support to engage them. ‘I think the WEA is in a good position because of its strong ties in a lot of local communities to be able to be working in partnership and to be consulted by the government on an approach to this,’ (ibid). Therefore the WEA as an all Wales body could still focus on its ability to provide community focused education, in order to enable citizens to participate at local levels in ways which were most appropriate to their needs.

Arguably, for the sustainability and progress of Third Sector organisations like the WEA, their ability to work with, as well as to critically challenge Government’s at all levels needed to be safeguarded. This would be regardless of the form in which future governments in Wales were to take shape or the level of funding Third Sector organisations receive. Further reduction to 60% of Welsh Government funding by 2013 was the target proposed in the Financial

Report 2011. It conveyed the desire of the organisation to distance itself from excessive governmental control and financial insecurity. However if both the WEA and the Welsh Government continued with their desire to promote empowering and deep forms of active citizenship, then cooperation and partnership working could be fundamental to this process. One WEA staff member conveyed this point, whilst recognising the remaining tensions between the Welsh and UK Government's, regarding resourcing Welsh Government agendas:

'I think you know the Welsh Assembly Government - they are not the enemy, they are very keen on active citizenship. Their problem is going to be the Barnett Formula is not fair to people in Wales... I think there will still be some money for the skills agenda but not the wider agenda,' Interview staff member (23/9/2010:10).

Therefore the Welsh Government's inability to increase or sustain its financial resources has inhibited its capacity to provide adequate support to the Third Sector and in turn citizens. This reveals an area where Third Sector organisations in Wales in contrast to England may find themselves at a disadvantage. Beyond its financial capacity, an especially effective and cooperative approach between the Third Sector and Welsh Governments would also require still more open and democratic governments to be able to respond to some of the challenges which critical thinking population and organisations would be likely to present. The ability and willingness of the UK and Welsh Government's to work with organisations and citizens that challenge them as previous chapters explored, remains uncertain. However the potential for governments in Wales, to develop and enable active citizenship in partnership with organisations such as the WEA, has so far appeared a stronger likelihood than the more detached governments at Westminster level.

9.4 Conclusions regarding the WEA's relationship with UK governments

In summary, for an all Wales WEA to remain a sustainable Third Sector education provider it requires a level of self-sufficiency and an ability to remain an independent force able and willing to challenge governments on all levels.

Its ability to promote grassroots community engagement through a democratic, member-led structure differentiated it from other learning providers, including other Third Sector bodies when enabling active citizenship. While a strategic relationship with governments has never been inevitable, it was observed that in order to deliver education for democratic and active citizenship it has been on many levels financially expedient. Also more importantly this relationship embodies the ideal that government is there to represent and encourage all citizens to actively participate in society. Therefore the WEA South Wales aimed to encourage, as far as is possible, participation through partnership with these democratic formal structures. This has so far been achieved by conveying its relevance as a progressive social organisation, working with local, national and global partners and focusing on those 'hardest to reach'. These provisions complemented Welsh Government's priorities on inclusivity and social justice, priorities which had seemingly less attention at Westminster level. Additionally it filled gaps that government provision in terms of critical education, which even at the devolved Welsh level cannot and perhaps should not always aim to fill through mainstream education.

Overall, the South Wales WEA seemed to have survived as a relatively independent organisation, maintaining its social movement base to some extent at least, despite the tensions inherent in its relationships with government, whether at the UK or the devolved Welsh levels. There were major challenges in the offing however, including the questions posed by the amalgamation. Also there were potential susceptibilities, including the organisation's reliance on particular individuals' skills and contacts. This all posed key questions in terms of future sustainability for the WEA's ethos and overall approach to adult learning for active citizenship.

9.5 Conclusions for the WEA South Wales case study

After critical examination of the WEA South Wales's work there was evidence that illustrated a strong commitment to their aims of encouraging active citizenship in its broad sense, as both an ideal and in practice. These

observations exceeded initial expectations of a Third Sector organisation's ability to help enable and encourage active citizenship set against the backdrop of limitations and barriers highlighted in literature review. This was particularly relevant with regards to the financial, political and cultural context of increasing financial pressures and government led based skills agenda.

The study highlighted numerous and multi-faceted challenges that citizens and Third Sector organisations such as the WEA have faced when encouraging and participating in democratic and active citizenship. It has exposed the complexities of the inter-related and over-lapping roles of governments and Third Sector, which the WEA's position as a charity having received high levels of funding from government has embodied. Nonetheless the extent to which the WEA South Wales remained in a unique position as a Third Sector education provider was apparent in a number of forms, as it primarily still aspired to promote an 'educated democracy' through its structures as well as practices. It was accepted that the creation of an 'educated democracy' for active citizenship would always be a work in progress. However, there were clear examples throughout the work of the WEA South Wales whereby the organisation delivered both long-term and short-term opportunities for some citizens of Wales to actively participate in learning with a wider social purpose. The WEA's work had repeatedly highlighted and often filled gaps in mainstream state provision and the lack of existing opportunities for all people, particularly the most disadvantaged in society, demonstrating how this influences the ability of individuals to participate on various levels.

The 'community development' framework that it demonstrated through its democratic structures and practices involved attempting to perceive and act on the needs of the participants as central to its purpose and direction. The underlying emphasis on 'confidence' as a key facet of an individual's ability to participate had been central to its ability to re-engage with individuals and communities otherwise overlooked and undervalued by other organisations including government. Therefore it appeared to fill a particular gap in the government's provision in terms of engaging so called 'hard to reach'

communities and individuals and enabling them to take initial steps to participating in their communities. Through the accounts articulated by participants and staff and through practices observed, it demonstrated how its approach to education was to help empower individuals and communities to reach their potential through a range of methods and educational activities. This was also at times illustrated through learners' ability and willingness to challenge government structures and policies as well as challenging the WEA itself.

Although community development style approaches have also been practiced by other Third Sector organisations such as the UK's (CVS) Councils of Voluntary Services, the WEA offered a distinct approach through its extra 'differentiated' support to its members through its democratic structure. In spite of increasing financial government constraints the provision of free or inexpensive classes, childcare, transportation costs and other financial aid it conveyed the impression that it recognised the on-going underlying socio-economic support that some citizens required. It also worked in a plethora of ways when delivering education to communities in their localities, where other training providers such as colleges and local government community education were not appropriate or available. However these additional provisions did not mean that the WEA was able to reach all communities and people facing disadvantage or social exclusion as it was limited to the restrictions of specific funding streams and underlying socio-political constraints. Nonetheless the WEA's willingness to challenge these underlying conditions was central to how it was able to differentiate itself from other mainstream or even other Third Sector education providers.

There were initial doubts as to whether, in a culture which promoted competition for resources, the WEA would be able to continue with its historical commitment to work successfully in partnership with other similar organisations. On the contrary, on the basis of the research evidence, it was clear that its ability to work in partnership with an increasing array of organisations acted as an intrinsic component to the success of the WEA in

engaging with a wider range of citizens across Wales. Its long-term relationships were embedded in its community based work with bespoke and discrete groups, in remote or isolated areas. Examples of citizen activation in some of the most deprived areas of Wales illustrated how this form of education could transform people's lives. Many organisations which worked in partnership with the WEA such as People First and the Stroke Association were at the forefront of breaking down these barriers and helping the struggle to establish equal opportunities for people to engage in their community life by challenging pre-conceived ideas about what can and should be achieved by people. In numerous instances that were observed this proved to have been an essential pre-requisite to ensuring that people from different backgrounds and with varying abilities were able to more fully participate as active citizens.

Despite its seemingly radical and alternative approach to learning, the WEA South Wales had been heavily reliant on government funding streams, however, and would have not existed in the same capacity without very high levels of subsidies. For this reason the WEA was increasingly appearing like a governmental organisation and was subject to government priorities and changing trends, such as its focus on basic skills provision. Reflecting the trends across the Third Sector it became a more fully professionalised organisation, subject to mounting levels of bureaucracy and auditing, which in some instances detracted from its overall purpose. The Association's members and staff conveyed their desire that this trend over time would be reversed, as branches and members would be committed to proceeding with its work outside of the organisational structure, acting as active citizens within their communities and continuing to participate and develop educational opportunities with a wider social purpose. Regardless of increasing pressures by the government there was evidence that the South Wales WEA had put up resistance to full government co-option then. The underlying function of the organisation as a social movement and not merely an education provider has been central to its capacity to transform communities through reflective and liberal educational opportunities.

Its ability and desire to continue to work with the Welsh Government can be expected to be subject to changing political circumstances and its vulnerable financial position is reflected across the Third Sector. However it could be concluded that the WEA demonstrated its capability and willingness to engage with individuals and communities that other providers have not and therefore the WEA has helped to transform the lives of individuals and empowered communities. These have been key objectives for the Government of Wales and arguably have made a small contribution to greater social justice. It could therefore be perceived that both (Welsh) Governments and the WEA have benefited from the reciprocal relationship and that a continued partnership would be expedient for all organisations and citizens concerned. Nonetheless, it is precisely the WEA's status and freedom as a Third Sector rather than a government body that makes it most useful to the democratic health of Wales, in that it has been able to encourage critical thought and democratic participation without the overbearing constraints of government directives. However restrictions could be further exacerbated if an all Wales WEA were to become more rather than less reliant on government funds.

Therefore the ambiguous relationship that the WEA has had with the Welsh Government could be perceived as reflecting the complex relationship that the citizen also has with the state more generally. In that the state is there to act on behalf of and in partnership with its citizens and the organisations that contribute to the wellbeing of its citizens. This in turn requires governments being challenged, however, in order to enable all citizens to participate in meaningful ways in society.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

These concluding reflections, based on the research findings, underline how organisations with the UK's Third Sector, specifically the WEA and its partners can encourage active citizenship. They highlight limitations and contributions of recent UK and Welsh Government policy frameworks. Themes highlighted outlined below initially emerged from the literature, and throughout the fieldwork and draw on key debates regarding active citizenship and community engagement. They bring together academic concepts in line with how they were perceived, delivered and enacted within the various settings throughout the study. The chapter goes on to outline the contributions of the study, reflections on what I have learnt and finally on what might usefully be explored further in future research.

The study examined how the Third Sector in the UK has promoted active citizenship set within the boundaries of wider UK and Welsh Government priorities and initiatives, particularly post 1997. It investigated how the devolved Welsh Government promoted democratic participation and active citizenship in conjunction with the Third Sector through to 2013. The work of the Workers' Educational Association in South Wales was used as a lens to explore the multifarious challenges and practices of the Third Sector from an outsider researcher's perspective.

Activities and perspectives from the Workers' Educational Association South Wales and partner organisations were captured through a process of participant observation and interviews. Through a theoretical framework which draws upon critical social analysis and a Feminist approach to empowerment the study reflected on the wider systemic imbalances of power, as well as inequalities within the research process itself. By drawing on the voices of research participants it communicates barriers towards community engagement and active citizenship, as well as positive learning practices and examples of empowerment emanating from these educational opportunities. Therefore, the

findings feature some important ways in which citizens can become active through participation in Third Sector activities.

Complementing this, the findings elicit viewpoints of several government policy officers from the Wales and Westminster Government's by using extracts from interviews with them. They illustrate how government policies and initiatives have been perceived and intended to promote active citizenship. This highlighted the complexity of government decision making processes and motivations as well as some ambiguities in theory and practice.

These varying perspectives and conclusions contribute to the findings highlighted as follows:

10.1 How varying perceptions of active citizenship in the UK contribute towards an understanding and practice of active citizenship.

Although the term active citizenship is widely contested, the findings revealed that if the notion of active citizenship is conceptualised as 'multi-layered' (Lister (1997; 2003) and 'universally differentiated' Young (2000), it could embrace the activities of citizens within their own terms. This wider definition also allowed for a more inclusive notion related to activity rather than a more passive and hierarchy based status associated with Conservative and neo-liberal interpretations.

This 'differentiated' interpretation was demonstrated through the words and activities of WEA learners and staff, who had described their contributions within a broad, social and usually community-based framework. This included associating citizenship within overlapping local, national and global dimensions, broadly reflecting views held by theorists such as Held (2007) and P B Clarke (1996). Participants often described their own and others' contributions in basic social terms such as to 'support others' (9/5/2010). Observations also revealed that active citizenship was perceived as an 'educative process' (23/9/2013), where people would most meaningfully participate at the level and in the ways

appropriate to them. It required each citizen to feel empowered to participate in a conscious way, relating not simply to their own lives but being aware of the impact their actions have on others and eventually wider political implications. In line with P B Clarke's concept of active and 'deep' citizenship (1998) it is seen as a process from self-actualisation to taking action. Therefore active citizenship involves more than the citizen's relationship with the state but requires a wider understanding and an ability to challenge political relationships at all levels. Welsh Government officials and WEA staff alike recognised that this is doing 'politics with a small p,' Interview with Civil servant (8/5/2012:4). If perceived in this way active citizenship most fundamentally encompasses a set of values and ideas about how citizens interact and influence the lives of other people locally and globally.

In line with radical concepts of citizenship such as particularly Freire's (1972), actions and processes involved in being an active citizen as illustrated in the study could be difficult and require bravery even sacrifice. Speaking out against injustices can have detrimental effects on the individual who is making challenges in the name of wider social justice. These facets imply that active citizenship is essentially a social concept and in contrast to certain neo-liberal interpretations involves more than a self-interested desire or official status of an individual. This is where certain Third Sector organisations such as the WEA offered a space to help 'empower' citizens to explore alternative avenues for participating, including challenging government expectations and systems and supporting others, particularly through its wider social movement.

10.2 Whether post-1997 government policies and approaches in the UK have enhanced the opportunities for active citizenship.

The term active citizenship received increasing attention in the UK, particularly since the arrival of the 1997 New Labour Government. The focus of UK Governments' approaches have shifted over time from civic renewal and engagement agendas under Labour to widening systems of self-help in civil society under the Coalition Government. In contrast the governments in Wales

at least rhetorically have emphasised the importance of the concept within the wider context of social justice and equality. However across all post-1997 UK governments' policies and approaches, inclusive and 'differentiated' notions of citizenship were rarely expressed. Instead they tended to prescribe how citizens should act within limited parameters, reflected in Clarke's notion of a 'responsibilised' citizen (2005:447).

These governments placed employability at the heart of their agendas, focusing on the citizen as a paid worker above other positive contributions. This prioritisation conveys how consecutive UK Governments have concentrated on the neo-liberal market driven economy over the wider needs of citizens. This emphasis has undermined many of UK Governments' other proclaimed aspirations in terms of citizen engagement, empowerment and decreasing the 'democratic deficit'. This was illustrated in part by decreasing or poor electoral turnout, diminishing to as low as 59.4% in general elections and 24% in local elections.

The research revealed how social injustice and inequality across the UK remained a significant barrier towards participation for citizens, in even the most basic of activities. WEA learners however illustrated how citizens who faced multiple forms of disadvantage often contributed to society in ways not necessarily appreciated or recognised by official figures and governments. Activities such as caring or unofficial volunteering duties and challenging injustices were rarely considered worthy aspects of active citizenship by governments. This inequality and deprivation remained high if not increasingly worse post-2008, described by Merrick and Leslie (2013) Coote (2011). Therefore both governments and the Third Sector have faced an increasingly difficult task in encouraging participation, as the link between socio-economic status and participation/ non participation was explained by Dorling (2010) and the Poverty and Social Exclusion report (2013).

Since the arrival of the UK Coalition Government 2010 there have been even greater expectations that citizens should support themselves, despite these

inequalities. Initiatives such as the Conservatives' Big Society' emphasised this approach, as their priorities have clearly involved retracting UK Government support, particularly from the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised e.g. higher student fees and decreasing welfare benefits. Mounting pressures on citizens from governments across the UK to conform to particular expectations regarding participation, such as employment or unpaid work embedded through policies and initiatives such as the Work Programme have undermined the autonomous agency of citizens. Most significantly these expectations have rarely been met with the support structures and positive rights necessary for citizens to participate in these prescribed ways. For instance opportunities to gain employment, particularly in the UK remained problematic especially for young people UK and unemployment figures in 2011 were the highest since 1994 at 2.6 million, BBC website {accessed 18/7/2013}. Accounts by WEA participants conveyed that these approaches to citizen participation and rights to benefits undermined equality of opportunity and citizen engagement. Likewise they impeded citizens' ability and willingness to participate in society in alternative and self-determined ways. Community participation was hindered as poignantly illustrated by the Valleys participants who conveyed concerns as to whether community members would be able to claim benefits if they were to engage in unpaid activities as active citizens (3/2/2011).

Also despite consecutive UK Governments' rhetoric which called for more 'localism' and the devolution of powers, their policies have largely remained determined from a 'top down' premise. This has been most evident in governments' relationships with the Third Sector and the mounting demands have placed on it to deliver public services within narrowly defined parameters, (Milbourne and Cushman 2013). Likewise although devolution was established in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, fundamental socio-economic powers have remained with Westminster. Even community regeneration programmes such as Communities First in Wales, which were co-ordinated by the devolved administrations, remained highly centralised.

The study demonstrated, through the accounts of Welsh Government officials, this complex dilemma, as citizens themselves have sometimes called for more rather than less government direction regarding local and community based projects. These government-led, 'top down' and centralised approaches have illustrated that citizens had rarely been empowered to participate and take on the full roles that were envisaged by governments. It is in this context where the work of the WEA and some other Third Sector organisations have played an important role in encouraging citizen and community centred active citizenship, which 'liberates' Freire (1972) and empowers citizens to engage in society on their own terms. However, as the findings revealed, despite certain measures to alleviate the effects of poverty on participation, wider systemic inequalities, including unequal capacity to influence democratic structures and processes remained constant obstacles to active citizenship.

10.3 Reducing the democratic deficit and the role of devolution in Wales.

The study found evidence that devolution within Wales has opened up arenas for its citizens to democratically participate in alternative ways to those expected and encouraged by the recent Westminster Governments. This included more routes to inter-act with elected representatives. Also introduced was a wider range of methods to be consulted on policies and political decision making processes. This was illustrated throughout the study where participants gained both some informal and some formal access to politicians, as well as via initiatives such as the Petition system and other consultation processes.

However, the wider political and socio-economic conditions which the Welsh Government has operated within offered a limited capacity to affect underlying inequalities which curtail participation. Political and financial restrictions particularly post-2008 imposed by the UK wide Government have placed particular impediments on the government in Wales when encouraging full and inclusive active citizenship within a more socially just context. Although the Welsh Government has achieved the ability to create some primary legislation since 2006 Government of Wales Act, it remained subject to wider legal

restrictions by the UK Government, which confirm the concerns of Trench (2008) and Chaney et al (2001). This includes the UK Government's ability to veto or override some decisions, as well ultimately controlling the amount of finances that the Welsh Government has to distribute. These widespread limitations have often undermined the democratic rights of the people in Wales, as their voices have been overshadowed by UK wide decision-making processes. Despite devolution providing new opportunities to engage with the political process, voter turnout had not surpassed 50% for the Welsh Government elections. This is where political education and empowerment through organisations such as the WEA and its partners potentially play a crucial role, which UK and Welsh Government's alone have been unable to fulfil.

In these circumstances it appeared that the Welsh Government more than ever needed to respond to its citizens in order to redress the democratic deficit and represent them within the wider political system. However as the study illustrated this has not always occurred, as accountability between citizens and Welsh political representatives has been inconsistent. The research process itself highlighted these problems within the system, as surprisingly few politicians gave any response to requests for interviews regarding active citizenship. Even within a small nation some representatives remained unexpectedly inaccessible and unaccountable.

Welsh Governments have nonetheless recognised certain gaps in state provision, particularly when engaging some of the most disenfranchised citizens and have provided financial support for Third Sector organisations to help engage citizens. This study accrued evidence that the WEA was able to help to increase some forms of democratic participation, albeit on a small scale. This was illustrated through WEA members' accounts of becoming community activists, political representatives and members of pressure groups for example as members of All Wales People First Group.

Overall, despite inherent limitations, devolution in Wales has so far provided a greater potential to engage and empower citizens than the UK wide structure

then. This has been particularly so as the Government of Wales Act (1998) stated a fundamental commitment to equality, which has thereafter been embedded into many of its initiatives and policies. However wider socio-economic and political factors continue to constrain its ability to address some fundamental elements of inequality and therefore empower all of its citizens. Additionally elements of the political culture in Wales have required a higher level of openness and accountability (Andrews 1999), which a more empowered and engaged populace could further encourage.

10.4 How the Third Sector's work within recent policy frameworks has helped to encourage independent and grassroots forms of active citizenship.

Popular and empowering notions of education as espoused by Freire (1972) and Bourdieu (1977) argued for forms of citizen participation which are decided upon and derived from citizens and their communities. These empowering pedagogies have long been adopted within the Third Sector and were also ostensibly acknowledged by previous Labour administrations. This included acknowledgments by David Blunkett as Home Secretary and then as Education Secretary of State, and also by the various Welsh Governments since 1997. It was nonetheless evident throughout the study that there were limitations to the state's ability alone to provide education for active citizenship.

In contrast certain Third Sector organisations in the UK, particularly those that have focused on education for active citizenship such as the WEA, have played an important role in enabling and encouraging citizens to be engaged and active. Despite concerns regarding government co-option of the Third Sector and civil society, (Hodgson 2009) certain Third Sector organisations in receipt of government funds have proven able to engage disenfranchised individuals and disadvantaged communities through specific programmes. This included Labour's Active Learning for Active Citizen in England, which was largely successful at empowering learners to become more active and engaged. Also the evidence presented throughout the research, including the experiences of participants within the WEA in Wales, highlighted how it was possible to engage

learners at grassroots level who had been socially excluded. In these instances Governments and the Third Sector worked in partnership to ensure citizens received bespoke educational support to ensure that citizens would have equal but differentiated support to fulfil their potential. In contrast to more conservative notions of education which promote conformity, it conveyed the capacity to empower citizens to transform the conditions of their own and other's lives, which was highlighted through the positive experiences of WEA participants who became active within their communities. Most pertinently it was illustrated by people with learning disabilities and socio-economic disadvantages becoming the new educators and therefore transforming perspectives about what can be achieved by citizens – at least at the local level and potentially beyond.

This relationship between government and Third Sector organisations such as the WEA allowed for practitioners and participants to be heard within the formal and informal structures of government and democracy. However in order for Third Sector organisations to continue to provide education for genuinely empowered citizens, they require a certain distance from governments, which have increasingly intervened in the internal work of the sector. This has occurred through increased funding and legislation, as well as more subtle forms of cultural pressures, for example isomorphism (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983). Therefore an arms-length approach emerged as difficult but necessary, in order to enable the creativity and grassroots approach of certain Third Sector organisations to complement and at times challenge government policies.

It was therefore in this space that these more radical elements of the Third Sector remained most appropriate to promote an alternative and empowering form of education and active citizenship. In the case of the WEA it offered a distinct contribution through its democratic social movement structures for citizens to critical question government policy, separate from government control. These forms of active citizenship were community derived and emphasised the importance of voluntary action rather than government

determined participation. It illustrated how community based education can support citizens and communities in finding ways to act autonomously.

10.5 How Third Sector organisations can work in partnership to enhance opportunities for active citizenship.

The study revealed that despite initial doubts about the Third Sector's capacity for partnership working within a culture of competition, that parts of the Third Sector in the UK (specifically WEA South Wales in the context of this study) had created and maintained constructive partnerships. It provided opportunities for inclusive citizen participation through working in partnership with other specialised organisations such as People First and government programmes such as Communities First. This distinctive type of provision challenged preconceived norms, particularly for those who had been socially excluded.

Partnership with organisations such as the WEA were key to ensuring that citizens have a structure through which they could gain key skills and knowledge, which would also enable them to express their voices as active citizens. Facilitated by the WEA, participants were given opportunities to discuss their concerns with decision makers including politicians as well as service providers such as the police and social services. This was particularly the case as the WEA had some close ties with the Welsh Government.

The influence of the WEA within Wales, particularly with regards to its receipt of high levels of government funding, in comparison to other Third and Voluntary Sector organisations, raises key concerns regarding inequalities within the Third Sector, Dicks (2001), Chaney (2001) and Balloch and Taylor (2001) and Milbourne and Cushman (2013). There was however acknowledgement by the Welsh Government that financial resources in Wales, as in other parts of the UK, have been too concentrated on some larger Third Sector bodies such as the WEA. Nonetheless the WEA's partnership with small and bespoke organisations was a significant factor in its ability to reach a wider range of people. Likewise small organisations that worked in partnership with the WEA were also able to

access some of these resources and influence. Therefore, despite the inequity of financial distribution across the sector, the WEA's partnerships with smaller organisations shaped a more equitable distribution of resources across Wales and therefore represented a wider array of citizen's voices.

10.6 How active citizenship was encouraged and embedded through the work of the WEA.

The findings revealed that in spite of initial doubts about the Third Sector's capacity, the WEA and partner organisations did effectively provide spaces for engaging considerable numbers of citizens on their own terms. These observations exceeded initial expectations of Third Sector organisations' ability to help enable and encourage active citizenship, set against the backdrop of the limitations and barriers highlighted in the literature review. This included challenges relating to professionalization and government co-option, for example, (Hodgson, 2009). The WEA's ability to engage and encourage citizen participation was illustrated through their approach towards democratic educational practice and structure, which aimed to promote self-sustaining community groups through mechanisms such as its branch structure.

The implementation of initiatives such as the Community Learning Representatives programme conveyed a desire to enable long-term community engagement beyond their educational provision. Their work recognised that in an increasingly inter-connected world, citizenship exists beyond state boundaries and requires citizens to learn and exhibit underlying principles of trust, empathy and understanding towards one another. Their work around global citizenship also demonstrated a progressive approach to constantly evolving issues at both a local and global level and wider perceptions of active citizenship. It did this by focusing on life skills and values which permeate national and perceived borders, as well partnerships with international organisations.

Throughout the observations there was a clear commitment to long-term transformational experiences and empowering forms of education. This provided participants with basic tools and skills such as increased levels of confidence to participate more fully in community life. At times its members became active in unexpected ways, even challenging the WEA itself, as well as challenging wider policies. Such challenges often occurred as a result of participants' democratic learning experiences, as well as being potentially more influential as a result of the WEA's links with other prominent bodies or representatives. WEA staff and members were themselves directly influencing government policies, through its official partnerships with Welsh Governments. Members were also encouraged to join independent pressure groups and community organisations. Likewise the WEA offered opportunities for its members to gain access to social networks, therefore potentially increasing their 'bridging' and 'linking' social capital, Putman (2000).

As the study revealed, all WEA members and staff were provided with the opportunity to democratically influence the way in which the organisation was governed, including proposing changes, policies and priorities. Therefore it was relatively unique even amongst other Third Sector organisations, in that it was directly accountable to its members and in turn was more readily able to justify its positions with regards to challenging government policies or decisions.

10.7 The extent to which the WEA has helped to recognise and overcome barriers and obstacles which curtail active citizenship.

Many WEA participants in the study identified how having been given the chance to take the first step back into education, they had become more aware of additional opportunities and their own capacity to participate in society as a whole. Likewise members were encouraged to reflect on their own circumstances, through the provision of critical and political education Crick (2000; 2002), Freire (1972). This had empowered learners to take action regarding personal and social issues. Projects which aimed to support the most vulnerable members of communities such as the disabled, elderly and

unemployed youth, which were set up by WEA participants, particularly in the valley's communities demonstrated this point.

The study confirmed that the WEA had adopted broadly social democratic interpretations of citizenship, based on their view that in order for all citizens to play active and more positive roles in society, governments need to ensure that there are more equal political, social and economic conditions in place. It also demonstrated that the WEA appreciated the need for positive rights and provisions for all people, regardless of background, race, ethnicity, sexuality, physical or mental ability, class or gender. Through its educational work within the wider social movement it aimed to challenge these barriers. This was particularly prevalent in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales, where generations of citizens faced multiple barriers and required extra support to overcome impediments to participation. Where assistance for participants was put in place by the WEA, learners usually became more active. This included providing extra provisions such as financial or physical support, locally based courses, transport and free or inexpensive courses.

Also, although the WEA's work was recognised and highly regarded in many circles including by governments, it was apparent that more was required to reach even wider audiences across South Wales. There was clearly a lack of knowledge of the WEA for many people in Wales, particularly in the under 50s age group. Most learners were signposted onto courses by WEA and partner organisation's staff, often through government related programmes such as Communities First. This had many advantages, such as bespoke advice from professionals. However, it also at times limited the scope for new learners to get involved. This was primarily due to the fact that structured programmes sometimes failed to engage those hardest to reach and the most isolated such as the housebound and homeless, as well as those that lacked confidence or were sceptical to join classes. Greater public access to information regarding its activities would have been greatly beneficial for potential members and the WEA alike. Building on existing networks and making more use of its website could have widened its appeal further, particularly with regards to

commissioning further outreach work with isolated communities and individuals.

10.8 Challenges faced by the WEA and partner Third Sector organisations when subject to financial and political pressures from UK Governments.

The WEA in South Wales had become increasingly reliant on government funds and therefore bound by its agendas and targets. The complexity of this relationship highlighted issues reflected throughout the Third Sector, as well as the difficulties that each sector faces when trying to encourage active citizenship.

The WEA and its some of its partners had gained access to government funding to widen participation across South Wales. These funding streams however reflected government agendas and were focused on specific groups, especially those from socially disadvantaged such as NEET's and those who lacked basic skills, as well as some funds allocated for active citizenship. This approach generally impacted positively on the WEA's ability to encourage participation in education more widely, particularly within increasingly excluded and disenfranchised groups in South Wales as a result of inter-generational unemployment and other forms of disadvantaged such disability. Conversely, however, the specificity of the funding streams raised serious concerns as many of them focused on employability skills in areas where employment opportunities were few rather than wider educational skills for life. The WEA adapted to this by offering additional educational opportunities. It also promoted the wider benefits of education for groups such as older people and disabled groups, through non-accredited and bespoke courses.

Despite a seemingly arms-length approach by the Welsh Government, the receipt of government funding did inevitably come with strings attached. This included significant pressures to amalgamate the two Welsh divisions of the WEA. This process raised fundamental questions about the long-term purpose of the WEA and whether it was possible for the organisation to maintain

critically challenging and democratic elements to its work. From an insider/outsider's perspective however its overall approach to its relationship with governments appeared to reflect wider responses amongst certain Third Sector organisations. As Milbourne and others have pointed out 'while some may have conformed to normative expectations until recently, those accommodations have been in the light of overriding mission, and may, as other examples show, have encompassed accommodation with resistance (Milbourne, in Cushman 2013:24). Thus, its relationship within the Labour movement and Labour Governments in Wales brought it both advantages and disadvantages.

Overall the findings imply that, despite the limits and contradictions inherent in public policies to promote learning for active citizenship, Third Sector organisations such as the WEA have been able to encourage broad forms of active citizenship. This occurred even when working with so called 'hardest to reach' communities, where bespoke and 'differentiated' support enabled citizens to 'to learn to act' on their own terms. The WEA also demonstrated attributes seemingly absent to the same extent in other areas of the Third or public sector. These included a democratic structure coupled with an ability to encourage critical thinking and empower citizens able and willing to challenge social injustice, even when in receipt of high levels of government funding. Therefore, on reflection it appeared likely that if the WEA South Wales was unable to find space for alternative approaches to active citizenship, it would be even more challenging for most other Third sector organisations. The study also demonstrated that governments at all levels also have an essential role to play in ensuring that they create and maintain genuinely democratic structures and implement policies that promote equality and social justice. Where citizens themselves are embraced as agents with the right to engage and change society, they are more able and willing to engage in citizenship activities on multiple levels.

10.9 Contributions

The specific contributions of this study emerged from my position as an insider/outsider researcher. It involved a critical analysis of the work of the WEA and its partners, which provided direct insights into how public policy influences citizen participation in practice. With a specific focus on devolution in Wales, I observed how Westminster and Welsh Government policies supported and/ or curtailed the opportunities for Third sector participants to become engaged as active citizens. Through following the experiences of WEA learners and groups, I discovered how citizens often unexpectedly progressed from relatively passive into more engaged and active citizens. Thus, the study highlighted how far the WEA as an exemplar of a Third Sector organisation in receipt of government funding, was able to make this potentially contentious contribution to active citizenship.

Through a process of participant observation and participatory research, the study concentrated on the perspectives of participants rather than pre-determined sets of narrow criteria formulated by governments or institutions regarding active citizenship. This participatory approach to the research reflected the central premise of the thesis, that governments and the Third Sector should engender increased equality in order to promote inclusive and self-determined forms of citizenship. Furthermore, it involved citizens who had experienced disadvantage and exclusion in the research process, in line with Feminist approaches.

The collaboration with the WEA and its partner organisations provided evidence-based research which both challenged and in other ways verified the practices and ethos of the WEA and its partners. The constant process of feedback and reflection which was carried out helped to triangulate the overall findings and gave voice to a wide range of members across the organisations. The South Wales WEA was also becoming increasingly aware of the potential value of embedding research in their work overall, enabling the organisation to become more effective in pursuing its mission, even in the face of wider systemic challenges. According to the General Secretary of the WEA, the case

study 'has been used to pave the way for a continuing commitment to research.' (2012).

10.10 Reflections on what I have learnt

The research emphasised that the Third Sector and governments alike have faced complex challenges regarding their capacity to ensure that all citizens have the ability and resources to participate, particularly within a context of austerity and government cuts. It revealed specific pressures (such as adapting to limited government funding streams) faced by Third Sector organisations, when trying to help develop critical thinking and empowered citizens. It also underlined the complications that governments have in supporting the work of Third Sector organisations without stifling their creative capacity to encourage citizen participation. Moreover the research illustrated how governments need to ensure that increasing equality and social justice ought to underpin their approaches to citizenship, as well as enacting a more equitable approach to its partnership with Third Sector organisations in order to enable them to more genuinely empower their citizens.

Additionally, an essential element of the research was to adapt to unexpected outcomes. This was particularly necessary when dealing with the dual role of both insider/ outsider to the partner organisation. A high level of reflexivity was required in order to present the detailed explanation of the findings without appearing biased towards the organisations' work. This was predominantly so as I had observed surprisingly positive practices within the organisation. It was also evident that from lack of responses from political representatives that a re-focus was required on the viewpoints of policy makers to reflect on policies and political perspectives.

10.11 Other areas for exploration

There were a number of areas that would have enriched the study but due to time and length limitations they were not possible. These included comparisons

of other Third Sector organisations. Also examination of the work of other types of groups that face inequality such as Black Ethnic Minority Groups (BME) groups and English Speakers Other of Languages (ESOL) learners could have provided valuable insights for thesis, particularly in relation to barriers towards active citizenship for those without specific UK citizenship status.

Additionally, further insights into the perspectives of politicians within the UK would have provided useful elements to the study. As it was, even with these limitations, I learned extensively from this research about the importance of flexibility, as well as reflexivity as an insider/ outsider researcher. The study revealed that even within the limitations of UK and Welsh Government's policy frameworks, there was still scope for citizen empowerment, particularly where citizens received support from certain Third Sector organisations. Differentiated and empowering approaches to citizen engagement, delivered by the WEA South Wales, proved particularly effective in enabling citizens to participate in varying ways and on their own terms. Its work also confirmed that citizenship is most usefully conceptualised on multiple levels, within overlapping local, national and global contexts.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Table 3: Responses from Ministers and policy makers 2012

Role	Number contacted	UK/ Welsh Government	Response	Date interviewed
Civil servants	3	Welsh UK	Interviewed Interviewed Interviewed	9/2/2012 11/4/2012 8/5/2012
Government Minister	3	Welsh Government	No No Declined	
Assembly Member	5	Welsh	No No No No Declined	
Member of Parliament	2	UK	No Declined	
Other organisation	1	Welsh	No	

Appendix 2

Table 4: Interviews with WEA Staff Members and learners 2010-2012

Interviews	Date
WEA staff	10/9/2010
	16/9/2010
	23/9/2010a
	23/9/2010b
	24/9/2010
	27/9/2010
	4/10/2010
	23/2/2011
	12/7/2011
GLiN staff x 2	5/9/2012
<i>WEA Learners and members</i>	
Valleys group	16/12/2010a
Valleys group	16/12/2010b
Valleys group	16/12/2010c
Valleys group	16/12/2010d
Valleys group	16/12/2010e
Valleys group	3/2/2011
Community Computer Care x2	16/2/2010a and b
CLR	18/4/2011
CLR	9/5/2011
People First	24/4/2011
People First	26/4/2011a
People First	26/4/2011b
People First	26/4/2011c
People First	26/4/2011d

Appendix: 3**Glossary of terms**

AM	Assembly Members (Wales)
ALC	Adult Community Learning
BNP	British National Party (Previously the National Front)
CATT	Changing Attitudes towards Training
CHWEAN	Coleg Harlech and Workers' Education Association North Wales
CLR	Community Learning Representative
CSV	Community Service Volunteers (UK wide volunteer organisation)
CVS	Council Voluntary Services
DACE	Department of Adult and Community Education
DCELLS	Department Community Education and Lifelong Learning
DfES	Department of Education and Skills
ESDGC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
GAVO	Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations
FEFCW	Further Education Funding Council for Wales
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
MENCAP	Mental Handicap
MP	Member of Parliament (UK)
MSP	Member of Scottish Parliament
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIACE	National Institute for Adult Continuing Education
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training (Government term)
Senedd	Welsh Parliamentary Building in Cardiff
SPACE	Social and Political Citizenship Education

TSPC	Third Sector Partnership Council (Wales)
VAC	Voluntary Action Cardiff
WCVA	Wales Council for Voluntary Action
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government- Welsh Government (from May 2011)
WEA South Wales	Workers' Educational Association South Wales
WISERD	Welsh Institute for Social and Economic Research and Data Methods

Appendix 4

Consent Form

Researcher: Daniella Holland Goldsmiths, University Of London

All information recorded in the interview will be kept confidential and all names and personal information will not be used in my research.

	Please Tick
I have read the background information to the research	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.	
I agree to take part in the study	
I would/ would *not like a copy of the transcripts	
I would/ not * like a copy of the findings	

*** delete as appropriate**

Name of participant Date Signature

Name of Person taking Consent Date Signature

Appendix 5

Information for Research Participants in a Study of Active Citizenship

Research Student: Daniella Holland

Background to the Study

The research is being carried out as part of an Economic and Social Research Council funded study. It involves a partnership between the Third Sector (voluntary organisations, charities and not for profit organisations), the government and the 'Take Part' Research Cluster which includes universities such as Goldsmiths, University College London.

Purpose of the Study

The study will be exploring the influences of the third sector, as well as government policy in encouraging people to become active citizens. The WEA South Wales is deemed an appropriate charity for this study as central to its long-term aims is the promotion of active citizenship.

"Our objective is the creation of an educated democracy in which participation in public affairs and the knowledge that it requires, are widely spread throughout the community".

The Researcher

I am carrying out this research as part of my studies as a student of Goldsmiths, University College London in partnership with the WEA. The research will contribute towards my PhD. I am supervised throughout by two senior members of the University and the research has been approved by the School Ethics Committee.

My academic background is in Politics and International Relations. I have previously worked in the education sector and for the Welsh Assembly Government.

What the Interview will involve

The interview will involve a set of questions which you will already have been presented with. The interview should take around an hour or less. The interviewee is free to ask any questions before, throughout or after the interview.

How will the interview be used?

The interview will be recorded with your permission, so that I have a record of what was said and then I will write up a transcript. This can be available to all participants on request. A summary of the findings will be presented to the WEA South Wales and the information collected will contribute towards the final study and possibly further articles or presentations. I will ensure anonymity where possible, names of yourself and anyone else mentioned will be changed. The original recording and transcript will be kept in a secure place.

Appendix 6

Interview with members of the WEA

Background and Purpose of the Research

The aim of the research is to look into how the Third Sector, (WEA South Wales being its prime case study), works with the government and research clusters to promote active citizenship and community engagement.

Any data which is collected during the interview will be available to those being interviewed after the interview has been transcribed.

Questions

What do you think active citizenship involves and should involve?

Do you think the WEA South Wales encourages active citizenship?

How do you feel learning through the WEA helps members get involved in their society?

Do you feel you understand more about how to get involved in political, cultural or community based activities by working with the WEA South Wales?

How do you think the WEA South Wales can work together with the government to improve active citizenship?

What do you feel are the barriers people face in becoming active citizens?

Appendix 7

Interview Questions for civil servants

Research Purpose

The aim of the research is to analyse how the UK Government and Welsh Government work with the Third Sector and the *Taking Part* research cluster (which aims to build research skills and capacity related to Active Citizenship and Community Empowerment) and to put forward suggestions to all sectors as how to further encourage active citizenship.

Any data which is collected during the interview will be available to those being interviewed on request after the interview has been transcribed. All information that is gathered is kept highly confidential.

Themes and Questions

What do you believe active citizenship does and should involve and what role should the government play in encouraging it?

What policies and initiatives has the Welsh Government established to encourage active citizenship?

How do you think the Third Sector does and can work together with the Government to promote active citizenship and democratic participation?

What are the barriers and challenges to active citizenship and how can the government help to overcome them?

In what ways do you believe the Welsh Government should and does work in partnership with other organisations such as the WEA to encourage active citizenship?