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Practitioners Perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area

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Practitioners Perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation has not already been accepted in substance, or in part, for any degree and is not currently submitted in candidature for any degree.

I further affirm that the substance of this work is entirely the result of my own independent research, excepted where otherwise stated.

Signed: ........................................

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Date: 6th May 2009
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Abstract

This dissertation examines the practitioner's perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area. It explores the barriers in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the motivation for participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and the strategies used to engage learners onto Adult Education courses. It provides a brief socio-economic profile of Blaenau Gwent. The findings are drawn from numerous interviews with practitioners of Adult Education, individuals who are on or looking to participate on Adult Education courses and a volunteer worker on an Adult Education course. The results of the study which are specific to one particular town within the Blaenau Gwent locality are discussed along with the relevant literature in this field.

Chapter one will introduce the study on which the dissertation is going to be based upon. It will briefly explain the current Adult Education and Lifelong Learning situation in Blaenau Gwent and will also explain the current economic situation in Blaenau Gwent. The introductory chapter will also explain why I have chosen to study this topic for my dissertation.

Chapter two reviews the literature that is relevant to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. The purpose of Adult Education and the purpose of Lifelong Learning are going to be explored within this chapter, along with the barriers, motivation for participation and the strategies used to help motivate and engage learners in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

Chapter three looks at the methods that will be used relating to the topic and includes reasoning why the specific methods are chosen. Also, consideration will be given towards alternative methods.

Chapter four presents the research findings relating to this dissertation. The issues will include, the barriers relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the motivation for participation relating to Adult Education, the strategies used to encourage adults into education and gender differences in Adult Education.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter which will assess the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning within the chosen area in Blaenau Gwent.
Chapter One: Introduction

1.1: Introduction

This dissertation reports upon practitioners perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area. I have decided to choose this topic to base my study on because of my interest in the current educational system within the current economic situation. Blaenau Gwent was once a thriving industrial area, traditionally a coal-mining and steel-working region where both sectors held a massive majority of jobs throughout the area. With the closure of the Steelworks in 2002 and the ongoing closure of the pits in the area, the main places of employment are now non-existent. Over the past years the majority of the remaining manufacturing jobs have gone because of the closure of the majority of factories, this then leads to a vast amount of people coming out of work without any beneficial qualifications. For this reason I have decided to look at Adult Education and Lifelong Learning within this specific area because I feel the Adult Education organisations are more beneficial than ever, education is now highly important. I was also interested to look into this specific topic because past research has already taken place looking at the participation in Adult Education within the Blaenau
Gwent area in 2000 and I thought it would be interesting to go back to see if anything has changed over the past years.

Throughout this dissertation the purpose of Adult Education and the purpose of Lifelong Learning is going to be explored, along with the barriers relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the motivation for participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and also the strategies used to help motivate and engage learners in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

1.2: Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent is a county borough within South Wales which borders the principal areas of Monmouthshire and Torfaen to the east, Caerphilly to the west and Powys to the north. Its main towns are Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. The borough was formed in 1974 as a local government district of Gwent. (www.tredegar.co.uk).

There are numerous organisations setup within the Blaenau Gwent area to help engage adult learners into education. These organisations are setup to help improve the individual’s quality of life by trying to expand their education. The following are just a few organisations and out-reach projects that are currently setup within Blaenau Gwent to help engage adults into education (although there are numerous others);
1.2.1: Communities First

Within Blaenau Gwent there is a number of Communities First organisations setup. These try and help improve the living conditions and prospects for people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales. (www.communities-first.org.uk)

1.2.2: U3A – University of the Third Age

The U3A is a self-help organisation, for people no longer in full time employment, providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. The U3A organisation in Blaenau Gwent draws upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their members to organise and improve interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership. The U3A approach to learning is – learning for pleasure. Within the U3A in Blaenau Gwent there is no accreditation or validation and there are no assessments or qualifications to be gained. (www.u3a.org.uk)

1.2.3: RISE

Rise is a partnership of all those involved in Lifelong Learning and the provision of learning in Blaenau Gwent and other areas, for example, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. The goal for RISE is to provide accessible adult learning opportunities throughout the region, putting the learner first. RISE aims for a friendly and welcoming environment, a high quality learning
environment, a wide range of learning opportunities, experienced, well-qualified tutors, convenient opening times, help and support when learning, independent advice and guidance and strong links with the community. (www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk)

1.2.4: Coleg Gwent

Coleg Gwent is the largest further education college in Wales. It offers a wide range of opportunities to help find the correct courses for each individual. Provision for adults is concentrated on in Coleg Gwent; they hold a wide range of access courses in addition to careers advice, personal and learning support, as well as a whole range of social activities. (www.colegwent.ac.uk)

1.2.5: CUV – Community University of the Valleys

The Community University of the Valleys is a partnership between Universities and Community Organisations in South Wales. This partnership works together to bring learning to Blaenau Gwent and other areas, delivering courses at community venues and listening to learners and community workers to ensure opportunities meet the needs of all sections of the community. The CUV offers very accessible options to gain university qualifications and improve skills for life and work. The CUV works within the Blaenau Gwent area to develop community based learning, from informal activities through to degree level study. (www.cuv.org.uk)
1.2.6: *Bridges into Work*

Bridges into work is a project setup that will help 2,878 people into employment and deliver training and qualifications to over 10,000 more people. The project will target those who are currently unemployed or on incapacity benefit as well as those with a work limiting health condition. It will also tackle barriers to employment such as transport, childcare and lack of self esteem (which is going to be discussed in further detail). Through this project participants will benefit from the guidance and support of a case worker, who will try to help them improve their chances of gaining a job. The case worker will assist them with access to courses to gain new skills such as basic skills training and NVQs. ([www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk))
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter looks at the literature relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area. The following chapter is going to concentrate on the purpose of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, along with the barriers relating to participation in Adult Education, the motivation for participation and the strategies used to engage and motivate learners.

2.1: The purpose of Adult Education

There are many different views relating to Adult Education. Uden (1996); Sargant, et al (1997) highlights that the purpose of Adult Education was viewed as being to support individuals and groups who had benefited least from previous initial education; to promote personal and social autonomy and emancipation through forms of development associated with the liberal education of the arts, humanities and certain of the social sciences. This replicated and sustained the boundary between liberal Adult Education and vocational training. Jarvis (1995, p.21) also reflects;

*The term ‘Adult Education’ has a social definition as being a form of liberal education undertaken by those people who are regarded as adults.*
Jarvis (1995, p.1) again points out that “The study of Adult Education is growing in significance as the training of educators of adults is being undertaken more frequently in the United Kingdom and elsewhere”. Due to the current economic situation; especially in the area that this research is based upon, it is thought that Adult Education is now more important than ever. Connolly et al (2008, p.5) indicates that “it is a widespread acknowledgement that education contributes positively to economic activity”. The current recession, ‘credit crunch’, has taken hundreds of jobs from the area, Adult Education then becomes one area of interest for people who require new or different qualifications in order to get another job. Gender is also a key issue in Adult Education, past research by Palazon (2000, p.40) shows that gender effects the motivation for participation and also shows that the barriers differ from men and women. Gorard et al (1997, p.6) claims that “gender has been a key predictor of participation in formal learning with men generally undertaking more episodes, particularly of continuous academic education and substantive work-based training such as apprenticeships”.

Tight (1996, p.1) describes adult education and training as “an important and developing field of activity and study. As children and as adults, we are all engaged in learning everyday of our lives, whether we realise it or not. We are also increasingly likely to be involved in more formalized forms of learning – that is, in education or training – both immediately after we have completed the compulsory education period and throughout the rest of our lives. In the UK, for
example, participation surveys indicate that every year at least one in five adults are involved in education or training”. Wilture (1976) sums up Adult Education by stating “Adult Education might also be understood as an educational process conducted in an adult manner”.

2.2: Lifelong Learning and the Learning Society

The term learning is a widely used term throughout our lives which research has shown many different definitions. “A generic definition of learning involves the gaining of knowledge, skill or understanding, self-consciously or tacitly, anywhere through individual and group processes throughout our lives.” Livingstone et al (2008, p.3). Whilst Livingstone states this recently, learning was also defined by Hilgard and Atkinson in 1967 as “any more or less permanent change in behaviour that is the result of experience”. There is also a vast amount of research which defines Lifelong Learning and the learning society. Firstly, Coffield (1994, p.1) states that;

“A learning society has been defined as one
in which all citizens acquire a high quality
general, education, appropriate vocational
training and a job . . . while continuing to
participate in education and training
throughout their lives” (Coffield, 1994, p.1)
Research also shows that the term Lifelong Learning is quite a modern phrase which, in the last decade, has been used more than ever. "The idea of a learning society is quite a fashionable term amongst educationalists, politicians and businessmen, despite the fact that it is extremely debatable whether the learning society is an attainable target for human societies or not". Duman (1999). Tett (2006, p.20) also has views on Lifelong Learning and states "The individuals capacity for learning across the life-span means that people can learn in many different ways and contexts. If the learning society in which they live regards learning as a normal activity for people of all ages then everyone, rather than a limited group, is likely to be effectively engaged in some form of learning of their choice . . . since those who leave school with few or no qualifications are unlikely to engage in learning later, it appears that if you do not succeed in the first place then you will not succeed later either", the latter of this quote is discussed further on in this chapter.

Livingstone et al (2008, p.3) states that "Everyone seems to agree that Lifelong Learning is needed to survive in these changing times". As was stated earlier, Lifelong Learning, along with adult education, is vital at this specific time because of the current economic situation within the area in which this research is being collected.
2.3: Barriers relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

There has been a great deal of research into participation and non-participation into Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and researchers often refer to the ‘barriers’ whilst talking about non-participation. According to Larson and Milana (2006, p.8-14) there are many barriers to stop adults entering education, barriers such as “Lack of time and/or energy, negativity towards re-entering education, a lack of available courses/equipment, a lack of support and/or lack of confidence in own abilities”. Larson & Milana (2006, p.8-14).

Appleby (2008, p.6) also talks about barriers into Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and suggests that;

*Life issues can affect people trying to enter education such as being homeless, being part of a moving population (E.g. refugees, asylum seekers and homeless people), experiencing violence, racism or homophobia, experiencing physical and mental issues, dealing with legal issues or care orders and dealing with poverty.*

Appleby (2008, p.6)

Appleby (2008, p.7) then goes on to state that “people who are dealing with some, or a combination, of the factors above are frequently identified as ‘at risk’ learners. This term is used to describe
people who are 'at risk' of social exclusions through non-participation in education. A social practice approach recognises the links between people’s lives and learning, especially the successful learning that often occurs outside the classroom. It explains the difficulty that some people have fitting in with what they may see as inflexible mainstream adult learning”. Appleby (2008, p.7-12) then illustrates that practitioners need to take into account peoples current circumstances and responsibilities, peoples individual barriers into learning, people's feelings of social exclusion and recognise and acknowledge peoples existing skills and competencies. Appleby (2008, p.7-12) then states that “barriers need to be taken into account: these can include physical, mental, social and emotional issues in life circumstances where people experience turbulence. Some people have past or current experiences of violence or trauma which are not always visible or expressed. These are both part of their history and can affect their current circumstances as well as their future.” Appleby, (2008, p.9).

Gorard et al (1998, p.29) also has opinions on the barriers relating to Adult Education. “The barriers that potential learners face have been well rehearsed and to widen, as well as merely increase, the access to post compulsory education and training, these barriers need to be recognised and faced. Barriers include direct cost and indirect cost which have a discriminatory effect on access. Barriers can be institutional, in the form of curricular arrangements, the other students, or the timing of sessions, for example, the lack of what is
seen as appropriate provision. People face stemming from initial
education, such as difficulty with literacy or numeracy, a problem that
can affect several generations of the same family. Added to these
barriers are lack of knowledge of benefits and even interpretation of
rules by benefits offices. Loss of time is another key barrier to
learning, especially in a country with a tradition of the longest
average working week in Europe... lack of motivation to overcome the
other barriers may be the greatest barrier of all, and its influence may
be underestimated by the literature concentrating on the more easily
visible barriers such as cost and entry qualifications”.

Gorard et al (1998, p.29) then goes on to highlight “It has been
reported that many people display an incorrigible reluctance to learn
formally, in fact, 21% of adults form a hard core of non-participants
outside all attempts to reach them. If all the barriers were removed for
them, by the provision of free tuition and travel, they may still not
want to learn. Lack of drive thus, becomes the most important of all,
since it is seen as to easy to get a job instead, and the qualifications
are seen as useless anyway”. However, because of the current
economic situation, especially within the area that the research is
based, it is not believed to be true when Gorard et al (1998, p.29)
says that it is seen as easy to get a job instead of take part in Adult
Education and Lifelong Learning.

Other authors have also identified specific barriers relating to Adult
Education and Lifelong Learning. Johnstone and Rivera (1965) used
terms such as situational, institutional, socio-demographic and
dispositional barriers. “Situational barriers (time, money, child care, lack of transportation, poor health, weather, shift or overtime work), institutional barriers (inconvenient class schedules, full time fees for part time study, restrictive locations and factors pertaining to the educational service provider), socio-demographic barriers (age, sex, race, income, educational level, and geographical location) and dispositional barriers (persons attitude about self and learning, self-esteem, group participation)”. Knapper and Cropley (2000, p. 184-185) have their own views on barriers towards Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. They believe that at present there are substantial barriers to the emergence of such educational systems and think that the constraints are structural, institutional and individual; they also involve the nature of learning itself. Knapper and Cropley (2000, p. 184-185) go on to say “fundamental structural problems include general issues such as the different levels of access to education enjoyed by groups of differing socio-economic status, lack of finance and lack of visible political will – despite the many rhetorical calls for the implementation of lifelong learning from educational leaders, legislators and business leaders. There are also more specific problems such as the difficulty of movement between learning fields”. They following this by stating that “institutional barriers include problems of the supply of learning opportunities outside the formal framework” and move on to talk about learning barriers and say that “these are individual barriers and concentrates on students attitudes to institutes and their view on what
constitutes ‘real’ learning, their motivation and self-image. Many people leave school with the feeling that institutionalised learning is unpleasant or divorced from their own needs and interests. In other words, they possess negative attitudes to institutions of learning”.

Throughout this section the many barriers which adults come across whilst trying to enter Adult Education have been discussed, however, whilst most research shows these barriers are the main problem for non-participation Gorard et al (1998, p.26) highlights that “Perhaps the barriers are not the chief problem? If not, then the ‘blame’ for non-participation may lie in the motivation of individuals, but it may also lie in the perceived nature of the opportunities on offer”.

Past research has also been undertaken with in the Blaenau Gwent area relating to the barriers and participation in Adult Education. Palazon (2000, p.42) suggests that many individuals within the Blaenau Gwent area do not participate in Adult Education courses and found some of the reasons being the persons domestic responsibilities, maternity, potential loss of income, waiting for a child to go to school, ill health and lack of interest.
2.4: Participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

Participation and non-participation is also another well researched area within adult education and lifelong learning. Cross (1981, p.2) supports this by indicting:

*Much research has been done in relation to participation and non-participation in Adult Education and training. The exact proportion of adults who participates in Adult Education and training varies from study to study, depending not only on time and place, but also the design of the study and how learning activities are defined.*

Participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning can have positive effects on a wide range of aspects. Connolly et al (2008, p.3) agrees with this by highlighting “More recently, there has been a growing recognition that participation in adult learning can also have positive effects on a range of wider social outcomes. Hence, researchers have argued that there are close relationships between educational participation and health outcomes, wider social and political attitudes and community-based benefits”. Connolly et al (2008, p.3) then goes on to state that “Emphasis on the instrumental benefits of participation in adult learning begs the question as to what other benefits derive from participation in this kind of learning. Adult educators have argued on the basis of their experience that forms of
adult learning which are not directly work-related can have positive effects on peoples working lives, through, for example, building confidence, developing learning skills and improving knowledge of the learning opportunities that are available. Here, the idea that participating in any form of adult learning can lead to progression to more advanced programmes (including ones that are directly work-related) has been important. Benn also talks about participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and has a similar point of view to Connolly et al. Benn (1997) argues that there is a mutually complimentary relationship between social activism and educational participation, and when individuals participate in society, they gain entry to local information networks, and are therefore, more likely to be aware of existing educational opportunities, and also that Adult Education serves to reinforce and even generate social activism.

Edwards et al (1998, p.40) also looks at the literature relating to participation and non-participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning. They believe that in general, there are three sets of inter-related themes which frame debates around participation and non-participation. First, there are those which focus on providers learning opportunities, on the need to transform the provision of learning opportunities to enable more adults to participate. Time-tabling, crèche facilities, physical accessibility, flexible delivery systems are encouraged to enable this to happen. Second, there is literature, which focuses on the system of provision as a whole. This concentrates on the need for coherent frameworks of access and
progression, not simply into and between institutions, but also with increased student and labour market mobility, across national boundaries. The focus shifts to credit frameworks, funding adults to learn and the need for a diverse range of learning opportunities. (HEQC, 1994). Third, there is the literature which discusses participation as an aspect of the exercise of culture and power. This addresses issues of participation not simply in terms of how learning is accessed, but also the content of that learning and its significance in the wider socio-economic and political context.

Whilst McGivney (1990, p.41) believes that the factors which affect the participation of adults in learning are many and complex, Uden (1996, p.7) believes that mass participation in learning is an essential ingredient for; a fulfilled life for individual men and women, a successful and developing economy and a participative democracy.

2.5: Motivation for participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning

Boshier et al came up with six factors for participation within Adult Education “Firstly, adults participate for social relationships, for example, to make friends and meet new people. Secondly, they believe that adults participate for external expectations, for example, to comply with the wishes of someone else with authority. Another reason would be social welfare, where an adult has the desire to serve others and/or the community. They also think another area for participation is for professional advancement, where the adult has the
desire for job enhancement or professional advancement. Another factor for participation is for the adult to escape and for stimulation, to alleviate boredom and/or to escape home or work routine, and lastly for cognitive interest, where they believe adults learn for the sake of learning itself" Merriam (1991).

Burgess (1971, p.3-29) identified several characteristics of adults who choose to participate in the learning experience: (1) they want to know; (2) they’ve established personal, social, or religious goals; (3) they’re engaged in some activity; (4) they need to meet a formal, work-related requirement; and (5) they simply want to escape. Appleby (2008, p.8) also has her own ideas on motivation for participation “Some people want to learn specific skills such as spelling or fractions because they had not acquired them when young and wanted to feel good learning them as an adult. For others, there are particular skills they need in order to progress onto college or into employment. Often people come with a general aim to ‘do computers’ and develop new skills, e.g. in graphics or designing sound systems. For some people, to learn about learning itself and how to become an independent learner is a key starting point”.

Knapper and Cropley (2000, p.185) had their own views on motivation for participation and believe that motivation is too narrowly understood as a collection of vague goals that seem more likely to be achieved by means of schooling (a good job, autonomy at work, a pleasant lifestyle, wealth) even though the relationship may be perceived only in a global way. With the emergence of graduate
unemployment and the realisation that a degree does not automatically guarantee a good job, a diffuse, largely extrinsic motivation is not sufficient to activate Lifelong Learning or even foster acquisition of necessary learning skills. Finally, experience of failure – or even success, but only through highly dependent, teacher-cantered learning – encourages learners to see themselves as capable of learning, except perhaps under close supervision. It goes without saying that a combination of negative attitudes to learning, lack of intrinsic interest in the contents of learning, seeing it instead only as a means to fuzzy ends, and unforgiveable self-image is not conductive to lifelong learning. Knapper and Cropley (2000, p.185) also goes onto state that initial post compulsory education or training appears to be determined by an individual’s background, more than their expense of initial education. Therefore, a particularly good or bad experience of schooling, including success or failure in examinations at sixteen or eighteen, does not seem to make any difference to what is effectively already an individual’s learning ‘trajectory’. More simply, early educational experience can affect what one participates in between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one but not weather one participates.
2.6: Strategies used to help motivate and engage adult learners

Research shows that effective strategies are needed to help motivate and engage any type of learner, adult learners however may need different strategies to help them start and maintain participation on Adult Education courses. The barriers into Adult Education were looked at earlier in this chapter and these barriers can relate to the strategies that are used to engage the learners. Thoms (2002) suggested many different strategies to engage learners including the following “put materials into ‘bite-size chunks’ which people are able to understand, make the material relevant, explain why certain assignments are made and their relevance to the overall course or training sessions, add a little ‘spice to their life’ by giving them some degree of options and flexibility in their assignments, keep the course requirements in perspective to the amount of time for the course (credit hours, for example), bend the news, if necessary and appropriate, so that the adult learner can ‘push the envelope’ and try new things.” Thoms (2002) also believes that by being flexible and willing to adapt to the needs of the adult learners, the instructor can be a motivating force in the classroom – rather than a hindrance and de-motivator.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This dissertation reports upon practitioners perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area. This chapter illustrates the different range of approaches and outlines the research methods used in order to gather relevant data for this dissertation. The research is based on a small scale study, where a range of different methods were used to interview and send questionnaires to practitioners engaged in adult education. However, volunteer workers and recently unemployed people were interviewed in order to come to the conclusion whether Adult Education and Lifelong Learning is effective in the particular area which is being researched. In order to carry out the research it has been decided that the mixed method approach will be used which will include both interviews and questionnaires, by using this approach it may be beneficial, this is because the use of more than one approach would support the findings and give a higher validity.
3.1: Walsh and Gibbs

Before starting this research I found a useful diagram by Walsh (2001, p.62) which is shown below. This diagram helped me to understand what was needed in order to start my research, I then changed Walsh's diagram to make it beneficial to the research I wanted to undertake.
I then looked at the Reflective Cycle set out by Gibbs (1988) and Pollard's Process of Reflection cycle diagram; again I adapted this to suit my research. The cycle below reflects both Gibbs and Pollard's diagrams and has also helped me understand what is needed to start my research.

[Diagram of Reflective Cycle]

1. Reflect - look at different methods of research that I could use. I have decided to use interviews and questionnaires.
2. Make provision - design both interview questions and questionnaires.
3. Act - organise who to send the questionnaires to and who to interview.
4. Collect evidence - undertake the interviews and send out the questionnaires.
5. Analyse - look at the data which has been collected and write out the results.
6. Evaluate - think of things that I could have done differently in order to perfect my findings.
7. Share - findings.
8. Repeat the cycle.

I could have done differently in order to perfect my findings.
3.2: Qualitative and Quantitative Research

There are two main types of data which are going to be discussed in this section, qualitative and quantitative. I have chosen to use both interviews and questionnaires for my research project and because of this hopefully I will gather both qualitative and quantitative data.

“Quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationship of one set of facts to another. The measure, using scientific techniques that are likely to produce quantified and, if possible generalized conclusions. Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals’ perception of the world. They doubt whether a ‘scientific’ approach can be used when dealing with human beings. Yet there are occasions when qualitative researchers draw on quantitative techniques, and vice versa” Bell (1996, p.5-6).

I aim for most of my results to be from the qualitative perspective, mostly from the interviews that will take place. “Qualitative research tends to be associated with participant observation and unstructured, in-depth interviewing. Bryman (1988, p.1). Cohen et al (2008, p.461) backs this up by stating “qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regulations”.

Bryman (1988, p.1) later says that “Quantitative research is typically taken to be exemplified by the social survey and by
experimental investigations". I shall carry this out through my questionnaires.

Both qualitative and quantitative data are equally important, although I am going to concentrate more on qualitative data, quantitative data is also useful to back-up the data. "Quantitative data analysis has no greater or lesser importance than qualitative analysis. Quantitative data analysis is a powerful research form. It is often associated with large-scale research, but can also serve smaller scale investigations, with case studies, action research, correlation research and experiments". Cohen et al (2008, p.462).

3.3: Normative and Ideographic Approaches to Research

Swetnam (2008 p. 31) states that research falls into two basic styles which are objective and subjective (or normative and ideographic). Objective approaches are concerned with physical characteristics and the external world, universally applicable rules and laws, tested through hypothesis, experiment and survey. Subjective approaches deal with the created social lives of groups and individuals through observation and explanation: both are systematically controlled and empirical. I have decided to use both questionnaires and interviews and because of this I am going to research through the normative approach.
3.4: Ethics

Geen et al (2007, p.90) believe that "Researchers have a commitment to advancing knowledge and understanding. They must not trick people, make false promises or use subjects merely as means to an end. In conduction research they should at all times respect human dignity. Furthermore, they have the duty to undertake honest inquiry and rigorous analysis. Under no circumstances should there be deliberate falsification of results". After taking this quote into consideration I have devised my own list of ethical considerations which are as follows:

- Securing permission for the research to be carried out,
- Respecting people's rights to have access to my end results,
- Respect for privacy and confidentiality,
- Respect for justice and inclusiveness,
- Follow guidelines laid out by law,
- Be honest about the purpose of the study and about the conditions of the research,
- Inform participants what is to be done with the information they provide.

Swetnam (2008 p.8) also refers to many different ethical aspects that need to be taken into consideration such as making sure no harm should come to the participants in the research either physically, mentally or socially. Particular care is taken not to exploit the
vulnerability of children, the elderly, the disabled or those disadvantaged in any way. No physical or environmental damage should be caused. The research follows equal opportunities principals. Anonymity and privacy, where requested, are guaranteed and honoured.

3.5: Triangulation, Validity and Reliability

Triangulation is a mixed method approach to collecting data. I have decided to use this technique by carrying out interviews and questionnaires.

"'Triangulation' is the term widely used for research designs where different sorts of data or methods of handling data are brought to bear on the research question. Often using multiple approaches promises very interesting results, it's always interesting to see the same question different ways".

Richards (2005, p.140)

Creswell (2007, p.62) backs up Richards statement by saying that "the most common and well-known approach to mixing methods is triangulation". The purpose of triangulation is to "Obtain different but complimentary data on the same topic." Morse (1991, p.122). Cohen et al (2008, p.141) then links triangulation to validity by stating that
"Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research".

This research is going to be both valid and reliable; without these two aspects the research would not be a fair reflection of people's views and therefore would reflect the results. "Validity is one of the most discussed issues in qualitative research" Richards (2005, p.139).

Cohen et al (2008, p.133) states that validity is an important key to effective research. If a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless.

Research also has to be reliable to have an overall true reflection of the chosen topic.

"Reliability is the extent to which a test or procedure produces similar results under constant conditions on all occasions"

Bell (1996, p.64)

Geen et al (2007, p.192) also supports Bells quote by stating that the term 'reliability' implies that, if the research were carried out on further groups of comparable subjects by another competent researcher, then similar results would be obtained. Questionnaires and interviews have been chosen specifically because I believe that they will both display reliable and valid data. "Whatever procedure for collecting data is selected, it should always be examined critically to access to what extent is likely to be reliable and valid". Bell (1996, p.64).
3.6: Questionnaires

I have decided to use questionnaires as one method to collect data for this research. "The questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured, often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of the researcher, and often being comparatively straightforward to analyse. The researcher will have to judge the appropriateness of using a questionnaire for data collection, and, if so, what kind of questionnaire it should be". Cohen et al (2008, p.317).

I believe that questionnaires are extremely useful to gain true replies to certain questions that some people may not be comfortable answering during a face to face interview. Walliman (2001, p.236) backs this up by stating that "using a questionnaire enables you to organise the questions and receive replies without having to talk to every respondent as a method of data collection. The questionnaire is a very flexible tool, but it must be used carefully in order to fulfil the requirements of a particular piece of research. One of the main features of a questionnaire is its impersonality. The questions are fixed, i.e. do not change according to how the replies develop, and they are the same for each respondent, and the person posing the questionnaire is remote. The responses can be completely anonymous allowing potentially embarrassing questions to be asked"

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1 Because of time restraints I was unable to send out the questionnaires. This will be explained later on in Chapter 5.
with a fair chance of getting a true reply”. Also, questionnaires are useful for collecting a higher proportion of data in a short space of time rather than taking time to interview people, these questionnaires can either be handed out or sent by post allowing a wide range of people to take part in the research, however, questionnaires do have a massive disadvantage; they may not have a high return rate and then may affect the end findings. For my research I am going to use a variety of question types, the more structured a question, the easier it will be to analyse. Youngman (1986) lists seven question types as follows (however there are others): (1) Verbal or Open, (2) List, (3) Category, (4) Ranking, (5) Scale, (6) Quantity and (7) Grid.

For my research I am going to use a mixture of open and close ended questions, multiple choice questions and Likert scales. “A Likert scale provides a range of responses to a given question or statement” Cohen et al (2008, p.326). Bell (1993, p.139) also talks about Likert scales, she believes that they are the most straightforward scale to use in a questionnaire because they ask respondents to indicate strength of agreement or disagreement with a statement or series of statements on a five – or seven-point range. “Answers are then scored, generally from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) and a measure of respondents feelings can be produced”. (Bell 1993, p.140) I am also going to make sure that the design of my questionnaire is easily readable and written in simple, straight to the point terms in order to ensure genuine, straight to the point answers. “An excellently prepared questionnaire will lose much...
of its impact if it looks untidy" Bell (1993, p.81). Within my questionnaires I am going to avoid asking questions that are presuming. "Presuming questions are often a source of error in questionnaires. When they are included is it often because the researcher holds strong views about a subject and overlooks the fact that everyone may not feel the same way" Bell (1993, p.80). Hypothetical questions are also going to be avoided. Bell (1993, p.80) also states that hypothetical questions “will provide only useless responses. Most hypothetical questions come into this category”.

3.7: Interviews

Along with questionnaires I have also decided to use interviews to gather my research. Walliman (2001, p.238) states that “whilst interviewing is suitable for qualitative data collection, it is particularly useful when qualitative data are required. The use of interviews to question samples of people is a very flexible tool with a wide range of applications. There are two main methods of conducting interviews; face to face and telephone”. Nowadays, conference calls and webcams are also used for interviewing. Walliman (2001, p.238) goes on to explain that “face to face interviews can be carried out in a variety of situations – in the home, at work, outdoors, on the move (e.g. while travelling) – and can be used to question members of the general public, experts or leaders, specific segments of society, e.g., elderly or disabled people, ethnic minorities, both singly and in groups. Telephone interviews avoid the necessity of travelling to the
respondents, and all the time and problems associated with contacting people personally”.

One major advantage of interviewing is its adaptability and it is because of this I chose to conduct interviews for my research. “A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings, which a questionnaire can never do” Bell (1996, p.91). However, there are many problems also relating to interviewing. Interviewing can be very time consuming, they have to be planned and then appointments have to be made which can suit both interviewer and interviewee. From past experience I have found that then there is a number of barriers that you need to come across for an interview, for example, holidays need to be taken into consideration whilst planning the interview time scale. Bell (1996, p.91-101) then goes on to highlight another major disadvantage of interviewing and states that interviewing “is a highly subjective technique and therefore there is always a danger of bias”.

The structure of the interview is also important to how the interview is going to be held. At first I decided that I was going to use a semi-structured interview, however, after reading the following quote by Walliman (2001, p.238) I then changed my mind and wanted to perform an open and unstructured interview in order to gain as much knowledge as possible. “The structuring of the interview depends on the type of information you wish to elicit. For very precise answers to very precise questions, used for quantitative and statistical analysis,
a tightly structured interview is required with closed questions formulated in a method similar to a questionnaire. At the other extreme, if you need to explore a situation and wish to get information which you cannot predict, a very open and unstructured form of interview is appropriate. A semi-structured interview falls between the two, achieving defined answers to defined questions, while leaving time for further development of those answers, and including more open ended questions". Walliman (2001, p.238) then goes on to show that "the most important issue when you set up an interview is to know exactly what you want to achieve by it, and what you intend to do with the information gained, and to choose the appropriate structure of the interview to do this".
To develop the questions that will be needed in order to set out my questionnaires and interviews I used a flow chart as seen in Cohen et al (2008, p.319).
3.8: Observation

I did not think that observations were needed to achieve my results during this dissertation, because of this I choose not to observe any situations. However, I still believe that observations can be a massive advantage to research projects. Information gained from observation can be raw, you see the results of what you are trying to find with your own eyes and therefore can give a true result. Observations can be structured or unstructured; however, some type of plan is still needed to ensure the information that is being observed is relevant to the end result of the research.

There are two main types of observation – participant and non-participant. Whether your observation is structured or unstructured and whether you are observing as a participant or a non-participant, your role is to observe and record in as objective way as possible and then to interpretate the data you gather.

Bell (1996, p.109-110)

Swetnam (2008, p.57-58) demonstrates that “Observational techniques, used principally for qualitative research, require a highly structured set-up – perhaps more so as they are open to charges of subjectivity. The group being studied is identified as a purpose sample by the researcher as is the episode or behaviour to be
observed". Swetnam later goes on to explain that the researcher may adopt different levels of participation from being a complete participant to being completely detached. The former can cause difficulties in using written lists or check boxes. It is often argued that the very presence of an observer means that the episode being studied is different from a 'normal' situation. However, this applies, in different degrees, to all research except physical experiments. Making observations should always involve a two-stage process:

- Recording the 'raw' data in the note book or log sheet at the episode site.
- Reflecting on and considering the collected data at a later time.

There are still problems which arise from observations, Shipman (1997, p.73) states that although observation is the basic technique for most researchers, it is also most likely to be affected by personal, professional and political views. Therefore, may lead to a bias and one-sided viewpoint.
3.9: Sampling

Whilst researching for my methodology I found there were many different viewpoints on sampling. Firstly I am going to look at Cohen et al (2008, p.100-118) They believe that the quality of a piece of research stands or falls not only by the appropriateness of the methodology and instrumentation but also by the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted. Judgements have to be made about four key factors in sampling:

1. The sample size
2. Representiveness and parameters of the sample
3. Access to the sample
4. The sampling strategy to be used.

Cohen et al (2008, p.100-118) then go on to state that there are two main methods of sampling. The researcher must decide whether to opt for a probability (also known as a positive sample). The difference between is this: in a probability sample the chances of members of the wider population being selected for the sample are known, whereas in a non-probability sample the chances of members of the wider population being selected for the sample are unknown.

There are a variety of different samples that I am going to use whilst carrying out my research, these types are going to be mainly non-probability samples which are explained by Cohen et al (2008, p.110-116) as follows;
1. Snowball Sampling – Researchers identify a small number of individuals who have the characteristics in which they are interested. These people are then used as informants to identify, or put the researchers in touch with, others who qualify for inclusion and these, in turn, identify yet others – hence the term snowball sampling.

2. Convenience Sampling – Or, as it is sometimes called, accidental or opportunity sampling – involves choosing the nearest individuals to serve as respondents and continuing that process until the required sample size has been obtained or those who happen to be available and accessible at the time.

3. Purposive Sampling – Often (but by no means exclusively) a feature of qualitative research, researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgements or their typically or possession of the particular characteristics being sort. In this way they build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs.

4. Volunteer Sampling – In cases where access is difficult, the researcher may have to rely on volunteers, for example, personal friends, or friends of friends, or participants who reply to a newspaper advertisement, or those who happen to be
interested. Sometimes this is inevitable, as it is the only kind of sampling that is possible, and it may be better to have this kind of sampling than no research at all.

There are also useful probability samples; however, I have chosen not to use the following types of sample for my research. Cohen et al (2008, p.110-116) explains these as follows:

1. Cluster sampling - Cluster samples are widely used in small-scale research. In a cluster sample the parameters of the wider population are often drawn very sharply; a researcher, therefore, would have to comment on the generalisability of the findings.

2. Stratified sampling – Involves dividing the population into homogenous groups, each group containing subjects with similar characteristics. For example, group A might contain males and group B, females. In order to obtain a sample representative of the whole population in terms of sex, a random selection of subjects from group A and group B must be taken.

3. Systematic sampling – this method is a modified form of simple random sampling. It involves selecting subjects from a population list in a systematic rather than a random fashion.
4. Simple random sampling – In simple random sampling, each member of the population under study has an equal chance of being selected and the probability of a member of the population being selected is unaffected by the selection of other members of the population, i.e. each selection is entirely independent of the next. The method involves selecting at random from a list of the population (a sample frame) the required number of subjects for the sample.

Walliman and Swetnam both have ideas on sampling. Swetnam (2008, p.43) believes that the researcher has the duty to ensure that; the sample is large enough to be significant, it is as respective as possible, its defects are acknowledged and a rational for it is produced. Swetnam goes on to say that the smaller the sample the less is the generalisability of the results. We may be forced by circumstances to use the only sample that can be reached – an opportunity sample. Commonly used are random samples but the randomness is often more apparent than real. For example, there are different numbers of people whose surnames begin with each letter. Taking the third name may result in an all make sample. Large random samples may be produced by using computer generated lists of random numbers. Walliman (2001, p.232) believes that
"Sampling must be done whenever you can gather information from only a fraction of the population of a group of a phenomenon which you want to study. Ideally, you should try and select a sample which is free from bias. You will see that the type of sample you select will greatly affect the reliability of your subsequent generalizations".

My sample is going to be from a range of different organisations and job roles in order to ensure that I have a range of different viewpoints to include in my research.
Chapter Four: Data Analysis

A descriptive account of the results is now going to be explored within this chapter and the main themes are going to be looked at in relation to the barriers in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning, the motivation for participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning and the strategies used to help motivate and engage adult learners on education courses. A total of six interviews were carried out with a range of representatives from a variety of organisations that provide Adult Education opportunities within the study locality. A Learning Development Officer (LDO), an Adult Education Project Coordinator and a Practitioner of Adult Education were interviewed to show the practitioners perceptions of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning within one specific town in the Blaenau Gwent area. In order to increase the validity of the data gathered, and to gain a true insight to Adult Education in Blaenau Gwent I also decided to interview a volunteer worker on an Adult Education course, one individual looking to develop their skills and enrol on an Adult Education course and one individual who already participates on an Adult Education course.
4.1: Theme One - Strategies used to help motivate and engage adult learners

As section 2.6 suggests research shows that strategies are needed and are vitally important to help motivate and engage adult learners onto education courses. After researching this area the above was found to be true, however, during one interview with a Learning Development Officer (LDO) he explained that in the case of the Blaenau Gwent locality where the data was gathered:

"There is only so much you can do to engage people in learning, after a while it's up to the individual whether he/she wants to participate in Adult Education or not"

The data gathered also suggests that the strategies used to help motivate and engage adult learners are vitally important within the Blaenau Gwent area due to the fact that there are so many barriers to overcome before an adult actually participates in education. The organisations in question displayed good strategies to engage learners, from providing a crèche for childcare to providing free transport to and from education centres. This was proven to be beneficial when one of the employees stated:
"The transport that is provided really helps me. I don’t have to worry about being late for class because the minibus comes and picks me up and drops me home ready for the kids to come home from school”

By the use of good strategies one specific organisation within the Blaenau Gwent area shows that it is possible to then find people to participate who are ‘hard to reach’. One practitioner of Adult Education stated that;

"The strategies are important. We make sure the centres are welcoming and homely and also make sure that there is easy access to the centres. These types of strategies are setup to try and overcome a certain barrier which is trying to get people into Adult Education who are hard to reach".
time constraints. However, research has also shown that because of the current economic situation, jobs are very hard to come across, therefore making education courses beneficial. And as one practitioner pointed out;

"There is no such thing as a free lunch."

There were also other barriers drawn to my attention whilst gathering the data; childcare, transport, confidence and self esteem seemed to come high up on the lists of the majority of people interviewed along with people having the sense of 'not belonging' with one person pointing out that they think university and higher education courses are;

"Something other people do".

An Adult Education Project Coordinator who was interviewed pointed out that he believes there to be three different types of barriers within the specific town in Blaenau Gwent.

"Institutional barriers, such as inconvenient class times and locations, Dispositional barriers, such as a personal attitude towards learning, confidence and self esteem, and Physical barriers, such as transport and childcare".
This data related to the reviewed literature shown in section 2.3 when Knapper and Cropley (2000) and Johnstone and Rivera (1965) both mention the institutional and dispositional barriers within adult education. Gorard (1998, p.26) then goes on to highlight that;

"Perhaps the barriers are not the chief problem? If not, then the 'blame' for non-participation may lie in the motivation of individuals, but it may also lie in the perceived nature of the opportunities on offer."

This quote was also relevant to the research because one man who was interviewed who was already participating on an adult education course stated that;

"I don't really have many barriers, the centre where the course is situated is only five minutes away from my house and the course is in the day time when the kids are in school."

The point being that in the specific area in Blaenau Gwent there are numerous courses which are spread throughout the town which are free of charge, therefore, some people may be inventing barriers which are not there, just to cover up for the main barriers, either they lack confidence, or, they just 'cannot be bothered to participate' as one of the practitioners stated.
4.3: Theme Three – Gender differences

Gender has also come up as a key theme relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning within a specific town in the Blaenau Gwent area. Palazon (2000, p.40) mentioned that most things in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning differ between men and women. This is supported by Gorard et al (1997, p.6) who state;

“Gender has been a key predictor of participation in formal learning with men generally undertaking more episodes, particularly of continuous academic education and substantive work-based training such as apprenticeships”

Gorard et al (1997, p.6)

After interviewing a practitioner of Adult Education many points arose which show the difference between men and women in Adult Education. The practitioner stated that one of the main reasons for women to engage on Adult Education courses was for them to have a sense of achievement; they want to ‘do something for themselves’. Becoming recently divorced, independence and helping their children with their school work are also other reasons that came up when the practitioner was asked why women engage in Adult Education. The practitioner then goes on to say;
"Men however, engage for economic reasons, for example, to improve their income or to get a job/better job".

The research has also shown that the barriers relating to Adult Education and Lifelong Learning differ between men and women. Women's barriers include childcare and confidence, whereas, men's barriers relate more to lack of time when they could be earning and transport. The research that has been undertaken has shown that the above is not always the case. Even though on average this was found to be true, the research has also shown that sometimes the barriers can be exactly the same for men and women, for example, after interviewing a single father it came to my attention that he also struggled with childcare and transport. He stated that;

"I don't know where the nearest courses are and they might not be near school, I might not be able to get near Child A because Child A comes home for dinner."

After looking back at this interview I would have liked to have found out if he didn't know where the nearest courses were because of lack of advertising or just because he wasn't really interested in enrolling in a course. This would be something I would have liked to research further.

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2 The child in question will be called Child A for confidentiality reasons.
4.4: Theme Four – Benefits of Adult Education to the individual and the wider community

The volunteer worker who was interviewed became vital to the research. He was able to have firsthand experience on Adult Education courses and answered the questions truthfully without being biased in any way. When asked if he thought Adult Education and Lifelong Learning was effective in the one specific town within the South Wales Valleys he stated;

"No, not really. I do not believe that the courses that I have had involvement on are effective at all as people are always left waiting around at the start-up of classes. The classes are not run fluently at all."

However, the data gathered also displays that participation in Adult Education does have long term effects on the individual as a learner and also the wider community. Courses are setup not just for educational reasons but also to help people become more confident in themselves and to help many make new friends. The volunteer who was interviewed also explains that many of the courses setup in the organisation in which he is involved with planned to have;

"Bigger groups of adults so that they do not feel alone in their learning and they can see that there are many other people going through the same situation as themselves"
Another positive effect of Adult Education courses was expressed clearly when one individual stated;

"I can just prove to people that I'm not dull.
The best bit though is that my kids think I'm really clever and ask me stuff about their school work and I'm actually able to answer them"

This statement proves the point that Adult Education has massive positive effects on a person's confidence and self esteem and also shows that the whole family and the community can be affected by one person attending an Adult Education class.

4.5: Theme Five – The current economic situation and funding

During the time this research was gathered Blaenau Gwent was going through one of the biggest recessions for decades. This made the research specific to this certain point in society, because of the lack of jobs throughout the area, eventually courses set up for adults may be one of the major ways forward to helping individuals gain qualifications in order to get a job. Connolly et al (2008, p.5) relates to the above by indicating that;

"It is a widespread acknowledgement that education contributes positively to economic activity"
One interviewee recently became unemployed because of the current economic situation. The interviewee in question did once have a well paid job which didn't require any qualifications. Now he has become redundant he doesn't have the qualifications needed to get another job, however, because of the current economic situation there are no jobs available. He is now finding himself turning towards Adult Education as a way forward with the knowledge that an education course maybe beneficial in this situation because he would not be making money during this time anyway. The interviewee stated;

"I may as well do a course in one of the centres, there's nothing better to do. There are no jobs around here and so I'm not missing out on any money anyway. And I'll have to get some qualifications soon otherwise ill never find anything"

The courses that are setup within the locality are mostly free of charge; this would be beneficial to this individual because of the money issues that he is facing at the current time.

One practitioner of Adult Education also explained that the organisation which he was involved in has just received funding for the next two years; this would then take them to the end of the financial year in 2011. Even though this is beneficial to many individuals currently enrolled on Adult Education courses I believe
that this short term funding is detrimental to Adult Education within the area in question. Within the Blaenau Gwent locality I believe that the opposite of this is needed, where courses are funded on a long term basis. The practitioner showed that he agreed with this by stating;

"Long term funding is the way forward"

One interviewee currently enrolled on an Adult Education course stated;

"I still can't believe that I am half way through the course, I thought I would have given up in the beginning, I do feel proud of myself."

Short term funding can also cause barriers in Adult Education. If the funding had run out when the interviewee above was in the middle of his course and he could not carry on then his attitudes towards learning could change and his confidence in Adult Education courses could be lost. Another barrier in short term funding could be that the staff, lecturers and teachers may leave half way through the course if they come across better opportunities.

A Learning Development Officer for one of the organisations in question explained in the interview that the organisation that he works for uses volunteers as learning advocates. I believe this may also become a problem for adult learners because the volunteer learning advocates are generally older, retired people who are
relatively fully qualified. The interview with the Learning Development officer revealed that;

"This seems to prevent younger people getting involved."

The Learning Development Officer then expressed his own opinion by saying that;

"I believe it would be beneficial for the volunteers not to act as volunteers, they should be paid employees. One suggestion would be to pay them a small allowance that would not interfere with their benefit money”

I feel that this may be a useful suggestion, especially if the organisation could then overcome one barrier and get younger people to enrol on the courses.
4.6: Theme Six – Motivation for participation in Adult Education

A vast amount of research has been previously looked at relating to motivation for participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning.

"Much research has been done in relation to participation and non-participation in adult education and training. The exact proportion of adults who participates in adult education and training varies from study to study, depending on not only time and place, but also the design of the study and how learning activities are defined".

Cross (1981, p.2)

The research that has been carried out shows that there are numerous reasons why adults participate in education. Within Blaenau Gwent, at this current time a high proportion of people are motivated to participate in Adult Education simply to gain qualifications to get a job, with one of the interviewees stating;

"Both my mother and father have worked all their lives and I can’t even get a job to start with. I used to hate school, I could never be bothered, I’m regretting it now though. This is the first time I’ve come back to any type of education and before I started I was just
worried that id mess this up, just like I messed school up. I just thought I'd start doing a course now to show them that I am trying to get a job now that the kids are in school".

Participation in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning can have positive effects on a wide range of aspects. Connolly et al (2008, p.3) agrees with this by highlighting;

"More recently, there has been a growing recognition that participation in adult learning can also have positive effects on a range of wider social outcomes. Hence, researchers have argued that there are close relationships between educational participation and health outcomes, wider social and political attitudes and community-based benefits."

The research has also shown that to make sure people are motivated to engage in Adult Education it is important that courses are widespread. One interviewee stated;

"Because of the kids I wouldn't have bothered doing a course that was further away, this course is near the school so by
the time the course is finishes it is time to go
straight to the school and get them."

Another reason that became apparent from the research is that many
individuals are motivated because of actually knowing somebody on
the course already and having friendly and welcoming staff. One of
the interviewees already participating on an Adult Education course
explains this by stating;

"There are people I know on the same
course as me so there's always someone
there for me to talk to. The people who take
the course are nice as well, I can ask them
anything, they're not stuck up at all. I thought
they would be before I started the course
though".

All the research stated in this section also relates to Burgess (1971,
p.3-29) beliefs who identified several characteristics of adults who
choose to participate in the learning experience: (1) they want to
know; (2) they've established personal, social or religious goals; (3)
they're engaged in some activity; (4) they need to meet a formal, or
work-related requirement; and (5) they simply want to escape. These
reasons for motivation were quoted in 1971. Now, nearly thirty-eight
years on Appleby also has ideas on motivation for participation and
states that;
“Some people want to learn specific skills such as spelling or fractions because they had not acquired them when young and wanted to feel good learning them as an adult. For other, there are particular skills they need in order to progress onto college or into employment. Often people came with the general aim to ‘do computers’ and develop new skills, e.g. in graphics or designing sound systems. For some people, to learn about learning itself and how to become an independent learner is a key starting point”.
Chapter Five: Conclusion and Future Research

This dissertation has reported upon practitioners perceptions of the effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific town within the Blaenau Gwent area.

5.1: Evaluation of Findings

The research that has been undertaken has allowed me to come to the conclusion whether the practitioners in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning feel that whilst Adult Education provision has made some inroad into improving the numbers of people who engage in study as adults, barriers still exist that prevent others from studying. The 'cost' of the education courses has lowered and mostly courses are free of charge, however, there are still barriers such as childcare, transport, confidence and self-esteem stopping Adult Education and Lifelong Learning being as effective as possible. One practitioner stated;

"How do you actually measure the effectiveness of adult education? Perhaps it's successful to start with because there are actually people enrolled on the courses".

Section 4.2 explains one of the main themes that I have concentrated on which are the barriers towards participation in Adult Education. Past research has looked at the barriers relating to Adult Education and after researching this topic myself I have come to the conclusion
that there is no drastic change between the barriers then and the barriers now. Palazon (2000, p.42) suggests that many people within the Blaenau Gwent area do not participate on Adult Education courses and found some of the reasons being the persons domestic responsibilities, maternity, potential loss of income, waiting for a child to go to school, ill health and lack of interest. The research that has been undertaken displayed that these barriers are still the case nearly ten years on, this is despite the development of initiatives that have been implemented since the research quoted above was undertaken, one example being the RISE project which is explained in the introductory chapter.

The data analysis chapter has also helped me conclude that the motivation for participating is slowly changing, specifically because of the economic situation within today's society. There are currently great job losses within the Blaenau Gwent area and because of this more and more people enrolling on Adult Education courses in order to gain new qualifications to help them stand a better chance of getting a job.

"The barriers that potential learners face have been well rehearsed, and to widen, as well as merely increase, the access to post compulsory education and training these barriers need to be recognised and faced."

Section 4.1 displays the strategies used to help motivate and engage adult learners. The research has helped me find that the strategies are vital to engage learners, without the correct strategies being implemented, such as the adult education centres being welcoming and homely, adult education courses wouldn't be as successful.

5.2: Future Research

Although the gender aspect in Adult Education wasn't looked at in depth when reviewing the literature it did come up as a main theme when gathering the data.

"Gender has been a key predictor of participation in formal learning"

_Gorard et al (1997, p.6)_

For further research I would be interested in looking at the differences in gender, relating to barriers and motivation for participation, more closely. I would also be interested in looking at one specific age range relating to Adult Education, this is because the research that I have undertaken has been so vast I think it would be more beneficial to break down the information and only concentrate on one age. I would also like to interview more individuals that are either taking part or would like to take part in Adult Education. I believe that this would be more beneficial to gain more reliable research rather than interviewing practitioners because I found that the practitioner's views
could be biased where other individuals may have a more 'truthful'
view.

After gathering all of my research I found that all the interviewees
were male, this was not planned but simply ended up this way.
Although the interviewees were from a range of different backgrounds
I would have still liked to interview more females. I think that by
interviewing females my results could have changed slightly and
would have allowed me to have a wider, less biased result, different
from just interviewing one sex.

Finally, I would like to state that because of time restraints the
questionnaires were not carried out. At first both qualitative and
quantitative methods were going to be used, unfortunately, only
qualitative research was then gathered. I found this to be a
disadvantage whilst gathering the data because I had no data to
back-up my interviews. However, after carrying out my interviews it
did help me realise that for this specific dissertation there was no
place for questionnaires and only need for interviews where the data
gives a more true reflection than if I did hand out the questionnaires.

This dissertation has demonstrated the practitioner perceptions of the
effectiveness of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in one specific
town with the Blaenau Gwent area. The themes in this dissertation
indicates the contribution that Adult Education and Lifelong Learning
can have on an individual's life, their family and also on the wider
community and I believe that the research that has been undertaken
shows need for further research on this specific topic, especially within the South Wales Valleys towns.
References

- Appleby, Y. (2008) Bridges into learning for adults who find provision hard to reach; Developing adult teaching and learning: Practitioner Guides. NIACE.


• www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

• www.coleggwent.ac.uk

• www.communities-first.org.uk

• www.cuv.org.uk

• www.statpac.com/surveys/sampling.htm

• www.tredegar.co.uk

• www.u3a.org.uk
## Appendix A - Dissertation Plan - Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Stage</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
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<td>Empirical Testing (If relevant)</td>
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</table>

- Problem identification and choice of Methodology: Start work on the problem identification and choice of methodology in September, with a focus on November and December.
- Literature Review: Begin the literature review in October and September.
- Implementation of methodology: Start the implementation of the methodology in September.
- Gathering of data sources: Begin gathering of data sources in October.
- Empirical Testing (If relevant): If empirical testing is relevant, start in October.
- Data Analysis: Data analysis will be completed in March.
- Writing up Draft: Start writing up the draft in April.
- Editing: Editing will be completed in April and May.
- Final Document: Finalize the document in April and May.
- Binding of Document: Bind the document in May.
Appendix B

This is the transcript of the main points that arose from an interview with a L.D.O. – Learning Development Office. The organisation that the LDO is referring to will be known as Organisation A for confidentiality reasons.

- How Organisation A engages younger learners – Something they haven’t cracked as yet.
- Organisation A works on encouraging mature learners.
- Organisation A also concentrates on Volunteer workers, and others who are already engaged in learning.
- Typical age – mature learners – 45 plus.
- Lone parent/ Mothers/ retired people.
- Some people easier to access than others.
- Lack of time/resources.
- Only recruit people who are already in centres.
- People mainly find out about Organisation A by word of mouth.
- Hard to recruit people.
- Most people have no qualifications.
- Future development – To improve people’s vocational skills (Transferable core skills)
- Up skilling for employment
• Focuses on activities to engage learners and get them back into employment, rather than just ‘getting people to do anything’.

• Future projects set up to engage younger learners – recruit learning advocates

• Future development – advertising Organisation A in more places not just in centres that are already set up.

• Barriers – childcare (one of the main barriers), many groups of people not easily accessible, career responsibility, psychological – confidence, physical, transport, dissatisfaction at ‘where they are in life’, some maybe carers, self esteem, intimidated by centres, previous experience at schooling, feel inadequate, hide literacy/numeracy skills

• Motivation – ambition to do something, get a career.

• ‘There’s only so much you can do to engage people in learning’ – sometimes, people have to overcome barriers themselves.

• Organisation A’s centres are relaxed – easy environments – try to avoid people feeling intimidated.

• (Older people especially) acknowledge that their lives could have been different.

• Reasons for to engage - Some people just want to get out and meet new people, that’s why they take up the courses., some are young mothers, some develop new friends, may have recently suffered a loss.
• People need to 'overcome barriers themselves'.

• "I believe it would be beneficial for the volunteers not to act as volunteers, they should be paid employees. One suggestion would be to pay them a small allowance that would not interfere with their benefit money"
Appendix C

This is the transcript of the main points that arose from an interview with a project coordinator. The organisation that the project coordination is referring to will be known as Organisation B for confidentiality reasons.

- How do you define successfulness? – Successful to start with because they are already there.
- Attract people to Organisation B by advertising, posters, word of mouth, taster sessions, coffee morning, working with other organisations.
- Come to Organisation – for qualifications, to help their own children with work now they are coming of a certain age, get more involved within the community, to improve confidence, want their children and other to see them in a different light.
- Organisation B – provides childcare (has a crèche in some centres) pays for child care if possible.
- Organisation B – Does not provide transport, however understands that transport is a barrier to learning, therefore, tries to spread out as many venues as possible to make classes ‘easy to reach’.
- There are three types of barriers
  1) Institutional
  2) Dispositional
  3) Physical
• Average student – ‘thirty-five year old woman with two children.
• Seventy percent of student – women.
• No fee for courses at current because of the locality (being in a communities first area) – this then can remove another main barrier – financial barrier.
• Participation – their friends come to they join to, children are grown up and left home, looking for something to do.]
• Barrier – self confidence – ‘university is something other people do’.
• Fair amount of retired people attend.
• Mostly day time courses – less demand for evening courses. – Usually 3-5.
• Organisation B expected to target – unemployed, domestic responsibilities, long term sickness, returning to the labour market.
• Economic situation – not much increase as yet – is expected to be some within the next few months.
• Organisation B – tries to make learning experience fun but serious (due to qualification)
• Organisation B – works with other organisations.
Appendix D

This is a transcript of the main points that arose from an interview with a practitioner of adult education.

- Most things in adult education and lifelong learning differ between men and women.
- Motivation – men – to achieve qualifications to gain a better job, for economic reasons (to improve income), may have recently became redundant.
- Motivation – women – engage in adult education to do something for themselves, could have become recently divorced, to do something on their own and to become independent, to help children now they have come of age with their school work, to prove to people that they can achieve within education.
- ‘gender has been a key predictor of participation in formal learning’
- Barriers – men – transport, lack of time when they could be earning,
- Barriers – women – transport, child care, confidence and self esteem, lack of time when they could be earning,
- Strategies – welcoming environment, easy access to courses and centres to overcome another barrier which is trying to get people into adult education who are ‘hard to reach’.
Appendix E

This is the transcript of an interview with a volunteer working in a specific adult education organisation. The organisation that the volunteer is referring to will be known as Organisation C for confidentially reasons. This interview was conducted over the phone therefore only the main points which were relevant to the research was recorded.

- Barriers – ‘getting the adult to admit they need help and the confidence to go into a course, etc'
- Effectiveness – ‘not really, as people are often left waiting around for the start-up of courses, etc. (not run fluently)’
- Why people participate in adult education – ‘benefit their job, use up the spare time they have, help others in their situation, and to get help themselves’
- Strategies used to engage learners – ‘having bigger groups of adults so they are not alone in their learning, have different entry skill levels’
Appendix F

This is the transcript of the main points that arose from an interview with a recently unemployed person. This person is a thirty one year old single male with one child who he has full custody of. The child in question will be known as Child A for confidentiality reasons. I did not get chance to conduct the full interview.

- Why participate in adult education? Why are you motivated to join an adult education course?
- Recently become unemployed.
- “I may as well do a course in one of the centres, there’s nothing better to do. There are no jobs around here and so I’m not missing out on any money anyway. And I’ll have to get some qualifications soon otherwise ill never find anything”
- Used to have a good job but past job didn’t need qualifications.
- Now he’s become redundant doesn’t have any qualifications to get another job, however, because of the current economic situation there are no jobs around to start with, especially factory jobs.

- What barriers do you think you’ll come across? If any. (times of courses etc)
• Time might be a problem – don’t know where the nearest courses are and might not be near school, might not to be able to get to Child A because Child A comes home for dinner.
• Transport might also be a problem if the course is not near.
• Are the courses well advertised?
• ‘I don’t think the courses can be well advertised because I don’t even know where to start’.
Appendix G

This is a transcript of the main points that arose from an interview with a person currently on an adult education course. The organisation where the course takes place is going to be known as Organisation D for confidentially reasons. This person is a twenty seven year old male with two children.

- Currently on a community development course
- About the course – course is designed to provide the learner with an understanding of the community.
- Why chose this course to study? – ‘I have no idea why I’m doing this. I know I should, but I’ve never done anything like this before’.
- Motivation - ‘both my mother and father have worked all their life and I can't even get a job to start with’. – ‘I just thought I’d start doing a course to show them I am trying to find a job now that I have time because the kids are in school’.
- ‘I used to hate school, I just couldn’t be bothered, I’m regretting it now though. This is the first time I’ve come back to any type of education and before I started I was just worried I’d mess this up, just like I messed school up’.
- ‘By the time I was twenty one I already had children and I just didn't have time to get a job or any qualifications’.
• 'I still can't believe that I'm half way through the course, I thought I would have given up at the beginning. I do feel proud of myself'.

• Barriers – 'I don't really have many barriers, the centre where the course is only five minutes away from my house and the course is in the day time when the kids are in school, there is a minibus that is useful sometimes though.'

• "The transport that is provided really helps me. I don't have to worry about being late for class because the minibus comes and picks me up and drops me home ready for the kids to come home from school"

• What about confidence? – 'well, not really, I was a bit worried, but now I'm just shocked I've managed to stick at it'.

• Why confidence isn't really a problem – 'there are people I know on the same course as me so there's always someone there for me to talk to. The people who take the course are nice as well, I can ask them anything, they're not stuck up at all. I thought they would be before I started the course though'.

• Why chose the course that you are on and Organisation D – 'because of the kids I wouldn't have bothered doing a course that was further away, this course is near their school so by the time this course finishes its time to go straight to the school and get them'

• What do you think is the biggest sense of achievement – 'I can just prove to people that I'm not dull and I can actually stick at
something. The best bit though is that my kids think I'm really clever and ask me stuff about their school work and I'm actually able to answer them'.
Appendix H

This is the rough draft of the questionnaire that was going to be distributed, but because of time restraints was not handed out. This questionnaire was intended to be given out to practitioners of adult education and lifelong learning.

Job Title

1) Do you believe that there are still barriers in adult education and lifelong learning within the Blaenau Gwent locality? (Delete as appropriate).

   Yes/No

2) Do you believe it is possible to measure the effectiveness of adult education in Blaenau Gwent? (Delete as appropriate).

   Yes/No

2.1) If 'Yes', how is it possible? (For example, are there high numbers of adults attending courses? Do the courses reach all groups of people or do you feel that there are still some 'Hard to reach' groups?)

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82
3) Have you ever come across any of the following barriers? (Tick as appropriate).

- [ ] Childcare
- [ ] Transport
- [ ] Finance
- [ ] Confidence and Self Esteem
- [ ] Carer Responsibilities

4) Are there any other barriers that you have came across which are not mentioned above? If so list below.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________

5) On a scale from one to five (with one being Highly Important and five being Not Important) how important do you think the following barriers are relating to participation in adult education within Blaenau Gwent?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Highly Important</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confidence & Self esteem

Childcare

6) On a scale from one to five (with one being Highly Relevant and five being Not Relevant) how relevant do you believe the following reasons are relating to motivation for participation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Highly Relevant</th>
<th>Not Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To gain qualification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To get a job</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retirement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children grown up and left home</td>
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<tr>
<td>To help children school work</td>
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<tr>
<td>To 'get out of the house'</td>
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<tr>
<td>A hobby to stop an addiction</td>
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7) Have you ever come across any other reasons why people want to participate in adult education?

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8) What strategies do you believe is important to engage adult learners?

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9) Does the organisation in question have;

☐ A friendly and welcoming environment
☐ Homely surroundings
☐ A relaxed atmosphere
☐ Easily accessible information
☐ Friendly and helpful staff
☐ Relevant courses
☐ Easily accessible centres
☐ Flexible opening hours
Appendix I

CUV figures 2000-08

- NVQ 2 or Below (397)
- NVQ 3 (237)
- NVQ 4&5 (186)
- Not Disabled (828)
- Disabled (322)
- 16-30 (277)
- 31-40 (341)
- 41-50 (246)
- 51-60 (167)
- 61+ (158)
- Male (392)
- Female (1052)
Appendix J – Communities first

www.communities-first.org.uk

What is Communities First?

Communities First is the Welsh Assembly Government’s flagship programme to improve the living conditions and prospects of people in the most disadvantaged communities across Wales.

It is founded on the principle that poverty and disadvantage are created by a complex number of factors, such as poor educational achievement, poor housing and environments, substance misuse, local job markets, benefit systems, stigma and perceptions about people and places etc. If we want to address poverty and inequalities then we must understand what the causes are. Communities First provides opportunities for people living in areas we term to be disadvantaged, and the agencies that deliver services in those communities, to examine the realities of poverty and to learn and work together to address it. Communities First is about people challenging the barriers, whether they be real or perceived, which prevent residents from fulfilling their own potential and from effecting change where they live. It is about supporting communities, groups and individuals to find their voices and use their skills and experiences to change, challenge, negotiate, persuade and jointly plan for the benefit of their communities.

The programme was launched in 2001 and initially worked with 142 communities comprising of the 100 most deprived wards from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2000, 32 pockets of deprivation and 10 Communities of Interest (CoI). Following the publication of the WIMD 2005, a further 46 areas identified by the Index as being in the 10% most deprived in Wales and were invited to apply for inclusion in the Programme. There are now a total of 188 Communities First areas, some of which are working with existing Communities Partnerships for inclusion in the programme and other
larger areas are establishing their own Communities First Partnerships.

Communities First is now moving forward into a new phase which will include a greater focus on outcomes and on addressing the causes and effects of poverty. Following an evaluation and a consultation the Welsh Assembly Government has committed to continued investment to fulfil its One Wales commitments. The vision for Communities First in its next stage has been summarised as a programme which will mobilise and enable local people to contribute to the regeneration of their communities in practical ways, in line with their local priorities and those of statutory bodies such as the Assembly Government, local authorities and health bodies.
Appendix K – University of the Third Age

www.u3a.org.uk

About U3A

U3A stands for the University of the Third Age, which is a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment. It consists of local U3As all over the UK, which are charities in their own right and are run entirely by volunteers. Local U3As are learning cooperatives which draw upon the knowledge, experience and skills of their own members to organise and provide interest groups in accordance with the wishes of the membership. The teachers learn and the learners teach. Between them U3As offer the chance to study over 300 different subjects in such fields as art, languages, music, history, life sciences, philosophy, computing, crafts, photography and walking. A typical U3A has about 250 members but could be as small as 12 and as large as 2000.

The U3A approach to learning is – learning for pleasure. There is no accreditation or validation and there are no assessments or qualifications to be gained.

ABOUT THE THIRD AGE TRUST

The Third Age Trust is the national representative body for U3As in the UK. It is both a limited company and a registered charity. It underpins the work of local U3As by providing educational and administrative support to their management committees and to individual members and assists in the development of new U3As across the UK. It is managed by a National Executive Committee which consists of a Chairman, 4 other Officers and 13 representatives from designated areas in the UK. The Third Age Trust is funded mainly by annual subscriptions paid by member U3As on a per capita basis, with the occasional grant for specific projects. It has 3 full time and 5 part time staff and is located in Bromley.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN U3AS AND THE THIRD AGE TRUST

U3As are independently managed charitable associations with their own constitutions. Membership of The Third Age Trust is a requirement in order to use the U3A name and logo both of which are protected but once registered, providing the aims and guiding principles of the organisation are adhered to, local U3As are self-governing.
Appendix L – RISE

www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

What is RISE?

RISE is a partnership of all those involved in Lifelong Learning and the provision of learning in Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen. The goal is to provide accessible adult learning opportunities throughout the region, putting the learner first.

Wherever you see the RISE sign, you know you will find:
   A friendly welcome
   A high-quality learning environment
   A wide range of learning opportunities
   Experienced, well-qualified tutors
   Convenient opening times
   Help and support with learning
   Independent advice and guidance
   Strong links with the community

Learners Voice

'Learners' Voice' groups in outreach locations throughout the Borough meet during the year to give feedback on current learning and to help us to plan future courses. This is a chance for learners to take an active role in their education - to tell us what we could do better and also, what we do well.

We believe that learners are the most important part of Adult Education and The Learners' Voice is an opportunity to improve the service for all its users. Come along, meet fellow students, air your views and influence your future learning.
Appendix M – Coleg Gwent

www.colegkwent.ac.uk

About Us

The largest further education college in Wales, Coleg Gwent offers a wide range of opportunities to help you find the course that’s right for you. Each year thousands of students enrol at one of the College’s six campuses to study on one of the hundreds of courses available.

Coleg Gwent offers top quality teaching in addition to a careers advice, personal and learning support, as well as a whole range of social activities to make sure your time spent here is both successful and enjoyable. With courses beginning at introductory and Access level, and some going as far as Foundation Degree level, there is bound to be something for you.
Appendix N – CUV Information

www.cuv.org.uk

Bringing Learning Closer to Home

The Community University of the Valleys is a unique partnership between Universities and Community Organisations in South Wales. We work together to bring learning closer to home, delivering courses at community venues and listening to learners and community workers to ensure opportunities meet the needs of all sections of our communities.

We offer very accessible options to gain university qualifications and improve skills for life and work. We work with many rural and isolated communities, to develop innovative community based learning, from informal activities through to degree level study.

The Community University of the Valleys Partnership is a widening access initiative led by the Department of Adult Continuing Education (DACE) at Swansea University.

Our Approach

Developing curriculum with communities
We aim to provide a learning experience that is flexible, supportive, interesting and meaningful. Learning that is negotiated and influenced by the needs of learners. Learning that supports both personal and community development and raises people’s aspirations of what they can achieve.

Learning from research
We support excellence in research and provide resources for research into issues affecting adult learners. By understanding the needs of learners and communities, we can making learning fit the skill needs and interests of communities and employers.

Ensuring Quality
We believe in achieving excellence in community learning. Our Code of Practice Aiming High encourages learning providers to sign up to:

- Shared ethos of good practice in community learning
- Common approach to the community curriculum
- Quality support services for community learners
- Well equipped and accessible community learning centres

Raising Awareness
We work together to provide information on community based higher learning. We also work together on research, events, promotional materials and good practice publications.

- Partnership Website
- Conferences and seminars
- Annual Lecture
- Publications
- Exhibitions

Developing Skills
We work together to share resources. We aim to support continuing professional development of all staff within partner organisations and organise training events for staff and volunteers.

Promoting Equal Opportunities
We believe that community learning opportunities should be accessible to all and aim to improve access to learning by excluded groups. Areas of focus include:

- Valuing Cultural Diversity
- Race, Gender and Disability Awareness
- Support for Learners with Disabilities

Sharing Resources and Expertise
We are committed to working in partnership for the benefit of learners and communities; ensuring university resources benefit communities within the region. Through community partnerships we can build appropriate services, making steps into higher learning a reality for local people.

This web-site has been produced with the support of the European Social Fund Objective 1.
Appendix O – Bridges into Work

www.blaenau-gwent.org.uk

Bridges into Work

£19m to help unemployed in South East Wales back into Work

A new £19 million project to help unemployed people into work across six Welsh counties has been given the go-ahead for Convergence funding.

Bridges into Work will help 2,878 people into employment and deliver training and qualifications to over 10,000 more.

The project, which will receive £10.5 million from the European Social Fund, will target those who are currently unemployed or on incapacity benefit as well as those with a work limiting health condition. It will also tackle other barriers to employment such as transport, childcare and lack of self esteem.

Through the project participants will benefit from the guidance and support of a case worker, who will accompany them on the journey into the job market. The case worker will assist them with access to courses to gain new skills such as basic skills training and NVQs.
Announcing the project, Deputy Minister for Skills, John Griffiths, said: "Bridges into work is a great example of partnership working and will help thousands of people across six counties access the support and guidance they need to overcome the barriers to employment.

"Better training and skills are more important than ever in the current economic climate and through this project individuals will be equipped with the necessary skills to enter or re-enter the workplace."

Deputy First Minister Ieuan Wyn Jones said: "This new project will play a valuable role in helping people break down barriers to taking up employment - an initiative that is even more welcome during the economic downturn."

"It accompanies the range of measures agreed at recent Economic Summits to defend Wales from the current global crisis, and demonstrates the positive benefit of the Welsh Assembly Government’s management of European Structural Funds."

Led by Torfaen Council and joining forces with Bridgend, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent, the project will target those who are furthest away from the labour market.

Individuals will be made aware of the service through a range of measures including job centres and leaflet drops. Information will also be available in outlets such as Doctors’ surgeries, leisure centres, libraries and community centres to ensure participation from the hardest to reach individuals.

Bridges into Work will also collaborate with other projects including the European funded City Strategy Pathfinder in the Heads of the Valleys area, helping participants access work-based training opportunities and assisting them into employment.

Leader of Torfaen County Borough Council, Cllr Bob Wellington said, "I am extremely pleased that by working together the six local authorities have secured this additional funding. It will certainly make a difference to the lives of many people in our areas and assist in the economic regeneration of our communities."