A critical investigation of the notion of active citizenship within the
Workers' Educational Association South Wales

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ways in which active citizenship is conceptualised by a variety of actors within the Workers' Educational Association South Wales and is the work of an 'insider' with experience of the organisation as both employee and Trustee. The Association is a democratically structured, voluntary organisation with a history of providing adult education in communities throughout south Wales for more than a hundred years. Its reliance on funding from the Welsh Government for the majority of its income is a significant aspect of the background to this study, particularly as one of the Association's aims is the provision of courses that 'will assist in the promotion of active citizenship'. The research is set within the contexts of changes in adult education policy during the Association's lifetime and a contemporary emphasis on the economic purpose of education, the contested nature of the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship and the organisation's historic role in relation to the Labour movement and past tensions in respect of the receipt of state funding. The study explores through semi-structured interviews with those responsible for the Association's strategic direction, both senior staff and Trustees, as well those whose role is to implement policy as Development Workers and Part-time Tutors, how active citizenship is understood and whether or not there is a shared understanding within the Association. A picture emerges in which there appears to be uncertainty among a significant proportion of participants about the Association's purpose as well as a lack of a shared understanding of what active citizenship means and of the kinds of active citizenship the Association could promote. The study also reveals shortcomings in organisational capacity to achieve the aim of promoting active citizenship. The thesis concludes with a series of policy recommendations for the Association to consider.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Citizenship as a concept has been described variously as 'complex and slippery' (Benn 2000, p244) and 'contested' (Lister 2003, p3). It follows that the notion of active citizenship is also complex and open to different and competing interpretations. The relationship between adult education and citizenship is one which has been explored before (see for example Coare and Johnston 2003) and was the subject of my previous study of learners from two branches of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) in south-east Wales (Gass 2002).

This study aims to investigate how active citizenship is conceptualised within the WEA South Wales. This introductory chapter begins by setting the context for the study by briefly outlining the origins of the WEA and the commitment of the contemporary WEA South Wales to provide courses that promote active citizenship. It goes on to explain the reasons for my interest in this topic and to introduce the research questions. This is followed by a section that provides an overview of the thesis with summaries of the contents of each chapter.

1.1   Context for the study

The WEA, which was set up in 1903 in England, has had a presence in south Wales since 1907. Established as a self-governing and democratic body to promote the higher education of working men and to encourage 'all working-class educational efforts' (Jennings 2003a, p15), it continues to operate as a voluntary organisation providing adult education in communities across south Wales. Although the WEA was founded on non-party and unsectarian lines, it was considered to have served the 'cause of reform and democracy' and to have secured the active participation of the Labour movement (Atkins 2003, p113).

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WEA was to clash with the Marxist inspired National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC) around ideological differences but, despite such attacks from the Left, maintained a commitment to the 'communal advance of working people' (Goldman 2003, p51). The early history of the WEA is characterised by ideological tensions and ambiguities as well as competition with the NCLC to be the Labour movement's educational arm. Adopting a radical position in the 1920s in supporting the goal of workers' control of industry resulted in close scrutiny of WEA classes and threats to withdraw the state funding it had first received in 1907. Such a loss of independence was accompanied, it has been argued, by a longer term 'sense of caution' (Fieldhouse 1992, p158).

The WEA South Wales is a membership organisation, constituted as an independent educational charity, which relies upon the Welsh Government for the major share of its funding. Since 2005 the Association has included amongst its aims the provision of courses that will 'assist in the promotion of active citizenship' (WEA South Wales 2005).

1.2   Rationale for the study

I have been involved with the WEA in various roles for more than thirty years and worked as a full-time adult educator in south Wales from 1985 until my retirement in 2009. During this period there have been legislative and policy changes that have had a significant influence on the adult education curriculum. I will argue that these changes have been driven by an ideological position which values an economic purpose at the expense of a social purpose. This 'shift to the right' and associated decline in social purpose adult education (Armstrong and Miller 2006, p294) and the development of an 'anti-political culture' (Frazer 2000, p88) provide part of the context for this research study.

This study builds on my previous research, referred to above, which investigated whether there was a relationship between learning within and participating in the Association's democratic structure and the acquisition of the attributes needed for active citizenship (Gass 2002). The study revealed that whilst learning with the WEA was considered by participants to have been influential in terms of acquiring skills and confidence, it was relatively insignificant in terms of gaining political knowledge. Furthermore, those taking part in the study reported low levels of knowledge of the political system and understanding of political ideas. These findings stimulated my curiosity about both the place of political education within the WEA and the organisation's capacity to promote active citizenship.

The findings of two research studies which investigated the attitudes of student teachers towards citizenship (Ivinson *et al.* 2000; Wilkins 1999) have also had a bearing on the research questions in this study. The first of these studies revealed a predominantly individualistic conceptualisation of citizenship amongst a group of British student teachers within a wider European study. The second study found high levels of political disengagement and widespread dissatisfaction with politics. These findings prompted me to consider whether WEA staff would hold similar attitudes or if, given the Association's history, those who choose to be involved with it either as staff or Trustees might have an affinity with its values and aims and a background of political engagement which would result in them conceptualising citizenship differently and retaining a strong sense of social purpose.

In the light of my earlier research and the contested nature of the concepts involved, this study aims to investigate how active citizenship is conceptualised within the WEA South Wales. In doing so it will also test whether the claim by Merrill (2003, p29) that active citizenship is one of a number of things to be perceived by governments, policy makers and adult educators as 'good' that 'are now embedded, uncritically, within political and academic discourses in Europe' applies to the Association.

The study involves exploring whether or not there is a shared understanding of what constitutes citizenship and active citizenship within the Association, and, in light of the consequences of adopting a radical stance highlighted above, whether or not there are perceived to be any constraints regarding the kinds of active citizenship that the Association could promote. For the above reasons, it was also considered important to gain an understanding of how different actors within the WEA understand the aims, values and history of the WEA as well as how they see themselves as active citizens. Other areas for investigation include the methods which could be used to promote active citizenship, the capacity of WEA tutors to promote active citizenship and the possible reasons for WEA not being seen as a source of political knowledge in the 2002 study.

I have chosen a qualitative approach for this study for reasons that are elaborated in Chapter 5. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of twenty-six people involved in various roles within WEA South Wales. The sample was divided for purposes of analysis into two groups. The first of these comprised Trustees and senior managers and is referred to as the 'strategic' group, whilst the second included operational managers, Development Workers and Part-time Tutors and is termed the 'operational' group.

1.3   Overview of the thesis

Chapters 2, 3 and 4 explore the context for this study and highlight the issues with which it is concerned. Chapter 2 considers the impact of ideology on adult education policy and practice over a period of approximately one hundred years. In particular, it outlines how the social purpose dynamic of adult education of the early twentieth century declined gradually during the second half of the century to be overtaken by an economic purpose by the end of the century.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship before considering pedagogical aspects of citizenship. The major traditions of citizenship are reviewed and the ways in which conceptualisations of citizenship have changed during the post-war period are considered. In doing so, the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are discussed in various ideological contexts – Thatcherism, New Labour and post-devolution Wales.

Chapter 4 provides an insight into the WEA's history starting with the contribution it made to workers' education in the first half of the twentieth century. In doing so it addresses some of the ideological tensions and ambiguities that characterised this period of the Association's history. The important issue of funding and the relationship between the WEA and the state is also considered in both a historical and a contemporary context. This includes a discussion of the implications of receiving state funding for the kinds of active citizenship the Association may be able to promote.

Chapter 5 covers the methodological aspects of the study starting with reflections on the possible impacts on the study of my biography and 'insider' status in view of my history within the Association. The chapter details the research design and explains the choice of method before describing the research setting. Further sections deal with the sampling approach, access to the sample, data collection and analysis and ethical considerations.

Chapter 6 & 7 relate the findings based on the data collected from interviews with the 'strategic' and 'operational' groups respectively. The chapters share the same structure based around the main research questions. In addition to detailing the findings from the 'operational' group, Chapter 7 also compares the responses of the two groups.

The final chapter summarises the key findings in relation to the main research questions and makes recommendations for consideration by the WEA South Wales regarding its aim of providing courses which promote active citizenship.

CHAPTER TWO

Adult Education: Ideology, Policies and Purpose

The form that education should take is a matter for debate and thus education will always be 'a source of political and social conflict' (Lauder *et al*. 2006, p2). This is the case for adult education just as it is for the primary and secondary phases. This chapter examines the ideological underpinning of adult education from the early twentieth century to today, with a view to understanding how policies have developed and priorities in terms of its purpose have changed. The chapter traces shifts in the purpose of adult education from the period before the Second World War in which it was inextricably linked with class politics and predominantly driven by a social purpose, to the first three post-war decades during which there was a gradual decline in social purpose, leading into the latter part of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century in which it is argued that an economic purpose has predominated.

2.1   The early twentieth century: conflicting traditions of emancipatory workers' education

It is suggested that the twentieth century 'inherited a strong tradition of socially purposive adult education' together with the belief that it 'could and should contribute to political and social action' (Fieldhouse 1996a, p45).   Moreover, the working-class had been the target of most adult education during the nineteenth century and workers' education remained a key focus of adult education up until the Second World War.

Two significant but distinct traditions of workers' education developed in the early years of the century, both out of the rise of the Labour movement and in response to it. One, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), was

considered to have 'collaborated with the state system', whilst the other, the National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), distanced itself from both the state and the class interests it represented (Lewis 1993, pxiv). Workers' education was a site of 'bitter ideological' struggle as the WEA, which received state funding and drew its tutors from universities and hence not from within the working class, expanded rapidly during the twenties (Milliband 1982, p91, n60). Supporters of the NCLC attacked WEA for its 'impartiality', which, it argued, was intended to confuse workers and to divert them from the class struggle, whilst the WEA accused the Labour College movement of indoctrinating students with 'dogmatic conceptions about the nature of society' (Simon 1992, p20). Unions were divided in their support, with the miners and railwaymen favouring the NCLC and, in Wales, the quarrymen and iron and steel workers being prominent amongst supporters of the WEA from the start (England 2007, p2). Such was the animosity felt by the NCLC towards the WEA, that when the WEA was celebrating its twenty-first birthday in 1924, one of its leaders declared: 'It is no fault of ours that you have reached your twenty-first birthday. We would be much happier to attend your funeral' (Davies 2007, p36).

Despite their ideological differences, both traditions shared a belief in the importance of education for the development of the Labour movement and a commitment to a collectivist ideal. The purpose of adult education was not to aid the social mobility of individuals out of their class background, but to 'raise the working class in general' (Lewis 1993, pxvi).

There is also evidence that the ideological differences between the two traditions were more complex than might be assumed. It is too simple to suggest that the WEA was an agency of social control. Lewis argues that its role was 'far more ambivalent' in that it was capable of both promoting a 'non-conflictual perspective on the social and economic order' and being 'sometimes clandestinely, sometimes overtly - a vehicle for anti-capitalist and anti-conservative sentiment' (Lewis 1993, p243). Moreover, accusations by *The Western Mail* newspaper

that the WEA was a socialist organisation could not be said to be groundless, argues the historian John Davies, whose uncle was WEA District Secretary in south Wales during the inter-war years. He notes that some of the classes were 'covertly, if not overtly Marxist in their teaching' and that there were tutors who had two sets of notes – one for teaching and the other in case of inspection by the Board of Education (Davies 2007, p32).   It appears that this ambivalence was not simply a south Wales phenomenon. Tutors of classes run by WEA with Birmingham University in the West Midlands were criticised by Inspectors in 1934 for failing 'to control their classes, to challenge students' prejudices adequately, or to prevent students from making politically intemperate statements' (Fieldhouse 1983, p12).   There were committed Marxists elsewhere who taught from a Marxist perspective and Marxist ideas were discussed in some areas as a result of pressure from students (Fieldhouse 1983, p23). Nevertheless, and despite the concerns of Board of Education officials in 1924 about the WEA's political colour, a review of what took place in WEA and university extra-mural classes between 1925 and 1950 which drew on contemporary accounts, memories of students and tutors, and syllabuses and book lists with a particular emphasis on history and economics, concluded that a 'prevailing liberal ethos created a predominantly anti-Marxist bias in this sector of adult education' (Fieldhouse 1983, p11).

Much of this evidence supports the view that the ideological differences between them were exaggerated by the NCLC (Rose 2002, p279).   Similarly, Rose argues that the NCLC's claim that the WEA was 'nobbling' the workers is undermined by the considerable overlap in the student bodies. He cites seven autobiographers who attended classes run by both organisations and gave no hint of any ideological differences between them (Rose 2002, p272).   Dai Smith makes a similar point in his biography of Raymond Williams about the situation in south Wales where the 'divisions were most sharply articulated'.   Students, he writes, were 'inclined to sample or even sate themselves on the wares of both' (Smith 2008, p230).

The partnership between WEA and universities which led to the tutorial class movement shared a 'broad liberal ideological perspective' with the extension movement that preceded it. Described as representing a 'libertarian socialism', its agenda included notions of individual self-fulfilment, as well as public service, social justice and class emancipation (Fieldhouse 1996b, p202).

Notwithstanding some concerns that it was 'dangerously left wing', it is argued that 'more politically sophisticated observers' welcomed the tutorial movement as a 'bulwark against bolshevism' and a 'moderating influence' (Fieldhouse 1996b, p203). By contrast, the Labour College movement was the avenue through which thousands of young trade unionists were 'imbued with a strong anti-capitalist ethos, based on Marxian economics and the materialist conception of history'. Moreover, the Labour College movement is said to have been far more effective than any political party in reinforcing a 'socialist rhetoric and the language of class conflict' (Lewis 1993, p241).

The first forty years of the twentieth century may be seen as a period when adult education was predominantly concerned with working-class education and one in which there were clear ideological differences between contrasting traditions. Despite these differences there was a shared emphasis upon a social purpose in adult education which was emancipatory and founded on principles of social justice. People were attracted to working in adult education because of its role as a part of a process of social change. According to Raymond Williams, they wanted to 'change society in some specific ways'. However, this was inspired not by social conscience, but out of an interest in 'the process of building a social consciousness of an adequate kind to meet new crises'. These crises were war, unemployment and Fascism – 'the crises of modern capitalist society' (Williams 1993, p262).

2.2   The post-war period: from social purpose to personal fulfilment

During the post-war period, over three decades, both university extra mural departments and the WEA saw a decline in the proportion of students coming from the working class. During the 1930s thirty per cent of all WEA students were manual workers. This proportion dropped to twenty-four per cent in 1945-6 and again to around fifteen per cent in the mid-1960s (McIlroy 1992, p210). It is said that 'workers' education gave way to adult education on the one hand, and trade union education on the other'. Furthermore, trade union education became shop stewards training, whilst universities moved from adult education into continuing education with an emphasis on vocationally related training for professional groups as a 'contribution to shoring up an ailing economy' (McIlroy 1992, p236).   In these post-war decades, it is argued that the WEA experienced a 'gradual evaporation of the social purpose dynamic'. This was due, it is suggested, to the perception that the need for 'knowledge for power' was less urgent in the context of the welfare state and to WEA students no longer being principally motivated by a wish to change society.   In place of social purpose, the pursuit of personal fulfilment or knowledge for its own sake gradually became predominant – a development that Fieldhouse terms 'cultural individualism' (Fieldhouse 1996c, p189).

By 1964 the NCLC, weakened by organisational difficulties, had been subsumed within the Trades Union Congress (TUC) leaving one of its leaders, Jim Millar, to state that the TUC's plans for trade union education represented 'the complete extinction of everything the NCLC stood for' (McIlroy 1992, p233). Such developments during the post-war period led to lamenting of the passing of a tradition of political education as a way of life, with its subsequent status as 'just another subject and not a very popular one at that' (Goldman 1999, p98). Furthermore, most adult education came to be seen as politically neutral although it could 'at times work effectively to create or sustain democracy' (Duke 1992, p189). This ambiguity is acknowledged also by Fieldhouse who

recognises the contribution that adult education can make to 'changing the hegemonic culture and ideology' whilst asserting that it is 'much more likely to be incorporated into the oppressive structures of society and to be used to divert people's attention away from the causes towards the symptoms of inequality' (Fieldhouse 1996d, p399).

This capacity of adult education to be a site for both diversion and political agency is encapsulated in an account of a WEA current affairs class at the Social Democratic Club in Aberfan, established and tutored in the autumn of 1966 by the newly appointed Tutor/Organiser Neil Kinnock. Two weeks after the disaster that struck the pit village in October, the evening class met again although with reduced numbers. Initially, Kinnock recalls, it provided an opportunity for 'conversation to divert minds' but later turned into a mixture of current affairs discussion and 'rehearsal of arguments to put to the Official Public Enquiry'. Returning to the village years later, Kinnock met a former class member who told him that it had 'helped us to *organise* our anger' (Kinnock 2003, p304).

2.3   The 1970s: recession, the shift to the right and the rise of economic purpose in adult education

In the early 1970s, the publication of *Learning to Be* (Faure 1972*)*, the report of an international committee, following a global debate fostered by the United Nations Educational, Social and Cultural Organisation, is said to have marked a 'turning point' as a public statement of the principles of lifelong education. Based on an 'essential humanistic concern' to achieve the 'fulfilment of man', *Learning to Be* was a 'broad and visionary manifesto' for education that should last the whole life for all individuals (Field 2006, p13).   The vision of education contained in the report is one in which 'democratisation is the main driver' and where the personal and democratic dimensions are combined (Biesta 2006, p174). Although the report's authors were aware of the significance of education

for work and economic development, 'questions about the economic function of lifelong learning were always subordinate to questions about its democratic function' (Biesta 2006, p173). Central to the debate was the idea of the 'good society' and the part that the structure and curriculum of education could play in its development, and in contributing to people's lives 'in rounded terms' (Crowther 2004, p128). However, it is argued that the debate on lifelong education surrounding the publication of *Learning to B*e had little influence in terms of direct practical developments at the time.

In the late 1970s the global economic recession and the shift to the right under Thatcher resulted in a corresponding shift towards seeing economic rather than social purposes for education (Armstrong and Miller 2006, p294). By the 1980s, as local authorities came under pressure to cut spending on non-statutory services, supporting 'liberal, general multi-purpose education' became harder to defend (Tuckett 1991, p25) and 'tackling unemployment replaced earlier preoccupations as the central task for adult education and training' (Field 2006, p15). However, despite Thatcherism's political ascendancy, the 1980s also saw the WEA at the forefront of a flourishing of Women's Studies courses that were 'both academically radical and politically in touch with more grassroots demands for individual and collective empowerment' following the re-emergence of second-wave feminism in the form of the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s (Fraser *et al.* 2007, p69). Whilst there were often 'fierce arguments' within the WEA over women's education at this time, it did provide space for women to 'articulate a different kind of collective potential' as a challenge to what was considered as the 'authoritarianism of the masculinist left' and to develop a 'meaningful and connected agency in the world' (Fraser *et al*. 2007, p71). However, Women's Studies would cease to be a 'visible priority' by the time of the WEA's centenary in 2003 (Fraser *et al.* 2007, p76).

2.4   The 1990s: lifelong learning and the drive for economic competitiveness

Towards the end of the twentieth century the terms adult education and lifelong education increasingly gave way to that of lifelong learning. Although the terms lifelong education and lifelong learning are often used interchangeably, there are 'important conceptual differences' between them and they arose from different contexts. It is argued that it would be wrong to 'assume that lifelong learning is simply a recasting of the same ideas and values in a new context' (Crowther 2004, p128).   The conceptual differences between 'education' and 'learning' may be understood in various ways. For example, 'education' can be seen as a 'relational' concept, in the sense that generally interaction takes place between an educator and student.   'Learning', on the other hand, suggests 'something that one can do alone and by oneself'.   Thus, learning can be seen as being more individualistic (Biesta 2006, p175).   Furthermore, Biesta argues that the discourses of adult education and lifelong learning can be distinguished in terms of rights and duties. In the discourse of adult education, learning tends to be seen as a right and as a result the state is expected to fulfil a duty to resource it adequately.   In contrast, the discourse of lifelong learning increasingly emphasises learning as a duty for which individuals should take responsibility (Biesta 2005, p688).   This emphasis on individual responsibility can be interpreted to mean that 'individuals are responsible for their own employability, and if they cannot find the job they want, they have only themselves to blame' (Lauder *et al.* 2006, p25).   Finally, lifelong learning can be seen to be an 'elusive' concept in that it 'means many things to many people and often means more than one thing at a time' (Biesta 2006, p173).   Since it means everything, lifelong learning is an attractive concept and yet because 'competing interests and different agendas can shelter under the same umbrella' there is an 'illusion of consensus' and other ways of thinking and speaking about education are glossed over (Thompson 2002, p19).

Arguably the context for the upsurge in interest in the concept of lifelong learning is the assumption by the European Union (EU), through the Maastricht Treaty (1992), of a role in promoting the educational policies of member states, following a number of policy papers during the 1990s. Against a background of globalisation, and economic downturn and crises, EU policies were influenced by a 'drive for economic competitiveness in a world market dominated by international capital units', and 'the crisis of welfare' facing European countries especially when social cohesion was threatened by increasing unemployment and migration (Crowther 2004, p128).

In England and Wales, the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act reflected a Thatcherite 'ideological shift and the growing demand for vocationalism' (Fieldhouse 1996e, p9).   The Act introduced the market into post-compulsory education through the creation of new Further Education corporations which were to 'compete with each other in a business efficiency model, and generally behave like private companies' (Price and Williams 2007, p153).   A new funding formula, which allocated resources according to the number of student enrolments, the subject area, the hours of study completed and the qualifications achieved, encouraged competition between providers and forced adult educators to offer a relatively restricted curriculum with an emphasis upon vocational and traditional academic qualifications or to forego funding (Gass 2007, p144).

2.5   New Labour, new vision?

The New Labour government's approach is said to have been 'profoundly influenced' by the legacy it inherited from its Conservative predecessor in terms of 'marketisation, privatisation and, crucially, the funding mechanism' (Kendall and Holloway 2001, p163).   The introduction of Individual Learning Accounts (ILAs) 'intended to encourage individuals to invest in their own education and training with financial support from the Government' was considered to have

been the 'key proposal' in *The Learning Age* Green Paper published in 1998 (Kendall and Holloway 2001, p166). ILAs, which were designed to give people choice as to what and where they learned, symbolised New Labour's concept of 'the individual's right to choose' (Taylor 2005, p108). Financial incentives of this kind to take up learning opportunities have been criticised for having 'potentially authoritarian tones' as they may be followed by 'stronger encouragement to make provision through savings' (Ecclestone 1999, p35). Other policy developments highlighted in the Green Paper included the extension of work-based learning and the setting up of the University for Industry (UfI) (Kendall and Holloway 2001, p166). Both ILAs with their encouragement of individual choice and the UfI's Learn Direct online learning programmes are manifestations of the individualisation of lifelong learning referred to by Biesta above. However, ILAs are also seen as evidence of an ideological departure from Thatcherism in that they exemplify an interventionist supply-side economics (Paterson 2003, p173).

Despite an evident enthusiasm for the educational policies it had inherited and subsequently consolidated in these ways, New Labour is credited with having demonstrated a 'generous and inclusive vision of lifelong learning on taking office' (Tuckett 2007, p5). *The Learning Age* advocated a broader lifelong learning perspective as evidenced in the foreword written by David Blunkett, as Secretary of State for Education, in which he stated:

> as well as securing an economic future, learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual sides of our lives, and promotes active citizenship (DfEE 1998).

It was noted that adult and community education had 'in some ways been de-marginalised and placed at the centre of policy' by being drawn into 'initiatives aimed at tackling social exclusion, educating for active citizenship and promoting lifelong learning'. Nevertheless there was also a 'deep sense of ambivalence about the way in which social purposes are increasingly subordinated to

economistic objectives' (Shaw *et al.* 2000, p5).   Similarly, some policy statements were said to have expressed a 'genuinely expansive vision of the role of adult education in creating a more just, inclusive and democratic society', whilst this expansiveness had largely disappeared in the actual implementation of policy (Martin 2000a, p14).   An examination of the Welsh Green Paper, *Learning Is For Everyone*, published in 1997, reveals little consideration of issues such as citizenship and a clear prioritisation of the economic purpose of education and training as 'the whirlwind of global economic forces means Wales needs a flexible, multi-skilled workforce' (Gass 2001, p134).   In spite of 'aspiration and exhortation about wider social and cultural concerns' government lifelong learning activity was concentrated on labour market training (Thompson 2002, p21). New Labour stands accused of having had only a short-lived flirtation with a broad definition of lifelong learning, as although Blunkett's vision was about much more than work, the government has 'consistently and systematically prioritised employability' (Thompson 2007, p38).   There is considerable support for the view that New Labour's policies have been dominated by the economic imperative (Biesta 2005, p687; Howard 2007, p18; Lauder *et al.* 2006, p3; Taylor 2005, p104).   In this sense, New Labour reflects a global tendency for public policy to be driven by economic concerns, so that policy focuses primarily on competitiveness and not citizenship (Field 2006, p11). This is also the case for the EU which is 'unashamedly explicit' about the economic imperative.   Thus, 'learning for earning' in the sense of learning to 'remain employable and productive in the face of the demands of the new, global economy' is held to be the main purpose of lifelong learning.   References to other purposes for lifelong learning are 'hardly more than lip service' (Biesta 2006, p174).

2.6   Human capital theory and the skills agenda

Lifelong learning policy is being driven by the idea of human capital formation (Biesta 2006, p169) since economic growth is considered to be largely dependent upon the development of human capital primarily through education and training (Rees *et al.* 2006, p927). For example, the documentation supporting the implementation in Wales of the EU Objective 1 programme makes reference to tackling unemployment and inactivity and to supporting the competitiveness agenda by equipping people with the skills for higher level jobs (WEFO 2004, p198). Similarly, the overall aim of the Convergence Fund, the successor to Objective 1, is the creation of a 'high skill, knowledge driven economy' and a 'skilled, adaptable workforce' (WEFO 2007, piv). The final report of the Leitch Review of Skills insists that every individual must 'play their part in a shared mission for world class skills' (Leitch Review of Skills 2006, p22). According to Lord Leitch, skills are the key to unlocking the 'vast, untapped' potential of the British people and the 'prize' for achieving this vision is promised to be 'enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice'. Without increased skills, he predicts, the country will be condemned to a 'lingering decline in competitiveness, diminishing economic growth and a bleaker future for all' (Leitch Review of Skills 2006, p1).

The skills agenda comes under criticism from a number of perspectives. For sociologists such as Rees *et al.*, human capital theory involves an 'unwarranted abstraction of economic behaviour from social relations more widely'. It is not possible, they argue, to understand participation in lifelong learning simply in terms of the 'narrow calculation of utility maximisation' referring to the idea that individuals are assumed to act in their own self-interest to acquire skills and qualifications (Rees *et al.* 2006, p926). Sociological analysis of participation reveals the constraints within which individuals operate in ways which are 'almost a mirror image of human capital theory' and choices may be 'rational, without conforming to the preferences presumed' in the theory (Rees *et al.* 2006, pp929 & 934).

Others offer a critique based from an economics perspective.   The Leitch
Review is challenged for assuming that 'skills, once created, will automatically be
used to productive effect' whilst a range of factors may determine the extent to
which this happens in practice. Many UK firms are said to compete on the basis
of 'low skill, low value added production strategies' and therefore developing
human capital could result in an under-use of workers' increased skills and
capabilities. Moreover, half the workers interviewed in the recent Workplace
Employment Relations Survey believed that they had higher skills than were
needed for their current job (Payne 2007, np).   Evidence from Scotland suggests
that 'boosting skills supply in excess of the underlying capacity of the economy to
absorb and put to productive use those skills' has 'potentially very limited
economic effects' (Keep *et al.* 2006, p554).   Thus, it is argued that skills are
'best viewed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving a high
skills, high productivity economy' (Payne 2007, np).

Adult educators express frustration and anger over the consequences of the
policies driven by the economistic imperative. Tuckett (2007, p4) refers to the
'displacement' of a million adults from structured provision over a three year
period as funding has been switched to the 'Train to Gain' programme in
England. Thompson (2007, p45) writes that education 'gets lost' amongst 'all the
talk about skills' and Biesta (2006, p178) argues that, in the context of the 'near
hegemony of the learning economy', there is an 'urgent need' to reclaim the
democratic dimension of lifelong learning. Likewise, Martin (2000b, p4)
highlights how the idea that human beings are 'essentially economic animals' has
become central to the notion of lifelong learning, such that our purpose has
become one of producing and consuming as opposed to being. He draws
attention to two economistic discourses, the first of which 'constructs the adult
learner as worker and producer'. In this discourse education is reduced to
training for work, whilst in the second, which constructs the learner as 'customer
or consumer', education becomes a commodity to be bought and sold like any

other. Such discourses, he argues, 'simply do not account for enough of what adult education, let alone lifelong learning should be about'.

Lauder *et al.* (2006) identify a paradox when posing the major question as whether there can be 'space' in education to go beyond a narrow economic interpretation of its purpose to consider whether it has a role to play in 'helping to address the major problems that now confront us'. For, they argue, problems such as environmental survival and poverty are 'intimately tied to economic questions'. If they are to be understood it will require a political and economic appreciation of their causes, which in turn is dependant upon a far greater focus on citizenship education than exists currently (Lauder *et al.* 2006, p56). Similarly, the challenges of the twenty-first century are such that the curriculum should be focussed upon developing people who can 'judge critically what is acceptable and what is not' from the evidence put before them (Longworth 2003, p116). This perspective is shared by Field who argues that 'an ever more greedy capitalism needs rational, humanistic and knowledgeable critics as a pre-requisite for human survival' (Field 2006, p175). These views resonate with the position of John Dewey who considered that a democratic society must have a type of education which 'gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder' (Dewey 2006, p100).

Despite the extent of criticism of New Labour's policies on the basis of their economic imperative, it is argued that there are factors that distinguish them from neo-liberal Thatcherism. For example, the idea that any government or significant parties in a democracy have a unified ideology is challenged (Paterson 2003, p165) and, similarly, as has been shown above in respect of the breadth of policy concerns, the ideological stance has not been 'monolithic' (Taylor 2005, p104). In a situation described as complex, achievements such as the Union Learning Fund can be highlighted as well as initiatives to widen participation (Taylor 2005, p110). However, whilst widening participation had

been a key policy objective for New Labour, it is argued that by early 2006 it was no longer a major driving force in policy. Moreover, it is considered that the purpose and ideology of widening participation are very different from those of the Labour movement in the past, when it was seen by RH Tawney as a 'moral imperative and a fundamental aspect of emancipation and empowerment of the working class' (Taylor 2007, p85). Indeed, in abandoning the language of Labourism's past such as class and social change and replacing them with notions of inclusion and exclusion, New Labour has emphasised the individual rather than the collective (Taylor 2005, p112).

2.7 Summary

Adult education can be seen to have evolved throughout the period under consideration in ways that reflect the changing contemporaneous social, political and economic contexts. The contrasting ideological positions of the WEA and NCLC during the pre-war period may be seen to have resulted in distinctive liberal and radical versions of social purpose. The post-war period may be characterised as one in which individualism took over from collectivism which was then reflected in a gradual erosion of social purpose. With globalisation and the shift to the right in the 1980s, policies based on marketisation, vocationalism and privatisation, combined with managerialism both intensified the emphasis on individualism and led to an emphasis on adult education's economic purpose. However, it is important to recognise the complex nature of policy and the presence of tensions between ideologies, as in the case of New Labour, and contradictions between policy and practice such as the flourishing of Women's Education inspired by feminism at a time when Thatcherism was in its ascendancy.

This chapter provides a context for the study by outlining the ideological shifts that have taken place in relation to adult education during the twentieth century

and the related developments in policy. The chapter also introduces the WEA and, in particular, its position in relation to social purpose and its relationship with the NCLC. The significance of the decline of social purpose in adult education and the 'shift to the right' for this study will be considered further in the next chapter, whilst the ideological tensions between the two organisations will be explored further in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER THREE

Citizenship: Complexity, Conceptualisations and Curriculum

This chapter begins by reviewing what has been described as the 'contested' concept of citizenship itself (Lister 2003, p3). The major traditions of citizenship are outlined and contrasted, before the changing conceptualisations of citizenship in the post-war period are examined. This involves a review of the discourses of citizenship and meanings ascribed to active citizenship in various ideological contexts – Thatcherism, New Labour and post-devolution Wales. The notion of the 'good' citizen is explored before a consideration of the levels of participation in contemporary British society together with the level of political knowledge. This leads into an examination of the learning that is required for active citizenship. After consideration of the citizenship curriculum there follows a discussion of the ways in which the attributes required for active citizenship may best be acquired. The chapter ends with a section that draws together the issues that arise for the proposed research study from this literature review.

3.1   Citizenship: a complex and contested concept

Citizenship has been described as a 'complex and slippery' concept (Benn 2000, p244), and one which is contested in terms of both its meaning and political application (Arnot and Dillbough 2000, p16; Dean 1999, p213; Lister 2003, p3; Merrill 2003, p24). This section explores the complex and contested nature of the concept of citizenship. Citizenship is complex because of the range of meanings attributed to it and because of the different traditions of political philosophy that these meanings reflect. It will be seen that it is a contested concept not only due both to its historical roots and to its contemporary political significance, but also because of its exclusionary aspects which are explained in the paragraph below. The section goes on to review the main models of

citizenship which are drawn from two historical traditions, before considering the various meanings of citizenship.

First, it is to be noted that understandings of citizenship have changed with time, and in a European context 'its multifaceted, different meanings also reflect both varied political and social histories and legal traditions and cultures' (Lister *et al.* 2007, p17).   Traditional theories are challenged from a feminist perspective for being male dominated and patriarchal (Pattie *et al.* 2004, p12) and critiqued for the way in which white, heterosexual males identified a 'homogeneous citizenship through a process of systematic exclusion rather than inclusion in the polity' so that in many societies women, working-class people, those without certain skills and people of colour were 'excluded from the definition of citizen' (Torres 2006, p538).   In short, citizenship was originally devised to 'exclude and subordinate people' (Delanty 2000, p11). Perhaps the most striking example of this is Ancient Greece, where citizenship was restricted to relatively few people, all male, freed for public duties by a slave economy and women's domestic labour (Held 1996, p33).

Since diverse forms of citizenship have developed in different political circumstances in contemporary societies a unitary theory of citizenship is held to be 'inappropriate' (Turner 1993, p11). Citizenship is recognised as being a 'very broad concept' encompassing 'questions of identity, ethnicity, gender, participation, attitudes and values as well as perceptions of rights and obligations' (Pattie *et al.* 2004, p129). However, with such a broad concept, there is a danger of it 'meaning what people choose it to mean' (Lister 2003, p13) and of it being defined according to the 'ideological and political stance of the definer' (Merrill 2003, p24).

There is considerable agreement in the citizenship literature about the main models of citizenship. Lister (2003, p3) identifies two 'competing' historical traditions: the participatory republican and liberal-social rights traditions.

Similarly, Oldfield (1994, p188) highlights the 'liberal' or 'liberal-individualist', and the 'classical' or 'civic-republican' conceptions of citizenship. He does not claim that anyone has 'held entirely, or exclusively, to either conception', rather that each is 'put forward as a model, to aid analysis'. Miller (2000a, p43) offers three conceptions including the republican conception, but makes a distinction between liberal and libertarian conceptions of citizenship. Pattie *et al.* (2004, p137) introduce a communitarian model in addition to the liberal and republican models, whereas Delanty (2000, p10) makes a case for two dominant models, namely liberal and communitarian, albeit with the latter 'harkening back' to civic republican ideas of political community.

These models are considered further in turn, beginning with the liberal conception of citizenship. Central to the liberal-individualism model of citizenship is the notion of 'status' (Oldfield 1994, p188). Associated with this emphasis on status is a language of 'needs' and 'entitlements' which are 'required both for human dignity and for the possibility of individuals being effective agents in the world'. Such needs and entitlements are the 'rights' that accompany the status of citizen. Describing the liberal-individualist conception of citizenship as an 'essentially "private" conception', Oldfield stresses that individuals are seen as 'sovereign and autonomous beings' and have no obligations to wider society apart from those they choose to enter into on the basis of contract (Oldfield 1994, p188). Likewise, it is argued that the liberal 'project' is one of individual rights and emancipation based on the idea of the individual as a 'unique subject and agent' (Byrne 2005, p3). It is argued that British political culture is deeply imbued with the notion of individualism stemming from classical liberalism, in contrast to the continental tradition where collectivism and state intervention is seen in a 'much more positive light' (Faulks 1998, p118). Delanty (2000) suggests that within the liberal conception there lies a market-based model of citizenship in which citizenship is 'related to the emergence of a conception of civil society that is basically pre-political'. Government, which is seen to be a 'necessary evil, required to secure the conditions of market exchange' is considered to threaten

the 'civic body of citizens'. In this context liberty is negative in the sense of the 'freedom to be free of unnecessary government', whereas positive freedom is the 'freedom of private individuals to pursue their interests', notably the creation of wealth (Delanty 2000, p14). Moreover, within liberal notions of citizenship, freedom is understood as a 'product of market relations', as opposed to the 'outcome of political co-operation between mutually dependent citizens' (Faulks 1998, p205). Indeed, free market theory is said to deny the need for politics because the 'sovereignty of the consumer should prevail over everything else' since the market is assumed to provide maximum choice for consumers and thereby to meet all their needs through exercising choice (Hobsbawm 2000, p113).

Miller (2000a) differentiates between liberal and libertarian conceptions of citizenship, with citizenship being understood in the former as a set of rights 'enjoyed equally by every member of the society in question'. Miller cites Marshall's statement on rights as an exemplar of this position, in which he holds that citizenship comprises civil, political and social rights upon which there is common agreement (Miller 2000a, p43). Miller's libertarian model has much in common with the liberal models outlined by both Oldfield and Delanty. Miller believes that New Right policies, aimed at changing the relationship between the individual and the state to make it explicitly contractual, are underpinned by the libertarian conception of citizenship.   In this conceptualisation, citizenship, he argues, is not valued for its own sake and it is only through demanding goods that require public provision that we become citizens – as 'rational consumers'. Contracts and choice are the means of ensuring consumer sovereignty. If a citizen is not satisfied with a service they may either take legal action to enforce a contract or exercise choice in the market by turning to an alternative provider (Miller 2000a, p50).

Turning to the republican model Miller outlines four main components of citizenship of which two, rights and obligations, are common to his liberal

conception outlined above. The other two, which he describes as 'distinctively republican', are a willingness to take action to 'defend the rights of other members of the political community' and an engagement in both the formal and informal 'arenas of politics' (Miller 2000a, p84).   Thus, a citizen is conceived as someone who 'plays an active role in shaping the future direction of his or her society through political debate and decision-making' (Miller 2000a, p53), and as someone who has a duty to the state (Arnot 2003, p107).   Oldfield argues that 'practice' is at the core of civic-republicanism and that this emphasis results in a language of citizens' 'duties' as members of their community. It is through a shared commitment to practice that individuals become citizens, and in turn social solidarity and community cohesion are fostered and sustained (Oldfield 1994, p189).   Central to civic republicanism is 'an ethic of civic virtue' where 'serving the common good' is considered to be the only means by which people can fulfil their potential as citizens. Involvement in public life is held to be more important than private or personal interests, and democratic citizenship entails 'sharing in rule as well as being ruled' (Lockyer 2003, p2).   In civic republicanism freedom comprises active self-government, whilst in contrast to the negative liberty of liberalism, liberty involves active engagement within a political community (Annette 2003, p141).   Indeed, it is suggested that an 'active concept of citizenship' is central to civic republicanism, compared with the 'passive model typical of liberalism' (Delanty 2003, p82).

The third model to be considered is communitarianism which Lister *et al*., echoing Delanty's view above, describe as 'an influential contemporary offshoot of civic republicanism'. Central to communitarianism is the 'politics of the common good' and a focus on 'common values and norms as a central issue in people's lives' as well as on 'people's duties to one another as citizens' (Lister *et al.* 2007, p55).   Both Delanty and Miller agree that communitarianism is a term that incorporates a broad, and often conflicting, range of political positions, which nevertheless can be distinguished from individualism (Delanty 2000, p23; Miller 2000a, p100). Delanty argues that the distinctiveness of communitarianism is its

rejection of individualism and contractualism and its emphasis on participation and identity compared with rights and duties (Delanty 2000, p23).

It can be seen that the main distinguishing features of the liberal and republican models are the emphasis respectively on rights and status and on practice and civic virtue.   This dualism underpins the views of commentators such as Torres who sees citizenship in terms of either civic virtues or legal status (Torres 2006, p547), and those, such as Biesta and Lawy, who reject the notion of citizenship as a status that can be 'achieved and maintained', arguing instead that citizenship should be seen first and foremost as something that people 'continuously *do*: citizenship as *practice*'.   Neither should it be seen as an identity that can be had, but as a 'practice of identification with public issues' (Biesta and Lawy 2006, p72). However, there are others who draw on both conceptions for understanding the meaning of citizenship, stressing that citizenship is a combination of rights and responsibilities (or duties), belonging (or identity) and participation (Delanty 2000, p4; Lister *et al.* 2007, p1).   Similarly, Faulks blends both conceptions in visualising citizenship as a 'status which necessarily demands political participation' by everyone to the best of their ability (Faulks 1998, p199).

Given the contested nature of citizenship as a concept reflecting the competing traditions outlined above, it is inevitable that there will be debate as to what constitutes citizenship.   At its most basic level citizenship means membership of a community (Lister 2003, p3). However, Frazer argues that Marshall (1950), and theorists who have followed him in using this definition, have contributed to a 'tradition of de-politicising citizenship' (Frazer 2007, p257). She regards it as a 'loose' definition which is associated with 'a discursive context in which "citizen" has a very vague reference'.   Such a general definition can result in anyone who plays their part in any community being considered to be a 'good citizen'. She argues that citizenship is, 'properly speaking', a political relationship and therefore should not be thought of without reference to political power (Frazer

2007, p257). Similarly, Byrne criticises contemporary citizenship discourse for its neglect of issues of power. Referring to the 'new school' of citizenship, he argues that it is predominantly focussed on a 'very passive conception of rights' and 'seldom gets beyond the notion of the active citizen as the fulfiller of reciprocal obligations of general do-gooding and busy-bodying' (Byrne 2005, p3). Such criticism cannot be levelled at Lister, however, as she is clear that citizenship entails participation in the political sphere (Lister 2004, p166). Thus, membership may be understood as both status and participation. Indeed, Lister uses the terms 'being' and 'acting' as a citizen to convey the idea of citizenship as both status and practice:

> To be a citizen, in the legal and sociological sense, means to enjoy the rights of citizenship necessary for agency and social and political participation. To act as a citizen involves fulfilling the full potential of the status.

She makes it clear that a person does not cease to be a citizen if they do not fulfil that potential and recognises that degrees of participation will vary (Lister 2003, p42).   Citizenship may be considered, then, as a 'process and not just an outcome, in which the struggle to gain new rights and to give substance to existing ones is seen as important as the substance of those rights' (Lister 2003, p6). Such active political participation by citizens, individually or collectively, is an essential component in ensuring the accountability and, therefore, the popular control of representative democracy (Weir and Beetham 1999, p9). In contrast, there is a view, which Frazer may well consider to be 'loose', that citizenship is 'broader than just involvement in politics' since it also involves all kinds of voluntary activities through both informal activities with friends and formal membership of a variety of organisations (Pattie *et al.* 2004, p23).   Yet, this position is challenged on the grounds that, although voluntary and community activity can be considered as a necessary element of citizenship, it is not 'a sufficient condition of full citizenship' on account of the importance of 'political' citizenship which must never be taken for granted' (McLaughlin 2000, p51).

Turner elaborates the membership definition by stating that social membership confers 'legal and other forms of entitlement' (1993, p12). However, lest citizenship be defined by the state 'merely as a collection of rights and obligations', it should be conceptualised as 'that set of practices (juridical, political, economic and cultural) which define a person as a competent member of society'. Such an emphasis on 'practices' signifies the 'dynamic social construction' of citizenship and places it 'squarely in the debate about inequality, power differences and social class' (Turner 1993, p2). Delanty concurs with the notion of citizenship as membership of a political community, which he considers to involve 'a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation and identity'. These components of citizenship are the 'defining tenets of group membership' (2000, p9).

A further way of identifying the contested nature of the concept of citizenship in Britain is to consider the different meanings attached to the idea of the 'good' citizen. For the Thatcher administration, it is argued that the good citizen had become the good Samaritan, caring citizens 'taking responsibility for children, old folks and dependants' (Coare 2003, p46). For New Labour, the good citizens, according to one Home Secretary, are 'active citizens participating responsibly' in civic renewal defined as strengthening their communities and combating crime (Blunkett 2003). In the context of a decline in social rights and inadequate public services, Martin notes that the good citizens must 'learn to look after themselves' (2003, p568). These conceptualisations may be seen as predominantly based in the liberal conception of citizenship with the exception of Blunkett's communitarian values. The definition from Pattie *et al*. of the good citizen as someone who 'is aware of their rights, but also of their obligations to other people and the wider society' and who is involved in voluntary activity and politics generally (Pattie *et al*. 2004, p129), and Crick's reference to the 'participative practice of good citizenship' (1998, p18) reflect the republican model. A more radical position is the view that the good citizen is 'not necessarily one who

obeys' (Arnot *et al*. 2000, p221).   Implicit in several of these conceptualisations of the 'good' citizen is the notion of the 'active' citizen, a concept that is explored later in the chapter. Whilst these conceptualisations of the 'good citizen' may be understood in terms of the different models of citizenship explored above, conceptualisations may also be gendered.   Arnot (2003) recounts how women from four European countries tended to emphasise 'the ethics of care or community involvement' rather than see themselves in the political sphere associated with civic republicanism. Generally, for women, the 'good' citizen was 'the grandmother, the mother or the carer in the private sphere, rather than the civic leader, representative or voter' (Arnot 2003, p110). In contrast, Welsh male teachers responded with 'images of male respectability, employment and "normal" but "exceptionally boring" family life', such as 'a middle-aged balding fellow with a nice garden and semi-detached house' (Arnot 2003, p111).

This section has reviewed the complex and contested nature of the concept of citizenship. In doing so it has been seen that the two main philosophical traditions of liberalism and republicanism underpin opposing views of the meaning of citizenship. In the former, citizenship is primarily a question of individual rights and status, where rights were traditionally seen in terms of negative freedom in the sense of freedom from interference by the state. In the latter, citizenship is conceived in terms of the responsibilities of membership of a political community involving the practice of political participation, which, in contrast to the individualism of liberalism, emphasises social solidarity and the potential for collective action. Whilst it has been noted that citizenship can be seen to involve both status and practice, it is the tension between these competing ideas that underlies the contrasting political representations of citizenship and justifies the view that citizenship is a contested concept.   It is evident from the literature reviewed here that there is a debate as to whether citizenship is a political relationship or not and, as a consequence, concerned with questions of political power and inequality. This debate and the ideological tensions in the WEA's early history referred to in Chapter 2, suggest that a

central question for this study must focus on the extent to which citizenship is understood within the contemporary WEA as status or practice and conceived of as a political relationship. This issue is considered further at the end of the next section.

3.2 Changing conceptualisations of citizenship: the influence of Thatcherism and New Labour

It was noted above that citizenship as membership of a political community may be considered to involve 'a set of relationships between rights, duties, participation and identity' (Delanty 2000, p9). This section begins by reviewing how the relationships between these different components of citizenship have shifted in the post-war period and how conceptualisations of citizenship have changed. Consideration is given to the impact of the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 and then the influence of the 'Third Way' policies of New Labour from 1997. It will be suggested that there has been both a new emphasis placed on the duties of citizenship at the expense of rights and an increasingly individualistic conceptualisation of citizenship in public policy throughout the period under discussion. This individualistic conceptualisation is mirrored in the findings of several research projects, which are considered in the context of attitudes to politics and the level of political knowledge and engagement in contemporary Britain.

In connection with Delanty's statement above about the relationship between the various components of citizenship, several writers focus in particular on the balance between rights and duties and comment on the way this balance has changed during the post-war period. It is argued that after the war basic social rights had 'come to be seen as the norm' (Faulks 1998, p124) and that the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 resulted from 'an attack on the citizenship of equal entitlement in post-war liberal democratic society'. Thatcher was elected 'not to reform the civic contract between state and citizens, but to rip

it up and start again' (Ignatieff 1991, p27). Similarly, Held describes Thatcherism as 'the natural enemy of citizenship' with its 'drive towards unrestricted private accumulation, its attack on public expenditure and its critique of "dependency culture"' (1991, p19). Consequently, policies were aimed at changing the balance between rights and duties with a reduction in social rights and a new emphasis on the duties to be carried out by citizens (Faulks 1998, p124). Thatcher was considered to view citizenship as meaning that 'individuals have a duty to help strangers as well as family, especially those less well off' with the burden on the public purse of helping others being as little as possible. Voluntarism was seen as the mark of 'moral' citizenship (Crick 2000, p100). Describing the aim of a 'broad based coalition of the right' in respect of education and social policy as 'conservative modernism', Apple argues that in the process democracy has been reduced to 'consumption practices' and citizenship to 'possessive individualism' (2000, pxi). However, it is also claimed that there has been a 'new-found enthusiasm' amongst conservatives for the idea of citizenship which stems from a realisation that 'the individualism associated with the free market is not a sufficient basis on which to hold a society together' (Miller 2000a, p42). There may be two problematic consequences of reducing the role of the state and encouraging everyone to behave as self-sufficient individuals. Firstly, those who are unable to care for themselves once state support is withdrawn will have nobody to look after them if their neighbours stop taking an interest in those around them. Secondly, individualism may manifest itself in increased criminal activity of various kinds. According to conservatives, the response required to address both these problems is a 'reassertion of moral values and social responsibility'. Hence the citizen is presented as someone who 'sticks to the rules of the economic game' and takes part in public service in the form of charitable work in the local community (Miller 2000a, p42).

Rather than reversing the trend towards greater individual responsibility under Conservative Governments, it is argued that the election of New Labour in 1997 resulted in the theme of responsibility becoming 'even more central under the

Third Way' (Dean 2004, p71). The Third Way, he notes, 'prioritises an essentially individualistic ethic of responsibility' (Dean 2004, p75). Dean is not alone in drawing attention to New Labour's focus on the obligations of the citizen (see Coare, 2003, p44; Levitas 2005, p126; Lister *et al*. 2007, p56), nor in highlighting its individualistic discourse (Fairclough 2000, p40). An increasing compulsion to work as a condition for receiving benefits, for lone parents and those on Incapacity Benefit, is cited as an example of an 'eclipsing of a rights-based welfare regime with one that changes the balance between rights and responsibilities' (Sullivan 2007, p56). Lister *et al*. characterise this 'more stringent conditionality attached to benefit entitlement' as an example of the tendency of countries like Britain and the Netherlands, where neo-liberalism or neo-conservatism have been in the ascendancy in the 1980s and 1990s, to reinforce citizenship's 'disciplinary qualities' (2007, p57).

Such prevalent individualistic notions of citizenship inherent in public policy are mirrored to some extent in the findings of a European research project, Promoting Equality Awareness: Women as Citizens, funded by the European Commission. The research, which was carried out in 1995 in Britain, Spain, Portugal and Greece, explored student teachers' conceptualisations of citizenship. The British data differed from that of other countries in several respects. Whilst the idea of the citizen as someone who was engaged politically was spoken of at length in Greece, it was barely mentioned in Britain. With the exception of the right to equality, gay rights and women's rights, there was no mention of other political, social or civil rights, whilst the only social obligation that arose was the payment of tax. Notably, personal attributes such as honesty, responsibility, reliability, balance and confidence were emphasised as the characteristics of the 'ideal' citizen. As few personal qualities were referred to in other countries, the researchers gained 'a strong impression of the individualistic nature of the citizen in Britain' (Ivinson *et al*. 2000, p144). The evidence from this study justifies the argument made by Lister *et al*. above that understandings of citizenship vary in a European context reflecting contrasting 'political and social

histories and legal traditions and cultures' (Lister *et al*. 2007, p17) and that of Faulks referred to above regarding British political culture being deeply imbued with the notion of individualism (Faulks 1998, p118).

Another study carried out during the same year investigated the social and political attitudes of Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students at two of the largest teacher education institutions in England. Data were gathered from a questionnaire returned by 418 students (a 62.5% return rate) before the start of their course, and interviews with 26 randomly selected students at the end of their first term and on completion of their training (Wilkins 1999, p218). The research project set out to 'explore the relationship between the students' wider social and political attitudes, their notions of citizenship, and how this related to their views of the role of the teacher'. What it meant to be a 'good citizen' in 1990s Britain was, as a result, a 'major focus' of the interviews. The students were found to have 'considerable difficulties with the *language* of citizenship' and their responses were 'broadly speaking negative' (Wilkins 1999, p223). The study revealed a high level of political disengagement and widespread dissatisfaction with politics across the whole sample. However, younger students going straight into the course from their undergraduate studies were more negative than students aged 26 and over. These younger students generally considered that they would have 'little opportunity to play a part in society' and that politics had no relevance to their daily lives (Wilkins 1999, p218).

The findings of both these studies in respect of attitudes towards politics in Britain are symptomatic of a 'decline of political thinking' (Crick 2000, p169) and of what Frazer describes as an 'anti-political culture' in Britain characterised by a 'pervasive antipathy towards politics and government' (Frazer 2000, p88). She argues that this antipathy is manifested in various ways – in the common association of 'political' with 'partisan', from the 'right' with a fixation on the risk of young people being indoctrinated in socialism, Marxism or pacifism through the

education system, from the concern of the 'left' that 'citizenship' and 'democracy' are 'biased vehicles for a quietist ideology' and from critics of both 'left' and 'right' such as feminists and environmentalists whose analyses 'generated a sceptical and critical approach to politics' (Frazer 2000, pp97 & 98). The findings also reflect the process of depoliticisation referred to by Hobsbawm, who notes how every political movement is finding it harder to mobilise people (Hobsbawm 2000, p105) and fears that the 'depoliticisation of the great mass of citizens is a serious danger' due to the possibility of their mobilisation 'completely outside the modus operandi of all kinds of democratic politics' (Hobsbawm 2000, p114).   Likewise, Byrne cites declining electoral turnout and the drop in membership of the Labour and Conservative parties as evidence of 'the withdrawal of the mass of people from political engagement' (Byrne 2005, p31).   Further, Frazer expresses concern that levels of political engagement and 'commitment to democratic values are "low" for the health of a democratic political system' (Frazer 1999, p7).

Moreover, levels of political knowledge in Britain are 'not that high' according to Pattie *et al.* (Pattie *et al*. 2004, p155), who undertook empirical research into contemporary citizenship attitudes and practice during 2000 and 2001 with a representative sample of more than 12,000 adults.   Respondents were asked whether they had taken part in any of seventeen activities aimed at influencing 'rules, laws or policies' during the previous year (Pattie *et al*. 2004, p81). The list included voting at local and national levels, and activities beyond formal politics on an individual or collective basis such as boycotting goods, demonstrating or taking part in a strike. The study reveals inequalities in political engagement with 'the already resourced' in terms of education, income and occupational status tending to be more actively engaged as citizens (Pattie *et al*. 2004, p109). These findings confirm those of an earlier comprehensive study of political participation based on a sample of approximately 2,000 people from England, Scotland and Wales carried out in 1984 (Parry *et al*. 1992).   Defining political participation as 'taking part in the formulation, passage and implementation of public policies', the study similarly explored both formal and informal political

engagement including participation in campaigning and protest activities. A strong connection was found between education and participation, with degree holders being not only an educational elite but also a 'participatory elite'. Whereas on average the formally uneducated took part in one action beyond voting and signing petitions, the degree holders engaged in nearly 3.5 actions (Parry *et al*. 1992, p84). These studies are not alone in finding a link between education and political participation (see Lauder *et al*. 2006, p61) and it is claimed that there is 'abundant evidence of an association between adult learning and active citizenship' (Field 2006, p167).

This section has traced the trend towards greater individual responsibility begun following the election of the Thatcher government in 1979 and intensified under New Labour, with an increasing compulsion to work as a condition of receiving benefits. The increasingly individualistic conceptualisation of citizenship evident in public policy was also seen to be prevalent in the findings of two studies of student teachers. Similarly, evidence of political disengagement in terms of reduced electoral turnout and party membership was also mirrored in widespread dissatisfaction with politics amongst the sample in one these studies, justifying concerns over the growth of an anti-political culture in Britain and the consequences of de-politicisation and a decline in political thinking. Evidence from two major studies of political participation reveals low levels of political knowledge and inequalities in political engagement with the level of prior education being shown to be an important determinant of participation.

The findings of the studies into the attitudes of student teachers raise a number of issues which will be explored in this study. One of the most striking aspects of the European study was the predominantly individualistic conceptualisation of citizenship that was expressed. The extent to which this will be replicated amongst tutors and other actors within WEA, a voluntary sector body with a democratic tradition and a vision of 'shaping the future through democratic learning', is one such issue. One might imagine that, given the Association's

history and name, there might be less of a tendency to an individualistic conceptualisation of citizenship and that notions of citizenship would be more influenced by the republican rather than the liberal model of citizenship. Likewise one might expect that tutors who are attracted to working for the WEA may have a history of political engagement and a level of political knowledge that would lead them to conceptualise citizenship as a political relationship. However, it is important to note the changing context for adult education in the latter part of the twentieth century with the 'shift to the right' in the 1980s which is claimed to have resulted in a challenge to the 'idealism of social purpose adult education' with the growing emphasis on the economic purpose of adult education (Armstrong and Miller 2006, p294). In view of this and the effects of an anti-political culture, there may be no grounds for expecting any greater commitment to social purpose or awareness of the political dimensions of citizenship amongst WEA tutors than any other group of teachers.

3.3 Active citizenship: individual acts of moral behaviour or proselytising an ideology of change

It was noted in the section on Citizenship above that the 'good' citizen is often spoken of as the 'active citizen'. Active citizenship, just like citizenship, is a term which is open to a wide range of interpretations and often appears in policy documents without being defined. This is the case with the National Assembly for Wales' statement of core values which includes the promotion of active citizenship amongst all age groups (National Assembly for Wales 1999). Similarly, there is no definition of the term in the constitution of WEA South Wales. Such a lack of definition has led to the criticism that active citizenship can be used 'as a "feel good" panacea in policy development' (Elrick 1999, p34). This section begins with a critical review of the first use of the term by the Conservatives in the 1980s and is followed by a consideration first of the more recent New Labour discourse of active citizenship, and then of Welsh Labour's

conceptualisation. The section ends with an exploration of alternative understandings of active citizenship.

Faulks (1998) recalls that the concept of active citizenship was introduced in 1988 by the then Conservative Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, and was endorsed officially at that year's Party Conference by Prime Minister Thatcher. It was an explicit theme in Conservative discourse for a further two years and an implicit one during the period of the Major Government (Faulks, 1998, p127). The Thatcherite conception of the active citizen was of a 'dynamic individual' who was self-reliant, taking responsibility for his or her own actions, and yet has a 'sense of civic virtue and pride in both country and community'. Active citizenship was a combination of self-help and voluntarism, and supposedly concern for community and country was to have a civilising effect on the 'competition and rigour of market relations' (Faulks 1998, p128). For the Conservatives active citizenship was about volunteering and giving to charity and definitely not about political participation (Lister *et al*. 2007, p54), indeed it 'shifted the emphasis of citizenship away from the political community and towards individual acts of moral behaviour' (Faulks 198, p132).

There are several grounds for critiquing the Conservative notion of active citizenship. Firstly, as Faulks argues, historically citizenship has been 'essentially a political concept' understood in terms of a relationship between individuals and a political community such as a nation-state. Hence conceptualising citizenship in terms of obligations, without acknowledging the 'political realm', constitutes a 'narrowed and de-politicised definition which detracts from true active citizenship'. Rather, active citizenship must involve 'collective policy making, consultation and the protection of basic rights associated with democratic forms of government' (Faulks 198, p130). Similarly, Oldfield describes Douglas Hurd's conception of active citizenship as 'vacuous' on account of its lack of any 'egalitarian provision for citizens to govern themselves' (1994, p188). Secondly, the assumption about the cause of

society's problems underlying the focus on the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own lives, namely a lack of active and committed individuals, is attacked for being 'couched in individualistic, psychological and moralistic terms' (Biesta and Lawy 2006, p69). Similarly but more graphically, the dominant discourse is described as 'pathological' in that it locates problems and deficits in the 'disaffected, apathetic or "alien" other' (Martin 2003, p573).   In the process more structural causes such as inadequate funding for public services are ignored and thus active citizenship 'exemplified a depoliticisation and privatisation of the very idea of citizenship' (Biesta and Lawy 2006, p69). Thirdly, the Conservative notion of active citizenship is considered to be exclusive in that those who are prevented from becoming active due to lack of money, resources or time are 'stigmatised as dependants and subjects' (Faulks 1998, p131). Participatory research involving people with first-hand experience of poverty reveals that lack of resources such as time and energy are indeed a reason for their lack of active involvement in campaigns against poverty. Moreover, living on a low income and 'struggling to survive on a daily basis' results in low self-esteem, isolation and a lack of confidence that means 'you're not likely to shout about poverty' (Beresford *et al*. 1999, p153).

Whilst the Conservative conceptualisation of active citizenship can be understood in terms of the liberal tradition of citizenship theory, New Labour's discourse is rooted in the communitarian model.   This approach is exemplified in the 2003 Scarman Lecture delivered by the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett, in which he links active citizenship to the strengthening of communities in the context of an overarching notion of civil renewal, with the aim of citizens becoming 'more actively involved in tackling their common problems and improving their quality of life' (Blunkett 2003, p8).   By making a connection between 'meaningful participation' and democratic accountability, Blunkett introduces the political dimension missing from the Conservative discourse. Nevertheless, it is evident that the policy is also based on a desire for social order and a fear that democracy will be undermined by alienation and apathy when citizens are 'not

constructively engaged with policies and services affecting their communities'
(Blunkett 2003, p9).   The emphasis of the policy appears to be upon the self-
regeneration of socio-economically disadvantaged communities without
acknowledging the structural causes of disadvantage and the unequal power
relations that are the context for the problems confronting such communities. A
key aim of New Labour's civil renewal strategy is tackling crime. Launching the
website of the Home Office funded Active Citizenship Centre, Home Office
Minister, Fiona McTaggart, spoke of 'strong communities', in which citizens play
a central role to 'build security for all and reduce crime' (McTaggart 2004).   Thus
in this conception of active citizenship responsibility is placed on communities to
resolve problems whose causes lie beyond their control and whose solutions
arguably require a significant redistribution of resources or change in government
policy.   Such policies give rise to the view that communitarianism is presented as
an 'alternative to a strong welfare state' and assumes 'a shift from state authority
to community responsibility' (Lister *et al*. 2007, p55). Furthermore, despite the
reference mentioned above to participation and democratic accountability, the
emphasis placed by Blunkett on 'active citizens participating responsibly' (2003,
p38) appears to leave no room for conflict or dissent.

In Wales, where an aspiration to increase democratic participation in policy
making and a desire to 'nurture a civic sense of identity' lay at the heart of the
devolution process (Betts *et al*. 2001, p50; Davies 1999, p8), there is evidence of
a distinctive social policy agenda compared with that of New Labour (Drakeford
2007, p37), underpinned by what has been described as 'different "takes" on the
philosophy of Labour' (Sullivan 2004, p62). This is the context for a distinctive
discourse of citizenship which emphasizes rights and participation in policy
making.   First Minister Rhodri Morgan, in what has come to be known as his
'clear red water' speech, emphasised that the new set of citizenship rights
created during the Assembly's first four years were 'as far as possible free at the
point of use, universal and unconditional'. He went on to distance Welsh Labour
further from New Labour by outlining a relationship between the individual and

government in which the individual is a 'citizen rather than a consumer' and strengthening the 'collective voice of the citizen' is preferred to 'basing services on a model of the user of public services as some sort of serial shopper' (Morgan 2002). However despite this distinctive discourse, research into the idea that active citizenship may be promoted through involvement in voluntary activity, in which data were drawn from interviews with members of civil society and community groups, found that the Welsh Government's priority echoed that of Blunkett in aiming to 'produce "responsible" citizens with whom it can liaise rather than active citizens in the true sense' (Hodgson 2006, p92). Voluntary organisations in receipt of Welsh Government funding for service provision felt inhibited about criticising policies lest they put future funding at risk (Hodgson 2006, p103).

One might imagine that for Hodgson the 'true' sense of active citizenship involves a political dimension and an engagement with power that is reflected in the following representations of active citizenship. Turner juxtaposes active and passive citizenship with the citizen conceptualised as 'merely a subject of an absolute authority or as an active political agent' (1994, p218), whereas Janoski and Gran differentiate between the 'incorporated' and 'active' citizen. Whilst the former are, or feel themselves to be, part of the elite, and 'actively participate and support party goals', the active citizen is often 'engaged in conflict with established elites' and, through membership of a political party, social movement or other active group, 'involved in proselytising an ideology of change' (Janoski and Gran 2002, p40). Similarly, Giroux refers to citizens 'talk(ing) back to power' and 'viable forms of political agency' (2003, p9). Describing herself as a 'neo-republican', Evans considers that active citizenship equates with political participation and engagement in direct democracy through structures such as neighbourhood associations (Evans 2001, p113). Central to such conceptualisations of active citizenship is the notion of human agency. As Lister argues, 'to act as a citizen requires first a sense of agency, the belief that one can act'. The sense of agency, she continues, is enhanced as a result of action

especially when the action is collective. She stresses that agency is about a 'conscious capacity' which needs to be developed and is related to self-esteem (Lister 2003, p39). Similarly, Benn identifies the necessity to possess 'certain abilities, confidence and knowledge' in order to act as a citizen (Benn 2000, p245).   What constitutes such attributes of citizenship will be considered in the next section.

This section has reviewed the meanings attributed to active citizenship by the Conservatives, New Labour and Welsh Labour in turn.   Whilst in the previous section there was seen to be a policy continuum with the election of New Labour in relation to the emphasis upon individual responsibility, there is a significant divergence between the Conservative and New Labour discourse of active citizenship. The former can be seen to be firmly rooted in liberal individualism with an emphasis placed on voluntarism and acts of charity, whilst the latter is informed by communitarianism. Interestingly, whilst Welsh Labour's discourse appears to be more republican with an emphasis on collective provision and unconditional rights, research evidence suggests that in reality both New Labour and Welsh Labour share a concern for a consensual approach whereby they can engage with responsible citizens. Beyond these official discourses of active citizenship exists the notion of the citizen as an active political agent often engaged in conflict with established elites. Finally, the section anticipates the next part of the chapter with a recognition of the importance of a sense of agency and the possession of abilities, confidence and knowledge in order to be able to act as a citizen.

A key task for this study will be to explore how active citizenship is understood within WEA and whether or not there is a shared understanding of the term. It will also be particularly important to explore whether or not WEA feels able to support a model of active citizenship that involves engaging in conflict with the Welsh Government in view of the evidence that other voluntary organisations in

receipt of state funding feel constrained in their criticism of the government for fear of jeopardising that funding.

3.4   Adult education and active citizenship: a contested pedagogy

The next section begins with an examination of some of the literature regarding what constitutes the attributes that are considered to be essential for active citizenship. The subsequent part draws on accounts of a Home Office project with the title of Active Learning for Active Citizenship (ALAC) for a consideration of the curriculum for citizenship education or, in other words, what needs to be learned for effective participation. The section ends with a discussion of the ways in which such learning may take place.

Given the contested nature of the concept of citizenship itself and the different meanings attached to active citizenship it would be unsurprising to discover that there are contrasting views as to the content of the curriculum for citizenship education. Much of the literature focuses upon citizenship education in schools; however, whilst passing reference is made to the National Curriculum below, the emphasis of what follows is upon adult learning for active citizenship.

Benn lists fifteen key attributes for active citizenship. Amongst these are the ability to deal with difference and conflict and to voice ideas and opinions, the confidence to have independent opinions and to assume that their voice will be heard, and knowledge of social structure, the workings of local and national government, the ideas of the main political parties and political ideologies (Benn 2000, p245). Benn's emphasis on political knowledge is lacking in the outcomes of the Education for Democratic Citizenship project set up in 1997 by the Council of Europe with the aim of finding out which values and skills are required to enable individuals to become 'participating citizens' (Bïrzéa 2000, p3). The project collated lists of core competencies for democratic citizenship from various

sources. These were recognised to be diverse in nature whilst sharing common features, in terms of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes. The knowledge included is only that which is needed to 'generate actions and practices', and the skills are defined in terms of 'knowing how to do, how to be, how to live together and how to become' (Bïrzéa 2000, p36). A similar focus on knowledge, skills and values, which would combine to form the 'political literacy' essential for effectiveness in public life, was one of three 'strands which should run through all education for citizenship' proposed in the Crick Report (Advisory Group on Citizenship 1998, p4).   Whilst the issue of power is lacking in these two accounts, other authors link education for citizenship with terms such as 'democratic transformation' (Pillinger 2000, p21) and the development of 'independent, critical thinking about power, wealth and poverty' (Coffield 1998, p99).   For Frazer, learning about 'particular democratically legitimate ways of securing, deploying, influencing and resisting political power' is essential for learning about democracy (Frazer 1999, p14). From a position of concern for low levels of engagement in politics, Evans urges community education to 'stimulate political participation' and to connect adults with 'democratic structures where skills and dispositions of active citizenship can be exercised (Evans 2001, p112). Similarly, Martin (2000) makes a case for adult education being about 'enabling people to develop to their full potential as rounded human beings' which, he suggests, means that adult education should help people to engage 'actively, creatively and critically in a wide range of social and political roles' (Martin 2000, p4).

In 2003 David Blunkett launched the ALAC project with the aim, amongst others, of devising a common framework and curriculum for citizenship education for adults (Blunkett 2003, p13). It is interesting that this initiative should come from the Home Office and not the then Department for Education and Skills, which arguably was preoccupied at the time with a narrow skills agenda (Evans 2001, p111).   A Steering Group, whose membership was drawn from the voluntary and community sector, academics and representatives from Government

departments, was formed to oversee the development and implementation of a programme of ALAC. The programme was to be based on a core curriculum developed by a cross-Government group and approved by the Home Secretary in 2003. One of the Steering Group's tasks was to 'expand and further clarify' the draft active citizenship curriculum (Woodward 2004, p7).   The core curriculum was expected to 'encourage an understanding of the three heads of active citizenship in a parliamentary democracy' (Woodward 2004, p15). The three heads, identical to those in the national curriculum for schools, comprise social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. It is interesting to note that the National Curriculum document has been criticised on the grounds that 'the last of these three areas seems to have been lost in the document' (Davies *et al*. 2005, p76).   Moreover, political literacy is defined as 'a propensity to act after due reflection and to recognise the necessity of compromise'. Despite a recognition that active citizenship 'can take many forms' (Woodward 2004, p15), this discourse of political literacy would appear not to accommodate the notion of the active citizen referred to above as someone who is 'engaged in conflict with established elites' (Janoski and Gran 2002, p40). A central aim of the curriculum is to build community leadership skills including facilitation, management and project delivery and representation or governance. This emphasis runs counter to the claim to recognise the diverse forms of active citizenship and reflects the Home Secretary's understanding of it as a process of strengthening communities, which has been critiqued as 'promoting commitment by individual actors to a self-sustaining social order' (Dean 2004, p72).

The curriculum has been divided into two main areas. The first of these, communication and participation, covers the essential practical skills for various elements of active citizenship, such as advocacy, recognition of issues of individual and collective concern in communities, encouragement of reflective and deliberative processes, democracy and leadership in small groups and networking. Here, the emphasis is on the practicalities of local project delivery and on managing difference and conflict whilst encouraging 'healthy democratic

debate'. The second area, skills, and knowledge, information and understanding, includes topics ranging from finding sources of information to consideration of inequalities and concepts of inclusion/exclusion. Also listed are law and social policy, the powers and duties of elected representatives, consideration of the variety of meanings of democracy/participation and the 'reality of the political dimension within everyday life and the legitimate use of power and authority' (Woodward 2004, p17).   Such emphasis on the legitimate use of power, and an absence of critical thinking or political campaigning, locates this curriculum within the liberal education tradition where the stress is on programmes that are 'rational', 'balanced' or 'neutral' (Tobias 2000, p419). There is some evidence that the draft core curriculum was influenced by participants at a cross-sector planning workshop held in late 2003, as Woodward refers to 'critical' citizens, recognises dissent and acknowledges the need for citizens to 'understand power and how to have impact' (Woodward 2004, p11).

In an evaluation of the ALAC project, the authors, Mayo and Rooke, note that through the project active citizenship was 'to be promoted within the framework of strategies for empowerment, addressing existing structures and relations of power in order to promote democratic change' (Mayo and Rooke 2006, p4). The project has, they consider, adopted approaches to learning in a context of social change at local and global levels which include both learning to know and understand the self in a cultural, socio-economic and political context, and learning in order to shape social change (Mayo and Rooke 2006, p55). A National Framework for Active Learning for Active Citizenship, which draws on the experiences, and highlights through case studies the good practice, of the seven regional hubs that made up the project, has been produced as a manual for adult educators wishing to get involved in citizenship education (Bedford *et al*. 2006).   The Framework asserts its core values as social justice, participation, diversity and equality and co-operation.   The principles underpinning the learning offered are that it is learner-centred, active and reflective, and community-based (Bedford *et al*. 2006, p17). The educational theory and

practice highlighted in the Framework is informed by the experiential approach advocated by the Brazilian educationalist, Paulo Freire who saw education as a process of transformation and change (Bedford *et al*. 2006, p93). This approach will be considered further below.

Not only are there conflicting views over the content of the curriculum for citizenship, but also there is disagreement over the means by which skills, values and knowledge will be learned. There is a strongly held view, for example, that whilst citizenship is a skill that needs to be learned like any other skill it will be acquired through 'positive experiences of participation' and not through the formal curriculum. Since practice is essential for the learning of participatory democracy, the experience of adult education itself should be 'an experience of participatory democracy' (Benn 1997, p85). Similarly, Longworth calls for all students to 'take part in the political processes, by experiencing democracy at work in the classroom' and for the encouragement of 'the sort of critical thinking and questioning of authority so important to the exercise of democracy in a world of change (Longworth 2003, p83). Biesta and Lawy argue that there should be a shift away from teaching young people citizenship to learning democracy. This would emphasise that democratic citizenship 'should not be understood as an attribute of the individual', but as being to do with 'individuals-in-context' (Biesta and Lawy 2006, p65). There is a link here also with Lister's view, referred to above, that the sense of agency that is required for action, in the form of 'the belief that one can act', is fostered in turn through action, especially collective action (Lister 2000, p39). Benn also argues that whilst it is possible to develop courses designed to provide the skills and knowledge required for active citizenship, few adults will willingly choose politics or economics (see also Goldman 1999, p98) and therefore the focus should not be on content, but on process with the skills of citizenship being seen as 'fundamentally transferable'. In other words, adults can learn the skills through any curriculum and transfer them into a 'more active participation in society' (Benn 2000, p244).

In a study aimed at discovering whether and where the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for active citizenship are acquired, Benn sent questionnaires to 250 students on part-time courses for adults at the University of Exeter (Benn 2000, p246). An analysis of the 75 responses revealed that for most people the workplace was where they gained their citizenship skills and that the school system had a 'largely negative effect' (Benn 2000, p253). Adult education was shown to be important in terms of building confidence and in the 'passive skills' but rarely was it cited as the site for gaining the requisite knowledge. Considering how it 'prides itself on its contribution to a democratic society', Benn concludes that adult education 'might have been expected to score more highly' (Benn 2000, p254). The findings of a case study of the experiences of 24 students from two WEA branches in south Wales carried out in 2001 were not dissimilar in respect of the acquisition of knowledge. The purpose of the study was to explore whether there was a relationship between learning within the democratic framework of a WEA branch and the development of the attributes required for active citizenship. Whilst the majority of interviewees gained relevant new skills and confidence, and had become more involved in their communities, the sample as a whole reported low levels of political knowledge and only four interviewees reported an increase in awareness of political issues as a result of learning with WEA (Gass 2002, p76).

There is support for the view that citizenship skills will not be acquired through formal learning in Frazer's acknowledgement that there is no clear evidence about the effect of explicit politics curriculum on young people's interest in politics (Frazer 1999, p9), whilst there is 'strong' evidence of a link between 'a democratic, discussion and deliberation based classroom practice', on the one hand and 'anti-authoritarian or pro-democratic attitudes and value commitments' on the other (Frazer 1999, p11). However, Duke, whilst recognising the potential for adult education to be 'conducted by democratic means', argues that the 'literature and the rhetoric are stronger than the practice' (Duke 1992, p193). The argument that skills for democratic participation are best learned through

participation itself is supported to some extent by evidence from the study by Parry *et al.* cited above in the section on changing conceptualisations of citizenship. The researchers set out to test the so-called 'educative' theory of political participation which has been traced back to Aristotle and expressed more recently by Rousseau and John Stuart Mill (Parry *et al*. 1992, p286). Respondents were asked whether taking a range of actions had increased their 'knowledge of how politics works'. Whilst most action was '*not* seen to have increased political knowledge' there were two exceptions both connected with political party campaigning – canvassing and 'behind the scenes clerical work' – where most actions taken were considered to have been educative. In other contexts, despite there being a minority that reported that taking action had an educative effect, these minorities were substantial, and there was found to be 'some association between increased knowledge and participation in more organised forms of activity' (Parry *et al*. 1992, p288). Moreover, it was evident that the more people participated, the more they related that their knowledge of politics had developed (Parry *et al*. 1992, p294). There is more support for Benn's position in the extensive research into learning through involvement in voluntary organisations carried out over six years by Elsdon *et al.* (1995; 2000). A 'high proportion' of those contacted for thirty case studies had 'consciously or otherwise, received an effective training in the skills of democratic organisation and management' (Elsdon *et al*. 1995, p73). Mirroring the findings of Parry *et al.* in relation to the link between learning and the volume of activity, it was those who 'took on responsibilities' who became more aware of 'broader social concerns' and engaged in what was described as 'political learning' and went on to take action (Elsdon *et al*. 1995, p139). Elsdon conceptualises the learning that takes place through activity in the voluntary sector as 'non-formal' in the sense that it takes place outside any external institution, and 'informal' in that it takes place through 'chosen activities' rather than any 'externally imposed curricula'. He stresses that much of it is 'unpremeditated and unconscious' explaining that respondents only became aware of it through the research interviews (Elsdon 2000, p254).

It can be seen that there is considerable evidence to support the view that the skills and knowledge required for active citizenship are to be gained through participation. Nevertheless, there are those that believe adult education has a part to play. For example, Duke holds the view that, although most adult education is 'politically neutral', it does have the potential to 'work effectively to create or sustain democracy'.   He was aware, in the early 1990s, of tutors who hoped to 'conscientise, liberate or mobilise those called "students" and change the social structure, promote democracy, reduce inequality, help save and build a better world' (Duke 1992, p189). Similarly, Newman writes about adult education processes aimed at helping people to move from 'a fatalistic or naïve consciousness to a critical consciousness' so that they become 'aware of themselves in their social context and capable of acting…to change it' (Newman 2000, p277). This perspective resonates with the educational philosophy of the ALAC initiative referred to above which is informed by the writing and practice of Paulo Freire.   Clearly those adult educators involved in ALAC and the authors of the project evaluation believe that the active learning opportunities that they promote make an effective contribution to empowering citizens and communities and in developing political knowledge and political literacy skills (Mayo and Rooke 2006, p48). However, in view of the decline in social purpose referred to above that has been highlighted by Armstrong and Miller (2006) and the contemporary stress on economic purpose that has been documented in the previous chapter, one may be forgiven for being sceptical about the extent to which adult educators have the capacity, resources and space to promote the approach adopted by the Active Learning for Active Citizenship project (see also Gass 2001, p141).

In this section it has been shown that, as with the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship, the curriculum for active citizenship and the way in which the attributes for active citizenship will be learned are also contested. Just as the issue of power has been seen to be key in the debate surrounding the meaning

of citizenship and active citizenship, unsurprisingly its inclusion in or absence from the curriculum is highly significant.

The issues highlighted in this section raise a number of questions for this study. It will be important to explore with managers and Trustees, those with responsibility for the strategic direction of the WEA, how they see the promotion of active citizenship being achieved, whether through a discreet curriculum, indirectly through the curriculum as a whole, indirectly through a democratic learning environment or through participation in the Association's democratic structure, or through a combination of some or all of these. It will also be significant to explore these questions with tutors to establish their perceptions of the process of promoting active citizenship within the Association. The matter of the political dimension, which has been central throughout the chapter, will need to be explored in the context of both the content of the curriculum, and the capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge, facilitate the development of 'critical consciousness' (Newman 2000, p277), or create a learning environment through which the skills of democratic participation may be acquired. This will need to be explored with tutors and with those responsible both for strategic issues and for planning and managing the delivery of the curriculum, tutor recruitment and staff development.

3.5   Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to citizenship, active citizenship and the pedagogy of citizenship and shown citizenship to be a complex and contested concept. In addition to a consideration of theoretical work, the review has revealed only a limited number of studies of teachers' notions of citizenship, and what constitutes the 'good' citizen, and of their attitudes to politics generally.   Those that have been discussed above focus on the attitudes of student teachers engaged in formal education in the primary and secondary

phases. No studies were found that involve teachers in adult education with the exception of Armstrong and Miller's research into the ability of university adult educators to sustain a commitment to social purpose. Whilst this relates to the broad context of the present study, it does not address the central questions concerning conceptualisations of citizenship. Therefore, it appears that there is a gap in the literature with respect to adult educators and especially those working outside of the state sector.   The chapter has also highlighted a number of key research questions for the study relating to the way both citizenship and active citizenship are conceptualized within the WEA and how this impacts upon the kind of active citizenship the WEA is able and committed to promote and the methods it uses to do so.

The next chapter examines elements of the WEA's history in respect of both ideological tensions, in a way that builds on Chapter 2, and the significance of state funding. The chapter also explores the WEA's contribution to citizenship in the first half of the twentieth century and reflects on the findings of relatively recent studies of WEA branches which demonstrate a continuing role for WEA in learning for active citizenship.

CHAPTER FOUR
The Workers' Educational Association: ideological tensions, state funding and active citizenship

The contribution of the Workers' Educational Association to workers' education in the first half of the twentieth century, and the ideological tensions between it and the National Council of Labour Colleges were considered in Chapter 2, in the context of a discussion of the purpose of adult education. It was noted that whilst there were claims from the Left that WEA diverted workers from the class struggle, there was evidence that the reality was more ambiguous. This chapter, which is in three sections, will explore these ambiguities further after outlining the founding values and early history of the Association. The second section deals with the important theme of funding, both in respect of the sources available in the early years and the implications of receiving state funding. The latter will include both an account of the relationship between the WEA and the state in the 1920s, and consideration of the contemporary situation for WEA South Wales which relies upon the Welsh Government for the major share of its income. This will involve a discussion of the relationship between the WEA as a voluntary body, and thus a part of civil society, and the Welsh Government which will address both the potential for criticising or resisting Government policy and, in light of the discussion in Chapter 3, raise questions about possible constraints on the kind of active citizenship that can be promoted.   The third section reviews the Association's contribution to promoting active citizenship.

The chapter does not aim to provide a comprehensive history of the Association's development, but seeks to indicate some of the key areas of tension, notably in relation to funding, that have existed since the early years and continue to be relevant today.

4.1   The ambiguities of the early years

The chapter begins with a review of the WEA's early years including the sources of support for the founding of the Association; the background, values, political beliefs and aspirations of leading figures involved, notably Albert Mansbridge, the Association's founder and first full-time secretary; the principles upon which the Association was formed and the nature of its relationship with the Labour movement.   It will be noted that, just as Mansbridge was able to attract support for the Association from a broad, and perhaps unlikely, combination of sources, there were different interpretations amongst key personalities in the WEA of its aims and what could be done whilst remaining true to its founding principles.   In addition to these ambiguities, it will be seen that, in spite of the criticism from parts of the Labour movement, the WEA succeeded in attracting students from those organisations and support from Marxists for the 'liberal' education that it offered.

Founded in May 1903 as the Association to Promote the Higher Education of the Working Man, it was in 1905 at its second national conference that the Association was to be re-named as the Workers' Educational Association.   Two years later, in 1907, a provisional committee for the South Wales and Monmouthshire District was formed and the first Welsh branch was set up at Barry (Roberts 2003a, pxi).   The WEA was established as a self-governing, democratic and decentralised organisation with support from a range of bodies including trade unions, co-operatives, political groups, churches and chapels (Rose 2002, p265).   Mansbridge is said to have brought together 'progressive ecclesiastics, senior academics, politicians of different persuasions, Co-operators and trade unionists' to publicly support the Association.   Notable amongst the politicians was Churchill, who is said to have been 'in full agreement with the objects of the association' (Jennings 2003a, p16).   Further evidence of the broad

based nature of the support for the WEA, and thus justification for the criticisms from the Left, comes in a passage of Mansbridge's account of the early years of the Association in which he recalls the assistance given by some of the staff at Marlborough College, a leading public school, to branches in and around Swindon (Mansbridge 1920, p26).

Mansbridge, who was an activist in the Co-operative movement, designed the WEA to 'give working people a dominant share of control' (Rose 2002, p276). He asserted that the initiative must lie with the students: 'they must say how, why, what and when they wish to study' (Mansbridge 1920, pxviii). For Mansbridge, education was 'spiritual food' that would lead people to 'the beautiful and true, where alone citizenship can be realised' (Goldman 2003, p50) and 'higher knowledge' would result in both 'intellectual pleasure' and 'right and sound action in public affairs' (Jennings 2003a, p15). He is said to have been particularly concerned about the possible social consequences of 'ignorance in the increasingly active working-class movement, especially the "lack of thinking power" in the rank and file' (Jennings 2003a, p14).

The WEA was set up on non-party and non-sectarian lines, a feature which was emphasised by Mansbridge at every opportunity and was frequently the subject of conference resolutions. WEA members were expected to undertake party political campaigning through organisations that were affiliated to the WEA and not through the Association itself (Jennings 2003a, p22). Compatible with this was an expectation that tutors maintain impartiality and 'open-mindedness' in relation to controversial issues. Thus, through being able to see all sides of a question a WEA student could achieve a 'higher rationality' and on that basis could contribute to social change (Simon 1990, p21). It was this claim of impartiality in dealing with political, economic, historical and social issues that would lead to the WEA being attacked by its opponents on the Left, who argued that its objectives were to confuse workers or divert them from the class struggle

by 'holding up the ideal of self-cultivation, of pure scholarship and of knowledge for its own sake' (Simon 1990, p20). These principles espoused by the WEA under Mansbridge's leadership, and the involvement of figures such as William Temple, later to become Archbishop of Canterbury and the Association's first President, provide justification for the view that the WEA from 1903 until the collapse of the founder's health in 1915 was 'largely liberal in political orientation, highly Christian in its leadership and strikingly moralistic in tone' (Roberts 2003b, p2).

Despite this, and what has been described as Mansbridge's 'apolitical idealism' (Atkins 2003, p113), together with his 'careful cultivation of the great and the good' (Roberts 2003c, p81), he and the emergent WEA are considered to have been 'rightly seen as serving the cause of reform and democracy'. Had they not been able to demonstrate this, it would have been impossible to have secured the active participation of the Labour movement (Atkins 2003, p113). Whilst the WEA can be seen as part of the Labour movement, understood as a movement to 'enhance the lives of working-class people' and as part of a 'rich culture of participative reform and self-help in local communities', under Mansbridge's leadership it is argued that the WEA could not be 'viewed as contributing to the socialist project' (Roberts 2003b, p7). However, it is also argued that whilst Mansbridge aimed to give the WEA a spiritual mission, others were able to keep to the WEA's non-party and non-sectarian constitution whilst simultaneously 'ascribing to it a much more practical purpose, firmly rooted in directly addressing the social and economic problems of early twentieth century Britain' (Atkins 2003, p113).

One such example is G.D.H. Cole, who looked forward to a time when the Labour movement would fund the WEA, thereby avoiding the potentially inhibiting dependence on state funding (Fieldhouse 1996c, p173). A further example is George Thompson, Yorkshire District Secretary from 1914 until 1945, who

rejected Mansbridge's notions of achieving class reconciliation and a bridge between classes through education, believing instead that the purpose of workers' education was to develop an understanding of class solidarity, and to 'equip them to serve their class, and to achieve social justice and industrial emancipation' (Fieldhouse 1996c, p175). Yet another is R.H. Tawney, 'one of the most renowned WEA tutors' (Mayo 1997, p37), who was to become the Association's President from 1928 until 1944 (Rose 2002, p265). Tawney, who believed passionately in the emancipatory potential of adult education, was 'equipping adults with the tools and knowledge for a fairer society' (Elsey 1987, p69). His was a 'deep commitment to adult education for citizenship, equality of opportunity and social justice' (Mayo 1997, p37). Nevertheless, he shared the WEA's commitment to objectivity or impartiality and rejection of propaganda, whilst maintaining that its political aim was to 'train workers to exercise power in a democracy' (Rose 2002, p266). Tawney was to face criticism for this policy, in his first tutorial class at Longton in 1908, from members of the Marxist Social Democratic Federation (SDF) who argued that 'his ideal of objective scholarship was designed to distract the workers from class warfare' (Rose 2002, p266). Reflecting a different ideological position, Alfred Wilkinson, a local Labour Councillor attending Tawney's first class at Rochdale held the same year, wrote to Mansbridge praising Tawney, and stated 'if you can get [another] don like him we can turn England upside down in a few years' time' (Goldman 2003, p45).

Interestingly, a commitment to the WEA concept of objectivity did not prevent the Reading branch, whose President from 1906 to 1909 was a factory worker and prominent SDF member, from adopting a 'class conscious, militant style' (Jennings 2003a, p21). Moreover, Goldman (2003) cautions against a false antithesis between the WEA's tradition of liberal adult education and a class-conscious alternative aimed at achieving fundamental political change. Drawing on accounts of the first students in WEA tutorial classes he argues that a 'desire for self-cultivation' was balanced by 'an equal commitment to the communal

advance of working people' (Goldman 2003, p51). Students expected the WEA
to provide 'personal development and collective advance simultaneously'
accepting that there was no tension between meeting individual personal needs
and the social needs of workers as a whole (Goldman 2003, p54).   Nearly thirty
years later a survey of students' motivations for enrolling with WEA and Ruskin
College found that whilst some students were solely concerned with individual
cultural enrichment and others were focussed on political issues alone, the
majority shared both goals and were 'convinced that one could not be attained
without the other'. Only a small minority believed that building socialism should
be the exclusive aim of adult education, and it was the view of some of the most
militant Marxists that a liberal education was an essential preparation for political
struggle (Rose 2002, p282).

This section has highlighted some of the ambiguities of WEA both at its
inception, in terms of the breadth of the coalition that supported it, and in the
various ideological positions of key actors in its development throughout the early
years, not least in relation to the pursuit of social justice and notions of
citizenship linked with emancipation. In spite of Mansbridge's 'apolitical
idealism', the WEA was able to win the support of the Labour movement even if it
could not be seen as being part of the 'socialist project'. Furthermore, it has
shown that, despite the attacks on the Association from both the SDF and the
NCLC, there was room within it for those with a Marxist viewpoint and for a
combination of individual development and class emancipation.

4.2   Funding: credibility and constraints

This section will begin by exploring the impact of the WEA's choice of funding
sources upon the way it was perceived by the Labour movement in the early
years and subsequently when it took money from the state.   This will include

consideration of how the Association was at times able to use its impartiality and moderation to persuade the state to support it to prevent extremism, and how, by moving to the left itself in order to retain its position in the face of competition from the NCLC, it incurred political controversy and loss of independence, with potentially lasting consequences.   The latter part of this section covers the period from the early 1990s when legislation resulted in more funding for the WEA as well as new constraints on curriculum, and then considers the impact of devolution, particularly in relation to policy for the Voluntary Sector, and the latest constraints upon curriculum stemming from the current policy agenda.

Funding for the WEA is an area, like its values and ideology considered above, characterised by ambiguity and to some extent the links between the two are intertwined. Mansbridge noted that in the early years financial support was 'accorded by working-class societies of all kinds and degrees', amongst them the Working Men's Club and Institute Union and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress (Mansbridge 1920, p16). However, the WEA also drew support from what may be considered as unlikely places. Roberts (2003b, p7) notes the presence of Conservatives amongst prominent individual subscribers and cites this as evidence of the 'limits of Labour influences on the WEA's founder'. In Wales, it is argued that without the contributions of wealthy benefactors such as the Liberal Member of Parliament and coal owner David Davies, Lord Tredegar and Lilian Howell, the WEA would not have survived the period between 1906 and 1915. Moreover, such support fuelled the claims of NCLC members that the WEA was the 'handmaid of capitalism' (Lewis 1993, p39). The Davies family of Llandinam continued to donate to the WEA in Wales throughout the 1920s, playing a crucial part in its survival (Lewis 1993, p144).

By 1907 the WEA was in receipt of state funding from the Board of Education and would acquire 'responsible body' status in 1924 (Roberts 2003a, pxi & xii). Despite the notion that the WEA has been a 'respectable' government funded

adult education body ever since (Munby n.d., p6) there have been periods when state funding has been threatened because of the perceived political stance of the Association, just, as has been shown above, as the receipt of state funding has been seen to influence the WEA's relationship with elements of the Labour movement. It is suggested that WEA leaders such as Temple and Tawney 'brazenly' exploited the preference of the 'establishment' for the WEA in the 1920s, when they warned both central and local government that only by supporting the WEA and respecting its academic freedom would they prevent workers' education being taken over by the NCLC (Jennings 2003b, p105).

A graphic example of the tightrope that had to be walked in order to be accepted by the Labour movement, whilst simultaneously safeguarding state funding, is to be found in Simon's account of the formation in 1919 of the Workers Education Trade Union Committee (WETUC), initially with the steelworkers alone, and its development during the 1920s. Unsurprisingly, this was a site of struggle for the WEA and the NCLC (Simon 1992). The WEA was able to argue forcefully to trade unions that their proposal would allow for the development of a system controlled jointly by WEA and subscribing trade unions, supported by funding from the Board of Education. Stressing the high costs of developing and resourcing such a programme, the WEA argued that the expense, if borne by unions alone, would be disproportionate to the educational advantages (Simon 1992, p39). In 1924, whilst seeking the support of the AEU engineering union, the WEA's General Secretary made no apology for the Association being in receipt of state funding, claiming it was accepted only on condition that it did not restrict their freedom in teaching. In a context of rising militancy, WEA recognised the importance of appealing to workers' class consciousness whilst neither losing their 'impartiality' or non-partisanship, nor prejudicing their 'responsible body' status (Simon 1992, p40). Early in 1925 more than thirty leading trade unionists signed a WEA/WETUC manifesto committing the WEA to

'fully supporting a definite political and industrial policy – that of workers' control of industry'.

Simon notes that never before had either the WEA or WETUC committed themselves to 'so radical a policy', and that 'impartiality' appeared to have been set aside (Simon 1992, p42). Subsequent press coverage accusing the WEA of promoting Marxist propaganda led to the WEA coming under 'a great deal of pressure' from the Board of Education and local authorities to avoid involvement with workers' education for 'social and industrial emancipation' (Simon 1992, p42). The WEA responded to the criticisms by seeking to 'minimise the political significance of the scheme' and, on occasions, adopting 'modified terminology' thereby introducing a certain 'confusing ambiguity' about its aims. Fieldhouse elaborates on the WEA's response, claiming that the scheme was represented as a compromise designed to stop the Trades Union Congress (TUC) from developing a NCLC influenced, 'fully-fledged Marxist' version (Fieldhouse 1992, p154).

The consequences of adopting what was such a radical stance for the WEA were far reaching both in the short term and as, is suggested below, in the longer term. Throughout 1925, following publication of the agreement, the WEA was subjected to threats and criticisms not only from its enemies but also from friends and donors. Both local authority associations and local education authorities questioned whether they could continue to fund the WEA in the light of the TUC agreement (Fieldhouse 1992, p155). By the end of the year government and local authorities had agreed a set of conditions for continued grant aid including the requirement that teaching 'must *aim* at freedom from party bias and from any flavour of political propaganda' and that the restrictions on recruiting tutors and students from the working class must be lifted. In addition local education authorities insisted on having the right to inspect grant-aided classes and the power to veto both the syllabus and tutor.

Ironically the agreement with the TUC was never implemented and yet it resulted in a restriction of the WEA's freedoms and a considerable increase in the control local authorities could exercise over classes (Fieldhouse 1992, p156). Moreover, this demonstrated the limitations of the WEA's independence and the extent to which conditionality was attached to its funding in terms of good behaviour and 'impartiality' which did not unduly threaten the status quo (Fieldhouse 1992, p157). The fact that the scheme was never implemented did not inhibit local authorities from using their new powers and the closer scrutiny and interference faced by WEA were 'practical and immediate manifestations of the WEA's loss of independence'. Fieldhouse adds that the longer term 'sense of caution' that followed could not easily be documented (Fieldhouse 1992, p158).

Over the following two decades, although there appears to have been little evidence of 'heavy censorship or control', various 'controversial incidents' were looked into by local and central government inspectors. These resulted in the establishment of a code of practice and the associated threat that non-compliance would lead to loss of funding (Fieldhouse 1996c, p177). Fieldhouse argues that 'over the years', as a consequence of its dependence on state funding, the 'close ties' that the WEA had with the working class and Labour movement have been loosened, as it has become a general adult education provider for all groups in society (Fieldhouse 1996c, p177).

Turning to the contemporary WEA, perhaps the most significant change in the relationship between the Association and the state happened in 1992 as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act, under which the Association was classed as a 'designated organisation' within the Further Education sector. With this new status came the recognition within the WEA that it was now 'more firmly within a statutory framework and within mainstream education than ever before'

(Fieldhouse 1996c, p194).   The WEA would depend upon new quangos - the Further Education Funding Councils for England and Wales - for the greater part of its income and would be subject to the same funding mechanism as Further Education Colleges. Moreover, the emphasis would be on providing courses included in Schedule 2 of the Act leading to academic or vocational qualifications (Gass 2007, p144).   Initially there was no restriction on the number of accredited courses which led to an expansion of WEA provision in South Wales. It is argued that this brought a cost as it became increasingly difficult to offer education with a broader social purpose, defined as enabling students to 'see their local concerns in a wider analytical framework'. Moreover, this was happening in an ideological context which was predominantly one of possessive individualism, compared with a 'wider citizenship philosophy which drove the WEA's educational mission' (Price and Williams 2007, p162).

During the intervening period funding arrangements have changed several times so that the WEA in Wales is now directly funded from the Welsh Government, and WEA South Wales depends on this source for seventy per cent of its income (WEA South Wales 2009a). This level of dependency on state funding poses questions about the extent to which WEA is constrained both politically in the sense outlined above and in relation to the policy agenda for adult education. Before reviewing the contemporary policy agenda and the extent to which there is room within it for the expression of the WEA's commitment to promoting citizenship and an educated democracy, consideration is given to the relationship between the WEA and the Welsh Government in the context of policy regarding the voluntary sector.

Arguably, WEA finds itself in a paradoxical situation, as on the one hand, its status as a voluntary organisation places it as a part of Welsh civil society, whilst on the other, its dependency on state funding, with the constraints that imposes in terms of its purpose and curriculum, suggests that it may have become

incorporated within the state with little room for manoeuvre. There is a certain
irony about this given the Welsh Assembly's aspirations to develop an inclusive
political culture (see Betts *et al*. 2001, p49; Dicks *et al*. 2001, p103), and to
engage with the voluntary sector in ways that would ensure that it had a
'meaningful and important role' in policy development (Drakeford 2006, p111).
This would include the development of a unique Voluntary Sector Scheme which
would clarify how the Assembly aimed to 'assist and promote the interests of
voluntary organisations' (Royles 2007, p43).

There is research evidence of devolution having led to a greater engagement for
the voluntary sector in the policy-making process and increased influence over
policy development. Amongst a generally positive view within voluntary sector
organisations of the relationship between the sector and the Assembly, there
were, however, concerns expressed about the impact of closer relationships with
policy makers and politicians on maintaining a 'critical distance' from some of the
government's actions (Drakeford 2006, p117). This echoes the findings of
Hodgson's research, cited in Chapter 3, that voluntary organisations funded by
the Welsh Government for service provision felt constrained from criticising
policies for fear of losing future funding (Hodgson 2006, p103).   Hodgson is not
alone in arguing (2006, p102) that a consensual style of policy making stifles
dissent. Williams and de Lima (2006, p516) make a similar point when asserting
that a participatory approach 'acts as a mechanism for gagging risky
communities' rather than deepening democracy, whilst Williams and Chaney
(2001, p85) suggest that consensualism can result in 'enforced incorporation'.
The extent to which this is the case for the WEA will be explored further in the
research.

In seeking to identify the impact of the contemporary policy agenda on the WEA's
capacity to promote active citizenship, it is instructive to consider the Welsh
Government's consultation document published towards the end of 2008 on the

future of Adult and Community Learning. Significantly, in light of the conclusion reached in Chapter 2 that the economic agenda has come to dominate lifelong learning policy, this was published under the title of Delivering Skills that Work for Wales, the country's overarching policy response to the Leitch Review (WAG 2008). The consultation document proposes criteria for the learners aged 19 or more for whom provision will be funded. These comprise people from under represented groups; those engaged in learning which may enable progression to further learning, employment or voluntary work; and those where the provision offers 'demonstrable' wider benefits for individuals or communities. Included in the latter are social inclusion and improved health and wellbeing but not active citizenship or increased democratic participation.

Notably, the priorities identified for provision are widening participation, basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and 'developmental training' to enable progression into employment or further training (WAG, 2008: 4). It would seem that, despite the Assembly's commitment, referred to in Chapter 3, to promote active citizenship by people of all ages, there is no vision for Adult and Community Learning being a vehicle to achieve this. In a joint response to the consultation with WEA colleagues in North Wales a case has been made that the criteria should be broadened to include, amongst other themes, Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC) (WEA South Wales and Coleg Harlech/WEA North Wales 2008, p8).

This section has highlighted the challenges that the WEA has faced and continues to face with regard to funding. In the early years the financial support from conservatives and wealthy benefactors drew criticism from the NCLC, whilst the subsequent receipt of state funding not only reinforced suspicion within elements of the Labour movement, but also threatened the WEA's independence. The most dramatic example of this was when competition with the NCLC for control of the WETUC during the 1920s led to the WEA adopting

an uncharacteristically radical position on workers' control of industry. The subsequent political outcry and close scrutiny of WEA classes has, it is claimed, left the Association with a lasting 'sense of caution'. Turning to recent times, it has been seen that legislation in the early 1990s placed WEA firmly in the mainstream of the education system and that, in Wales, the Association is heavily dependant upon the Welsh Government with seventy per cent of the income of the WEA South Wales coming from this source. The WEA's status as a voluntary body has been considered in the light of the Welsh Assembly's policy in respect of the Voluntary Sector and research findings that show that, despite its positive side, this has resulted in organisations feeling that closer working relationships result in limited space for dissent.

It is notable that the contemporary political context is markedly different from that in which the WEA adopted its most radical stance. Reference has already been made in Chapter 3 to the de-politicised nature of contemporary society. There is no comparison with the 1920s when the trade union and Labour movement was numerically and politically stronger than it is today and when the WEA was under attack from the NCLC. The inclusive style of government in Wales appears to have had an incorporating effect on the voluntary sector. This context together with the dependency on state funding combined with the Welsh Government's policy agenda, and the WEA's history in relation to the state suggests that there may be limits to its potential to promote active citizenship. This poses a further set of questions for the research including the extent to which there has been a lasting 'sense of caution', as suggested by Fieldhouse, since the 1920s and, if so, what risks there are perceived to be in seeking to promote active citizenship or encouraging the expression of dissent.

4.3 WEA and active citizenship

CHAPTER FOUR
The Workers' Educational Association: Ideological Tensions, State Funding and Active Citizenship

In the final section of this chapter consideration is given to evidence of the impact of the WEA in terms of promoting active citizenship. The section begins with an examination of the citizenship discourse of the WEA's early years and continues with a review of various accounts of the activism of WEA students which span several decades in the pre-war years as well as the late twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century. The section ends by raising questions about the WEA's contemporary capacity to offer a curriculum that equips students with the political knowledge required for active citizenship.

Reference has been made above to Mansbridge's vision of the WEA enabling the realisation of citizenship (Goldman 2003, p50) and 'right and sound action in public affairs' (Jennings 2003a, p15). In view of his commitment to objectivity and his antipathy towards revolutionary social change, it is reasonable to conclude that the dominant citizenship discourse within the early years of the WEA was one of a civic republicanism in which the active citizen would participate 'responsibly' as envisaged by Blunkett (2003) one hundred years later. However, the references above to emancipation attributed to George Thompson and R.H. Tawney suggest a more radical interpretation of citizenship which allows for the possibility of conflict.

Whilst Roberts (2003c, p88) notes that, 'up until the First World War, citizenship courses, along with industrial history and economics, were the 'subject matter "gold standard"', he does not elaborate on either the curriculum content or the ideological stance taken. Smith (2008, p228) highlights the inclusion in the curriculum of 'tailored' provision for trade unionists and other activists on 'public expression' as well as the study of economics, philosophy and political theory, which suggests a concern with both the skills and the knowledge required for active citizenship, but similarly tells us little about ideology.

According to Rusoff (2003, p63) Tawney believed strongly that the working class would benefit from the public service in which WEA students would engage as a result of their studies.   There is evidence from various sources to justify this belief. Rose (2002, p292) is adamant that the WEA 'succeeded in training an effective corps of working class leaders'. He records how approximately two out of three of the three hundred and three students attending tutorial classes in 1917-18 were involved in some kind of public work in roles such as trade union official, Co-operative Society officer, local Councillor or volunteer teaching.   In addition, lodged in the WEA National Archive is an undated account (WEA n.d.) of an enquiry carried out in the autumn of 1938 into the part played by students in "public affairs". WEA District Offices were asked to report on the number of students involved in public roles ranging from Members of Parliament and Councillors at all levels of local government, to membership of bodies such as the Public Assistance Committee and Juvenile Employment Committee, and School and Hospital Governors. Sixteen out of the eighteen Districts responded recording a figure of 2,342 active students from a total of 65,000. Although this included 15 Members of Parliament and 1,800 students active at various levels of local government, the report's author considered it understated the situation.

Further evidence of activism has been gathered by Fieldhouse. Firstly, he reports on a survey of 410 tutorial class students and 128 Ruskin College students carried out in 1936 by Williams and Heath, which revealed that many WEA students had been 'prepared or stimulated by their courses to become active citizens' (Fieldhouse 1996c, p180). He also refers to a report produced by the WEA in 1943 on 'its service to democracy since 1918'. This, he writes, was presented 'as evidence that the real value of workers education is determined by the extent to which it leads to social activity outside the classroom'. Lastly, his own research into ninety-two WEA classes held before 1951 confirmed that the Association had 'generated a considerable amount of social activism' in terms of trade union and other political and civic activities (Fieldhouse 1983, p29).

More recently, researchers enquiring into learning that takes place in voluntary organisations found that the Kelvedon Branch of the WEA was 'continually training a cadre of skilled speakers, problem solvers, people who can discuss and discharge responsibility, for other groups in the village'. Issues of 'civic importance' were raised in the Branch and members were trained to 'assess evidence, debate it and make up their minds independently' (Elsdon *et al*. 1995, p127). There are striking echoes of Mansbridge's commitment to academic objectivity in this finding together with notions of responsible citizenship. What is missing, however, is any reference to the class background or any Labour movement affiliations of the branch membership.

A study in 2002 of members of two WEA branches in South Wales, both of which were located within socially disadvantaged areas with Communities First status, explored the relationship between adult learning and active citizenship. Both branches could be described as being in working class communities, one of which as a former steel and coal village witnessed considerable activity during the last miners' strike. The members tended to have low incomes, few if any qualifications and no history of social activism. The study found that significant numbers had gained new skills and confidence of the kind required for active citizenship and had become more involved in their local communities (Gass 2002, p77). However, the study also revealed low levels of understanding of the political system or ideas amongst the sample interviewed, with only two respondents citing the WEA as a source of political knowledge (Gass 2002, p76). This finding tends to justify the argument that adult education has 'lost its wider political ends' (Goldman 1999, p98) and also throws into question the WEA's claim to promote learning opportunities which:

> empower individuals of all ages and their communities through
> gaining new confidence, skills and knowledge to play an active and

democratic role in society locally, nationally and internationally (WEA Cymru 1998, p4).

This section has identified the predominant discourse of the early years as being civic republican with an emphasis on responsible citizenship similar to that espoused more recently by Blunkett. The cited studies of activism by WEA students demonstrate that the Association prepared people to take part in the machinery of government locally and nationally, and within the Labour and Co-operative movements. Through their involvement in public life and their commitment to 'sharing in rule as well as being ruled' (Lockyer 2003, p2), as discussed in Chapter 3, WEA students may be seen as citizens in the civic republican sense.   The more recent studies indicate a continuing role for WEA in developing the skills and confidence necessary for civic participation, but less evidence of engagement in the formal political arena. In view of the finding of the recent study in south Wales that WEA was barely considered as a source of political knowledge, the study will explore possible reasons for this.

4.4   Summary

This chapter has explored elements of WEA's history and contemporary situation that have a bearing on the research study. In doing so it has re-visited aspects of the ideological differences between the WEA and the NCLC referred to in Chapter 2 and has shown that the differences between the two organisations are more ambiguous than the NCLC's criticisms would suggest. Moreover, it can be seen that there were ambiguities over the interpretation of the WEA's commitment to objectivity during the early years. The more radical position adopted during the 1920s can be understood in this context, and its consequences in terms of greater control over the use of public funding and the subsequent 'sense of caution' may be seen to influence the contemporary WEA.

CHAPTER FOUR
The Workers' Educational Association: Ideological Tensions, State Funding and Active Citizenship

The receipt of state funding and the WEA's current dependency upon it is clearly of paramount importance to this study and there is an interaction between all three sections of the chapter in terms of the relationship between ideology, funding and the possibilities for different models of active citizenship within WEA.

The discussion in this chapter has led to the identification of two areas for the study to explore. The first of these relates to Hodgson's findings that voluntary organisations in Wales have felt constrained through a fear of losing state funding and Fieldhouse's perception of a 'lasting sense of precaution' within WEA as a result of the reaction of the state in the 1920s to its radical stance over workers' control of industry. The research question that follows from this is whether or not the WEA is constrained in promoting a model of active citizenship that involves conflict with the state. The second area for exploration is the finding in the study of two WEA branches (Gass 2002) that WEA was barely considered as a source of political knowledge. The study will investigate possible reasons for this being the case.

CHAPTER FIVE
Research Methodology

In this study I set out to investigate how active citizenship is conceptualised within the WEA South Wales and to explore whether or not there was a shared understanding of what constitutes citizenship and active citizenship within the Association. In view of the assertion that the consequences of the Association's support for workers' control of industry in the 1920s detailed in Chapter 4 would result in a long term 'sense of caution' (Fieldhouse 1992, p158) a further aim was to explore whether or not there were perceived to be any constraints regarding the kinds of active citizenship that the Association could promote. I also considered it important to gain an understanding of how different actors within the WEA understood the aims, values and history of the WEA as well as how they saw themselves as active citizens. Other areas for investigation included the methods which could be used to promote active citizenship, the capacity of WEA tutors to promote active citizenship and the possible reasons for WEA not being seen as a source of political knowledge in the 2002 study.

This chapter begins with a biographical section in recognition of 'the fact that research is ideologically driven' and that 'early on the qualitative researcher identifies his or her own biases' (Janesick 2000, p385), and in an attempt to reflect on how my personal history 'shapes the study' (Cresswell 2003, p182). There follows a section that explores the characteristics of 'insider research' and some of the issues surrounding it. Subsequent sections cover the research questions, the research design and the rationale for the choice of method, the research setting, the sampling approach, access to the sample, data collection and analysis and ethical considerations.

The term 'participant' has been chosen to describe those who have been interviewed for this study. As Oliver (2003, p6) notes, this term tends to be

associated with qualitative research because of 'the emphasis placed on the unique contribution of each individual to the collective nature of society'. In contrast to the term 'subject' which he suggests implies a passive role in a research project, the term 'participant' conveys a notion of the person being 'fully involved in the process'.

5.1 Biographical insights

I have been associated with WEA in one role or another since the mid-1970s when I worked in the north-east of England on a community development project. My first involvement was as a Part-time Tutor teaching a short course on the Welfare State in South Shields. On moving to south Wales in 1976 I made contact with the WEA locally and over time took on further part-time tutoring work. In 1985 I was appointed as Tutor/Organiser for the WEA in Gwent, a position I held until 1996 when I filled a new role managing quality across WEA South Wales. Within a year of leaving WEA at the end of 1999 to work for a local university I became a Trustee of the organisation and am now one of two Vice-Chairs. I have chaired the Audit and Curriculum Committees and currently chair the Voluntary Movement Committee whose role is to strengthen the membership and democratic elements of the association.

In 2002, as part of a Master's degree, I undertook a study of adult learners in two WEA branches in south Wales which explored the possibility of a relationship between learning within and participating in the democratic structure of the Association, and the development of attributes required for active citizenship (Gass, 2002). The study adopted a typology of attributes consisting of skills, confidence and knowledge (Benn, 2000:245). Whilst the WEA experience was the most frequently reported influence in respect of gaining skills and confidence, only a small minority identified the WEA as a source of political knowledge. Moreover, the sample reported low levels of knowledge of the political system

and understanding of political ideas. These findings stimulated an interest in the place of political education within WEA South Wales and a desire to investigate the Association's conceptualisation of active citizenship.

I joined the staff of the WEA at a time when five of the six Tutor/Organisers, myself included, were active members of the Labour Party. I succeeded Llew Smith, whose predecessor was Neil Kinnock, on his election as a Labour Member of the European Parliament. These details, together with the account below of my role in a later constitutional debate about the WEA's relationship with the working class, are included to shed light on my life history and ideological position. I left the Labour Party in 2000 out of disillusionment with New Labour after twenty years of membership, during which I held various offices in the party at branch and constituency level and served as a Borough Councillor for nine years.

Throughout my involvement with WEA South Wales I have sought to ensure that the WEA sustains its commitment to social purpose and emancipatory education. In the light of the findings from the 2002 study, I proposed a motion at the following Annual General Meeting urging Council and staff to explore ways of revitalising political education within the WEA's curriculum which was carried unanimously (WEA South Wales, 2003). At the next Annual General Meeting several amendments to the Memorandum of Association were proposed. One of these, which was represented as a step to 'modernise' the Association, sought to delete from the organisation's principles the words 'it shall provide in particular for the needs of working class adults'. I played a key part in the debate that ensued and the amendment fell as there was not a sufficiently large majority in favour (WEA South Wales, 2004:6). The following year a compromise was reached within the governing body and agreed by the Annual General Meeting over a new form of wording recognising the Association 'has an historic commitment to working class education' (WEA, 2005:6).

At the same meeting the Memorandum of Association was also amended to allow for the provision of courses that 'will assist in the promotion of active citizenship'. I had argued for the term 'active citizenship' to replace a reference to making 'better citizens' on the grounds of the latter's moralistic connotations. This argument was accepted, yet there was no discussion at the time as to what the Association understood 'active citizenship' to mean and as the mover of the amendment I must bear some responsibility for a lack of clarity and an unspoken assumption that there would be a shared understanding of both the concept itself and the implications for the curriculum. In retrospect, given that citizenship is such a 'complex and slippery' concept (Benn, 2000: 244) which is open to various interpretations, as has been discussed in Chapter 3, it was perhaps naïve to have made such an assumption.

This study, and the motivation for undertaking it, needs to be understood in this context. There is a sense in which the research provides an opportunity to rectify a situation, which was partly of my own creating, whereby a decision was made without its implications being fully understood or debated. Whilst acknowledging that the principal purpose of research is the production of knowledge, and being conscious of the risk of the findings being 'distorted by ideas about how the world ought to be' (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p20), I am motivated by a desire to generate a discussion within the Association in relation to its aim to promote active citizenship with a view, if it proves to be necessary, to develop policies for its achievement. As another student undertaking a Professional Doctorate wrote 'after all you don't do action research in order to simply maintain the status quo' (Moore, 2007: 30).

I combine an academic interest in the subject of citizenship with active engagement as a citizen in and beyond my local community underpinned by a preference for a particular theoretical understanding of citizenship. Also, I have been influenced in my practice and beliefs about adult learning by the ideas of Paolo Freire (1996). My particular bias in relation to citizenship theory is towards

the civic republican tradition and I share the view that citizenship is essentially concerned with political relationships between citizens and the state. I see the defence and extension of collective rights together with the pursuit of social justice as being central to this process.

My own active citizenship has embraced both political activity and volunteering in the community. Political activity has included participation within the formal political process as an elected representative as mentioned above; support for campaigns and pressure groups such as Greenpeace, Child Poverty Action Group, Shelter and Friends of the Earth; participation in demonstrations on a range of issues including nuclear disarmament, solidarity with striking steelworkers and miners, unemployment, the Iraq war, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, cuts in public services - and supporting parliamentary lobbies on matters such as abortion rights and global issues, as well as lobbying councilors and the local Assembly Member and Member of Parliament. Currently I co-ordinate anti-cuts activity in the area where I live. Voluntary activity has included being a school governor, Trustee of the local Citizen's Advice Bureau, involvement with the local Fairtrade Forum and, as mentioned above, significant involvement with the WEA South Wales.

The implications of my 'insider' status will be considered further in the section on insider research below.

5. 2   Insider research

Insider research is the term applied when researchers carry out research 'in and on' their own organisation (Coghlan 2003, p456) or 'with communities or identity groups of which one is a member' (Kanuha 2000, p440). This section considers the challenges of insider research as well as some of the benefits associated with it.

Familiarity is seen as a particular problem for qualitative researchers investigating educational settings (Delamont 2002, p47), a problem which is arguably exacerbated when the research is conducted by insiders. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that whilst in 'strange' settings a researcher's faith in his or her preconceptions may be quickly undermined, in familiar surroundings they may be harder to put to one side (1995, p103). Coghlan advises insider researchers to 'learn to look at the familiar from a fresh perspective' and to recognise 'how their perspective is grounded in their functional role or occupational sub-culture' (2003, p456).

I have attempted to identify and reflect upon my preconceptions as well as how my role could impact upon the research. I acknowledge that when thinking of my experiences of the WEA of twenty years ago and comparing them with the contemporary WEA I have a tendency to idealise the past. I consider that there has been a steady drift away from social purpose and an over emphasis on subjects such as art and ICT compared with the curriculum at that time which included women's studies, social sciences and a range of courses on contemporary political issues such as the environment and world development. Whilst the former full-time member of staff may idealise the past, the present day Trustee may be over critical of the changes that have taken place. There is a danger that these preconceptions could, for example, cause me to presume incorrectly that art and ICT classes are predominantly skills based and not a forum for debate or exploration of political ideas.

I must also acknowledge my uncertainty about the commitment of people in the WEA to the social purpose agenda and the promotion of active citizenship. I am capable of presuming that those from my own generation who share a history and a particular world view will be positive towards the promotion of active citizenship and of fearing that younger people who have experienced a different political culture and history may not be.

As well as being familiar *with* the WEA I am familiar *to* the WEA which raises a further set of issues. Seven of the staff in the sample knew me when I was employed by the Association. I was familiar to all the Trustees and senior managers that were interviewed, and to all but five of the sixteen staff members who participated in the study. It has been important to reflect upon the possible implications of this. It is possible that participants' perceptions of the researcher could affect the data collected. For example, participants might tell me what they imagine I wanted to hear, possibly distorting their accounts in line with their impressions of what I would consider to be an 'appropriate' response (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, p130). Clearly, this may be unconscious or it may be due to a 'wish to present themselves in an especially favourable light' (Atkinson *et al.* 2003, p121).

The issue of power is an important factor in the relationship between the researcher and participant. In this study I recognise that I am researching within a 'context of unequal power relations' (Griffiths 1998, p37) in various dimensions which is intensified by my insider status. The first element of this is the issue of the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee regardless of the researcher's status in the organisation. Whilst power can reside with interviewer and interviewee alike, typically more power resides with the interviewer. It is the interviewer who defines the situation and who generates the questions and the interviewee who is under scrutiny whilst the interviewer is not (Cohen *et al*. 2000, p122). The fact that in this case the researcher is in a position of power within the Association as a member of the Council increases the degree of inequality in the relationship. A further dimension to be considered is that of gender inequality and how the aforementioned aspects of power could be compounded when female participants are interviewed by a male researcher.

Despite the challenges there are undoubtedly benefits to insider research. For example, Kanuha found that being an insider enhanced 'the depth and breadth of

understanding of a population that may not be accessible to a non-native scientist' (2000, p444). Similarly, Hobbs suspects that, when investigating entrepreneurship and policing in the East End of London, his insider status meant that he had access to settings and information that 'might not otherwise been available to him' (1988, p15). Sherif makes a similar point about access but adds that the status brought her an 'enhanced rapport with individuals' (2001, p446). Certainly, in this study it was an advantage to understand the structure of the WEA sufficiently well to be able to plan the sample effectively. Similarly, knowing who to contact to arrange interviews and venues was extremely helpful. Like Sherif, I felt there was an enhanced rapport with those participants whom I knew already.

5.3   Research questions

During the discussion in the preceding chapters a number of areas for the study to explore have been highlighted. The key questions that emerge from these discussions were identified as follows:

How familiar are different actors within the WEA with the Association's aims, values and history?

How are the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship understood within the WEA?

Is there a common understanding of active citizenship within the organisation?

What kinds of active citizenship can WEA promote and how can it be promoted effectively?

What capacity do tutors have to introduce WEA students to political knowledge?

Why is the WEA no longer being seen as a source of political knowledge?

Willig (2008, p21) argues that the reflexive researcher should 'examine very carefully' his or her personal and professional reasons behind the choice of research questions. My motivations have been outlined in section 5.1 and the reasons for asking these questions can be summarised as follows. Following the earlier study carried out as part of my MA, I was interested in carrying out further research within WEA South Wales into the place of political education and learning for active citizenship in the Association. The last two questions particularly were stimulated by the findings of this study. The part I played in formulating the Association's aim in respect of promoting active citizenship and the manner in which that was done, as described above, resulted in my posing the second, third and fourth questions with a view to stimulating discussion and debate within the Association. The first question underpins all the others and relates to the discussion in Chapter 2 about the purpose of adult education.

5.4   Research design

I chose a case study design for this research for, as Bryman (2004, p49) states, the emphasis of the case study 'tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting'. This was considered appropriate because of the exploratory nature of the study and my particular interest in the WEA South Wales. The purpose of the research was to undertake an in-depth investigation of the Association in relation to active citizenship which fits well with Bryman's characterisation of the case as 'an object of interest in its own right' and of the researcher's aim being to 'provide an in-depth elucidation of it' (Bryman 2004, p50).

I adopted a qualitative research strategy instead of a quantitative approach because of my preference for an 'emphasis on the ways in which individuals interpret their social world' to the 'practices and norms of the natural science

model' (Bryman 2004, p20). Furthermore, I was interested in 'the precise particulars of such matters as people's understandings and interactions' (Silverman 2005, p9).

The argument that qualitative methods can be limited in the extent to which their findings can be generalised to other settings is acknowledged. However, this study does not seek to generalise beyond the setting of the case study. The purpose of the study is to investigate a particular social phenomenon within the setting and, where appropriate, to make recommendations regarding policy.

The decision to adopt a qualitative approach will be considered further in the section below on research methods.

5.5   Rationale for choice of method

I chose to collect data through semi-structured interviews with people in different roles within the organisation. Interviewing was chosen in preference to alternative methods such as observation or focus groups for several reasons. Firstly, there were practical considerations such as constraints on my time and, in the case of focus groups, the logistical challenges of getting people together who work across a wide geographical area. Secondly, interviewing offered the chance of gathering 'rich detailed answers' to the research questions (Bryman 2004, p320). Observation might have been a valuable additional method to have used, particularly in the case of tutors to see if and how their teaching promoted active citizenship. However, as an alternative to interviewing it would have been very time consuming and on its own would have been unlikely to have provided helpful data, especially in the case of those participants not engaged in teaching.

Semi-structured interviews were considered to be more appropriate than unstructured interviews because the research had a 'fairly clear focus' and there

were 'specific issues to address' (Bryman 2004, p324). A more structured approach using a questionnaire would have had the advantage of scope, in the sense that a larger sample could have been involved as it could have been administered relatively quickly. However, such a structured method of collecting data 'means that the researcher will have made certain decisions about what s/he expects to find' (Bryman 2004, p282). In the case of this research study, a structured approach would have involved offering participants a range of choices, for example, in relation to the meaning of citizenship, which would have been pre-determined by the researcher. Whilst the chosen method allowed participants to 'project their own ways of defining the world' (Cohen *et al*. 2000, p146) or have 'leeway in how to reply' (Bryman 2004, p321), a structured approach would have effectively constrained their responses as well as potentially distorting the data by suggesting answers that they would not have thought about otherwise.

Adopting an interview guide enabled me to ask the same open questions of each participant whilst leaving me free to ask follow up questions to explore a discussion point more deeply, to clarify responses where they were unclear, to probe where responses were especially brief or to pose a question differently where it appeared that a participant had misunderstood it. In contrast to the prepared questions that had been carefully planned, the follow up questions were improvised since responses could not be predicted (Wengraf 2001, p5).

5. 6   Research setting

The Workers' Educational Association South Wales is a registered charity and a company limited by Guarantee which has provided adult education in community venues across the South Wales area since its foundation in 1907. The Association is funded by the Welsh Government on the same basis as a Further Education College.

The Association has a democratic structure with elections to its Council taking place at the Annual General Meeting. Council is made up of representatives of local branches, individual members and affiliated organisations. Reflecting the various legal entities outlined above, Council members act as Trustees, directors and governors. During the 2008/9 year there were twenty-four members on the Council (WEA South Wales 2010, p11).

Whilst Council has overall strategic responsibility for the direction of the Association, there is a management structure which at the time the research was carried out comprised a Senior Management Team made up of a General Secretary, four Regional Education Managers, a Finance Manager and a Human Resources Manager.

Planning and managing the curriculum and provision is devolved to four geographical regions, namely the East, Valleys, South and West regions. In addition there is a Workplace Learning team and a network of Online Learning Centres. Each regional team consists of a Learning Manager, a Development Worker, an Administrator and between twenty-five and fifty part-time tutors. During the 2008/9 year there were fifty-three 'core' staff, of whom twenty-three carried out 'support' roles, and approximately one hundred and forty part-time tutors teaching on a regular basis (WEA South Wales 2009b, p2).

The Association's Human Resources Report for 2008/9 shows that 69% of the workforce were female and 31% male, and 92% were white and 8% from 'other ethnic origin' (WEA South Wales 2009c, pp5&6).

5.7   Sampling approach

A purposive sampling approach, that is one which enables a researcher to 'build up a sample that is satisfactory to their specific needs' (Cohen *et al*. 2000, p103),

was decided upon in order to interview people in certain roles within the organisation. I considered it to be important to investigate how people with different responsibilities conceptualised citizenship and how this may vary according to the kind of function they performed within the organisation.

The sample was designed to include people with strategic responsibilities and those with what could be described as an operational role in terms of the curriculum. The people with strategic responsibilities in the organisation are the Trustees and senior managers, namely the General Secretary and Regional Education Managers. Those with operational roles are the Learning Mangers, Development Workers and Part-time Tutors. On the basis of the roles of these two groups they are referred to from now on as the 'strategic' and 'operational' groups respectively.

When selecting Trustees I decided to include those with particular responsibilities in terms of being an officer of the Association or a committee Chair. One exception was made to include a Trustee who had joined the Council more recently, both for contrast but also to offset the gender imbalance. In determining which staff should be included in the 'strategic' group the General Secretary was considered to be essential on account of the key strategic responsibility of the role. Regional Education Managers were also identified as performing a vital strategic role in view of their overall responsibility for the WEA's programme in their region. However, I felt that it was impractical to interview all four Regional Education Managers due to time constraints, so I decided to include two in the sample to make it both manageable and to allow for contrasting opinions at that level within the organisation. All four regions have distinguishing features, so picking any two would have provided contrasts. The final choice was made in order to include managers who had come to the WEA via very different routes.

Having selected two Regional Educational Managers it seemed appropriate to interview people with operational roles from the same regions. As a result the

'operational' group consisted of a Learning Manager, Development Worker and five tutors from each of the regions. The overall number of tutors was set somewhat arbitrarily at ten in order to make the sample size manageable. The sample was expanded to include two additional Development Workers with responsibilities for specific aspects of the curriculum. As a result, the 'operational' group numbered sixteen made up of two Learning Managers, four Development Workers and ten Part-time Tutors.

In selecting the tutors consideration was given to achieving a spread in terms of the number of hours taught, the length of involvement with the Association and the subject taught. Whilst it is not claimed that the group of Part-time Tutors was representative in any way it was varied in several respects. In terms of hours taught, six out of ten taught for ten hours per week or longer with one teaching twenty-four hours whilst at the other extreme another taught for only two hours per week. The Part-time Tutors in the sample had worked for the WEA for periods ranging from eight months to fifteen years, with the average length of time being seven years. Whilst not all the subjects taught across the WEA curriculum were represented amongst the sample, there was a range encompassing Basic Skills, Crafts, English, ESOL, Environmental Studies, History, Information Technology and Psychology. I was assisted with the selection of the tutors by the Regional Education Managers once the aim of securing a varied sample had been explained. An initial approach was made to the tutors by the regional staff who passed on to me the contact details of those willing to take part. Subsequently I followed up this initial contact by sending further information about the study.

A decision was taken early in planning the study not to include WEA students in the sample. This was largely because my previous study (Gass 2002) had focussed on the perspectives of WEA students and the findings of that study had prompted an interest in a study of those responsible for making and implementing the Association's policy in respect of learning and active

citizenship. I also felt that including students in the study would have meant either expanding the sample, which would have been impractical in view of the time constraints and the qualitative strategy that had been chosen, or reducing the number of WEA Trustees and staff in order to make the sample size manageable. The latter option was rejected as it would have limited the scope in terms of the data that could have been gathered from the groups in which I was primarily interested on this occasion.

I considered that a sample of twenty-six people would be sufficient to generate a broad range of data in relation to the key research questions. As Cohen *et al*. make clear, in using a purposive sample there can be no pretence that it is representative of the wider population, rather it is 'deliberately and unashamedly selective and biased' (2000, p104). Delamont (2002, p84) argues that the method used for putting together a sample is 'not that important'. However, she continues, it is crucial to be honest and reflexive and to 'think carefully' about how data will be affected by the selection of the sample. She adds that careful thought does need to be given to matters such as the age, gender, race and class of the sample.

The sample was not selected to reflect the demographic characteristics of the WEA staff and Council accurately. In retrospect more could have been done to achieve a more representative gender balance particularly. However, in respect of age and race the sample does have similar characteristics to those of the workforce.

The age profile of the staff sample does not exactly match that of the workforce except in so far as whereas in 2008/9 there were three members of staff in the '40 to 49', '50 to 59' and '60 and over' age bands for every one employee in the '16 to 20', '20 to 29' and '30 to 39' age bands (WEA South Wales 2009c, p8), a similar pattern is evident in the sample with a ratio of 2.6 to 1. There are no data available on the age profile of the Council so a similar comparison cannot be

made for Trustees. However, it is important to note that one was under 30, two were aged between 50 and 59, and four were aged 60 or over. Eight participants in the 'strategic' group were aged 50 or more, whilst seven from the 'operational' group were in the same age bands. Nine participants in the 'operational' group were aged between 30 and 49 compared with only one in the 'strategic' group. Thus the 'strategic' group can be seen to be composed of predominantly 'older people', whilst the 'operational' group is more evenly balanced as between people aged under and over 50.

The gender breakdown of the sample is not representative of the proportions of men and women working for the Association or on the Council. Whereas 69% of the WEA workforce was female only about a third of the employees in the sample were women. The gender breakdown of the Council was approximately 60% male and 40% female, whilst that of the sample of Trustees was 70% and 30% respectively. This imbalance is due largely to the decision to include Trustees with the responsibilities described above who were predominantly male, and to the inclusion of five male Part-time Tutors. The 'strategic' group comprised six men and four women, whilst the 'operational' group was made up of six men and ten women.

Turning to race, there were two members of staff from non-white ethnic origins which resulted in a slightly higher proportion of the staff sample than that of the workforce as a whole. All the Trustees were white whereas the Council had one member from a non-white ethnic origin.

In addition to the demographic data summarised above, details of qualifications were gathered from each participant. All but one of the 'strategic' group were graduates. All three senior managers had Masters degrees, whilst two of the Trustees had postgraduate qualifications including one PhD. Twelve out of sixteen participants in the 'operational' group were graduates. Eight of the ten Part-time Tutors were graduates and four of them had postgraduate

qualifications including one with a PhD and two with Masters degrees. Both Learning Managers had degrees, one at Master's level. Two of the four Development Workers were graduates. It can be seen from the above that a greater proportion of the 'strategic' group were graduates.

In order to assist the reader to identify the roles of the various participants a list may be found at Appendix I.

5.8   Access

Permission was sought formally by e-mail from the General Secretary to undertake the research study following an initial informal conversation (see Appendix II). As an 'insider' there was no difficulty in arranging access as many of the interviewees were already known to me. There was a high level of co-operation from managers and all the interviewees. Where possible WEA staff were particularly helpful in co-ordinating interview appointments to minimise the amount of travelling involved.

5.9   Data collection

Interviews were carried out over a period lasting from early October 2009 until late February 2010. Twenty of the interviews were completed before Christmas and a further five by the middle of January. The final interview was delayed due to heavy snow making it impossible to meet sooner. I had hoped to complete the interviewing in three months but this turned out to be impossible for logistical reasons.

Interviewing took place mostly at WEA offices but where it was more convenient for participants I visited them at home. This applied in the case of one Trustee

and three tutors. I was conscious that this might be seen as an intrusion by participants but all were very welcoming and there appeared to be no negative impact on the process.

I had anticipated that the interviews would take about an hour and on average they lasted for sixty-five minutes. However, the interview length varied considerably from about half an hour to nearly two hours. Interviews with Trustees and senior managers tended to last longer than average whilst those with Part-time Tutors tended to be shorter. This is not particularly surprising as some Trustees and all the senior managers had been involved with adult education for many years and had a lot of experience to draw on compared with some of the Part-time Tutors. Also one would expect those responsible for the leadership of the organisation to have more to say than, for example, a relatively new Part-time Tutor teaching for relatively few hours per week for whom the WEA would not be such a significant part of their life.

Interviews were recorded using a small digital recorder with the participant's permission. Although Delamont (2002, p127) warns that recording interviews may inhibit participants or lead to some refusing to speak at all, neither appeared to be the case in this study. This may have been because many of the participants knew me or because the opening question, which was about the nature and length of their involvement with the WEA, was one which they could answer relatively easily and was designed to some extent to put them at their ease.

All the interviews were transcribed and participants were given the choice of being sent the transcript. Eighteen participants opted to have a copy of their transcript.

An interview guide was used to ensure a parity of approach with each participant. The guide can be seen at Appendix III. The interview questions were grouped

according to the main research questions. The first set of questions was devised to discover how familiar participants were with the WEA's aims, values and history. The questions covered the participant's role within the organisation, their length of involvement and how they had become involved including what had attracted them to the WEA. Participants were also asked what they knew about the WEA's aims, values and history at the point of their involvement and what they had learned since. They were then asked what their involvement with WEA meant to them, how they identified with the WEA's aims and values and how they saw the WEA's contemporary role. As well as seeking to build up a picture of the participant's understanding of and involvement with the WEA, these questions were designed to explore both their values and their attitudes towards the WEA's purpose.

The second group of questions was aimed at identifying how participants understood the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship. Participants were asked to say what they thought the terms citizenship and active citizenship meant. They were then asked to describe ways in which they were an active citizen and how this experience contributed to their role in WEA. It was anticipated that these questions would reveal whether or not there was a common understanding of active citizenship within the organisation, but an additional question was included to test whether or not participants had a sense of what was meant by the WEA when using the term active citizenship as in its constitution.

The following set of questions related to the kinds of active citizenship WEA could promote and the methods that could be adopted. Up until this point all the questions had been open ended and I had deliberately avoided introducing any models of citizenship or active citizenship so as not to influence participants' responses. Furthermore, I had declined to answer when asked by some people for my own definition of the concepts. Anticipating that not all participants would conceptualise citizenship in terms of political relationships, at this stage I decided

it was necessary to refer to different models of active citizenship as a preamble to the question on the kinds of active citizenship WEA could seek to promote. As a follow up question for those participants who did not identify any risks that may be associated with a particular model or approach, I asked if there might be any risks or constraints and if so what these might be. Further questions covered the ways in which WEA could promote active citizenship and their views on what needed to be included in the curriculum to enable WEA learners to become active citizens.

Two questions were devised to investigate the capacity of Part-time Tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge. These questions were put to all participants as it was felt that this was an issue for the organisation as a whole and therefore one on which everyone's comments would be significant. Firstly, participants were asked for their thoughts on the skills, experience and knowledge Part-time Tutors needed to have to be able to encourage active citizenship directly through the curriculum or indirectly through creating a democratic learning environment. Secondly, they were questioned on the support, if any, they thought that tutors needed to develop these skills. It was decided not to ask Part-time Tutors directly about their individual capacity as it was felt that this could be threatening, whereas it was considered that an indirect approach could allow people to make general points about all Part-time Tutors and thereby identify their own needs without embarrassment.

Finally, I outlined how before the Second World War the WEA was well known as a source of knowledge and understanding about politics, economics and international relations, and that a recent small scale study of WEA members revealed that this was no longer the case. I then asked participants what they thought might be the reasons for this. The interview ended with my asking what steps might be taken to change this in view of the WEA's commitment to promoting active citizenship and democratic participation.

Demographic details were collected through the use of a sheet that was completed with participants before the start of the interview (see Appendix IV). Information gathered about participants in this way included their role in WEA, length of involvement, age group, qualifications and, in the case of tutors, the courses taught and their average weekly working hours.

5. 10   Data analysis

Initially I had intended to code the data without the assistance of a software package. However, after attempting to do so and becoming rather overwhelmed by the amount of data I attended a training session on the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software package NVivo 8. Having seen the benefits of using NVivo I decided to use it for storing, managing and coding the data. Atkinson *et al.* (2003, p152) succinctly describe the twin purpose of such software as facilitating 'the attachment of codes to strips of data' and enabling the researcher to 'retrieve all instances in the data that share a code'. Coffey and Atkinson (1996, p12) warn that, since such computer-based procedures involve the coding of data, there is 'a clear danger that coding and analysis will be treated as synonymous'. The warning has been heeded in this study and whilst the software was extremely useful in identifying themes in the data and in quantifying instances when certain keywords, phrases or concepts were present in the data, I recognised that this was only a tool in the process towards analysing the data.

I decided to code and analyse the data for the two groups of participants, identified in section 5.7 as the 'strategic' and 'operational' groups, separately prior to considering the similarities and difference between the two sets of data later. This distinction is reflected in the way the findings are presented in Chapter 6 which deals with the 'strategic' group, and Chapter 7 which relates the findings from the 'operational' group and makes comparisons between the two groups.

In reaching the decision to bring Trustees and senior managers together into one group for the purposes of analysing the data and writing up the findings, it was recognised that their roles and time commitment to the organisation are significantly different and that as a consequence the senior managers' responses as the full-time paid leaders of the organisation might differ from those of the volunteer Trustees. However, it was felt that rather than have two separate groups, one of which would have been very small, it was legitimate to examine together the responses of those with responsibility for the strategic direction of the WEA. Similarly, when constructing the 'operational' group it was understood that the roles and responsibilities within the group differed and that whilst some participants were employed full-time others worked for a limited number of hours. Nevertheless, it was felt that the common characteristic for all participants, namely their contribution to fulfilling the Association's strategic aims at an operational level, was sufficient to consider them as a 'real' grouping for the purposes of the research.

After coding and then gathering together the data sharing the same code the process of analysis began. This involved 'searching for themes and patterns' in the data before beginning to interpret the data (Coffey and Atkinson 1996, p9). This was done by bringing together the coded data under each of the main interview questions and identifying the different categories of responses that emerged from the data, together with ambiguities, contradictions and similarities between the responses.

During this process and when writing up and interpreting the findings it was necessary for me to confront some of the preconceptions that were referred to in section 5.3 above. For example, whereas the 'strategic' group turned out, as I had anticipated they might, to be generally more politically experienced than the 'operational' group, as will be seen in Chapter 7 there were surprises in the data from the latter group in respect of their positive suggestions for promoting active

citizenship. I was also confronted with data from the 'operational' group that confounded my preconception that art and ICT courses were unlikely to be sites for political discussion or the development of the attributes for active citizenship. I was conscious during the process of analysis of Wengraf's advice that just as interviews are not 'asocial, ahistorical events' in that one does not set aside one's prejudices, one is similarly affected by one's past and one's 'blindspots' when it comes to analysing the material produced (Wengraf 2001, p4). In analysing and writing up the data I aspired to meet Pring's notion of virtue in educational research, namely 'to find out and to tell the truth as it is and not as one would like it to be' (Pring 2001, p421).

I was also conscious of the 'value of multiple analytic strategies' such as examining the narrative form or the semantic content of the data (Coffey & Atkinson 1996, p16). However, despite recognising the potential benefit in terms of enriching the analysis, I felt that the constraints on the length of the study meant that this was impractical.

5.11   Ethical considerations

The research proposal was submitted to the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee for approval and the Committee's decision can be found at Appendix V.

I took steps to ensure that all participants gave their informed consent by providing information about the study and asking them to complete a consent form. In signing the consent form they were indicating that they had read and understood the information sheet, they agreed to take part, and understood that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without giving a reason. The information sheet and consent form may be found at Appendix VI and VII respectively.

Whilst the sample did not include anyone from generally recognised vulnerable groups, I was aware of the need to avoid causing any kind of harm to participants, particularly in the context of this study being 'insider' research. For, as Costley and Gibbs (2006, p89) highlight, research involving colleagues 'raises issues of ethics in different ways' due to the particular nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Whilst the academically based researcher can 'detach themselves emotionally from the research context' this is not the case for 'work-based researchers' whose colleagues are 'temporarily transformed into research subjects'. Costley and Gibb (2006, p92) propose an 'ethic of care' arguing that caring for others is a stronger notion than the generally accepted idea of not harming research participants.

I was conscious that some participants might find some of the questions, particularly those to do with the meaning of citizenship and active citizenship, difficult to answer particularly as 'people do not have a clear idea of what it means to be a citizen' (Miller 2000b, p26) or they may not understand the questions (Miller & Glassner 2004, p128). I made every effort to respect participants' responses and to exercise an 'ethic of care' by reassuring participants who were anxious about their responses that their contributions were valuable. In the event there were several participants who were embarrassed because they felt their answers were inadequate. Arguably, their embarrassment was heightened due to my 'insider' status and my familiarity to most of the participants.

For example, one of the operational group participants would end responses with comments such as 'I don't know if that is what you mean by citizenship though' and 'is that the kind of thing? I don't know'. Despite my attempts to value her responses she went on to question whether she was 'the only terrible one who doesn't really understand what it (citizenship) means'. When given the opportunity to add anything at the end of the interview she commented 'I am just

sorry really if I wasn't any good'. Once again I sought to reassure by saying that her answers had been 'perfectly valid' and reiterated that the purpose of the research was to explore the different ways WEA people thought of citizenship and whether WEA had a shared view and, if not, how that might be achieved. The interview ended with her reflecting that to be an active citizen she needed to become more aware of 'the political side' and get more involved.

Whilst I had anticipated that some participants would find the citizenship questions difficult to answer I was less prepared for embarrassment over the question about the WEA's history. Another participant ended her answer by saying 'I am really struggling to give you the answer that you need'. Despite my attempt to reassure her by saying 'don't feel that there is a right answer', near the end of the interview she returned to this saying 'I feel embarrassed that I couldn't answer your question about the history, it's not for lack of knowing it is lack of not having a clear thought I think'. However, she concluded by saying 'I just think that it has been a really interesting discussion and it has made me think about a lot of things' indicating that overall the interview had not been a negative experience.

I was particularly concerned with confidentiality and the need to preserve the anonymity of participants for as Christians (2005, p145) warns insiders often recognise pseudonyms. In a fairly small and close knit organisation such as the WEA people know one another's history and characteristics. This posed a particular challenge as I was anxious to ensure that none of the participants could be recognised and yet needed to provide sufficient information for readers to have a feel for the setting and the participants so that they could evaluate the claims made in the study. A range of demographic and other information was collected about the participants such as age, the length of their involvement with WEA and, in the case of tutors, their subject area. However, much of this has not been included in the thesis as it would have made participants more recognisable. Pseudonyms have been used for all the participants and in some

cases these are deliberately gender neutral in an attempt to protect a participant's identity further.

5.12   Summary

In this chapter I have set out to explain the approach that I adopted in a reflexive manner, starting by tracing my lengthy involvement with the WEA, outlining my motivation for undertaking the study and revealing my ideological bias. This was followed by exploring how my 'insider' status might impact upon the study and summarising the reasoning behind the research questions. Further sections have explained the research design, provided a rationale for the choice of method, described the research setting, sought to justify the sampling approach, touched on access, detailed the processes of data collection and analysis, and addressed ethical considerations.

The next two chapters relate the findings from the interviews with the 'strategic' and 'operational' groups respectively.

CHAPTER SIX
Findings: The Strategic Group

This is the first of two chapters that deal with the research findings and it draws upon the interviews with ten people who have been referred to in the previous chapter as the 'strategic' group in that their roles as Trustees and Senior Managers differentiate them from the 'operational' group comprising Part-time Tutors, Development Workers and Learning Managers. The 'strategic' group consists of seven Trustees and three senior managers who are introduced briefly in the first section below.

The chapter is in several sections which relate to the principal research questions. The first considers participants' familiarity with the WEA's aims, values and history. It covers questions about their awareness of what the WEA stands for, whether or not they see themselves as belonging to a movement with a particular history and whether or not they are committed to social purpose. The second section deals with how the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are understood by the participants and whether or not there is a common understanding of active citizenship within the organisation. The third section reviews participants' attitudes on the kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote and the methods that may be adopted in its promotion. This addresses questions about the risks that may be associated with any particular model and whether the Association might feel constrained through fear of losing funding. It also includes participants' views on whether active citizenship is to be promoted directly by means of a discrete curriculum, or indirectly whether through the curriculum as a whole, through a democratic learning environment, through participation in the Association's democratic structure, or through a combination of some or all of these. The fourth section concerns the capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge, facilitate the development of

'critical consciousness' (Newman 2000, p277), or create a learning environment through which the skills of democratic participation may be acquired. The fifth section explores why the WEA appears no longer to be seen as a source of political knowledge.

6.1   Familiarity with WEA's aims, values and history

This section introduces the 'strategic' group of participants, relating what attracted them to their roles within the Association, before outlining the findings regarding their awareness of what the WEA stands for, their sense of belonging to a movement with a particular history and, in the context of a 'shift to the right' and an increased emphasis on the economic purpose of adult education, their commitment to social purpose.

6.1.1 The attraction of the WEA

The section begins by drawing on the findings from a question about what attracted the participants to their particular role in the Association to introduce the ten participants who constitute the 'strategic' group. All seven Trustees interviewed knew about the WEA, to varying degrees, before they became Trustees and they were drawn to the role by a variety of factors. Similarly, all three senior managers were well aware of WEA before being appointed to their roles, and there were some common elements in what attracted them to the organisation. Several themes emerged from their responses such as a synergy between upbringing and the WEA's values, a history in education combined with a belief in the importance of second chance education, a commitment to lifelong learning and an identification with the Association's ethos.

Upbringing and background were cited by three of the participants. The role of Trustee appealed to Morgan, who had close contact with the WEA as a young trade union official and later joined a WEA class in retirement, because he liked the Association's democracy. He elaborated: 'I'm all for the business of collectivism and democracy, I'm all for that because it's part and parcel of my very upbringing'. Upbringing and background were also cited by senior managers Pat and Ceri. Before taking this role Pat had been a part-time tutor and as a result was aware of the Association's commitment to communities and its work with trade unions at the time. Having come from the trade union movement Pat saw the WEA as 'quite a natural environment for me to be in'. Ceri spoke of having been brought up as a socialist and considered working with the WEA to be 'coming back' to those 'socialist roots'.

Three Trustees cited their own background in education and identification with the Association's commitment to promoting second chance education for disadvantaged adults as the most significant motivating factor. Lyn, who had 'always been a fierce advocate of adult education, second chance education', first had contact with the local branch as a tutor at the same time as being 'heavily involved in Llafur' which was known at the time as the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History. With a background in researching coal mining and miners, WEA had appeared to Lyn to be 'quite a user friendly, empathetic, sympathetic organisation in tandem with my interests'. Chris, a retired teacher, who remembered there being a WEA branch in the village where she grew up and who had enjoyed the opportunities and vibrant community provided by her local branch later in life, explained that she was motivated by the desire to 'give something back' and just wanted 'so many people who haven't had the opportunity to get involved'. For Terry, also retired after a lifetime's career in teaching, becoming a Trustee was 'a natural step' that would allow for a continued involvement in education and workers' education.

A commitment to lifelong learning was clearly the motivating factor for Edward who was persuaded by trade union colleagues to get involved after attending two annual meetings of the Association. He described how he had 'had been doing evening classes for many, many years'. Rowan, also a Trustee, who had grown up knowing about the Association through family ties and had been employed by WEA on leaving university, linked together an appreciation for the value of lifelong learning and the organisation's democratic ethos. Working in deprived communities and later in trade union education, Rowan had seen 'what lifelong learning did for people and how it actually changed people'. WEA was more than simply a provider of courses, because its democratic structure made it possible for 'people to come back into that system that they'd been empowered by and to do something and change something and shape it'.

The WEA's ethos and values were also important attractions for two of the senior managers. Ceri knew that what WEA stood for was 'what I wanted'. The WEA was 'about equality, it is about giving people a chance' combined with a 'positive approach' and a belief that 'things can change for the better'. Whilst recognising the pressures associated with public funding, such as the quality system, Ceri believed that WEA still maintains 'an independent spirit which has been there for over a hundred years'. Alex, the third senior manager, who had first encountered WEA whilst working for a partner organisation and then became a part-time tutor, described being attracted by the WEA's approach of 'empowering people to build confidence' and the flexible approach to teaching methods, recalling that 'it wasn't talk and chalk'. Lionel, the seventh of the Trustees, had originally known about WEA through his membership of the Labour Party and attended classes when a branch was being established in his area. His interest was sustained by people's desire 'to learn more about how society functions and address some of the key issues that affect us in politics and society'.

6.1.2 Knowledge of WEA's aims, values and history

Participants were asked what they knew about the aims, values and history of the WEA when they got involved. Several participants reiterated points that they had made already in respect of the Association's aims and values when describing what had attracted them to their role. Lyn referred again to the commitment of the WEA to providing 'second chance' education, Rowan spoke of learner involvement and democracy and Ceri linked the values of the Association to a 'socialist way of operating' that was concerned with equality and a recognition of the potential in everybody.

Although there was an element of repetition in what participants said, new themes emerged also. For example, Edward spoke of a learner centred approach in that 'people who go to the classes decide on their own direction', which was echoed by Alex who also spoke of a belief in the value of learning for learning's sake. Lyn mentioned informality and Terry highlighted how WEA 'does the reverse' of other providers, who expected learners to go to them, by coming out to communities. Several participants made reference to the Association's commitment to workers and working class communities, including Terry who said WEA would 'appeal to the mass of society rather than an elite' and Pat who connected support for the goal of 'an educated democracy' with the idea of 'empowerment for the working class'.

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All the participants had a sense of belonging to an organisation with a significant history, albeit to different degrees. Three Trustees, Chris, Terry and Edward, acknowledged that when they first joined Council they did not know a 'great deal' although this had changed over time and especially as a result of the Association's centenary celebrations in 2007 which, according to Chris, 'really focused people on the start of the movement and the history and the people involved and how it evolved'. In contrast Pat, Morgan and Lyn were well-informed about the Association's history and referred to the conflict described in Chapter 4

between the WEA and the NCLC, including the 'competition for who was going to be representing workers in this type of education'.

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The remaining participants were all aware of the historical links with the Labour movement as is typified by Rowan who said 'I knew that it was rooted in workers' history and trade union education'. Similarly, Ceri referred to a 'legacy from history' being the WEA's links with trade unions and the co-operative movement and described how being part of a movement made working for the WEA different from other jobs because 'you feel the pressure of history almost, which I haven't felt before'.

6.1.3 The meaning of the WEA name

Asking participants for their views on the meaning of the Association's name provided a further insight into the extent to which Trustees and senior managers considered themselves to be part of a historic movement as well as an indication of how they understood the Association's contemporary purpose. The question also prompted more than half of the group to consider the relevance of the name today.

In responding to this question all but two of the group referred to the historical significance of the name. The two exceptions were Morgan and Pat who were both well versed in the Association's history and their answers to other questions indicated that they were well aware of being part of a historic movement. Morgan remarked that he had never thought about what the name meant to him, adding 'I would be happy to be called a worker because that's what I've always been'. Several people understood the name to signify the organisation being about 'education for working class people'. Recalling a childhood 'surrounded by miners', Chris linked the WEA with the Institute in the neighbouring village, whilst Rowan specifically made the connection with the Association's historic purpose.

This was echoed by Alex who said 'it means to me that we are rooted in struggle' and then added that the 'workers bit' was 'wider for me than just, you know, working class or anything like that' in the sense that WEA was 'a movement for giving opportunities to people both within a working environment and outside of it'. Similarly, Edward commented that, whilst the focus had been on 'the workers' during the 20s and 30s, the emphasis was 'a little bit different now' as 'it's the non-workers that we are going for'.

A concern about the perception or 'currency' of the term 'workers' in contemporary society was raised by six of the ten participants in this group. Morgan wondered if the name sounded 'old fashioned' and went on to say 'I suppose the name was more attractive then than it might be now'. Lyn reflected that 'maybe that phrase is not immediately recognisable by participants today', whilst acknowledging that there is 'something quite precious in the word workers or worker' and its connection with the Labour movement. Terry went as far as saying 'the name Workers does put people off', citing as an example the reaction of members of the local Town Council when approached for a grant, who had assumed WEA was 'something to do with Arthur Scargill …. some extreme left wing organisation which it isn't at all'.

In spite of these concerns none of the participants wanted to see the name changed, none more so than Terry who, despite his concern about the name being off-putting, stated unambiguously 'I don't think that I can change a hundred years of history'. Similarly, Lionel argued that the name could not be changed 'because the historical connection has still got a value hasn't it? We have a strong sentiment about it, don't we?'

6.1.4   Commitment to social purpose

An aim of the study was to explore whether or not people involved in WEA would have maintained a commitment to a social purpose in the context of a 'shift to the right' and an increased emphasis on the economic purpose of adult education. To examine this, participants were asked how they saw the contemporary role of the WEA in Wales in the light of the WEA's history and the political and social changes that have taken place over the years since its inception.

A social purpose role was articulated explicitly by four of the strategic group. This was expressed by Ceri, in the context of the notion of the WEA being a movement, who spoke of the WEA having a role in campaigning, in 'being a conscience' and as a 'deliverer of equality, social justice'. WEA was seen as 'an enabler for people to gain education in its broadest sense' which would mean providing opportunities for 'critical and analytical thinking as well as for providing skills and recreational learning'. Ceri was not alone in mentioning skills development as part of the WEA's contemporary role. Lionel also mentioned 'skills and training for people who have missed out' as a role which had developed over the past twenty years. However, he too mentioned the WEA's social purpose first. Both Alex and Rowan spoke of the WEA's role in creating active citizens. Alex described a process of empowering people through lifelong learning whereby 'we give them routes to involvement through what we do'.

 Five participants, including Ceri, spoke of the WEA having a campaigning role. Two of these, Chris and Lyn, referred to campaigning in the context of devolution. For Lyn the focus would be 'to remind them (civil servants and elected members) who we are, what we are about'. This would include 'flaunting brazenly' *Our Purpose in the 21st Century* (WEA South Wales 2009d), a document written as a response to a friendly challenge from Rhodri Morgan, the then First Minister of Wales, made in a speech at the Association's centenary AGM in 2007 when he questioned the WEA's contemporary role. This document acknowledges the WEA's contribution to developing skills for employment whilst concluding with this statement:

> The development of the learning, skills and prosperity of the people of Wales requires also our commitment to democratic citizenship, inclusiveness, cultural enrichment, health and well-being and social justice.

A cautionary note was sounded by Morgan, who foresaw the difficult times ahead In which finance would dictate the kinds of things WEA would have to do to survive. He envisaged that the organisation would have to contract and noted that 'when people have to retrench their principles usually become more important'. He hoped that would be the case with the WEA.

A picture emerges during this section of a group of people who have a lot in common in terms of what attracted them to the WEA, their understanding of what the Association stands for, their awareness of belonging to a movement with a history of which they are proud, their commitment to its name together with what it signifies and their commitment to social purpose. All the participants in this group have made a conscious choice to be involved with the WEA based on a sense of a synergy between their values and those of the Association. As such they can be seen to have made a decision on ideological grounds, although they do not necessarily share the same ideological positions. Within this group there appear differences in the language used and varying levels of knowledge of the Association's history and values. For example, some participants such as Ceri, Morgan, Pat and Rowan were ready to use concepts like equality, democracy and socialism, and Lionel introduced the term politics at an early stage. This discourse tends to distinguish these participants from the rest of the group. Lyn, Morgan and Pat had a more detailed grasp of the Association's history compared with other participants, several of whom acknowledged they had known very little when first involved. Despite some concerns about public perception of the Association's name there was a convincing unanimity about its importance and certainty that the name should not be changed. The group seemed to have been largely untouched by the dominance of an economic purpose in adult education

policy that was referred to in Chapter 2. Although Ceri and Lionel both spoke briefly about training and skills, the predominant discourse was one of social purpose albeit one that lacked some of the meaning attached to it in the early part of the twentieth century. Whilst there was mention of equality and social justice, the idea of emancipation of the working class which had been current in the 1920s had been replaced with the notion of empowerment.

6.2   How the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are understood

This section is about the way the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are understood within the Association. The study set out to explore whether citizenship would be conceptualised in predominantly individualistic terms, whether it would be understood as status or practice, whether or not it would be seen as a political relationship, and, equally importantly, whether there would be a common understanding of active citizenship. The section reviews, in order, the responses of participants to questions on the meaning of the terms citizenship and active citizenship, on their own active citizenship and on what they believed the WEA to mean when using the term active citizenship.

6.2.1   The meaning of citizenship

When asked what they understood the term citizenship to mean, some participants found it difficult to answer. For example, Terry frankly admitted to not having 'really thought of it at all', whilst Lyn considered it to be a concept which was only 'partly understood' by people, adding 'I am not sure exactly what the best definition is'. Rowan was equally reflective, saying 'it's just a word I use… I don't really sit back and consider what it actually might mean'. Despite their somewhat self-effacing remarks all three went on to offer views on the concept.

Rowan asserted that citizenship 'means being part of or belonging to a place or a system …being a "citizen" of something and being part of it', and Lyn spoke of citizenship entailing 'parallel notions of decency, of community, of tolerance, of integrity, of personal self-esteem and personal sharing'. Lyn's initial comments were the only ones to include elements of personal qualities, which could be equated with an individualistic view of citizenship in the light of the European study discussed in Chapter 3 (Ivinson *et al*. 2000, p144).

There was little or no evidence of participants being influenced by the liberal model of citizenship. Pat made the only reference to citizenship as status by mentioning the confirmation of citizenship that a UK passport confers, before posing the question 'is it more than that too? Is it part of being part of the democratic process?' Notably, nearly all the participants linked citizenship with being part of a community or communities, often with an emphasis on citizenship being about active involvement within those communities, reflecting elements of both communitarianism and the civic republican tradition as well as the notion of citizenship as practice.

Terry, who had not thought about the concept before, related citizenship to being part of different communities including 'church community or a member of a club or political one' as well as where one lives. For him, citizenship included trying 'to work together to achieve the aims of that particular part'. Morgan, who considered that to be a citizen you must be part of a community, said forcefully:

> My view is a very, very simple one…if you are a part of a
> community you should be doing something within whatever skills
> you have to try and help that community, and if you don't do that
> then there's something wrong with you.

Alex, who equated citizenship with being an active citizen, introduced the notions of exercising power to make changes in the community and a leadership role in the sense of 'pull(ing) people together to be active within a community'.

A global dimension was introduced by three participants, including Chris who said: 'citizenship is being involved in your very closest community, further afield… Britain, Europe and the World'. Lyn linked the term global citizenship to Wales being part of a global network and never having been a 'static economy', saying 'it's about tolerance of others moving into an area'. Reflecting perhaps the importance given by WEA to providing ESDGC, these two Trustees also spoke of an environmental dimension to citizenship. Chris linked this to the responsibility of a 'good' citizen to 'give something back to society' which could be 'by being responsible in the way they live, the way that they use resources and so on', whilst Lyn spoke of a 'green agenda' being part of the notion of citizenship, arguing that 'the whole notion of miles travelled, food miles, the use of extravagant wrapping, sourcing local shops … sourcing local produce, food in season' needed 're-thinking'. As well as identifying the global dimension of citizenship, Lyn made a link between citizenship and 'issues of present day Welshness and the state of Wales at the moment', thereby introducing elements of identity and contemporary politics.

The notion of citizenship involving certain responsibilities, which was articulated so clearly by Morgan, was a recurring theme. Interestingly, these were always framed in terms of responsibilities to others in society rather than to the state. This might be at the level of 'keeping an eye out for the neighbours' as Morgan had been taught by his parents, or, as Ceri said, of people taking 'some responsibility for how they are positioned' in their community in the sense of 'how they fit within that and how they are affected by it themselves and how they affect it'. Lionel introduced the idea of citizens having a responsibility to look beyond their narrow interests when considering what change was needed in order to think about the effects such change may have on other parts of society. Edward spoke of 'knowing your civic duties' which involved 'what you can give and perhaps also what you can take'. Evidently conceptualising this in political terms,

he spoke of knowing 'what is available, what is freely available, what can be got with a struggle as well and how to struggle'.

A political element to citizenship was also introduced by Morgan, who recalled his school days when 'we were taught about political parties' as well as 'the nonsense which goes on in advertising'. The idea of citizenship being a prerequisite for a 'true democracy' was advanced by Pat. In all, half of these participants introduced a political discourse into the discussion of the meaning of citizenship, mentioning between them power, democracy, political parties and struggle.

6.2.2 The meaning of active citizenship

A number of themes emerge from the responses to the question on the meaning of active citizenship. Lyn's initial response was that active citizenship is 'an educational process' involving 'articulation by those who can to convince others that they can do it, that they have a voice'. A similar argument was put by Pat who recalled references by a past Chair of the Association to Tawney's assertion that the WEA's role was not to teach people what to think but how to think. 'By teaching people how to think', argued Pat, 'they become more active…within their neighbourhood, their community or the UK if you like'. Encouraging people to get involved in their community was mentioned by several participants as being an element of active citizenship, implying a leadership role similar to that mentioned by Alex above.

The expressions 'taking part' and 'getting involved' were used by a number of the participants, usually in the context of their local community, although when probed, Lyn spoke of trade union activity as another possible sphere for active citizenship. Another key idea was that of making a contribution. Chris talked about 'making local events happen because you are prepared to put something

in', whilst two others used the word 'giving'. For Rowan, this meant 'giving up time'; whilst for Edward it was 'serving', as in 'serving' on the Community Council for two four year terms, in his case. This notion of public service was implicit in Terry's words when speaking of active citizenship as preparedness 'to take part in public life'. Considering the number of participants with a background in the Labour Party and/or trade unions (see below), various references above to democracy and equality, their awareness of the movement's history and the level of political discourse in the discussion of citizenship, there were few explicit references to politics in respect of active citizenship. Lionel referred to 'people getting involved in the society around them, in their community and in politics', whilst Edward included amongst active citizenship people attending Council meetings when 'a local issue comes up' and 'waving banners outside the Council offices', as well as contacting the local Councillor.

Others spoke in political terms, including Pat who considered campaigning to be an aspect of active citizenship and Ceri who said: 'it is around making changes, it is around working with others to rise to a challenge that you see around you and to address issues that you see around you'. This was set in the context of 'looking at responsibilities perhaps in terms of being part of a democratic process' and the activities could be 'very local or again they could be at a variety of levels'. Rowan described an active citizen as 'somebody who wants to influence or improve or play a part… in the system or place or whatever it is that's around them'.

6.2.3   *Participants as active citizens*

Asking participants the question 'in what ways are you an active citizen?' elicited some responses which threw more light on how the concept was understood. For example, Chris had not mentioned politics previously but in response to this question volunteered that she was not active politically, saying 'I don't belong to

any political party'. When asked why she was mentioning it now and if she would like to elaborate on this, she replied that:

> politics obviously is part of active citizenship but it could just be
> taking a responsible approach to who you vote for, for example,
> to know what the different parties stand for.

Chris added that it was incumbent on citizens to take up matters at local Council level rather than leaving it to someone else to sort out. She would be 'quite happy' to take action such as contacting the local Councillor over an issue such as education cuts. This interchange was interesting in that it revealed that in at least one person's mind to be active politically equates with being a party member, although the subsequent remark suggested a more ambiguous understanding of what it is to be politically active.

This question also revealed a further political dimension to other respondents' understanding of active citizenship, in that two senior managers and two Trustees mentioned their membership of a political party. Whilst Pat did not reveal the party at this point[1], Ceri was a member of the Labour Party and both Lionel and Morgan had been Labour Party members but were no longer involved. Morgan had spent ten years as a member of the Party's National Executive Committee.

Likewise, whilst trade union activity had only been mentioned by one person initially, this question prompted three more participants to describe their activism in that sphere too. Pat had been active in the trade union movement before joining the WEA staff, and at a young age had 'landed up being Chair of the whole of the union', and had also been active in the trade union in the WEA. Morgan had been heavily involved in his trade union, chairing the Branch and District before being elected to the National Executive, whilst Rowan had also been a union representative and 'became very involved in the education and

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[1] Later in the interview Pat spoke of having joined the Labour Party as a young person.

training committee'. When asked how his active citizenship contributed to his WEA role, Edward described how he brought an understanding of the rules of debate and 'the organisational side of things' from many years as a trade union activist at branch and regional level.

When describing their own active citizenship, some participants brought an added dimension to their previous answers. For example, Ceri said: 'I am a volunteer in a variety of guises' which included being a Trustee of a community building. Alex spoke of chairing meetings of the local Residents' Association and of lobbying the Council successfully for funding to replace the village's lamp-posts. Lyn outlined a similar leadership role saying: 'I belong to various organisations, mainly in a kind of chairing, overseeing role'. Morgan referred to his commitment to the local beekeepers' association, whilst Terry belonged to 'various societies' in the local town and had fundraised with the Lions for local charities. Support for charities at a local or worldwide level was mentioned by two other participants, including Ceri who had sponsored people through organisations such as Save the Children.

Different dimensions were introduced by Lyn and Pat. Lyn who responded with 'I am pretty much an organic gardener' with 'five compost bins on the go', also considered teaching 'in terms of understanding something of the past' and writing, in the shape of 'responsible journalism', to be expressions of active citizenship. Pat introduced the notion of informal active citizenship, recounting regular meetings in the local pub with a 'motley crew' of eight or nine people, 'three of whom are staunchly conservative in any form of C you want', and defined the activity as trying 'to convince the Daily Mail and the Telegraph readers of this world that they may not necessarily have everything right'.

Interestingly, although WEA was only mentioned indirectly in the context of the first question on active citizenship, when asked about their own active citizenship half of the participants referred to their involvement in the Association. For

example, Ceri said 'I believe I am an active citizen in the work I do', whilst Chris explained that, in addition to being on Council, 'I am treasurer of my local branch, I am on the committee, some people actually think that I am employed by WEA' and considered involvement in the Association to be 'very much' part of active citizenship. Rowan reiterated the idea of giving outlined above in saying:

> my WEA 'active citizenship' then is about me giving up my own
> time to play a part in an organisation … whose aims and values
> I identify with and that I think is important and …changes
> people's lives and generally has a great effect on people.

In Chapter 3 alternative models of active citizenship were outlined and two opposing positions were identified in terms of 'individual acts of moral behaviour' or 'proselytising an ideology of change'.

The findings from these two questions on active citizenship are not so neatly juxtaposed. Whilst participants described behaviour that could be considered as individual acts of moral behaviour such as raising money for charities or sponsoring people in poverty, those were the very same people who also spoke of active citizenship in terms of politics, of contacting the local councillor and of campaigning. It is evident that individuals can interpret a broad range of activity that they engage in as constituting active citizenship.

6.2.4 The WEA's meaning of active citizenship

Asking participants what they thought was meant when the WEA used the term active citizenship, as in the Constitution, provided an opportunity for them to think about the concept from yet another angle, and, as a result, some different notions were introduced and significant comments were made. Morgan replied insightfully that 'it's obviously going to mean different things to different people'. When pressed as to whether he was referring then to people within WEA or to

potential learners, he replied: 'I think it's both'. He was certain that if one were to talk to activists within WEA about citizenship and active citizenship one would find a 'variety of views'.

Edward, who had spoken earlier in terms of serving the community and of knowing how to struggle, replied that it meant 'bringing people up to be good citizens' that although compared to the '30s when philosophy and politics were 'the mainstay of WEA' there was less now, he felt that foundation was still there and that 'politics is always at the root of it'. For Edward the 'good' citizen appears to be a politically engaged citizen rather than one who undertakes individual acts of moral behaviour. This is the 'good' citizen of the Greek student teachers rather than the individualistic version of the British participants in the European study referred to in Chapter 3 above (Ivinson *et al*. 2000, p144).

Predominant amongst the responses to this question was the view that the WEA was about teaching people how to think so that they could make informed choices. This was a theme that was mentioned by six of the participants. Typical of their responses was this one from Ceri who saw WEA as:

> providing people with the tools to be able to be critical in their thinking; to be able to understand their place in society and to have the confidence to do something about what they see.

Terry saw the WEA's purpose as being to help people to 'think more clearly' so that when faced with 'some of the red tabloid press and seeing some lurid headline about anti-immigration or anti- foreigner' they would be able to 'look a bit behind that and make up their own mind rather than just following the headlines'. Chris envisaged WEA 'providing people with classes that address issues' which would enable them to make informed choices noting that 'we think in these days that everybody is au fait with the economics of the country and people's rights but they are not'. This was the first time that either economics or rights had been mentioned.

Alex made a connection between 'empowering people to become more active within their community and really to have a voice' and the exercise of the vote. Having heard members of the local residents' association saying they did not know who to vote for and would not bother to vote, Alex asserted: 'I think that is the job really of the WEA to ensure that those people know what their choices are'. The notion of empowerment was also mentioned by Rowan in the context of the opportunities the WEA provides for learners to become active citizens within the structure of the association 'in practical senses like become involved in your branch, make decisions, help do things, help run activities; or become involved in our organisation'.

Echoing views reported above about active citizenship being about 'making a difference', Lionel answered this question by saying:

> We're coming back again to providing citizens with, to some extent, guidance, stimulation so that they learn about how society functions and how it might be bettered.

Interestingly, this question prompted a measure of unanimity that was not so apparent with the earlier questions around citizenship and active citizenship. However, on reflection, the answers relate more to participants' perceptions of the WEA's role and purpose than to the meaning attached to the concept of active citizenship itself within the Association. Nevertheless, the responses are revealing both for the degree of shared understanding that there seems to be about role and purpose and the apparent lack of a common WEA definition or meaning of active citizenship. In hindsight, it would have been useful had the researcher probed this further with participants at the time.

Section 6.2 provides a fuller picture of the strategic group of participants and reveals very clearly the complexity of the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship. As the interviews progressed some participants volunteered more

information about themselves and their activities. For the purposes of the study the additional information in relation to political and trade union activity was especially interesting. Four participants were or had been Labour Party members, of whom Morgan and Pat had also been heavily involved in trade unions. In addition Edward, Lyn and Rowan had been active trade unionists. Thus seventy per cent of the group could be said to have been active in the Labour movement. Clearly this group is not representative of the population as a whole, as can be seen in respect of membership of a political party. Whilst two of the ten participants in this group, remained members of the Labour Party, in 2005 as few as 1.3% of the population of the United Kingdom belonged to one of the three main political parties (Marshall 2009, p1).

In Chapter 3 it was suggested that in view of the WEA's history and name there might be less likelihood of people involved with WEA tending to conceptualise citizenship in individualistic terms. Likewise it was noted that those attracted to WEA might have a history of political engagement and political knowledge that would result in them conceptualising citizenship as a political relationship. The findings outlined above appear to confirm the first of these points in that only one participant spoke of citizenship in what could be considered as individualistic terms by highlighting personal attributes. Moreover these comments were balanced with a more communitarian view. Indeed, most of the responses could be characterized as representing citizenship as practice and not status. The prediction that those attracted to WEA might have a history of political engagement is also borne out by the findings. However, it has been shown that only half of the group conceptualised citizenship as a political relationship despite more of the group having had experience in the Labour movement.

As Morgan predicted there proved to be a variety of views about the meaning of active citizenship. There was considerable support for the view that active citizenship is about taking part and getting involved in one's community with a view, in some cases, to making changes for the better. However, it cannot be

said that a common understanding of the term was evident from the group's responses to the questions covered in this section.

6.3   The kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote and effective methods for its promotion

This section is in four parts, the first of which presents the findings in relation to a question about the kinds of active citizenship the WEA is able to promote. This is followed by responses to a question about any risks that might be involved with encouraging active citizenship. Thereafter, the focus is on whether active citizenship is to be promoted directly by means of a discrete curriculum or indirectly whether through the curriculum as a whole, through a democratic learning environment or through participation in the Association's democratic structure, or through a combination of some or all of these. The section ends with findings from a question on what needs to be included in the curriculum in order to enable WEA learners to become active citizens.

6.3.1   The kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote

It can be seen from the previous section that participants interpreted a broad range of activities as 'active citizenship' without necessarily conceptualising it in political terms. Before asking participants about the kinds of active citizenship they felt the WEA could promote, the researcher referred to the range of understandings of the term reflecting a 'political spectrum' from the literature on the subject that has been discussed already in Chapter 3. It was explained that active citizenship could be understood in terms of volunteering, looking after your neighbours and giving to charity at one end of the spectrum and direct action for example to prevent motorways being built at the other end, with activities like

lobbying or going on protest marches in between. Participants were asked which of these the WEA could be seen to be promoting.

This question prompted a range of responses, some of which conflicted with one another and revealed some of the WEA's historic tensions referred to in Chapter 4. Two participants responded initially by stating that all the activities outlined in the preamble to the question counted in their views as active citizenship. Pat said that volunteering in an Oxfam shop 'is active citizenship just as the youngsters are sort of running down the street fighting against the fascists' and added that WEA should 'choose the tactics that best suits it' before venturing 'maybe the banner and a peaceful demonstration is the best'. This response is revealing for two reasons. Firstly, by focusing on the stance the WEA should take, it suggests that the question was either not understood, or was not sufficiently clear, in relation to the role of the WEA in promoting active citizenship amongst learners. This ambiguity emerged elsewhere where Rowan talked in terms of the Association as a campaigning organisation. Secondly, the response places the WEA firmly in a political role but not at the extreme of the range of behaviour that may be considered to be active citizenship.

Alex described how within WEA classes 'learners become friends of each other and the group actually looks after one another' and related this to the 'caring for your neighbours' model of active citizenship, before adding that WEA was 'about the direct action as well'. This was a reference to the way learners reacted to the loss of funding for crèches fifteen years ago. One branch had invited learners from other branches to a meeting to discuss the situation. Alex explained:

> It was great and there were over a hundred people there and they
> were asking what is happening with the funding, what is happening
> with the WEA. That wasn't organised by any member of staff with
> the WEA, it was quite scary to think that they had done it themselves.
> But it was good that they took action, they decided they were not
> putting up with this and they were prepared to go down to the

> Assembly, with pushchairs and prams, and say, 'Look, if we want to study, we can't, we have got all these children.'

In Alex's view, it was not the role of WEA staff to organise the learners, rather 'we should be empowering them to make these decisions themselves and to organise themselves to lobby, which is exactly what they did'.

All but one of the participants identified a role for WEA in encouraging a model of active citizenship that involved engagement with political processes, albeit in different ways. Lionel replied:

> I'll go back to what I said before, getting involved in their
> community and getting involved in politics in a rational and
> probably, I would have to concede, in a moderate way.

Chris spoke of 'promoting democracy' and of 'empowering' people so that they 'feel that they can contribute to local, national, international issues'. Once again the issues referred to by several Trustees tended to concern the environment including climate change and, in Lyn's words, 'the whole notion of where is mother earth going to be in another fifty years'.

Rowan, who was clear that the WEA is 'involved in terms of being political', whilst acknowledging the Association's non-party political stance, asserted:

> you can't just encourage people to think and consider the world
> around them without actually giving them routes to maybe do
> something about it, think about how they do something about it.

Promoting participation in the formal political sphere was introduced by Ceri who said 'I think at the very least we can encourage people to use the tools at their disposal to vote'. However, this was not all – learners should also be encouraged 'to be critical of what is happening around them and to speak out if they see inequalities or unfairness'.

The sole dissenting voice amongst these participants was Terry, who expressed the view that it is not part of WEA's role 'to be political' and was concerned that 'by raising awareness perhaps some people would say it's taking a political stance'. Citing the recent controversy regarding Government appointed scientific advisers on drugs policy, who had been accused of 'over stepping the mark and hitting the political arena', he took the view that WEA might join in with raising awareness of issues but did not 'see us as a leader in those things'. This rather ambivalent position is indicative of the 'sense of caution' described by Fieldhouse (1992, p158) which was referred to in Chapter 4. Furthermore, echoing the policy of the Association's founder Albert Mansbridge, which was also mentioned in the same chapter, this Trustee argued that individuals could take active roles within campaigning organisations but 'not under the WEA banner' (see Jennings, 2003a, p22). This caution, and more explicitly, a sense of the constraints consequent upon receipt of state funding, was also evident when Ceri acknowledged, in relation to WEA taking direct action, that 'we could be on difficult ground … because of our reliance on government funding currently'.

6.3.2 *Possible risks associated with promoting active citizenship*

Both of these expressions of caution were volunteered as part of answers to the question about the kinds of active citizenship WEA could promote. Whilst indicating the sensitivity of the issue, it is interesting that only a minority of participants raised such concerns spontaneously, although it is conceded that Lionel's emphasis on moderation may well reflect a similar preoccupation. When those who did not raise any concerns initially were asked a follow up question as to whether or not there might be any constraints attached to any particular aspects of active citizenship, the majority felt there would be. Most responses related to the risk of losing state funding if, for example, the WEA were seen to be attacking Assembly policy or to become 'overtly political' or 'to go down a

particular political route' by which Edward meant support either for a particular party or philosophy such as Marxism. Pat related the question to the historic conflict between WEA and the NCLC referred to in Chapter 4. Lyn and Rowan raised concerns about alienating parts of the organisation or the 'many class members [who] would not think that was part of the WEA's brief'. However, Lyn's latter remark was tempered by the view that despite there being 'some dangers' there was a need for the WEA 'to have the confidence or be able to debate and work through those'. Whilst acting in a way that might be considered to be 'political' might be seen by some as a diversion from education's core purpose, Lyn reasoned that, on the other hand, 'empowering others is at the core of it all'.

Other Trustees played down the risks, including Chris who acknowledged that the WEA could not be political in the sense of promoting one party over another and expected that anyone employed by the Association would understand this. As long as WEA was 'teaching people to think, not what to think' there should be no danger. Similarly, Morgan spoke of an active citizenship programme being 'even handed' as 'there would be no useful purpose in it being a political propaganda situation'.

6.3.3 Methods for promoting active citizenship

This part of the section relates to the question about the methods that could be used to promote active citizenship. Participants suggested a range of methods which could be categorised as direct and indirect methods, and their responses to the question reflected to some extent the debate in Chapter 3 as to whether the attributes for citizenship may be learned through the formal curriculum or through 'positive experiences of participation'. However, whilst nine out of the ten participants suggested direct methods and seven proposed indirect methods, none argued for one type of method to the exclusion of the other.

Several responses revealed a feeling that insufficient was being done in relation to promoting active citizenship. For example, Morgan said 'I think that the business of active citizenship is one area where we are not really doing as much as we could', whilst Pat described a pie chart that had been compiled recently representing the curriculum breakdown in the region where 'the smallest slices at the very bottom were things like history, philosophy, economics and political theory and so on'. Together these subjects accounted for as little as 1% of the total curriculum in that particular region. The answer, in Pat's view, was to set targets for increasing that segment to 'say 6% over two years and 10% or 12% over four years'.

Whilst this part of the 'formal curriculum' might be considered to provide the underpinning knowledge that would be required for active citizenship, Rowan spoke of 'putting on overt courses about citizenship' which would include considering what it means and 'taking it a step further' by asking learners to consider questions such as 'how can you influence things?' and 'how can you play a part in the world around you?'. The idea that WEA should not tell people what to think which has become a recurring theme throughout the chapter was reiterated in several of the responses. For example, Lionel said firmly:

> it's not for us to dictate to the people who come to our classes
> what they should be thinking and what they should be doing.
> But we must provide the stimulus for them to think about it and
> come to their own conclusions.

This idea of WEA having an obligation to stimulate people to think about issues was echoed by two others who felt that people would not necessarily think of asking for courses on topics such as climate change or the history of Western philosophy and would need to be told what their options were. As Pat said: 'our responsibility is to bring that to the attention of people and that is part of the education process of democracy … to make people aware of what is available'.

In contrast to these direct methods of promoting active citizenship through the formal curriculum, participants suggested a number of indirect methods. Some of these related to the curriculum but others were in line with the argument referred to above in relation to learning through participation. Morgan took the view that active citizenship should be 'part of the agenda' of every WEA course. Similarly, Alex suggested that, as with Welsh language and culture and ESDGC, an Open College Network unit on active citizenship could be attached to courses introducing topics such as 'how do you become active within your community?' Alternatively, Alex thought that active citizenship could be introduced 'through the course delivery', and cited an example of this being done by an ESOL tutor who stimulates discussion of current affairs by asking learners to compare how stories are presented in different newspapers. Ceri mentioned courses for Community Learning Representatives which in essence are training activists although they are not overtly represented as being about active citizenship. Edward felt that active citizenship could also be promoted by 'our whole ethos' as well as through publications. An example of the latter was given by Alex who enthused about the regular ESDGC newsletter produced by WEA staff which 'makes people think about the world around them' and results in learners getting involved in campaigns on global issues.

Two participants identified the local WEA branch as a site for acquiring essential attributes for active citizenship such as confidence and skills. In Alex's opinion, the branch provides a 'relaxed and friendly environment' in which learners can gain confidence and an understanding of how meetings are run, which can then be transferred to other meetings outside of WEA. Thus, 'the WEA has really been the springboard to be able to go onto other things'. A similar view was expressed by Chris, a branch activist, who observed that people who 'have never been used to committee work' could get involved, feel part of the group and that 'their voice counts'. As a result they might become involved in 'wider groups' or on WEA's Council. These two contributions provide support for the argument recorded in Chapter 3 in favour of learning for active citizenship through democratic

participation. That only two participants spoke of this way of learning may be because there are limited examples of it taking place within the Association or that it is not something that has been discussed widely. Indeed it is recognised that there are not many active WEA branches and that only a small proportion of the overall programme is organised by branches. Nevertheless the evidence from Alex and Chris, together with Alex's earlier example of branch activists having gained the skills and confidence to campaign against withdrawal of funding for crèches demonstrates the potential for learning to take place within the Association's democratic structure.

6.3.4   A curriculum for active citizenship

The final part of this section contains the findings in relation to the question about what should be included in the WEA curriculum in order to enable WEA learners to become active citizens. Participants gave a variety of answers from which a number of themes emerge. Four participants proposed courses that would generate debate and encourage analysis through, for example, discussing contemporary issues, whilst seven mentioned specific disciplines such as modern history, politics, philosophy and sociology. Four participants also felt that the curriculum should include the skills needed for active citizenship.

Chris considered that there was need for 'more open debate' so that people felt that the WEA was providing 'a class for today's issues' such as unemployment, the credit crunch and global warming. Likewise, Lyn said there would be 'a major place' within the curriculum for 'the whole issue of the environment' which would take WEA 'into a world wide agenda'. Reflecting comments referred to above on contemporary Welsh politics, Morgan posed the question 'how much debate have we had on devolution and the value of it or otherwise?'

Rowan spoke specifically about 'political and social education' whilst three other Trustees suggested modern history, including Lyn who advocated a 'robust understanding of political history' of the last century. In respect of political education, Ceri cautioned that 'people are getting fed up of party politics as they see it'. Rather than starting with political structures, WEA should be 'encouraging people to look at the concepts of equality and diversity' and their place in society which in turn would lead to discussion of the structures as they are now.   .

Regarding the skills for active citizenship, several participants highlighted the need for committee skills. Rowan argued there was no point in encouraging learners to become active in the Association unless they understood how to become involved, how the structures work and how to have influence. There was a need for meeting skills as well as campaigning skills. This was echoed by Pat, who reflected on the challenges of setting up a new WEA branch without people experienced in chairing meetings, taking minutes or preparing a balance sheet.

Lyn envisaged a ten week course on 'understanding your potential local empowerment'. This would look at local provision, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, local tenants' organisations, and street neighbourhood watch schemes. Where such organisations didn't exist it could cover how to form one. Accessing local councilors and understanding how they are elected would also be included. Lyn also believed visits to the Senedd and Parliament, as well as to the local Town Hall, including attendance at a committee meeting to be 'part of an essential curriculum in the twenty-first century'.

Morgan synthesised ideas of learning particular academic disciplines and skills development and linked them to the promotion of democracy, saying:

> learning new skills, learning new things like philosophy, like literature and all the rest of it, actually promotes, or should promote the sort of democracy that we are looking for within the WEA.

He recalled that as a 'twenty odd year old' he found studying the novel and poetry was 'very, very helpful' even though he may not have realised it until years later. Not only had he acquired 'a better vocabulary than many of the people I dealt with' but discussing a novel in-depth for three weeks had been invaluable for learning 'how to take somebody's argument to pieces'. Interestingly, this comment tends to echo the view recorded in Chapter 4 that a liberal education was considered by some of the most militant Marxists to be an essential preparation for political struggle (Rose 2002, p282).

Whereas section 6.2 concluded that despite seven out of ten of the group having been actively engaged in the Labour movement only half the participants conceptualised active citizenship in political terms, the findings from this section show that nine of the group considered that WEA was in a position to promote an active citizenship which involved engagement with political processes. However, it is also clear from the findings that there were limits to the nature of the political action that WEA could be associated with. In particular, there were seen to be constraints due to the receipt of state funding upon the extent to which a conflict model could be adopted. Whilst a majority of the group expressed caution there were several participants who considered that empowering others to take action on the basis of making informed choices was legitimate. Similarly, political education that was neither propagandist nor promoting any particular party was held to be acceptable.

Most of the suggestions for the methods to be adopted were curriculum related whether through a discrete curriculum offer of citizenship and related academic subjects or through citizenship becoming, in Morgan's words, 'part of the agenda' of every course. Only two participants spoke of learning for active citizenship through participation in the democratic structure of the organisation. Proposals for curriculum content covered both the knowledge and skills required for active citizenship. In respect of suggestions for the knowledge based curriculum,

participants were divided between those who favoured academic disciplines such as history and politics and those who preferred an issues-based approach.

6.4 The capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge

This section relates to the research question about the capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge. Participants were asked to consider what skills, experience and knowledge tutors need in order to be able to encourage 'active citizenship' whether directly through the curriculum or indirectly through creating a democratic learning environment. This was followed with a question asking for views on the support tutors needed in order to be able to promote active citizenship.

The responses to the first question were interesting in a number of ways. Firstly, there was a wide variety in the depth and breadth of responses with some participants like Ceri going into considerable detail and at the other extreme one Trustee, Edward, acknowledging that it was a 'deep' question and one which he was not able to answer. Secondly, participants tended to focus on the skills and knowledge aspects of the question to the extent that only two out of the group of ten referred to the experience required of tutors. This may be because of the way the question was framed. If the question had been split into parts it might have elicited a fuller range of responses on the experience aspect. Alternatively, with hindsight, the researcher could have probed by asking a follow-up question on experience.

6.4.1 Skills

Two Trustees focussed their responses on the importance of tutors being qualified. In Morgan's case this was in the sense of holding a teaching qualification, whilst Terry expected tutors to be qualified in their subject area. Arguably this would be expected of tutors regardless of the specific dimension of promoting active citizenship and neither really addressed that directly. Lyn's response to the question appeared to contradict the view that skills or qualifications were particularly important by beginning with:

> I wonder if all they need is enthusiasm and commitment, and
> open mindedness to take on board sometimes the unthinkable
> or the different or the uncomfortable.

However, later in the interview Lyn qualified this by introducing the importance of being able to handle different political viewpoints and debate and manage group work, referring to these as aspects of the methodology of teaching. Rowan made no mention of qualifications as such but, exemplifying the concern expressed by several participants with developing critical thinking, considered that tutors should be 'engaged really in how you help people to think'.

Ceri spoke of the need for tutors to be adaptable, creative and innovative and in particular to have the ability to:

> relate to people's experience and draw out from that something
> that will click them into the message that you are trying to give
> in terms of active citizenship or thinking holistically about their
> position in society.

Demonstrating the indivisibility of skills and knowledge, Ceri contextualized this comment by saying that tutors should understand why they are working for WEA and the significance of the WEA's strap line 'Shaping the future through democratic learning' and must be 'engrained in believing that you start from where your learner is'. A similar learner-centred viewpoint was expressed by Chris, for whom a 'good' tutor was one who could 'make the learners feel

comfortable, valued, able in their learning and in the ways they act as citizens'. Tutors would need 'good negotiating skills, empathy, the right personality'.

Despite the question being phrased in terms of the skills tutors might need in order to encourage active citizenship either directly through the curriculum or indirectly through creating a democratic learning environment, apart from one brief mention of negotiating skills by Chris none of the participants mentioned any skills explicitly in relation to the latter, although the notion of democratic learning had been raised by Ceri. Neither did anyone refer to skills that might help tutors to contribute to building the voluntary movement and branches in particular, in spite of several participants such as Rowan mentioning the WEA's democratic structure in relation to other questions.

6.4.2 Experience

It was noted above that only two responses touched on the experience that tutors would need to be able to promote active citizenship. Chris expected tutors to have worked with 'all sorts of people on all intellectual levels' and 'people with all sorts of problems'. The second response related directly to the tutor's own activism. Alex referred to the recruitment of tutors and made a link between the tutor's understanding of and involvement in active citizenship and their capacity 'to enthuse the learners' to become active and concluded 'so if you have a tutor who perhaps isn't really active themselves, how do we expect them to promote active citizenship within their class?'

Alex's point is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, as the tutor has the most contact with learners their role seems to be central to the achievement of the WEA's objective of promoting active citizenship and their own active citizenship may be a key component of their capacity in this respect. Secondly, notwithstanding the shortcomings in the questioning referred to at the beginning

of this section, it is notable that only one participant thought of this point, particularly as earlier in the interview everyone had been asked about the impact of their own active citizenship on their role within the Association.

6.4.3 Knowledge

Six participants spoke about the kinds of knowledge tutors needed. Four emphasised that tutors needed wider knowledge over and above their subject area without specifying what that might be. For example, Chris argued that because 'society is just so complex' tutors need 'to be able to do more than just teach their subject'. However, Pat who felt that tutors should be able to 'look at the wider issues about what is going on around them' was more specific in suggesting that an IT tutor, for example, could introduce environmental issues as the topic for a word processing activity. Like Ceri, Rowan stressed the importance of tutors being knowledgeable about the WEA, saying:

> I think tutors need, um, well, first and foremost I think that the bedrock is maybe an understanding of the WEA and what it is we may be trying to achieve with this. I think tutors need to be sort of tuned into that in a sense.

Rowan went on to say that tutors need to understand that 'they are part of something that's bigger than maybe just delivering a course'.

Perhaps more than is the case with the previous sections, the significance of the responses to this question is what participants did not say rather than what they did. There were few references to the need for tutors to understand the WEA ethos and values, as few as two participants referred to the experience expected of tutors, of whom only one mentioned the importance of tutors being active themselves, and only one raised a skill that is essential for creating a democratic learning environment. In view of the extent of participants' involvement in the

Labour movement and their recognition of the political dimension of active citizenship, it seemed incongruous that nobody referred to a need for tutors to have knowledge of political ideas and structures. The nearest anyone came to stating this was Chris who expected tutors to be 'informed and interested in issues'.

6.4.4 Support for tutors

When asked about the kind of support that tutors might need to develop the skills and knowledge they required to be able to promote active citizenship effectively all but one of the participants contributed ideas. One Trustee felt unable to comment on the grounds of not being a tutor. Training was suggested by half of the group and was the most common suggestion. Creating opportunities to reinforce WEA values was mentioned by two Trustees and the sharing of good practice was proposed by two other participants. The question prompted one senior manager to reflect on the quality of support offered to tutors.

Amongst Trustees suggesting training be provided for tutors was Terry who acknowledged his own 'hazy recollections' about citizenship during the interview and suspected that tutors did not understand the subject either. The first step, in his view, was that 'it should be defined to the tutors so that they understand it' and then a course should be held. Another Trustee, Lionel, felt that 'it would be nice if WEA could cultivate a few tutors that could deal with political issues and society and so on directly'. Chris felt that the annual tutor training days held in each WEA region provided an opportunity 'to address these issues'. They should also be used 'to promote the fact that we are a democratic movement that all tutors have a part to play in reinforcing WEA philosophy aims, objectives'. Rowan made a similar point about the need for more education for tutors and development workers about the WEA's ethos, aims and values. Alex took the view that there should be an induction for new tutors so that they 'have a full

understanding of what this organisation is about'. The implication of this was that there was no existing induction system used across the Association.

Pat was certain that tutors would benefit from training and discussion that would include the history of the WEA and consideration of philosophy. However, he recognised the difficulty of asking hourly paid tutors working for only two or four hours per week 'to go away and do some reading on history of western philosophy'. Rowan was also sensitive to the demands being made of tutors when referring to the idea of embedding active citizenship without tutors thinking:

> That's another bloody thing I've got to do. I've got to say good
> morning in Welsh, I've got to consider ESDGC, and now I've got
> to encourage everyone to be an 'active citizen'.

To address this Rowan suggested that development workers could offer tutors help with thinking about how citizenship could be introduced into the curriculum. This suggestion is significant, not only in that none of the other participants in this group spoke of ongoing support for tutors, but also because it presupposes that the development workers themselves have the capacity to provide this kind of support in relation to active citizenship. This will be explored further in Chapter 8. Pat thought that tutors may need to be reassured that they were free to 'broaden out' their curriculum and 'bring a wider picture' into their teaching rather than having to follow an Open College Network (OCN) unit 'right down the line'.

Both Ceri and Lyn brought up the need for sharing good practice. Ceri thought it would be helpful to 'have a grouping of subject area tutors that was their own network that they could link with'. This was a model that worked well for ICT tutors. Lyn was in favour of both a regional network and away days where tutors could 'reflect and talk to other practitioners in different subjects and share good practice'.

Ceri was the only participant in the group to mention teaching resources, arguing that there should be 'a resource bank that they can go to, that they will feel is quality assured as well'. Ceri was also the only person to reflect on the quality of support for tutors, acknowledging that it was not 'very well defined' and that:

> maybe we are not looking after our greatest asset as much as we could be, particularly when we are expecting them to have the skills to promote democratic learning and active citizenship and so on.

This question drew out a number of important points which will be discussed further in Chapter 8. These include Alex's proposal for an induction programme for new tutors, and Ceri's concerns about the quality of tutor support. Terry's suggestion that active citizenship needs to be defined prior to training being offered to tutors relates directly to the central question of this study as to whether or not there is a shared understanding of the meaning of citizenship within the Association.

6.5 Reasons for the WEA no longer being seen as a source of political knowledge

This section concerns the research question prompted by the findings of a small scale study of members of two WEA branches in south-east Wales that was referred to in Chapter 4 (Gass, 2002), which showed that whereas WEA was well known before the Second World War as a source of knowledge and understanding about politics, economics and international relations this was no longer the case. Participants were asked to put forward possible reasons for this.

A variety of reasons were suggested, with some participants offering several possible explanations for the change in perception of the WEA as a source of political knowledge. Most of the explanations can be categorised in terms of

factors that are external to the WEA, whilst a significant minority are arguably internal in the sense that they relate to the WEA's practice. However, there is an overlap between these two categories where, for instance, changes to the WEA curriculum can be seen to be the result of external pressures such as funders' priorities. Where several participants used the language of the market, referring to supply and demand, there were contrasting explanations.

6.5.1 External factors

Amongst those explanations relating to external factors, changes in society were cited the most. Lyn suggested that a prevailing view that 'we have got everything that we need more or less' has resulted in a perception that the subjects which were needed in the 1930s are no longer important. Similarly, Lionel who linked a desire for political education to an interest in trade union and political activity as a way to 'improve their lot', felt that 'tremendous' improvements in social and economic conditions for the majority of people since the war' meant 'that driving force has gone'. Terry felt that one particular reform was responsible. In his view the introduction of education for all as a result of the 1944 Education Act diminished the role of the trade unions as a provider of education.

Other explanations ranged from blunt comments such as 'that's not what they are interested in' and 'general apathy', both from Rowan and 'a popular laziness' from Lyn to the more elaborate. These included Ceri's view that demand had reduced due to the general public being 'less politicised' and to the decline of the trade union movement, and Chris's suggestion that people are 'so fed up of politics [that] they don't see that politics affects their everyday life'.

Ceri and Chris shared the view that attending classes had lost its appeal and was no longer the norm as it had been. The availability of alternative sources of political knowledge was also cited as a reason by Lyn who said 'it is available at

a click of a mouse online or it is all around within the media, television'. Chris offered what may be considered as a conspiracy theory in suggesting 'some governments wouldn't want us to be to aware'.

6.5.2 Internal factors

Six of the participants identified internal factors whereas seven had highlighted external factors. Interestingly, the comments of four participants came into both categories. The contemporary WEA curriculum was identified as a contributing factor by all six people. This was expressed in different ways with Alex and Chris commenting on the emphasis given to Information Technology and another three - Morgan, Ceri and Rowan - referring to funding pressures. For example, Ceri said 'I think the fact that we are certainly constrained by the funding that we receive to deliver a certain curriculum, is partly to blame'. Morgan described it in these terms:

> pre-war we had the luxury of running classes and teaching people whatever we thought was the appropriate thing for the WEA to be doing. Our bread and butter is not like that now …

A contrasting explanation was offered by Pat, who rejected the argument that there was no longer a demand for political knowledge, stating:

> we have altered the supply…we have taken it off the shelf, not because it wasn't selling but because we don't want to sell it any more and that is the problem.

The findings in this section that relate to the social changes that have taken place since the 1920s and 30s reflect the positions of Crick (2000, p169) and Frazer (2000, p88) set out in Chapter 3 regarding a 'decline of political thinking' and a 'pervasive antipathy towards politics and government' respectively. The comments regarding changes in the WEA's

curriculum and the influence of funding policy support the view of the significance of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 in relation to the curriculum outlined in Chapter 2 (Gass 2007, p144). However, the most interesting finding is the conflict of opinions as to whether the change in reputation is due to a fall in demand for this kind of knowledge as argued by several participants or because the WEA, in Pat's words, has 'altered the supply'.

6.6   Summary

It can be seen from this chapter that the 'strategic' group identify strongly with the WEA's values, recognise that they belong to a historic movement and share a sense of social purpose. However, their responses to questions in relation to citizenship and active citizenship suggest a lack of a clear strategic overview in relation to the Association's objective of providing learning opportunities that promote active citizenship. Although by the end of the third section there appeared to be overwhelming support for the view that WEA could be seen to be promoting an active citizenship which involved engagement with political processes this was not consistent with the views expressed previously. There appears to be neither a shared understanding of the meaning of active citizenship, nor a comprehensive understanding of the methods available to promote it. Few respondents came forward with ideas for developing a democratic learning environment or learning skills in democratic participation through involvement in WEA's decision making structure, especially at branch level. Responses to the question about the skills, experience and knowledge that a tutor requires to be able to promote active citizenship suggested there was no strategy for tutor recruitment. Nevertheless, participants offered clear and positive suggestions for curriculum development in respect of both knowledge and skills for active citizenship.

Two inter-related areas of difficulty for the Association emerge in the chapter. The first of these is to do with a tension around what it means to be 'political' and the second is the longstanding issue of the consequences of accepting state funding for the Association's independence and freedom to encourage a conflict model of active citizenship. The findings reveal a sense of caution related to the extent to which the Association may be seen to be 'political' in the context of reliance on state funding for survival. These issues will be explored further in Chapter 8 following an examination of the findings from the interviews with the 'operational group' in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER SEVEN
Findings: The Operational Group

This is the second of two chapters that deal with the research findings and it draws upon the interviews with sixteen people who have been referred to in Chapter 5 as the 'operational' group in that their roles as Part-time Tutors, Development Workers and Learning Managers differentiate them from the 'strategic' group of Trustees and Senior Managers which was the focus of the previous chapter. The chapter is structured in such a way as to mirror Chapter 6 with the same sections relating to the principal research questions. Whilst reviewing the findings from this particular group of participants, comparisons will also be made with the findings from the previous chapter.

7.1   Familiarity with WEA's aims, values and history

This section introduces the 'operational' group of participants, relating what attracted them to their roles within the Association, before outlining the findings regarding their awareness of what the WEA stands for, their sense of belonging to a movement with a particular history and, in the context of a 'shift to the right' and an increased emphasis on the economic purpose of adult education, their commitment to social purpose. The 'operational' group consists of ten Part-time Tutors, four Development Workers and two Learning Managers.

7.1.1   The attraction of the WEA

The section begins by drawing on the findings from a question about what attracted the participants to their particular role in the Association to introduce the sixteen participants who constitute the 'strategic' group.

With two exceptions, Sarah and Maria, the Part-time Tutors had limited or no prior knowledge of the WEA before they started tutoring. Similarly, most of the six other staff had no knowledge of WEA when they first got involved. All six had started working for WEA as part-time tutors or in administrative roles, so that by the time of their appointment to their current posts all were familiar with the organisation. In comparison to the 'strategic' group, all of whose members were familiar with WEA when they took up their roles, the 'operational' group taken as a whole was relatively less well-informed about the organisation when they began working for the Association.

Sarah and Maria had both been active members of WEA branches where they lived before taking on the tutor role. Their positive experiences of the Association had attracted them to tutoring for the WEA, so much so for Maria that she wanted to 'share what I'd benefited from and pass it on to others'. Barbara, who recalled that her grandfather, having left school at 'an extremely early age' had gone to WEA classes and whose aunt had been a WEA tutor, was attracted by the WEA's friendliness and strong links with communities. Gwyn who had heard of Coleg Harlech, was familiar with the Labour movement and 'knew a little bit about the WEA', was attracted by 'the idea of teaching adults'. Mair had been impressed by what a friend who was working for WEA told her about it, and said she was still impressed by the way that the Association responds to people's needs. Leslie, who also learned about WEA from a friend, explained that he had always been active in the Trade Union movement and that he believed in the ethos of the WEA. He spoke of learning being empowering and how he liked 'the idea of the WEA going out to the community reaching out to people and actually changing peoples lives'. Both Paul and William were familiar with WEA through previous roles with organisations that had worked in partnership with WEA. For William the attraction of the WEA was the 'placing of the student centrally in what we do' together with the degree of responsiveness to their needs. Both Andy and Ashley were frank about initially having had no knowledge of WEA and having

been motivated solely by the need for employment. However, Andy explained that, since being introduced into 'the WEA environment', learning about the Association's history and ideals had given him 'a lot of momentum and motivation to stay with them'. Ashley no longer saw it as 'just another job', and particularly appreciated the support she received from colleagues.

The remaining six members of the 'operational' group were a mixture of Learning Managers and Development Workers. Wendy had been attracted initially when she needed teaching practice during her PGCE course. A member of WEA staff had addressed the group and she remembered his enthusiasm and encouragement. As time had gone on she came to appreciate the ethos of the organisation and in particular its learner-centred approach. Kim and Fran made similar comments. Kim, who had learned about WEA through a colleague where she had been working, recalled how she had been attracted by the WEA's ethos and 'what they stood for'. Fran was supporting a women's group when she first contacted WEA because she was aware that the organisation would tailor courses to what learners wanted. It was this flexibility and willingness to listen to learners that attracted her to the WEA. Ryan had heard of the WEA when he first started tutoring but the main attraction was the opportunity to be a trade union studies tutor. Amanda, who had never heard of the WEA, recalled reading about the organisation in preparation for her interview for an administrative role and thinking that she would really like to get the job. She added that she was so glad that she had. Likewise, Marion had not heard of the Association when the Job Centre had mentioned that there was an administrative vacancy with WEA.

Whereas all the participants in the 'strategic' group were seen to have made a conscious choice to become involved with WEA based on a synergy between their values and those of the Association, the same cannot be said for everyone in the 'operational' group. Five of the group acknowledged that they knew nothing about the WEA initially. Amongst those who did know about the WEA before getting involved, six referred to the WEA's ethos but only Leslie spoke in

ideological terms about the attraction of working for the Association. The majority of the group appeared not to have the same affinity with the WEA that most of the participants in the 'strategic' group displayed.

7.1.2 Knowledge of WEA's aims, values and history

When asked what they knew about the aims and values of the WEA, seven members of the group spoke of the WEA's commitment to providing second chance education or to working in disadvantaged communities, one of whom, Barbara, referred to the WEA having 'a special connection with the community'. Two of these participants together with another two mentioned the democratic values of the organisation, whilst three more focussed on the Association's student centred approach. Similarly, four people drew attention to voluntarism, mentioning between them branches and committees. Sarah explained how having been told she was a member of her local branch on joining her first class had given her a 'sense of belonging', which was something she had needed at the time. Fran, Maria and Sarah mentioned values such as equity, justice and rights whilst also describing the encouragement given by WEA to people to be active in their communities. Sarah was the only person to mention the WEA's encouragement of a sense of responsibility and caring about the environment and other people. Ryan was alone in making a specific connection between WEA and the Labour movement, saying that the Association was its education arm. He also talked of WEA in terms of promoting 'positive social change'. This was echoed by Andy who spoke of the WEA changing people's lives. Five members of the group referred to the WEA as being approachable, friendly, warm, inclusive, informal or flexible, whilst two others mentioned how the Association valued both staff and learners.

Notwithstanding references to democratic values, the predominant discourses of the 'operational' and 'strategic' groups were noticeably different. Proportionately

there were fewer references amongst the 'operational' group to trade unions and democracy than in the 'strategic' group. Whilst the WEA's ethos was cited by members of both groups the discourse differed. For example, members of the 'strategic' group tended to link the ethos more explicitly to values such as democracy and equality whereas those in the 'operational' group emphasised the WEA's learner centredness. References to socialism and empowerment of the working class by members of the 'strategic' group also distinguish the two groups in terms of the respective political discourses.

Not everyone in the 'operational' group shared a sense of belonging to an organisation with a significant history, although some of the participants had a very good understanding of the Association's history. Half of the people in this group had no knowledge of the WEA's history when they first became involved, whilst others such as Gwyn and Barbara felt they had a little knowledge. Gwyn was aware of both WEA and Coleg Harlech and their links with the trade union movement. Leslie, William and Paul were well aware of the Association's links with the trade union movement before taking on their roles. Three people referred to the centenary celebrations, as had members of the 'strategic' group, as being significant in developing their understanding of the Association's history. Of these, Ryan made particular mention of the centenary collection of essays. Others such as Marion, who had started working with WEA in an administrative role, had learned about the history, including links with trade unions, from colleagues. On the other hand, it appeared that some tutors such as Mair and Ashley had learned little about the history during the years in which they had worked for the Association. Compared with the 'strategic' group, all of whose members were well aware of the Association's past, there was relatively little sense of belonging to an organisation with a significant history among the 'operational' group.

7.1.3 The meaning of the WEA name

Reactions to the question about the meaning of the WEA's name elicited a variety of answers which often contrasted with those of the 'strategic' group. Whilst nearly all of the 'strategic' group referred to the historical significance of the name, only six out of sixteen in the 'operational' group did likewise. Whereas this question stimulated six out of ten of the 'strategic' group to consider the 'currency' of the name, only four participants in this group brought up the issue. Although a significantly higher proportion of the 'strategic' group commented on the name's contemporary relevance, none of them went so far as to suggest that it should be changed. That was not the case in this group. Barbara, who understood that the WEA had been set up to help 'working class men like my grandfather', thought that the name might not sound so relevant now. Whilst the name did not 'bother' her, she suggested that WEA might need to reconsider it in order to attract younger age groups. Her suspicion that people were thinking about this was borne out in Sarah's comments. Sarah said that she would like to change the name because it was hard to explain it to people. She too understood that initially the Association's purpose had been to provide education for the working class, but felt that it was difficult for people to relate to the name now because they did not identify themselves as being 'working class'. Mair considered the name to be 'a bit limiting' particularly as none of her students were workers.

On the other hand, Wendy, who conceded that people might be put off by thinking it was not for them, was not aware of it actually having been a barrier for anyone. Others made clear their support for the name including Amanda who said she felt 'very close' to it. Fran, who imagined people wondering 'what has that got to do with me', was certain that the name should not be changed because 'it is part of our history and it would just seem completely daft'. Fran's view echoes those of Lionel and Terry in the 'strategic' group. Whilst all the members of the 'strategic' group were committed to the name and their

responses demonstrate that the Association's history was of central importance to them, the same cannot be said for most people in this group.

7.1.4 Commitment to social purpose

The final part of this section covers the responses of the 'operational' group to the question about the WEA's contemporary role which was designed to test participants' commitment to social purpose. There was a diverse range of responses to this question. Six people felt that the WEA's role should remain the same as it had been. Fran, for example, thought the role was 'still the same' which for her meant 'empowering people to think', and was similar to Ceri's focus on 'critical and analytical thinking' in Chapter 6. Similarly, William said 'the role of the WEA in Wales today is exactly the same as it always was'. He argued that simply because more people were working in call centres than steelworks did not mean that they did not share the needs and 'aspirational ideas' of their 'forefathers'. In his experience 'the idea that improvement is dead is manifestly untrue, you still have that striving for knowledge'. Ryan, who felt the role was 'as important as ever', acknowledged political and social changes including improvements in education since the WEA's formation, but was clear that trade unionists still wanted education of the kind that WEA could provide. Wendy felt that it was 'important to maintain the main aims of the organisation', which in her view meant 'trying to cater for the learning needs of the disadvantaged groups… working class'. This theme of tackling disadvantage was mentioned by Kim also who spoke of the need to 'make sure that we reach those people that nobody else wants'.

The latter statement also implied that WEA is distinct from other providers. Kim was not alone in highlighting the difference between WEA and other providers. Marion was concerned that WEA was being 'pushed' into a 'place where we don't belong' referring to the funding mechanism for post-16 education. She was

adamant that WEA was different to a Further Education College although it was 'very hard to put into words'. Ryan also stressed the WEA's distinctive role, asserting that trade unionists would not get what they wanted from a college curriculum.

Marion's concern was echoed in the remarks made by Amanda and Andy. Amanda considered that 'we got swallowed really into all this funding' which resulted in 'not sticking to our ethos and our history', whilst Andy spoke about the education system being 'strangled by bureaucracy'. He also felt that education was 'tied to the needs of the economy'. Andy was the only member of the group to speak of 'a new political situation' in Wales and the potential for WEA to be 'part of this force for positive change' in the country and to shape 'the education system to be more liberal', thereby implying a campaigning role for the Association just as four members of the strategic group had outlined. Mair, in arguing that the WEA should not be so 'qualification based' so that tutors would be better placed to respond to learners' needs, also implicitly rejected the dominant vocational and economic agenda.

Like Alex and Rowan in the 'strategic' group, Sarah and Leslie introduced elements of active citizenship. Sarah said she would like to think that WEA 'educates people to become more active' and added that 'we need to be more prepared to discuss politics'. She felt that WEA had a very important role in 'educating people about their roles and their responsibilities'. Leslie expressed it in terms of giving people confidence and 'motivating them to actually want to make differences to other people'.

Mair suggested that WEA should act as a bridge between minority ethnic communities and indigenous people 'because I think the threat of civil unrest is not something to ignore', whilst Ashley used the same term in relation to conveying 'the needs of these groups of people who are very vulnerable' to government.

Apart from Andy's critical comments about the education system being 'tied to the economy', there were only two other references to economics. Both Leslie and Kim referred to the need for education to address both economic and social issues. Clearly, several members of the group were aware of the direction of Further Education policy and there was a predominant interest in maintaining the traditional role of WEA as participants understood it to be. Whilst references to a social purpose role were not as explicit as Ceri's comment in Chapter 6 about WEA being concerned with equality and social justice, campaigning and active citizenship were mentioned by equal numbers in each group. Overall, the 'operational' group was more inclined to support a social rather than an economic agenda for adult learning. Apart from Ceri, nobody in either group articulated social purpose in the way it was understood in the pre-war period.

In this section some distinctions between the two groups have emerged in terms of the extent of their respective knowledge of the WEA prior to their involvement, their political discourse regarding what attracted them to the WEA and a sense of belonging to an organisation with a significant history, including attachment to the name. However, it should also be noted that there are differences within each group as well as between them. The question that arises from this analysis of the two groups' responses to this set of questions is whether or not there will be a similar pattern in respect of their responses to the remaining questions. In light of the differences that have emerged so far one might expect to see distinct responses.

Despite these differences it is important to note that very few participants mentioned the skills agenda and there were some strong criticisms of current adult education policy and its impact on the WEA. Together this suggests that participants had no enthusiasm for the predominantly economic agenda for adult education. However, although there was evidence of commitment to a social

agenda there appeared to be no unifying sense of a distinctive purpose for the WEA.

7.2   How the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are understood

This section reviews the answers of the 'operational' group to questions about the meaning of the terms citizenship and active citizenship, their own active citizenship and their understanding of what was meant by the WEA when using the term active citizenship.

7.2.1   The meaning of citizenship

In an echo of the quotation from Lister *et al.* (2007, p17) referring to the 'multifaceted, different meanings' of citizenship, Leslie observed that citizenship was 'one of those words that means so many different things in so many different contexts'. Several of the responses reflected this view. Fran, for example, responded by saying:

> I suppose when I think of citizenship I think of probably active citizenship in terms of are you an active member of your community and society. And then you think about, you know, about migrant workers and people who come from other countries and they have to do citizenship tests to actually fit into our society. And, so yes I guess in a way citizenship is about fitting in as well isn't it, to a certain extent, with what this society says is right and promotes.

Fran recognised a tension between these two understandings of citizenship, whilst Mair expressed this in terms of there being two levels of citizenship, with the gaining of citizenship status being at a 'superficial' level compared with a 'deeper' meaning to do with 'being part of the community that you live in, feeling

that what you do matters'. In addition to Fran and Mair, eight more members of the group spoke of citizenship as an active process. For Kim this was linked to 'having a voice and not being afraid to use it', to bringing about 'change' and being 'involved in decision making processes'. Wendy and William spoke in similar terms whilst Andy, Barbara and Ryan referred to democratic participation. In associating citizenship with active involvement in society, arguably these participants can be identified with the civic republican tradition of citizenship, in which as Fryer explains, 'citizenship necessarily entails active participation in public life' (2010, p109).

Sarah linked the notion of citizenship being active with responsibility, caring for the environment locally and globally and 'having a place', all of which she encapsulated as 'a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose'. She was not alone in conceptualising citizenship as 'belonging'. Maria was one of three other people to speak in similar terms when she answered with a rhetorical question: 'Well, isn't it having a place?' before adding 'you're a citizen of a country'. William linked the notion of citizenship being an active process with a sense of belonging when he said he believed citizenship to be:

> the capability to actively participate in your own community, to be able to feel the confidence to feel part of the area that you live in, and to feel that your voice actually has some sort of point within the community.

Sarah was not the only member of the group to mention the environment and global citizenship. Marion spoke of citizenship involving environmental awareness, whilst both Leslie and Andy referred to global citizenship. Andy, who acknowledged that he had been 'confused about the terms "global citizenship" and "citizenship" on its own' and unclear about the difference between them, said 'as I understand it now "global citizenship" is more about human rights'.

Whilst Andy was the only person in the 'operational' group to mention rights, several people apart from Sarah mentioned responsibility. Whereas Gwyn visualized responsibility as making a contribution wherever possible by 'picking litter up or not dropping litter on the floor' or by helping neighbours or 'the broader community', Wendy envisaged it as having 'an understanding of what's going on within society and getting actively involved in some way, in a good way'. When asked to elaborate on what she meant, Wendy added that it could be 'having a voice… or trying to get an understanding of how things work, so you could have an informed voice'. These contrasting interpretations of responsibility reflect some of the ideological differences regarding the concept of citizenship that were identified in Chapter 3. Gwyn's account appears to resonate with the Thatcherite notion of the good citizen as a caring citizen (Coare 2003, p46), whilst Wendy's version of responsibility is more aligned with the participatory model of civic republicanism.

Marion was the only person in the group to introduce a Welsh dimension. She was clear that she was a citizen of Wales and for her an important element of citizenship was to have an awareness of one's culture and history and a commitment to bilingualism. However, Marion's first thought on hearing the question was about the citizenship classes run by WEA as part of the ESOL provision. She spoke of the value of the classes to people who 'have made a life here… (and) want to be able to stay and not be moved again' and concluded 'I think the citizenship qualification is really important. I think that is what I associate citizenship with'. Marion's position differs significantly from that of Mair above who considered the gaining of citizenship status to be relatively 'superficial'. It also contrasts starkly with Andy's concerns about the citizenship test, particularly 'about the content of what people are expected to learn and who chooses the content'.

An emphasis on personal qualities was evident in two people's responses. Ashley replied: 'it is how a citizen should behave – with good moral standards', whilst Paul understood citizenship to involve:

> embracing really all cultures, anyone and everyone around
> you within your workplace, your community, everywhere and
> it's understanding and respecting and valuing everybody for
> who they are and what they are.

Ashley's comments in particular represent an individualistic and moralistic conception of citizenship.

The responses from participants in the 'operational' group to the question regarding the meaning of citizenship suggest that, with one exception, citizenship is not generally conceptualised in individualistic terms; citizenship is understood by most of the participants in this group to be about practice rather than status and is seen as a political relationship by about a third of the group.

A comparison of the findings from the two groups in respect of the first set of questions regarding familiarity with the WEA's aims, values and history revealed some significant differences between them and it was suggested that these differences may be reflected in the answers given to the remaining questions. There were some differences between the two groups regarding the meaning of citizenship but these were not as evident as in the earlier section. For example, three of the 'operational' group referred to personal attributes including one tutor who was overtly moralistic, compared with one from the strategic group. In respect of conceptualising citizenship as status, three participants in the 'operational' group referred to status including two who spoke of the citizenship test as compared with one reference to the status conferred by a passport from one of the 'strategic' group. However, it should be noted that all but one of these participants considered other interpretations of citizenship to be more important, including one tutor who referred to citizenship status as 'superficial' relatively

speaking. About a third of the participants in the 'operational' group could be considered to have seen citizenship as a political relationship compared with half of the 'strategic' group. There were also similarities in their responses, particularly in respect of citizenship being thought of as active involvement in society. Likewise, a similar proportion of both groups referred to environmental and global citizenship.

7.2.2 The meaning of active citizenship

The next part of this section considers the ways in which participants responded to the question on the meaning of active citizenship, and how these responses compared with those of the 'strategic' group.

Whilst four out of ten of the 'strategic' group associated active citizenship with getting involved or actively participating in the community, twelve of the 'operational' group understood it in these terms. However, it appeared to mean different things to different people. For Paul, it meant:

> engaging in a community, whatever shape or form, it doesn't have to be political, it doesn't have to be on a very large scale. It could be just helping your neighbours, helping the old aged pensioner down the road or you know anything that gets you engaged with other people.

Paul's response appears to encompass a broad spectrum of activity which reflects several of the theoretical positions in relation to active citizenship referred to in Chapter 3. Paul implies that there is a place for political activity within active citizenship whilst emphasising activities that could be considered to constitute what Faulks (1998, p128) would categorise as 'individual acts of moral behaviour'. However, Amanda's view that active citizenship would involve people going to the Assembly, if they disagreed with a new law or with something

that was being planned, to 'speak up for themselves, speak up for the community' reflects the model of active citizenship envisaged by authors such as Janoski and Gran (2002) and Giroux (2003) in which citizens have 'political agency' and challenge those in power.

Five people explicitly linked involvement in the community with making change. Fran, for example, introduced the notion of tackling injustice when she spoke of 'looking at injustice, looking at what is going on in your community and the rest of the world and then trying to become engaged, trying to make change'. Leslie hoped that learners on one of his courses would become active citizens through changing 'the way they're living their lives and actually making a difference to people and getting involved in the community'. Ryan conceptualised active citizenship as a collective activity that involved making changes at the workplace saying that citizenship:

> is about not just making it better for you, it's making it better for the community you work in or you live in. The community I deal with is the workers, so it is their workplace mostly.

Ryan was also one of two people to relate active citizenship to democracy when he explained:

> I think that's linked to democracy then and that citizenship and active citizenship means that people have the ability and the confidence perhaps to be able to speak up and speak out on what ever subject they want… so it's about feeling able to participate.

The other person to connect active citizenship with democracy was Barbara who said 'I think of ancient Athens and people being actually involved actively'. Whilst acknowledging the exclusivity of the Athenian system, she considered it to be 'a good blueprint for a proper democracy'.

Responsibility was mentioned by three participants. For Kim and Maria responsibility was linked to taking a leadership role, with Kim speaking of 'taking people along with you and actually taking a bit of responsibility' and Maria saying 'you get people together…being responsible, being involved'. However, Ashley's response contrasts markedly with this view. After saying that an 'active citizen' should be 'actively involved in the community' Ashley added two different dimensions. Most important of these was the citizen's obligation to vote, followed by their duty 'to behave as a good human being'. The latter emphasis on personal qualities was shared by Marion who thought of active citizenship as about being 'a good person' which involved being 'a good member of the community… looking out for people, being polite, being helpful'.

Whilst Andy also spoke of active citizenship in terms of being a good citizen, he conceptualised that notion quite differently. For him it was about 'taking note of environmental issues and their effect on people's lives'. Environmental awareness was also mentioned by Fran, Leslie and Marion. Fran began by suggesting that active citizenship could equate with making change at a personal level in relation to the environment and continued by saying:

> I think there is something about active citizenship and
> engagement isn't there. Can you be an active citizen if you are
> not engaged in society? No you can't, which then backtracks
> about what I have just said about personally being active.

Having identified engagement as a key element of active citizenship, Fran concluded that 'the two sort of go together really'.

Whereas a few of the participants in the 'strategic' group made explicit references to politics in relation to this question, only one person in the 'operational' group referred directly to politics. As was mentioned above, Paul said that active citizenship did not necessarily have a political dimension. Whilst it was surprising that so few of the 'strategic' group participants mentioned politics

in view of both their backgrounds in the Labour movement and the political discourse surrounding their discussion of citizenship, it was less unexpected in the case of the 'operational' group. Fewer of its members had mentioned any involvement in a political party or trade union and a smaller proportion had spoken of citizenship in ways that suggested they saw it as a political relationship. However, despite the lack of specific references to politics, it is notable that a third of the 'operational' group spoke of active citizenship in terms of making changes. As in the case of the meaning of citizenship, there were more references of an individualistic and moralistic kind in the answers of the 'operational' group. Arguably, there was a greater diversity in the range of responses to the question amongst the 'operational' group as compared with the 'strategic' group. This provides further evidence of the lack of a shared understanding of these concepts within the WEA.

7.2.3 Participants as active citizens

Just as in Chapter 6, asking participants about the ways in which they considered themselves to be active citizens resulted in them revealing more about themselves and their understanding of the concept of active citizenship. Four participants spoke of their involvement in the Labour movement for the first time. William had served on the Welsh Executive of his trade union, whilst Paul had been a shop steward and secretary of his union branch. Paul had also been involved in local politics for over thirty years and was a Community Councillor. He did not mention whether or not he was a member of a political party. William, who had also been a local councillor as well as a school governor, did not reveal at this stage if he belonged to a political party. Gwyn and Ryan elaborated on their involvement in the Labour movement. Both had been active in their respective unions, and Ryan had been on the local Trades Council as well as a member of the Labour Party until he had become 'frustrated' by it. Leslie volunteered that he had never belonged to a party because 'I don't think there's any political party

that would have me really'. However, Leslie was one of two people belonging to campaigning organisations. He was a member of an environmental pressure group, whilst Sarah belonged to a human rights organisation. Kim and Maria also spoke of having been involved in campaigning. For Kim this involved lobbying the Council on behalf of the local residents' association, whilst Maria had been part of an informal group that had organised a public meeting after reading in the newspaper that the canal running through her community was going to be closed. Nine participants were active in a range of community or voluntary organisations, including a Credit Union, a Parent Teacher Association, a Women's Aid group, a residents' association, an advice centre and a Refugee Support Group. Six out of the nine - Barbara, Fran, Gwyn, Kim, Ryan, Sarah and William - had all been involved on committees at some point.

Five tutors considered that they were being 'active citizens' through their role with WEA. Maria explained that as a tutor she was 'trying to enable other people, encourage other people, bring awareness and knowledge'. She believed that by coming to classes people would 'see that they have got a voice and they can make a difference'. For Ashley, on the other hand, who was also active within her own ethnic minority community, being an 'active citizen' involved 'conveying the message very clearly' to her learners as to 'what they should do and what they shouldn't'. For Barbara, it was her involvement in her local WEA branch that was significant. The WEA was a medium for Marion to promote Wales which was an expression of active citizenship for her. She was able to promote both the language and culture in the classroom as well as in her day-to-day life.

Fran, in addition to being involved in several community organisations, also considered that her personal behaviour was part of her active citizenship. She said:

> I think in terms of my behaviour and my values, in where I want
> to shop and what I want to do and what I want to do with my

rubbish and that sort of stuff I feel like I am an active citizen
there. I do try and encourage others that I know to do it.

Similarly, Andy was concerned with environmental and world trade issues and
spoke in terms of 'trying to get involved in social change' and in 'positive social
projects'.

Leslie and Mair introduced different dimensions into the discussion. Leslie, who
described himself as a 'bloody good Dad', considered that active citizenship
'starts at home with your family and it stems out from there', whereas for Mair
active citizenship was 'tied up' with her religious beliefs. She was concerned by
the lack of 'spiritual values' in the world such as 'values like justice, like
friendship, like compassion'. Within her faith group she was involved with running
groups to discuss such matters and, in the case of a group for children, 'to instill
spiritual values in them'.

This question provoked participants from both groups to recount their own
activism – past and present – in a range of organisations. With seven people
belonging to either the Labour Party or a trade union (or in some cases both), the
'strategic' group had a significantly higher proportion of Labour movement
activists than the 'operational' group. The latter included four trade union
activists, one of whom reported having been in the Labour Party. In respect of
holding public office, two of the 'operational' group and one member of the
'strategic' group were or had been Community Councillors. However, a higher
proportion of the 'operational' group reported being involved in community groups
compared with the 'strategic' group. Half of the 'strategic' group considered their
engagement within the WEA as an expression of active citizenship compared
with a third of the 'operational' group. That is not surprising given the voluntary
nature of the Trustee role held by seven of the 'strategic' group. In Chapter 6 it
was noted that a wide variety of activities was considered by participants to
constitute active citizenship. The findings from the 'operational' group reveal an

even wider range of activity that was considered to fall into a definition of active citizenship including taking a moral stand on learners' behaviour, the promotion of Welsh language and culture, good parenting, and a spiritual element.

7.2.4 The WEA's meaning of active citizenship

The next part of this section relates to participants' responses to the question about their perceptions of what was meant when the WEA used the term active citizenship. As in Chapter 6, this question elicited more about the participants' views on the WEA's role as a learning provider than about the meaning attached to the term by the Association. Several participants evidently found this a difficult question to answer, with one initially saying 'I don't know' and others talking in rather vague terms about providing access to education and knowledge.

Wendy was one of the minority that focussed on the question. She began by relating the question to the WEA itself and suggesting that it could be 'something like getting involved in the branch structure and the democratic structure', before extending that to other kinds of voluntary activity or 'having a debate with your neighbour'. She concluded by saying 'I don't think that it is necessarily tied down to one thing. I think it's richer, sort of in everything, every element of society'. Marion, Sarah and Maria also understood it to mean the involvement of learners within the Association's democratic culture and structure. Marion spoke of learners feeling equal and having a role to play, whilst Sarah talked of new branches being set up and Maria saw it in terms of learners having a voice and being able to 'speak up and choose, to some extent, what they want to do'.

Fran, like most of the other participants responded in terms of the WEA as a learning provider in saying:

it is about people being able to access opportunities and learn
things which make them make decisions about how they want to
live their life. It is about them actively making choices about
themselves.

William saw it as 'broadening learners' horizons', whilst other participants spoke
about empowering learners or building their capacity and confidence so that they
could engage. Barbara focussed on being able to read and write as a
prerequisite for active citizenship. Getting people involved in 'immensely
important' issues such as climate change had to go hand in hand with 'gaining
power through learning the language' in her view. Kim considered that it was
about raising awareness that they have a role to play and that they 'have a
voice', and that learning was the key to discovering that. Sarah referred to the
embedding of ESDGC and Welsh in the curriculum.

In Chapter 6, it was noted that there had been a degree of unanimity in response
to this question about the meaning attributed to active citizenship within WEA
that had not been evident with the others. The predominant view amongst the
'strategic' group was that the WEA's role in relation to the promotion of active
citizenship was to teach people how to think so that they could make informed
choices. Although critical thinking had been mentioned by one participant in the
'operational' group in response to an earlier question, nobody mentioned it at this
stage in the interview. Whilst various themes emerged from the responses to this
question, the one that was mentioned the most was participation in the
Association's democratic structure. A quarter of the group mentioned this,
whereas only one of the Trustees commented on it. It is evident from the above
that the two groups responded quite differently to this question. However, a
significant common feature of their responses was that very few of the
participants in either group addressed the question. This may be because
participants did not understand the question, although it appears to the
researcher to be unambiguous. Alternatively, it may be because either the WEA

has not clearly defined its position in relation to active citizenship, or has failed to articulate its position to its members and staff effectively.

The responses to this set of questions about citizenship and active citizenship reveal some key differences both between and within the two groups. Although nearly all participants understood citizenship in terms of practice rather than status, participants in the 'strategic' group were more likely to view citizenship as a political relationship than those in the 'operational' group, and overall less than half of participants did so. Few of the 'strategic' group and only one person in the 'operational' group made explicit references to politics in relation to active citizenship, although about a third of each group spoke of active citizenship as being about 'making change'. Whilst the questions on the meaning of citizenship and active citizenship elicited a range of responses and demonstrated a lack of a shared understanding of the terms within the Association, the question in relation to how participants considered themselves to be active citizens prompted a considerable array of responses, particularly amongst the 'operational' group, that emphasised further the lack of common ground. Finally, the replies to the question on what the WEA meant by the term active citizenship appear to suggest, as mentioned above, that the WEA has not made clear its position on active citizenship.

7.3   The kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote and effective methods for its promotion

This section is in four parts, the first of which presents the findings in relation to a question about the kinds of active citizenship the WEA is able to promote. This is followed by responses to a question about any risks that might be involved with encouraging active citizenship. Thereafter, the focus is on whether active citizenship is to be promoted directly by means of a discrete curriculum or indirectly whether through the curriculum as a whole, through a democratic

learning environment or through participation in the Association's democratic structure, or through a combination of some or all of these. The section ends with findings in relation to a question about the curriculum that is required to enable WEA learners to engage as active citizens.

7.3.1 The kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote

As in Chapter 6, two people, Kim and Amanda, considered that the full range of activities cited in the preamble to the question constituted active citizenship. Kim felt that there was less 'political engagement' within WEA than there had been in the past and said she:

> would like to think that we could work maybe towards going back to sort of how things used to be. You know to see the reintroduction of politics and the importance of political engagement.

Kim differentiated between the learners and the WEA as a movement. She could see the value of learners talking with their neighbours 'because that gets people involved more in their community' and added 'as a movement I think that we should certainly be promoting the politically engaged side of things, through our lobbying'.

Amanda gave a briefer response, saying that WEA could be involved with:

> the whole breadth of that from volunteering to actively taking part and hearing… well letting their voices be heard, you know, to the powers that be.

Gwyn echoed Kim's remark about lobbying when he said that it would be within the WEA's role, if there were threats to its funding, to 'ask our learners maybe, if

they feel that way inclined, to write or to make their feelings known, and they do have feelings'.

Sarah gave an example of a political issue that had arisen within her community and how she would have liked WEA to have responded to it. A vigil had been arranged to protest at a planned demonstration by the far-right, anti-Islamic English Defence League (Allen 2010, p227). She explained:

> there was a big part of me that felt that we need to talk about these things and if we are united we need to go and say we are united and we need to go and take part.

Another person to raise a specifically political element was Andy, who referred to aspects of the citizenship course he was teaching that he considered were the kinds of active citizenship WEA should be promoting. These were human rights, equal opportunities and contacting Members of Parliament.

Fran also referred to rights in the context of people volunteering for the WEA, for example by becoming involved with branches. She asserted that learners should be told 'it is your right to be involved in this, you know, you can have a say, you can make change'. Moreover, she suggested, this could lead to:

> talking about rights and about their own rights in terms of education and how they think about how that fits into the political system then they can lobby.

Fran concluded by saying that WEA could promote active citizenship 'at lots of different levels'.

Marion saw the democratic structure of the WEA with branches and Council as a manifestation of the Association's promotion of active citizenship, whilst Kim spoke in terms of branches being empowered and able to 'act' on behalf of WEA. These three responses suggest that WEA itself is seen as a site in which active

citizenship takes place and that WEA is promoting active citizenship by encouraging learners to become involved in its democratic structure. Interestingly, nobody in the strategic group had responded in this way.

Wendy, Sarah and Paul all mentioned the WEA's role in encouraging people to think. Paul, for example, spoke of WEA helping people to think which in turn means they 'start engaging in discussion'. Learners were encouraged to 'find out more about the world they are living in and the community they are living in'. Similarly, William talked of WEA being able to encourage learners to see themselves as 'integrated' citizens who 'believe that they have a voice to express their opinion'. Marion spoke of WEA 'empowering' learners 'with knowledge and culture'. However, she did not specify the kinds of activity learners were empowered to undertake. These comments echoed those of members of the strategic group, yet arguably they do not really answer the question.

Like Ceri in Chapter 6, Sarah and Barbara raised the issue of voting. Whilst Sarah said simply 'I think people need to start voting', Barbara was concerned that 'people have become complacent' about politics and considered the decline in voting numbers to be a 'terrible tragedy'. She felt that WEA should be teaching politics and history and should:

> encourage enthusiasm among young people perhaps
> especially, so that people will become much more actively
> involved and get the governments that they have voted for and
> are much more aware of.

She stressed that WEA 'would have to be very careful and I don't think the WEA should promote one particular political party'. Similarly Leslie's response revealed an awareness of the sensitivity of this for WEA when he answered 'that's quite a hard one because the WEA is also supposed to be a non-political organisation'. When the researcher sought to clarify that the WEA was non-party political, he responded 'non-party political organisation and the politics with a

small P and politics with a big P' thus demonstrating a misunderstanding of the constitutional position and overstating the problem.

Leslie's comments came closest to the position expressed by Terry, one of the Trustees, who said it was not part of WEA's role to be 'political'. However, there were two people who were opposed to WEA encouraging a political dimension of active citizenship. Ashley made clear that she didn't support the 'view that you have to be active in politics because I think "active citizenship" really means being a good human'. She believed that WEA should:

> promote reducing anti-social behaviours and just take care of the
> community first before we think about any further, because right
> now the most serious problem is anti social behaviour.

Mair also expressed reservations about involvement with politics and a concern with crime. She acknowledged her ignorance of 'the political' and said she believed 'in policy making but not politics'. As a result, she said 'I don't particularly want WEA to go down the political route'. Referring to somebody speaking of 'walking the spiritual path with practical feet', Mair added 'I would like that… you know the spiritual qualities like oneness of human race and justice, less crime'.

In Chapter 6, all but one of the members of the strategic group identified a role for WEA in encouraging a model of active citizenship that involved engagement with political processes. No such clear picture emerges from the interviews with tutors and other staff in the operational group. Whilst some of the contributions, for example those of Barbara and Kim, are unequivocal about political engagement, others such as Gwyn's are more tentative, or less developed as in the case of Marion. Ashley and Mair demonstrate an antipathy towards politics and Leslie has an exaggerated view of the limitations facing WEA. In all, only half of the operational group could be said to envisage WEA encouraging a politically engaged form of active citizenship.

7.3.2 *Possible risks associated with promoting active citizenship*

In relation to possible constraints, in Chapter 6, it was noted that two of the 'strategic' group expressed caution in relation to the kinds of active citizenship which WEA could promote without being prompted by the researcher. Apart from Barbara's concern that WEA should be 'careful' and Leslie's comments about the difficult position WEA was in as it was not meant to be political, nobody in the 'operational' group voiced any concerns until asked directly whether or not they thought there might be any constraints surrounding the kinds of active citizenship WEA might wish to promote. Nine people in the group felt there could be risks for the Association and almost all of these pointed to the possible loss of state funding. Amongst this group were Kim who thought that political engagement could bring risks but added 'it is what you do with them, it is how you manage those risks isn't it', and Sarah who felt that the Association needed 'to be a bit braver' and say 'this is what we stand for, this is who we are, this is what we believe and this is what we are going to promote'. Similarly, Barbara acknowledged that there 'probably' were risks but thought that the WEA 'should push the boundaries because I think sometimes things become very narrow'. The position taken by Sarah and Barbara resembles that of Lyn, one of the Trustees, whose view is recorded in the previous chapter.

As well as mentioning the risk to funding, Ryan said 'we are partly constrained by ourselves in that the Council members… Council could change. There are Council members who are conservative'. He suggested that 'they might want to do something different to what other people want to do in the WEA' but added that he was not sure about that as he didn't go to any Council meetings.

Just as Trustees such as Chris and Morgan played down the risk, there were people in the 'operational' group who displayed less concern. Wendy said 'I don't

see why there should be because it's not a negative thing' and Gwyn argued 'it's

not a sort of party political issue in that sense I don't think, I think it's a general

community issue'. Andy felt there should be no risk provided what was taught

'resonate(d) with the core values of the WEA'. Leslie considered:

> if the WEA is encouraging people to be responsible and make a
> difference, I can't see that there can be any problems or
> shouldn't be any problems, but I suppose then how you interpret
> active citizenship, yes if you're actually trying to get people to
> man the barricades it might be different.

William, on the other hand, was unequivocal when he answered the question

'might there be any risks or constraints?' by saying simply 'no'.

The 'operational' group appears to be less cautious than the 'strategic' group,

with a smaller proportion recognising any risk and more of those who did

believing that WEA should be prepared to take the risk. On the face of it, this is

somewhat surprising given the relative lack of political experience in the group.

However, the apparent heightened sense of caution showed by the 'strategic'

group may reflect the responsibility they feel for the organisation's financial

security. Also, the relative lack of concern amongst the 'operational' group may

also be explained by their tendency not to conceptualise active citizenship in

political terms, and, in some cases, to be opposed to a political element. In this

context, a lack of concern for risk is more understandable because their preferred

model of active citizenship would not involve any element of conflict with the

state and therefore would not jeopardize the funding.

7.3.3 Methods for promoting active citizenship

As in the previous chapter, this part of the section relates to the question about

the methods that could be used to promote active citizenship. As before,

participants proposed a variety of methods, including both direct and indirect methods.

Three participants, Amanda, Ryan and Wendy, spoke about political education. For example, Wendy suggested there could be 'more opportunities for people to talk, and debate, discuss' so that learners became 'more informed about the political side of things', whilst Ryan mentioned generating debate through 'political studies' lectures. Fran was in favour of providing courses that included an element of 'thinking critically about what is going on'. Amanda also referred to courses with a relevance to 'what is happening in our society today', citing 'the money ones and the organic gardening'.

Like Rowan, one of the Trustees, who suggested 'overt courses about citizenship', three participants favoured making specific provision for active citizenship. One of these, Fran, also favoured integrating active citizenship in other courses, as did Maria (see below). Fran and Sarah felt there could be more courses on citizenship, whilst Andy spoke of informing learners about 'aspects of citizenship that they could be active in and…universal ideals like human rights and equal opportunities'.

As well as suggesting a direct approach to promoting active citizenship through specific courses, many participants proposed indirect methods. As with the 'strategic' group, some of these related to the curriculum whilst others involved learning through participation in the WEA's democratic structure. In addition there were ideas that had not been mentioned by any of the 'strategic' group. Finally, there were those who either saw that it was a 'natural process' or one that depended on the tutor's understanding of the WEA's ethos.

Amongst those who proposed methods that related to the curriculum were Barbara and Kim. Barbara considered that active citizenship could be promoted through the study of literature and in drama classes. She explained 'sometimes

people find it easier to talk about issues, contemporary issues, when they are actually looking at an ancient or historical text'. A key element was 'knowing the… or being sensitive to what kind of texts or syllabus you might provide'. She added that 'drama classes might be a way of getting people into playing the roles of citizen participation'. Kim's example could be said to be part of an informal curriculum, in that she described the social side of the WEA where:

> people become involved outside of the classroom with people that they have met, whether that is through an organisation or … they make a visit somewhere.

She cited as an example a group of ESOL learners who had recently visited the Senedd, the home of the National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff Bay.

Several participants spoke of 'embedding' active citizenship in other curriculum areas. For example, Gwyn said:

> I guess you could embed it and I do, on occasions, into some of the classes I teach. Certainly in IT some of the exercises I give are sort of historically based or about the community they live in so there is no reason why we couldn't embed it in that kind of thing as part of the curriculum.

Likewise Kim saw an opportunity within other curriculum areas, suggesting that 'some courses lend themselves more readily to discussions, things like sociology, psychology'. Fran considered WEA could include 'an element of how to be active in what is going on in the community' in other courses. Maria referred to using 'specific OCN units', but added a warning that 'there have to be people who actually want to do it'. She suggested that having it 'in small doses in with other units would probably be better'. Fran shared Maria's concern, saying 'you probably wouldn't get that much take up because it is a bit dry'. She was also in favour of 'tagging it on to something else and getting people to actually think'. Both Fran and Maria's views coincided with those of Alex in Chapter 6.

Both Maria and Marion referred to the WEA's policy of embedding ESDGC into the curriculum, and in particular raising awareness of environmental issues. Maria clearly supported the practice of building it in to different units and felt that it worked. However, despite his support for the idea, Gwyn sounded a note of caution about embedding themes such as global citizenship and Welsh language and culture into the curriculum, saying 'generally it's as much as we can do to focus on our own subject; it's hard'.

Maria and Paul suggested that WEA could promote active citizenship by example, in the sense that part of Maria's answer was 'by being democratic' whilst Paul said 'show that we really are a democratic organisation and we do what we say'.

Whereas only two members of the 'strategic' group spoke of the WEA's democratic structure as a site for the promotion of active citizenship, five participants in this group referred to branches. For example, Fran said 'we have the branch don't we, that is a forum for people to become more active' and Maria said 'branches are great' whilst recognising they do not always work. Maria, who had been an active branch member before becoming a tutor, thought WEA should encourage the building of branches as they are a 'very good way of enabling people to think for themselves' and 'to make decisions for themselves… taking responsibility'.

Both Maria and William spoke about learners gaining confidence through participation in WEA classes and argued that this in turn would lead to active citizenship. Maria said 'I think lots of WEA classes … one thing they do is they enable people just to feel confident in themselves to do something'. William referred to 'using education to make people aware of their circumstances and how they can change'. He added:

> I think it can only be done from a basis of a sense of
> empowerment within the WEA community, that people actually
> feel that their voice carries a value and it creates a space in
> which it can be heard, and if it can be heard within the WEA,
> ultimately it's a voice that will be heard outside of WEA, and if
> you can give people the confidence to use it I think that
> ultimately it will filter through into a wider world.

Several suggestions were made that had not been mentioned by participants
from the 'strategic' group. Kim implied that active citizenship should be spoken
about more when she said 'when learners go on courses and things there is
nothing ever mentioned about active citizenship'. She saw learners coming on a
course because they wanted to learn about IT for example, and commented 'I
don't think that it is about "I want to go on a course to learn IT" but "through that
this is what I can do" '. She added 'I don't think that we make enough of that'.
Ashley made two suggestions, the first of which was for WEA to form
partnerships with schools to provide after school activities. The second was for
'something more "green"' such as walks for people 'to get them to know the
environment'. The first of these suggestions reveals this tutor's limited
understanding of the WEA's role and purpose as an organisation funded to
provide post-compulsory education and training.

Mair posed a challenging question about some of the WEA's curriculum when
considering this question. She cited Belly Dancing classes and asked how these
were relevant if the WEA's aim was active citizenship. Whilst she thought there
was nothing wrong with Belly Dancing classes and would love to take part if there
was one near her, she said 'I don't know of how much of that relates to active
citizenship'. This raises an important issue for WEA to consider and connects
also with Kim's point above about the need for active citizenship to be mentioned
more often.

Paul answered the question about how WEA could promote active citizenship by
saying 'I think really through our learning, through our classes, that's what we're

about I guess'. This view was similar to Kim's belief that 'when you go on a course I think that you think of the course don't you, you don't think of everything else that is going on' which led her to conclude that there was a 'natural process' of becoming an active citizen through learning. Likewise, when answering the question about the kinds of active citizenship WEA could promote, Leslie hoped that WEA made people 'more liberal with a small L, more open, more accepting, more inclusive, more understanding and less judgmental' and felt that this should happen in any course regardless of the subject. He hoped that those values would 'get absorbed by the participants' and thus it was not necessary to have courses with a direct link with active citizenship.

Leslie also stressed the importance of having 'a good team of committed properly trained professional tutors' and asserted:

> if you get the right tutors then everything else follows on, and
> that means making sure that the tutors are properly trained,
> properly paid, properly rewarded, properly supported and the
> support means making sure that the tutors are aware of the
> ethos of WEA.

Sarah also focused on tutors and the need for them to project WEA's ethos. She considered that having 'so many tutors' was 'diluting our ethos because we don't know really what tutors are doing and what tutors are saying and what tutors are promoting'. She argued for a 'smaller and more unified' group of tutors so that 'we're in more control of saying "This is what we do, let's go and do it" '.

Anticipating the question later in the interview regarding the support needs of tutors, Sarah also made a case for tutors to be able to learn about history, politics, gender roles, social policy and law and to discuss 'what citizenship is'. Linking this to the point above, she proposed that 'rather than picking a lot of tutors from everywhere for different subjects', there should be 'a pool of people who hold a philosophy and become more educated in a whole way'. The

comments made by Leslie and Sarah in relation to the need for a body of tutors who share the WEA's ethos are particularly significant, because of both their importance for the achievement's of WEA's aims and the fact that none of the other participants raised these matters.

There were some interesting differences between the responses of the two groups. Firstly, four people from the 'operational' group compared with only one from the 'strategic' group suggested running courses overtly about citizenship. Despite this difference, perhaps more significant is that so few participants mentioned this at all. Secondly, the fact that three of the 'operational' group but none of the 'strategic' group mentioned political education is somewhat surprising considering the much greater willingness of the latter group to consider active citizenship in terms of political engagement. However, participants from the 'strategic' group highlighted the need for politics to be included in the curriculum in response to a later question (see below). Thirdly, the relative awareness on the part of the 'operational' group of the potential for the democratic structure to be a site for active citizenship was unexpected given the 'strategic' group's close involvement with that structure. However, as the numbers are so low in all of these cases one should be wary of exaggerating the significance.

7.3.4 A curriculum for active citizenship

The final part of this section covers the responses to the question about what should be included in the curriculum in order to prepare WEA learners for active citizenship. There were contradictory views amongst tutors and development workers in response to this question. Whilst there were several who felt, for various reasons that nothing needed to be added to the curriculum, the majority had ideas for new courses. There were some similarities between the replies from the 'operational' workers and those of the 'strategic' group.

Amongst those who were in favour of leaving the curriculum unchanged was Leslie who argued that the way courses were delivered was more important than the content, so that rather than having courses in Active Citizenship 'every course should be encouraging people albeit in an unspoken way to become active citizens'. Both Ashley and Marion took the view that the curriculum was sufficiently wide already. Amongst the majority who made proposals for developing the curriculum, there was a similar range of responses as there had been from the 'strategic' group. That is to say, there were participants in this group who proposed courses which would generate debate, stimulate critical thinking and have a focus on issues, as well as those who mentioned specific disciplines and others who focussed on the need for skills development.

Like Chris in Chapter 6, Wendy was clear that there needed to be more discussion in the curriculum so that people could 'express their views more'; whilst Barbara argued that the study of literature was ideal for discussing 'very important issues'. She cited texts like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* to provide an opportunity to discuss some scientific issues and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* which she described as being 'very important for climate change'. Literature, she believed, both 'exercises the imagination' and is 'a key to a civilised and sympathetic society'. Mair noted that the education system did not cater for a changing society but felt that WEA could be more flexible than other bodies. She proposed that WEA should organise discussion groups in areas where there was racial tension so that local people could voice their concerns but also learn about topics such as the history of immigration.

Another tutor, William, whilst acknowledging the WEA's non-party political stance, asserted:

> we do want to raise issues of inequality, we want to raise issues of disadvantage, we want to raise issues of exploitation and make people think on these issues, not to lecture them but to make them think that there has to be a better solution, and

hopefully through education they can look towards that
themselves.

Sarah spoke with some passion about the need 'to learn about our history' as
well as about law, politics, social policies, and 'about men and women and their
gender roles'. In addition, 'we need to discuss what citizenship is'. She was
confident that 'learners would be interested in all of those different areas of
learning'. Interestingly, this confidence contrasted with the concerns of a
development worker, Amanda, who despite being enthusiastic about holding
lectures 'on things like poverty, inequality', cautioned that 'it is hard to get people
into those kind of lectures'. Both Kim and Ryan also favoured introducing more
politics into the curriculum, whilst Andy commented on the usefulness of 'having
knowledge of your political environment' and Paul spoke of the importance of
studying history.

Andy and William both felt that teaching about rights should be included in the
curriculum. Andy spoke about the positive effect on ESOL students of learning
about their human rights and how to contact their elected representatives and
organisations that could help them when needed. William, who had worked in an
advice centre years ago, believed that 'people are no better informed now than
they were a quarter century ago' and that there should be opportunities for
people to learn about their rights and be aware that there is a 'process of redress
as a citizen' when the system does not operate as it should.

Five participants offered ideas on how the curriculum could address the skills
needed for active citizenship. Fran, Sarah and William all stressed the
importance of learners gaining communication skills, and having opportunities for
personal development so that they had the confidence and self-awareness
necessary for successful interaction with other people. Fran also considered it
was important to get people to 'think about what is right and wrong within the
world, within their own community, within Britain'. She saw this as 'embedding a

bit of critical thinking' and reflected that this had been the WEA's purpose but 'we have sort of lost our way a bit', adding that she remembered that when she began working with WEA 'we did women's studies courses and we don't do that anymore'.

Kim mentioned the need for courses on 'becoming an active volunteer' and also emphasised the practical skills that would be useful for learners interested in forming WEA branches including forming a group, committee skills and fundraising. Similarly, Gwyn focused on giving people the 'tools' for becoming active whether inside WEA or in 'the trade union movement, politically or charities'. He spoke of showing people 'what's out there and who to contact and how to do it and what's involved in doing it'. However, it is noticeable that very few people from either group suggested that such skills be addressed.

Whilst there was a similar range of responses to this question from both the 'strategic' and 'operational' groups there were differences in emphasis. There was, for example, a greater emphasis on academic disciplines in the 'strategic' group with seven out of ten mentioning specific disciplines including modern history, politics and philosophy, compared with only five out of sixteen people in the 'operational' group referring to such subjects. Notably whilst two of the 'operational' group wanted to see coverage of citizenship and human rights in the curriculum, these were not mentioned by any of the 'strategic' group, although citizenship courses had been mentioned by one Trustee in response to the previous question. Significantly, whilst three of the 'operational' group were opposed to any change to the curriculum, not one person from the 'strategic' group responded in that way. Whilst five people from each group suggested that there should be more discussion of issues, due to the relative size of the groups this represented a smaller proportion of the 'operational' group.

Taken together, the responses to the questions on the methods for promoting active citizenship and on curriculum content demonstrate a considerable level of

enthusiasm and constructive ideas spanning both groups for a pedagogy for active citizenship, notwithstanding the lack of clarity regarding the meaning of the term and the absence of a consensus on the kinds of active citizenship the Association could safely be seen to promoting.

At the end of the previous section it was noted that less than half of the participants viewed citizenship as a political relationship and only approximately a third had spoken of active citizenship in political terms. Following the question about the kinds of active citizenship the WEA could promote which was introduced with a preamble setting out different models of active citizenship reflecting a range of ideological positions, several more participants envisaged WEA promoting a politically engaged form of active citizenship. Whilst three members of the 'operational' group and one Trustee were opposed to WEA taking this approach, two-thirds of the participants were in favour of it. The question on constraints showed that the 'strategic' group tended to be more concerned about risk despite being more likely to conceptualise citizenship in political terms. Amongst those who recognised the risk amongst the 'operational' group there were several who thought that the WEA should take the risk. The answers to the question on the methods that WEA could adopt to promote active citizenship showed no preference for direct methods over indirect methods. Amongst the 'operational' group there was more awareness of the potential for the democratic structure of the association to act as a site for active citizenship. The responses to this question and the one about new curriculum showed an enthusiasm at all levels of the association for developing a pedagogy for active citizenship.

7.4 The capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge

This section covers the findings in respect of questions regarding the skills, experience and knowledge that tutors need in order to be able to promote active citizenship, and the support they require to be able to achieve this. The section begins by considering the responses about the skills, experience and knowledge needed.

7.4.1   Skills

Echoing the point made by Lyn in the 'strategic' group about the importance of tutors being able to handle different political viewpoints and manage group work, both Wendy and Kim identified the need for tutors to be able to handle debates. Kim spoke of the skill of 'being able to question, to open a discussion, to open up a debate and to keep it going and to bring the thoughts of the learners out'. Similarly, Sarah referred to skills in group facilitation, as well as an ability to build relationships in the community. Kim also referred to the 'soft skills side of things' and the importance of tutors 'being able to use all those sorts of skills to enable people to reach their full potential'. Barbara focused on communication skills which she linked with a 'willingness to help individual students where there might be a specific need and to direct them to other help and support that they might need'. She also spoke of having the ability to 'give different choices to people'.

Ashley considered that tutors working with learners from ethnic minorities should 'get to know the background first, what are the taboos and what are the beliefs and what are the values, which is important for that ethnic group before you can even start'. Ashley said that 'apart from that, I think there's no other special skills that are needed'.

Notably only five of the group commented on the skills needed, including one who did not consider any special skills were needed. As was mentioned in Chapter 6, the question was flawed as it was in three parts, and this may have

affected the responses. However, it is interesting that this group had so little to say about the skills required of a tutor to promote active citizenship. In contrast, six out of ten members of the 'strategic' group gave views on the skills needed by tutors. Whilst some of these responses did not address directly the question of skills for promoting active citizenship, the point made by Chris about the importance of negotiating skills was especially relevant.

7.4.2 Experience

As was the case with skills, only a minority offered their ideas on the experience a tutor would need. Interestingly, with one exception, they were not the same people who replied in relation to skills. Barbara, Fran and William all believed that 'life experience' was essential. Barbara, for example, said 'I think you need to have had a lot of experience of different aspects of life', whilst William linked life experience to an ability to give 'a sensible answer in a range of different things' and thereby establish credibility with learners. Andy, whose response related more directly to the question, echoed Alex's point in Chapter 6 in arguing that tutors should definitely have experience of 'active citizenship issues'. Gwyn thought that his experience as a trade union activist would prepare him for discussing citizenship issues. Ashley also referred to the benefits of tutors being active, arguing that tutors should get involved in their community 'to get to know what's it like out there before they can convince someone else to do it'. Despite the limited number of responses to this part of the question, six people from the 'operational' group offered views compared with only two from the 'strategic' group. Although more of this group referred to the need for experience of activism or community involvement than did the 'strategic' group, the proportion overall who recognised the importance of this was very small at four people out of twenty-six.

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7.4.3 Knowledge

Seven members of the group gave their views on the knowledge a tutor requires. Good subject knowledge was cited by Amanda, Barbara, Maria and Wendy. In addition Barbara highlighted the need to have a 'holistic view', a comment which resonated with the expectation of four members of the 'strategic' group that tutors would have a wider knowledge than their subject area. Andy and Maria both mentioned the need for tutors to be aware of issues. Andy stressed the importance of tutors being 'aware of all the citizenship issues to begin with' and being familiar with 'current issues because obviously the political environment is changing all the time as well'. Marion, who acknowledged her uncertainty about what active citizenship involved, said that if she were to promote courses she would need to know more about politics and history. She added that tutors would need this knowledge also if they were being asked to promote active citizenship in their classes. Apart from Andy, Maria and Marion's contributions, none of the other participants' responses related strictly to knowledge required to promote active citizenship.

Fran raised a key question of central importance to this study when she said 'I wonder if tutors actually know what active citizenship is to be quite honest'. Whilst praising tutors who she described as being 'interesting' and 'great for our learners', she suspected that many of them would not be familiar with the concept because 'it is something that isn't everyday'. This led her to suppose that tutors need to understand what the WEA wants to achieve, which she defined as 'people being able to take control of their own lives, being able to question, being able to do more'. She doubted whether enough emphasis was given to this at WEA tutor days.

Seven participants, including some who commented on knowledge, spoke about the qualities or attitudes required of tutors. Barbara, for example, spoke of the need for sensitivity towards the needs of individuals in a group and added 'I think

to be a caring person is vital'. Fran, Mair and Paul stressed the importance of empathy and understanding. Fran expected tutors to 'have an understanding of how people develop at their own pace', whilst Paul was looking for an 'understanding that we are all together on this journey whatever, and make them feel valued and equal as part of that learning process'. In her response, Maria prioritised the need to be motivated. This view was shared by Leslie who emphasised the importance of 'recruiting the right sort of tutor in the first place', someone who has 'the right attitude … the right passion'. Sarah also focused on recruitment of tutors when she began her response by saying 'I wonder if we are looking for a person that shares our philosophy'. This view was shared by Ceri in the 'strategic' group who expected tutors to know why they were working for WEA and to be aware of the significance of the Association's strapline 'Shaping the future through democratic learning'. Whilst Leslie and Sarah's responses highlight a significant issue, according to Ryan, there was not a problem in respect of Trade Union Studies tutors whose values had been formed through experience in the trade union movement and would, he believed, be in accord with those of both the WEA and the Labour movement.

7.4.4 Support for tutors

When participants from the 'operational' group were asked about the support tutors might need in order to be able promote active citizenship, nine out of sixteen answered that training was needed. Only four of these participants were tutors; however there was interest amongst other tutors in different means of developing their skills and knowledge which included meeting to share good practice and holding additional tutor days. All but one of the tutors had ideas for the kind of support that would be useful. Paradoxically, tutors seemed to be more confident in identifying the kind of support they would like than in articulating the skills, experience and knowledge they needed in order to promote active citizenship.

Amongst the tutors who were in favour of training, Mair thought the focus should be on 'social skills', whilst William recommended that a short course should be organised for tutors 'to build confidence' which would consider what active citizenship is and how it could be integrated into the curriculum. This suggestion was similar to, yet more democratic than, that of Terry in the 'strategic' group who had proposed that active citizenship should be defined and then a training course be run for tutors. Sarah felt that, as well as training in topics such as group dynamics and the WEA's ethos, there should be opportunities for tutors to go on courses, saying she was keen to learn about 'the role of women in history' as well as more about Social Policy.

Kim and Ryan were amongst the other staff who believed more training was needed. Kim suggested that this should cover topics such as equality and diversity, and added that she would like to see 'something around our conversation today as it really makes you stop and think' which could include 'awareness raising and discussion and debate'. Ryan thought there was a need for tutors to have a better understanding of the WEA's history and reflected that he wasn't talking to people about it. He realised that the interview was the first time he had talked about it 'for a long time'.

Paul, who worked as both tutor and development worker, was the only participant in this group to mention support from learning managers and particularly development workers who 'are there to give the support in any shape or form that we can'. Paul's comments were not as specific as those of Rowan reported in the previous chapter who had suggested that development workers could help tutors to think about how they could introduce citizenship into the curriculum. It was noted in Chapter 6 that there may be an issue in terms of the capacity of such staff to provide that support. Evidence from the interviews with four development workers – Amanda, Fran, Marion and Ryan - suggests that there would be varying levels of capacity to support tutors. For example, Fran's responses

demonstrate a relatively sophisticated understanding of the concept of active citizenship, particularly in the context of the WEA's ethos and purpose, compared with Marion's frank acknowledgement of her uncertainty regarding active citizenship and her need to learn more about history and politics. Moreover, the lack of clarity that has emerged from the findings regarding the meaning of active citizenship within the WEA exacerbates the problem for both tutors and staff whose role is to support them.

Marion highlighted several opportunities when tutors were brought together for other purposes such as accreditation meetings, moderation events as well as tutor training days when support in relation to active citizenship could be 'embedded'. Leslie agreed with Marion that moderation events should provide that opportunity when a number of tutors in a curriculum area come together for tutors 'to share ideas'. The tutor days were also mentioned by Leslie and William, both of whom were critical of the current arrangements. Leslie was in favour of holding more tutor days because 'tutoring tends to be a very lonely existence' and the current arrangement of an annual tutor day which was 'very rigidly structured' left little opportunity for interaction with tutors. Leslie's experience of most tutor days was that they were 'one sided' and consisted of 'basically being told by the WEA what we are going to be doing next'. William felt that an additional tutor day was needed as the emphasis of the current tutor day was on practicalities which left no time to consider 'wider concerns'. In his view discussion of issues happened 'far too rarely and we certainly would need something like that if we are going to introduce citizenship as an idea'.

Sharing experience and good practice with others was mentioned by five tutors including Andy, who was interested in hearing how other tutors approached the subject and drawing on their experience whether it be at workshops, meetings or through publications. Similarly, Barbara suggested having a 'discussion forum on it and exchanging some views with some of the other tutors'. Maria also favoured 'get together sessions where people exchange experience' and felt that it would

help if tutors exchanged more. She also suggested that examples of good practice could be put on the website.

Other suggestions included one from Marion for a quarterly active citizenship newsletter and another from Gwyn for 'a written toolkit or something like that with the kinds of things that we need to provide'. Fran also identified a need for resources.

In addition to the criticisms made by Leslie and William about the tutor days, there were negative comments about the quality of training for tutors generally. William's remark that 'WEA is not overly good in terms of training our own staff' was very similar to Sarah's opinion that 'we can do an awful lot better in the way that we train up our tutors'. These comments, together with the view shared by nearly all the tutors that there was a need for either training or mutual support from one another, confirm that Ceri was justified in acknowledging that 'maybe we are not looking after our greatest asset as much as we could be' (see Chapter 6). Not surprisingly perhaps, tutors and the staff who work most closely with tutors had more to say in response to this question than Trustees and senior managers.

In summary, whilst allowing for the weakness referred to regarding the way the question about the skills, experience and knowledge needed by tutors was structured, the responses from both groups are revealing for what they leave out as much as what they include. Very few participants in either group suggested skills that would be important for creating a democratic learning environment. None of the participants thought of mentioning skills that would assist with branch development. This was an interesting omission in view of the various mentions made in answer to other questions of the importance of branches and the WEA's democratic structure in respect of active citizenship. As few as eight participants spoke about the experience tutors would need, of whom only four mentioned the need for tutors to have had experience of activism. Only three participants, one

Trustee, a Development Worker and a tutor, specified a need for political knowledge. Perhaps surprisingly these were not people with a history of involvement in trade unions or a political party. Whereas tutors appeared to have relatively little to say about the skills, experience and knowledge they needed, they were clear about the support they would benefit from in terms of training and sharing of good practice. Several tutors made serious criticisms about the quality of training provided whilst simultaneously recommending ways in which the annual tutor days could be improved.

7.5 Reasons for the WEA no longer being seen as a source of political knowledge

This section relates to the research question prompted by the small scale study of WEA members referred to above which showed that WEA was no longer seen as a source of knowledge and understanding about politics, economics and international relations. Participants were asked for their views on why this should be the case.

As in the case of the 'strategic' group, various reasons were offered and a number of participants provided multiple possible explanations. Also a similar mixture of external and internal factors in relation to WEA was identified. Most of the explanations can be categorised as being external to the WEA and relate in different ways to social and economic change since the Second World War.

7.5.1 External factors

Both Ryan and William thought there was a range of different reasons. Ryan suggested that learners were 'shaped according to the needs of the day' where the imperative was to get a job or a better job. He also thought that people were

'bombarded with all sorts of other things you can do today rather than go to learning'. Moreover, negative educational experiences meant that some people were not attracted to learning. William echoed Terry's view reported in Chapter 6, that the 1944 Education Act bore some responsibility, when he said that since the introduction of the welfare state 'people know the difference between the political options that are offered to them'. William recognised that WEA was not alone in that other organisations had difficulty in attracting people and taking forward a political agenda. This was because political knowledge was not a 'pertinent aspect of our society at the moment'. He thought this was due to people seeing politics as 'something that contributes to a universal cynicism' and feeling 'sold short' by the expenses scandal.

The availability of alternative sources of information was cited by four participants. Both Gwyn and Mair said how easy it was to get information from the television, and Gwyn also mentioned the internet. However, he also questioned whether a lot of his learners would look for it. Amanda contrasted the current ease of access to the media with the situation years ago before television was so widespread when people would go outside and discuss politics with their neighbours. Kim considered television was one of various influences which meant that people were 'very easily distracted these days'.

Seven participants believed that contemporary attitudes to politics were to blame. Paul, for example, believed that people under 40 or 45 had become de-politicised and as a result would not think of WEA having 'that sort of role'. Kim felt that, compared with before the Second World War, people's values were different and they were 'disengaged'. There was both apathy and a lack of understanding that they could influence decisions. Despite being unhappy about 'what goes on', they did nothing about it. Maria considered there would be a lack of interest if courses were put on. Sarah commented that 'we've become politically a lot more apathetic as a nation'. Andy agreed that there was apathy towards politics which he thought was due to a loss of confidence in the political process and a feeling

of powerlessness following the massive protest against the Iraq war which had not been listened to. In addition, the power of multi-nationals had grown to such an extent that the sovereignty of nations was compromised which in turn led to an 'erosion of the political process' that had 'fostered a disinterest in the political arena generally'. This was the most elaborate analysis of political disengagement to be offered by any of the participants from both groups.

Amanda thought it was a reflection of 'how society is today' and commented that she didn't know many people from her generation with an active involvement in politics. Where somebody was active it was usually because they had grown up in a family that was politically engaged or 'outspoken'. Similarly, Wendy reflected on some of the changes that had taken place since the war that had a bearing on the way in which WEA was perceived. She noted that the structure of society had changed and there weren't the same groups and people no longer belonged to 'certain groups that would argue for a certain thing'.

Marion shared Ryan's view about learners' priorities suggesting that 'those classes were more of a hobby' whereas at a time of redundancies classes such as basic skills and IT were 'more of a necessity' for finding another job. She concluded that there was a lack of demand due to changes in the economy, whilst acknowledging that the curriculum had changed with the inclusion of 'a lot more IT' than before and ESOL classes due to the demand from people coming into the country.

7.5.2 Internal factors

Changes in the nature of the WEA curriculum were highlighted as a possible cause by several other participants. Ashley suggested that it was due to a 'change of direction of the courses offered' together with the diversity of courses and the absence of an 'area of concentration'. By offering 'everything', WEA was

losing people looking for 'something' because they would go to the organisation that provided the 'specific item' that they wanted. Like Ceri from the 'strategic' group, Wendy took the view that there was pressure on the WEA to provide a curriculum that addressed the needs of the economy. On the other hand, Fran thought it was because WEA was 'not teaching those curriculum areas anymore'. Echoing Pat's comments reported in Chapter 6 that WEA had altered the supply, Fran added that the learner group had changed and that an assumption may have been made that they would not be interested in politics or economics. She ended with the comment that 'perhaps we were a more academic organisation before the second world war'. However, Leslie suspected there had been a loss of radicalism due to a need to 'be respectable' in order to keep the funding.

Two participants raised the issue of leadership. Whilst Ryan wondered if 'people in key positions in WEA' had not prioritised political education, Sarah argued 'the WEA has to push it and make it happen and start with tutors'. Gwyn, who recognised that some of his learners would be interested, acknowledged that he did not tell them about 'that part of WEA's role' and that maybe he should since there was 'a bit of an ignorance about the WEA and that role that it used to provide'.

Barbara's conclusion that:

> it has to do more with the changes in our society than with the changes in the WEA, although there have obviously been changes in the WEA, and I think our society has changed so much

reflects the balance of opinion amongst these participants.

There were few striking differences between the kinds of responses from the two groups of participants in relation to this question. There were proportionately fewer 'internal' explanations from the 'operational' group. However, three

participants did highlight the need for WEA to take a more proactive approach to challenge the perception of the Association whilst none of the 'strategic' group members considered this. Interestingly, there was a sole voice in each group arguing that the WEA had removed the supply of political education contrary to the view that there was no longer a demand for it.

7.6 Summary

A picture of the 'operational' group emerges from this chapter that contrasts in various ways with that of the 'strategic' group. As a group it had less knowledge of the WEA and a weaker sense of belonging to a historic movement. Its members were less likely to have been members of a political party or to have been active in the trade union and Labour movement. Similarly, they were less likely to express the attraction of the WEA in ideological terms. Nevertheless, everyone in the group appeared to be committed to the WEA, although several tutors were critical of the Association particularly in respect of the quality of support and training for tutors.

After contrasting the responses of the two groups of participants to the first set of questions, which related to participants' familiarity with WEA's aims, values and history, the opening section of this chapter ended by posing a question as to whether a similar pattern would be repeated in respect of subsequent questions. It can be seen that there have been overlaps between some of the responses of both groups to most questions. In respect of the questions on the meaning of citizenship and active citizenship there were differences of emphasis but these were not so marked as in the first section. However, there was a significant difference in relation to the kinds of active citizenship that the groups envisaged WEA promoting. Whereas nearly everyone in the 'strategic' group expressed it in terms of engagement with political processes only half of the 'operational' group did so. This would seem to be consistent with the findings in respect of the first

set of questions. However, it was notable that whilst participants from both groups were aware that the receipt of state funding placed some constraints on what WEA could do, those from the 'operational' group tended to be less risk averse. Interestingly the pattern was less evident in relation to responses as to the methods for promoting active citizenship where paradoxically 'operational' group members were more likely to propose overt citizenship courses and political education, and to see the democratic structure of WEA as a site for learning about and practising active citizenship. The distinction between the two groups that emerges from this question is offset somewhat by the responses of the 'strategic' group to the question about how the curriculum could be developed, which included suggestions for both academic, such as history and politics, and issues based courses as well as skills for active citizenship.

The distinction between the two groups was less pronounced in respect of the question about the skills, experience and knowledge needed by tutors. This was partly due to the limited number of responses to parts of the questions from participants in both groups and to what was missing from the responses of each group. There were two differences that stood out as being inconsistent with the pattern. More members of the 'operational' group identified the need for tutors to have had experience of activism and to have political knowledge than did members of the 'strategic' group. However, the numbers were so small in each case that this may be less significant than it first appears.

When considering the kind of support tutors needed to be able to promote active citizenship, both groups proposed training and opportunities for sharing good practice. The question prompted the three senior managers to reflect respectively on the lack of an induction programme, on how much could be reasonably expected of tutors who were only teaching for a few hours per week and on the quality of the support provided. Two Trustees felt that there should be an emphasis in training on the WEA aims and ethos. Most tutors recognised the need for more discussion on the topic of active citizenship but some felt this

could be achieved through mutual support rather than through training, in some cases because of negative experiences of the annual tutor training events. Criticisms, such as the infrequency of the tutor days and the way they were run, substantiated the concerns of one senior manager about the quality of support provided to tutors.

Finally, there was a similar range of responses from each group to the question about the reasons for WEA not being considered as a source for political knowledge in the 2002 study. Participants in both groups suggested both external and internal factors and there was one dissenting voice in each group arguing that WEA had removed the supply of political education as opposed to there no longer being a demand for it.

This chapter begins by contextualising the thesis before discussing the policy implications of the findings in relation to each of the six principal research aims as highlighted above. A section covering the key findings, their policy implications and recommendations is devoted to each aim. The chapter ends with a reflection on the limitations of the study and my ideas for further research in this area.

8.1   The context of the study

There are several elements to the context of this study including adult education policy, the 'contested' nature of citizenship as a concept, the contrasting meanings ascribed to active citizenship and aspects of the WEA's history.

There have been significant developments in adult education policy during the twentieth century which reflect distinct ideological perspectives. It was argued (in Chapter 2) that the policy agenda had become dominated by economic concerns by the late twentieth century whereas in the first half of the century, as the WEA developed, a sense of social purpose prevailed. At that time the WEA's agenda was described as representing a 'libertarian socialism' and included notions of individual self-fulfilment, as well as public service, social justice and class emancipation (Fieldhouse 1996b, p202). A gradual erosion of social purpose took place in the post-war period as individualism took over from collectivism. With globalisation and the shift to the right in the 1980s, policies based on marketisation, vocationalism and privatisation, combined with managerialism both intensified the emphasis on individualism and led to a prioritisation of adult education's economic purpose.

Conclusion: Implications for WEA Policy and Recommendations

It was noted (in Chapter 3) that citizenship has been described as a 'contested' concept (Lister 2003, p3) and that different meanings are ascribed to the term active citizenship according to the ideological context. Opposing views as to the meaning of citizenship were seen to be underpinned by two main philosophical traditions of liberalism and civic republicanism (Oldfield 1994, p188). A third model, communitarianism, has been described by Lister *et al* (2007, p55) as 'an influential contemporary offshoot of civic republicanism'. According to the liberal tradition, citizenship is primarily a question of individual rights and status, with rights being understood in terms of negative freedom in the sense of freedom from interference by the state. In comparison, the civic republican conceptualisation of citizenship is one in which citizens belong to a political community with responsibilities including the practice of political participation, which, in contrast to the individualism of liberalism, emphasises social solidarity and the potential for collective action. Although the term communitarianism is considered to incorporate a broad range of political positions it can be distinguished from liberalism (Delanty 2000, p23; Miller 2000a, p100) due to its rejection of individualism and emphasis on participation and identity (Delanty 2000, p23).

These contrasting views as to whether or not citizenship is a political relationship, together with the ideological tensions in the WEA's early history referred to in Chapter 2, prompted the researcher to investigate the extent to which citizenship is understood within the contemporary WEA as status or practice and conceptualised as a political relationship.

The various ways in which active citizenship is understood also reflects the different philosophical traditions of citizenship. Under Thatcher, for example, active citizenship was conceptualised in line with the liberal tradition in terms of volunteering and giving to charity and was definitely not about political participation (Lister *et al*. 2007, p54). According to Faulks (1998, p132) the emphasis of citizenship moved 'away from the political community and towards

individual acts of moral behaviour'. New Labour and Welsh Labour interpretations of active citizenship were seen to draw on the communitarian and civic republican traditions respectively, despite sharing a concern for a consensual approach whereby they can engage with responsible citizens. Further along the ideological spectrum was the notion of the citizen as an active political agent 'involved in proselytising an ideology of change' (Janoski and Gran 2002, p40). The chapter also contained a discussion of learning for active citizenship and the different ways in which the knowledge and skills required for active citizenship may be acquired.

Certain aspects of the WEA's history since its establishment in England in 1903 have a bearing on the thesis. Particular attention was paid (in Chapter 4) to the founding principles of the Association and the rivalry between the WEA and the Marxist National Council of Labour Colleges for the attention of the working class. Despite allegations from the Left that the WEA diverted workers from the class struggle, it was seen that the situation was more ambiguous. A central feature of the bitter struggle between the two organisations was the acceptance by the WEA of state funding; a decision which was to create problems for the Association in the 1920s when it adopted a radical stance in supporting calls for industrial democracy. The ensuing threats to its funding and scrutiny of its activities by the state was said to have left the Association with a 'sense of caution' (Fieldhouse 1992, p158). The reliance of the contemporary WEA South Wales on funding from the Welsh Government was also considered together with the possibility of this constraining the kind of active citizenship that WEA could promote.

8.2   How different actors within the WEA understand the Association's aims, values and history

Conclusion: Implications for WEA Policy and Recommendations

This section draws on responses to interview questions about what attracted participants to the WEA, what they knew about its aims, values and history at the time and had learned since, what the Association's name meant to them and how they understood the WEA's contemporary role.

8.2.1 Key findings

All participants in the 'strategic' group and two of the Part-time Tutors were familiar with the WEA when they first got involved. The remaining participants from the 'operational' group had limited or no prior knowledge of the WEA. The Trustees and senior managers were all attracted to the WEA because of a synergy between their values and those of the organisation, whilst only six of the 'operational' group were attracted by its ethos.

Participants' responses about the WEA's aims and values varied considerably in their breadth and depth. Some demonstrated a sound understanding whilst others were limited. The most cited aim was to provide learning for disadvantaged individuals and communities including 'second chance' education. However, less than half of the participants mentioned this. Flexibility and democracy were the two most cited values. However, both were referred to by as few as seven participants. Voluntarism, equality and social justice were each mentioned four times. However, responses to later questions suggest that some of these values were understood more widely.

Although participants from both groups referred to the WEA's ethos the discourse differed with members of the 'strategic' group more likely to relate the ethos explicitly to values such as democracy and equality whilst those in the 'operational' group emphasised the WEA's learner centredness. References by participants in the 'strategic' group to socialism and the working class exemplified a distinctive political discourse.

There were also differences between the two groups, and to some extent within them, in their awareness of the Association's history. Everyone in the 'strategic' group, albeit to varying degrees, was aware of the Association's past and shared a sense of belonging to an organisation with a significant history. Whilst some of the 'operational' group, including three of the tutors, had been well aware of the WEA's links with the trade union movement, half of the group knew nothing of the organisation's history when they first got involved. Whilst most of these had learned about the history subsequently there were two tutors who appeared not to have done. This group revealed less of a sense of being part of an organisation with a significant history. This distinction was also evident from participants' views on the WEA's name. Nearly everyone in the 'strategic' group commented on the name's historical significance compared with only six out of sixteen participants in the 'operational' group.

From this evidence it appears that Trustees and senior managers tend to be more familiar with the history of the Association than most of the people in other roles. In respect of aims and values there appeared to be differences in the ways these were articulated by people in different roles with those in the 'strategic' group having a distinctive political discourse.

Responses to the question about the WEA's contemporary role revealed that there was no enthusiasm for the dominant economic agenda of current adult education policy. However, whilst there was evident commitment to a social purpose for adult education only one participant spoke of equality and social justice. Generally, the notion of the emancipation of the working class current in the 1920s had given way to one of empowerment of the disadvantaged. Notably, in view of the study's focus, only four participants referred to the promotion of active citizenship. Significantly, the variety of responses was such that there was neither a sense of clarity nor a consensus within the organisation about its purpose.

8.2.2 Policy implications

Arguably, two significant issues arise from these findings that have policy implications for the Association. The first of these is the lack of awareness amongst participants, particularly from the 'operational' group, of the WEA's aims, values and history. The second is the apparent absence of clarity or consensus regarding the organisation's purpose.

The first of these issues has implications for the Association's Human Resources policies regarding staff recruitment, induction and development. This will be considered further in section 8.6.3 below.

The absence of clarity or consensus regarding the WEA's purpose raises questions as to whether or not the Association has a clear policy and sense of purpose. As recently as 2008 an exercise was undertaken to produce a statement of purpose which culminated in a document that was endorsed at the Annual General Meeting in 2009, a matter of months before this study was undertaken. This document asserts that the WEA's purpose is 'to empower individuals through the attainment of confidence, skills and knowledge so that they can play an active and democratic role in society locally, nationally and internationally' (WEA South Wales 2009d, p1).

It is important to consider why the consultation and debate within the WEA about its purpose and the subsequent publication appear to have been ineffective. There are several possible explanations. However, it is important to note that the WEA faces considerable logistical challenges when seeking to involve and communicate with staff given the geographically dispersed nature of the organisation and the considerable number of part-time workers, some of whom work for as little as two hours per week. A particular challenge is that for some

Part-time Tutors the WEA will not be their top priority. Moreover, despite making efforts to consult members and staff it is impossible to insist that people take part in the process and similarly even if the document was circulated to everyone there is no certainty that it will have been read and its contents absorbed. In other words different actors in the Association may be unaware of the document or, if they have read it, may have forgotten its key points.

8.2.3 Recommendation

The implication of this finding is that the Association needs to consider how it communicates significant policy decisions and how it reinforces its purpose to members and staff. In doing so it will need to take account of the particular challenges it faces and will need to consider how key messages are 'cascaded' within the organisation. For the organisation to be cohesive and effective in meeting its purpose it is essential that staff and members understand and identify with that purpose.

Recommendation 1:
WEA should review how it communicates its purpose so that all actors within the organisation understand how they contribute towards its achievement

8.3   How the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship are understood within the WEA

This section is based on findings from interview questions on how participants understood the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship, and on the ways in which they were active citizens.

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8.3.1 Key findings

There was little evidence of participants being influenced by the liberal model of citizenship, with a minority speaking of citizenship in individualistic terms. Four participants emphasised personal attributes which could be equated with an individualistic view of citizenship in the light of the European study discussed in Chapter 3 (Ivinson *et al*. 2000, p144). One was a tutor who said 'it is how a citizen should behave – with good moral standards'. There were also four references to citizenship as status. One participant spoke of the status conferred by a passport before adding 'is it more than that too? Is it part of being part of the democratic process?' Two mentioned the UK citizenship test, one of whom believed that citizenship status was relatively 'superficial'.

The majority of participants spoke of citizenship in terms of belonging to and being actively involved in society in one way or another, reflecting both the civic republican tradition and communitarianism. Seven participants introduced environmental and global dimensions to citizenship, whilst two related citizenship to contemporary Wales in terms of both cultural identity, including the Welsh language, and politics. For the majority, citizenship was a matter of practice rather than status. However, only a minority of participants expressed this practice in terms of political participation. Participants from the 'strategic' group were more likely to express citizenship in such terms than those from the 'operational' group. A minority of eleven out of twenty-six participants could be seen to conceptualise citizenship in political terms.

In response to the question about the meaning of active citizenship, the most commonly used expressions were 'taking part' or 'getting involved'. Whilst sixteen participants specified the context as the local community, a minority mentioned spheres such as trade union activity, public service and politics.

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However, 'getting involved' in the local community was interpreted in different ways. For example, one tutor said it need not be political or on a large scale. The important thing was to get 'engaged with other people' which could mean 'just helping your neighbours'. In articulating active citizenship in both political and caring terms, this statement reflects two of the theoretical positions referred to in Chapter 3. It encompasses both a conflict model and what Faulks (1998, p128) would consider to be 'individual acts of moral behaviour'.

Seven participants believed active citizenship to be about 'making changes' or having 'influence'. Most focused on making their community a better place, whilst one specified collective activity in the workplace and another talked of 'addressing injustice'.

Three participants introduced the notion of the active citizen being a 'good' citizen. The tutor who equated citizenship with 'good moral standards' defined active citizenship as behaving as 'a good human being'. Likewise, a Development Worker saw it as being 'a good member of the community… looking out for people, being polite, being helpful'. However, another tutor saw a 'good' citizen as someone who took 'note of environmental issues and their effect on people's lives'. Environmental awareness was also mentioned by three other participants in the 'operational' group.

There were three explicit references to politics in the context of active citizenship including a Trustee who spoke of protesting at council meetings and another who mentioned involvement in politics more generally. There were other participants who spoke in political terms. These included three who made specific references to democratic participation and two who spoke of campaigning. One of these spoke of people who disagreed with a new law going to the Assembly to 'speak up for themselves, speak up for the community'. This view reflects the model of active citizenship in which citizens have 'political agency' and challenge those in power (Janoski and Gran 2002; Giroux 2003). Altogether, ten out of twenty-six

participants made explicit or implicit references to active citizenship involving political activity, which is broadly consistent with the replies to the question on the meaning of citizenship.

Further evidence of participants' understandings of the concept of active citizenship emerged when they described how they were active citizens. Most responses could be categorised as political activity within the Labour movement, environmental groups or local single issue campaigns, involvement in the formal political process as an elected representative or volunteering.

Seven of the 'strategic' group were or had been members of the Labour Party or had been active in their trade union (or in some cases both). Four of the 'operational' group had been trade union activists and one of these had also been a member of the Labour Party. One Trustee and two tutors were or had been Community Councillors. Considering the number of participants with a background in the Labour Party and/or trade unions, the references above to democracy and equality, and the awareness of the WEA's history, there were surprisingly few explicit references to politics in respect of active citizenship.

Twelve participants spoke of their involvement with a variety of community or voluntary organisations. Two tutors described their engagement with environmental issues, another belonged to a human rights organisation and two people from the 'operational' group had campaigned on local issues.

Ten participants, five from each group, understood their involvement with WEA to constitute active citizenship. One tutor referred to telling learners how they should behave, whilst another participant saw the role as an opportunity to talk about Welsh language and culture with learners.

In addition, several participants considered their personal behaviour in respect of the environment to be active citizenship. For example, one Trustee mentioned

being an organic gardener, whilst one of the Development Workers described being a role model to others in respect of recycling. Being a 'bloody good Dad' was considered to constitute active citizenship by one participant, whilst supporting charities was cited by another.

It can be seen from the above that although citizenship was conceptualised in different ways the majority of participants understood it to be to do with practice rather than status, reflecting the republican rather than the liberal philosophical tradition. However, only eleven out of twenty-six conceptualised citizenship in political terms and a similar proportion expressed active citizenship as political activity. The findings in relation to active citizenship demonstrate that participants interpreted a broad range of activities as active citizenship, rendering the term rather imprecise and raising a question as to how meaningful it is in the context of the WEA.

8.3.2   Policy implications

These findings amount to a challenge for the WEA. The statement of purpose referred to in the section above envisages the Association empowering learners to take on active and democratic roles in their communities. Arguably this implies a notion of active citizenship based on the republican tradition that involves political engagement. There appears to be dissonance between the way in which the majority of participants conceptualised the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship on the one hand, and both the expressed purpose of the Association and its history on the other. These findings have implications for the WEA's capacity to fulfill its purpose and raise similar questions to those in section 8.2.2 about Human Resources policies which will be considered further below.

8.4   The extent to which there is a common understanding of active citizenship within the organisation

This section relates primarily to the participants' views on what was meant by the WEA when using the term active citizenship. One trustee replied insightfully that 'it's obviously going to mean different things to different people'. He was certain that if one were to talk to activists within WEA about citizenship and active citizenship one would find a 'variety of views'. His prediction was borne out by the responses to the questions summarised in the section above.

8.4.1   Key findings

Most of the responses to this question revealed more about participants' views on the WEA's role as a learning provider than about the way the Association understood active citizenship. Most participants interpreted the question to be about the WEA's role in promoting active citizenship rather than how the concept itself was understood.

A minority of participants focussed on the question. One participant from the 'operational' group suggested that it could be 'something like getting involved in the [WEA's] branch structure and the democratic structure', then mentioned other kinds of voluntary activity before concluding with 'I don't think that it is necessarily tied down to one thing. I think it's richer, sort of in everything, every element of society'. Participation in the Association's democratic structure was mentioned by three more participants form the 'operational' group together with one from the 'strategic' group.

There are three possible explanations for the way in which the majority of participants responded to this question. Firstly, they may not have understood the question; secondly, the WEA has not clearly defined what it means when

using the term active citizenship; or thirdly, WEA has failed to articulate its position to its members and staff effectively. Clearly the first of these explanations is plausible although the researcher felt that the question was unambiguous. The second possible explanation seems to be the more likely than the third in light of the broad range of responses that participants gave to the question about active citizenship summarised in section 8.3.1. Drawing together the evidence from these two sections one can reasonably conclude that there is not a common understanding of active citizenship within the organisation.

8.4.2 Policy implications

The absence of a shared conceptualisation of active citizenship is clearly an impediment to achieving the aim of promoting it and undermines policy in this area. The complexity and contested nature of the concept means that the task of arriving at a shared definition is challenging. The WEA's historic commitment to social purpose, but also its history of conflict with the state and contemporary reliance on Welsh Government funding evidently makes that more difficult still. Moreover, the wide range of activities that were considered by participants to constitute active citizenship also highlight the challenges involved in reaching a definition that is sufficiently precise to be meaningful.

8.4.3 Recommendation

The recommendation below is based on the recognition that, in order to be effective in achieving its aims, the Association needs to determine what it means by both citizenship and active citizenship. In arriving at a definition of active citizenship, consideration will also need to be given to the kinds of active citizenship that can be promoted together with methods, as these are not only

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inextricably linked but also have implications for the Association in terms of the risks that may be attached. This will be discussed further in the following section.

Recommendation 2:

WEA should determine what it means by both citizenship and active citizenship having regard to values of equality and social justice. This process should take place together with a consideration of the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote and the methods it should use to do so.

8.5   The kinds of active citizenship WEA can promote.

This section covers the findings in relation to the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote, possible risks associated with promoting active citizenship and methods for promoting active citizenship.

8.5.1 Key findings

The question on the kinds of active citizenship WEA could promote was introduced by referring to a range of understandings of the term reflecting a 'political spectrum' from the literature discussed in Chapter 3. It was explained that active citizenship could be understood in terms of volunteering, looking after your neighbours and giving to charity at one end of the spectrum and direct action at the other end, with activities like lobbying or demonstrating in between. Participants were asked which of these the WEA could promote.

The effect of this preamble was that most participants focused on whether or not the WEA could, or in some cases should, promote a politically engaged model of active citizenship. The responses from the two groups of participants were

noticeably different. Nine out of the ten participants in the 'strategic' group felt that WEA could encourage a politically engaged model of active citizenship, compared with only half of the 'operational' group.

Those participants who envisaged a politically engaged model qualified it in various ways. One Trustee, for example, spoke of encouraging people to get involved in politics in 'a rational and moderate way', whilst another acknowledged the Association's non-party political stance. One senior manager was clear that it was not the role of WEA staff to organise the learners, rather 'we should be empowering them to make these decisions themselves and to organise themselves'. The importance of encouraging people to vote was stressed by three participants including one who also thought they should learn to be 'critical of what is happening around them and to speak out if they see inequalities or unfairness'.

One Trustee and two tutors considered that it was not appropriate for WEA to promote a political model. One of these tutors rejected the 'view that you have to be active in politics because I think "active citizenship" really means being a good human'. A third tutor was convinced that the WEA was supposed to be a 'non-political organisation' despite the researcher pointing out that it was non-party political.

Interestingly, seventeen people envisaged a political dimension to active citizenship in response to this question compared with eleven who had identified citizenship as a political relationship in answer to earlier interview questions.

This question prompted various other responses. Three participants from the 'operational' group made the point that WEA is promoting active citizenship by encouraging learners to become involved in its democratic structure.

Finally, responses from three other participants from the 'operational' group spoke of promoting critical thinking which had been mentioned by trustees in connection with another question. One tutor, for example, spoke of WEA being able to encourage learners to see themselves as 'integrated' citizens who 'believe that they have a voice to express their opinion'.

It was noted in section 8.1 that reliance on Welsh Government funding might limit the kind of active citizenship that WEA could promote. Four participants did express some caution in their responses to the question about the kinds of active citizenship the WEA could promote. For example, a senior manager said, in relation to WEA taking direct action, that 'we could be on difficult ground … because of our reliance on government funding currently'. A tutor who felt that WEA should be teaching politics and history stressed the need to be 'very careful' and avoid promoting one particular party.

When participants were asked a follow up question about any possible risks associated with promoting any particular kind of active citizenship a majority in both groups felt there would be. Most referred to a risk of losing funding. Participants in the 'strategic' group anticipated this happening if WEA were seen to be attacking Assembly policy or to become 'overtly political'. Interestingly, one Trustee who acknowledged that acting in a way perceived to be 'political' could be seen as a diversion from education's core purpose, argued 'empowering others is at the core of it all'. This Trustee felt that WEA should 'have the confidence to debate and work through' any dangers. Three participants from the 'operational' group held similar views, including one tutor who considered that the Association should 'be a bit braver' and say 'this is what we stand for… and this is what we are going to promote', and another who said that WEA 'should push the boundaries'.

Other participants played down the risks including one Trustee who recognised that WEA could not be party-political and expected that anyone employed by the

Association would understand this. This trustee added that as long as WEA was 'teaching people to think, not what to think' there should be no danger. Another trustee anticipated that an active citizenship programme would be 'even handed' as 'there would be no useful purpose in it being a political propaganda situation' and therefore there would be no risk.

Participants were asked what methods could be used to promote active citizenship and what they thought needed to be included in the curriculum in order to enable WEA learners to become 'active citizens'.

A range of methods were suggested which could be categorised as direct or indirect, and responses to the question reflected the debate in Chapter 3 as to whether the attributes for citizenship may be learned through the formal curriculum or through 'positive experiences of participation'. Whilst more participants suggested direct methods than indirect ones, nobody argued for one type of method to the exclusion of the other.

Amongst those who suggested direct methods were three participants who considered that insufficient was being done in relation to promoting active citizenship. Six participants felt that specific provision should be made for courses on citizenship and active citizenship. A senior manager pointed out that subjects like history, philosophy, economics and political theory accounted for as little as 1% in one of the regions. This manager argued for targets to be set to increase the proportion over the next four years. In all, seven participants from the 'strategic' group proposed that specific disciplines such as modern history, politics, philosophy and sociology should be included in the curriculum. Whilst fewer participants from the 'operational' group recommended specific disciplines, four were in favour of more politics. One tutor felt learners would also be interested in law, social policy and gender studies. History and rights education were also mentioned.

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Political education was suggested as a method by three of the 'operational' group and one senior manager and, for inclusion in the curriculum, by one of the Trustees. One Learning Manager felt that there could be more opportunities for debate so that learners became 'more informed about the political side of things'. Creating opportunities for debate and analysis through discussing contemporary issues like the credit crunch and global warming was also mentioned by four participants from the 'strategic' group. One Development Worker made a case for 'embedding a bit of critical thinking', reflecting that this had been the WEA's purpose but 'we have sort of lost our way a bit'. She added that when she began working with WEA 'we did women's studies courses and we don't do that anymore'.

Nine participants considered that the curriculum should address the skills needed for active citizenship. Three of the 'operational' group focused on the importance of learners gaining communication skills, and having opportunities for personal development so that they had the confidence and self-awareness to interact successfully with other people. Campaigning and committee skills were also mentioned. One trustee commented that if learners were to be encouraged to become active in the Association they needed to understand how the structures work and how to have influence. Another trustee considered visits to the Senedd and Parliament, as well as to Council meetings to be 'part of an essential curriculum in the twenty-first century'.

Two indirect methods were proposed; namely ensuring that active citizenship was 'part of the agenda' for every course and recognising the potential of the WEA's democratic structure as a medium for acquiring the attributes for active citizenship.

Several ways of including active citizenship in the whole curriculum were proposed. One senior manager suggested that an Open College Network unit on active citizenship could be attached to courses as had been done with ESDGC

and Welsh. A second option was to introduce active citizenship 'through the course delivery'. For example, one tutor envisaged the study of literature providing opportunities to discuss issues and drama classes being a way to get people into role playing citizen participation. Three participants from the 'operational' group used the expression 'embedding' active citizenship in other courses, and two of these cited the current practice with ESDGC. However, a tutor expressed concern about this saying 'generally it's as much as we can do to focus on our own subject; it's hard'.

Five participants in the 'operational' group and two from the 'strategic' group highlighted the WEA's democratic structure as a site for the promotion of active citizenship. A tutor, who had been an active branch member, thought WEA should encourage the building of branches as they are a 'very good way of enabling people to think for themselves' and 'to make decisions for themselves'. A senior manager and a Trustee, who was a branch activist, spoke of branches providing an environment in which learners with no experience of committee work can gain confidence, learn how meetings are run and make their voices heard. As a result they might become involved on WEA's Council or in outside groups.

The question about methods prompted some other very interesting comments about the relevance of some of the WEA curriculum and the importance of the tutor.

One of the tutors posed a challenging question for WEA, asking how Belly Dancing classes were relevant if the promotion of active citizenship was the Association's aim. Much as she would like to attend such a class she could not see how it related to active citizenship.

Two tutors emphasised the importance of tutors projecting the WEA's ethos. One believed that there were 'so many' tutors that the ethos was being 'diluted' and

argued for 'a smaller and more unified group of tutors' who would 'hold a philosophy and become more educated in a whole way'. The second tutor felt that if the 'right' tutors were in place everything else would follow. Tutors needed to be 'properly trained, properly paid, properly rewarded, properly supported'. This tutor argued that the way courses were delivered was more important than the content, so there was no need for new curriculum; rather than running Active Citizenship courses 'every course should be encouraging people albeit in an unspoken way to become active citizens'. Two other participants from the 'operational' group considered there was no need to change the curriculum as it was sufficiently wide already.

Taken together, the responses to the questions on the methods for promoting active citizenship and on curriculum content demonstrate a considerable level of enthusiasm and constructive ideas within both groups for a pedagogy for active citizenship, notwithstanding the lack of clarity regarding the meaning of the term and the lack of consensus on the kinds of active citizenship the Association could safely be seen to promoting.

8.5.2 Policy implications

Significantly, the findings reported here demonstrate a higher level of awareness of active citizenship involving political engagement than was evidenced in answers to questions on the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship themselves. Although a small number of participants were opposed to such an approach, a majority of nearly two to one were in favour. This suggests that there would be more support for, and therefore greater readiness to engage with, a policy that was politically engaged than appeared to be the case. Moreover, it arguably provides sufficient basis for proposing that this is the kind of model that the Association should promote.

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Understandably, Trustees and senior managers are more sensitive to the risks associated with an explicitly political approach than other actors within the Association because they are the ones with responsibility for safeguarding the funding and yet they tend to be the ones with greater awareness of the Association's roots and radicalism. Hence, in the process of arriving at a definition of active citizenship and addressing the question of the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote, it will be necessary to take into account these concerns as well as the views of those who considered that risks could be managed and that the WEA needed to 'push the boundaries'.

Participants made various constructive comments on the methods for promoting active citizenship and for what should be included in the curriculum. It follows that if the Association were to adopt a definition of active citizenship that involves political engagement, the curriculum would need to be developed accordingly. This would involve taking a policy decision to increase the proportion of curriculum that gave learners opportunities for debating contemporary issues, discussing citizenship, learning about political ideas and systems and gaining the skills required for active citizenship. This would include providing access to disciplines such as politics, economics, environmental studies, history, philosophy, sociology, social policy and women's studies as well as maximising the potential for subjects like literature, drama, IT, art and photography to be a medium for exploring citizenship issues. It would be important to consider further the arguments for and against the 'embedding' of active citizenship in the curriculum generally as has been done already with Welsh and ESDGC in light of the concerns of the tutor recorded at 8.5.1.

Further consideration would also need to be given to maximising the potential for learning through participation in the WEA's democratic structure primarily at the branch level. As one tutor said, this would require the building of more branches. It would also require more sharing of past and current practice so that Development Workers and tutors appreciate what is possible and are able to

facilitate its development. Similarly, more work would need to be done in terms of creating a democratic environment in classes so that learners are able to develop skills such as negotiating and decision making.

The empirical evidence from this study also suggests that the Association is unclear as to how the aim of promoting active citizenship sits within its overall purpose and curriculum. There are a number of elements to this. The Association has no shared understanding of what active citizenship means, there are divisions over the kinds of active citizenship it can promote and it lacks clear policies for its promotion. Furthermore, it is unclear as to whether all or part of the curriculum should be devoted to this aim.

In view of the lack of clarity regarding the aim of promoting active citizenship, one option may be for the Association to consider whether it should retain the aim. However, in light of its history and the considerable interest in the subject of active citizenship that participants showed together with concerns expressed by some about the WEA losing sight of its purpose, it would seem inappropriate to recommend this.

8.5.3   Recommendations

Arising from this discussion three recommendations are made. The first of these proposes a mix of direct and indirect methods for promoting active citizenship. This acknowledges the contrasting positions in the debate in the literature (referred to in Chapter 3) as to the most effective pedagogical approach as well as building on the experience, ideas and concerns of participants. It is considered that a flexible and varied approach will have the greatest chance of success. It also builds on evidence that learners can gain the attributes for active citizenship through democratic participation.

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The second recommendation relates to the question posed by a tutor regarding the place of Belly Dancing in the curriculum if the WEA's purpose is the promotion of active citizenship. The Association's Memorandum lists several aims which may not always be mutually reinforcing. The purpose of this recommendation is to review how the curriculum meets the WEA's aims and the extent to which the curriculum is expected to promote active citizenship in the light of other aims.

The third recommendation addresses the issue of 'embedding' active citizenship within other curriculum areas. Whilst 'embedding' is attractive in principle it is important to take account of the concerns expressed by several participants about the pressure this puts upon tutors and the consequences for the main curriculum area.

Recommendation 3:
In agreeing the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote and the methods it should use to do so, the Association should consider a mix of direct and indirect methods including political education through specific subjects and discussion of contemporary issues, and increased opportunities for learning the skills for active citizenship through participation in WEA's democratic structure and learning environments.

Recommendation 4:
WEA should review how its curriculum contributes to its purpose and as part of this process should determine whether or not its aim of promoting active citizenship applies to all or part of its activities and curriculum.

Recommendation 5:
WEA should give further consideration to 'embedding' active citizenship within other subjects whilst having regard to the pressures this puts on tutors.

8.6 The capacity tutors have to introduce WEA students to political knowledge.

This section draws on evidence gathered from some of the interview questions referred to above and from questions on the experience and knowledge that tutors would need to be able to promote active citizenship and the kind of support they would need to do so.

8.6.1 Key findings

It was noted in 8.5.1 that seventeen of the twenty-six participants envisaged a model of active citizenship that would involve political engagement, leaving nine who did not think in these terms. Of the latter there were two tutors who were opposed to any involvement in politics and one who considered it a difficult area because he understood WEA was supposed to be non-political. Having a significant minority of the sample either not thinking in political terms or being opposed to any political role raises a serious question of capacity.

When asked what knowledge tutors would need in order to promote active citizenship, one Development Worker raised a key issue regarding this research question saying 'I wonder if tutors actually know what active citizenship is'. Another Development Worker who recognised her own uncertainty about active citizenship said that tutors would need to know about politics and history if they were asked to promote active citizenship in their classes, implying that this was not currently the case. Only two other participants - one Trustee and one tutor - identified a need for political knowledge.

Only eight participants gave a view on the experience that tutors would need to be able to promote active citizenship. These included two tutors who gave examples of the kind of experience that would equate with a capacity to introduce students to political knowledge. One cited experience of 'active citizenship issues', whilst the other referred to experience of trade union activism.

It was notable that tutors had more to say about the support they would need than about the knowledge and experience necessary to promote active citizenship. Despite several criticisms about the amount and quality of training and support that they received, there was an enthusiasm for both training and mutual support around active citizenship including a proposal from one tutor for a course 'to build confidence' which would consider what active citizenship is and how it could be integrated into the curriculum.

Clearly, there are tutors with relevant knowledge and experience including one who said in response to the question about the curriculum:

> we do want to raise issues of inequality, we want to raise issues of disadvantage, we want to raise issues of exploitation and make people think on these issues, not to lecture them but to make them think that there has to be a better solution, and hopefully through education they can look towards that themselves.

However, these findings together with evidence from section 8.2.2 of a lack of awareness, particularly from the 'operational' group, of the WEA's aims, values and history and from section 8.3.2 of a dissonance between the way in which most participants conceptualised the concepts of citizenship and active citizenship on the one hand, and both the expressed purpose of the Association and its history on the other raise significant doubts about the capacity of tutors to introduce WEA students to political knowledge.

8.6.2 Policy implications

If WEA is to succeed in implementing the recommendations above there will be a need to address these issues of capacity. Any shift in the emphasis of the curriculum will have resource implications. Not only would there be implications in respect of matching tutors to the new curriculum but there may also be funding implications, particularly if the only way to make the provision would be to increase the number of courses, rather than reneging on commitments to partners or learners to provide the existing curriculum.

The findings highlight a number of areas of Human Resources policy where action could be taken to build the capacity of the Association to fulfil its aim of promoting active citizenship. These include the recruitment process, induction of new tutors and staff development for development workers and tutors.

8.6.3 Recommendations

Four recommendations are made below to address the shortcomings in capacity which have been identified above, the first of which relates to the Association's policy and procedures for recruiting Part-time Tutors. Bearing in mind the views of one participant that the key to success in achieving the WEA's aim was to recruit the 'right' tutor, consideration should be given to the recruitment criteria. More thought needs to be given to the skills, experience and knowledge that a tutor would need to be able to promote active citizenship. Depending on the outcome of recommendation 4, it may or may not be necessary to apply these criteria for all new tutors. Clearly, if it were decided, to quote one of the trustees, that active citizenship would be 'part of the agenda' of every course all tutors would need to satisfy the criteria. As a minimum a tutor could be expected to have the skills of facilitating debate, developing critical thinking and contextualising their subject in a wider political and social context, and to have

had experience of activism whether in a trade union, political party or social movement. In addition to having knowledge of current affairs and political ideas, a prospective tutor would also have some knowledge of and sympathy with the WEA's history, aims and values.

The second recommendation addresses the argument, made by another tutor, who was concerned about a dilution of the WEA ethos, for a smaller pool of tutors who would be more 'unified' and would 'hold a philosophy' merits investigation. However, as the Association covers a very wide geographical area there are sound practical reasons for having enough tutors to be able to provide a range of courses without travelling long distances.

The third recommendation calls for the introduction of a systematic induction programme for new staff which would cover the WEA's structure, history, aims and values including its approach to promoting active citizenship and how learners can become involved within its democratic structure.

The final recommendation in this section addresses criticisms about the amount and quality of training and support for tutors. It proposes a review of continuous staff development for both Part-time Tutors and development workers in order to build capacity. Staff development should be designed to reinforce the content of the induction programme with a view to developing a range of skills. These should include creating a democratic learning environment, negotiating the curriculum, building learners' confidence in their ability to become active citizens both within and beyond the WEA, and supporting them to set up new branches. In addition there should be opportunities for staff to learn more about active citizenship and the related issues of social justice, environmental justice and equality. As well as reviewing the content of staff development it would be important to consider how it could be improved and explore the possibility of increasing the opportunities for tutors to discuss these matters, bearing in mind financial constraints.

Recommendation 6:

WEA should review the procedure for recruiting tutors and introduce minimum criteria in respect of the skills, experience and knowledge needed to promote active citizenship

Recommendation 7:

WEA should consider recruiting a smaller pool of tutors with the aim of preventing a dilution of the WEA ethos

Recommendation 8:

WEA should introduce a systematic induction programme for new staff which would cover the WEA's structure, history, aims and values including its approach to promoting active citizenship

Recommendation 9:

WEA should review the amount and quality of support provided for tutors, and enhance staff development for tutors and development workers in order to build capacity for promoting active citizenship

8.7   Reasons for WEA not being seen as a source of political knowledge.

This section relates to the responses to the question that was prompted by one of the findings from my earlier research study of WEA learners.

8.7.1 Key findings

Participants offered a range of explanations in response to this question. Whilst most of these can be classed as being external to the WEA and relate in different ways to social and economic change since the Second World War, a significant minority are internal in that they relate to the WEA's practice.

Changes in society were the most common of the external factors to be mentioned. One trustee considered that social and economic changes meant that people no longer thought that the popular subjects of the 1930s were needed. Eight participants felt that contemporary attitudes to politics were to blame. One senior manager believed that demand had fallen away due to the decline of the trade union movement and because the public was less politicised. The latter view was shared by one of the tutors. Three participants felt that people were disenchanted with politics due to factors such as the MPs' expenses scandal, a sense of powerlessness after the massive protest against the Iraq war was ignored by politicians and the erosion of the political process due to the power of multi-national corporations.

Five participants highlighted alternative sources of political knowledge such as the internet or television, which in turn was quoted as one of various influences that distracted people from learning. Two participants suggested that economic pressures resulted in people choosing subjects such as Basic Skills or IT that would help them into work or a better job.

Amongst internal factors mentioned by participants, the most common was the contemporary curriculum. Three participants agreed that the curriculum had changed with the inclusion of IT, and one added that ESOL classes had increased due to demand from people entering the country. In all, nine participants commented on the curriculum. Four of these argued that funding drivers were responsible for its current shape, including one who claimed that WEA was under pressure to provide a curriculum that addressed the needs of the economy.

Two participants rejected the view that demand for political education had declined by arguing that the WEA had cut off the supply and another suspected that there had been a loss of radicalism due to a need to 'be respectable' to keep the funding. Two other participants raised the issue of leadership. One wondered if 'people in key positions in WEA' had not prioritised political education, whilst the other argued 'the WEA has to push it and make it happen and start with tutors'.

8.7.2 Policy implications

There are two particularly significant aspects to these findings. The first of these is the debate as to whether demand for political education has slumped or the WEA disconnected the supply, and the second is the perception that the curriculum has changed under pressure from Government.

The competing explanations that emerge from the interviews in relation to the first also raise the question about the priority that has been given within the Association to political education. Taken together with the argument that the WEA has removed the supply of political education, this suggestion poses a challenge in terms of curriculum policy.

The view that funding drivers had resulted in significant changes in the WEA's curriculum corresponds with the account in Chapter 2 of the prioritisation adult education's economic purpose. Senior managers and Trustees are evidently conscious of the emphasis given by the funders to the 'skills' agenda, and the imperative to ensure the organisation's financial viability. There is clearly a tension between Government funding priorities and the WEA's aim of promoting active citizenship; despite the latter being one of the Welsh Assembly's core values.

This has several implications for policy. In order to be true to its stated aims, the Association must find ways to provide political education whilst simultaneously fulfilling the goals of its major funder. There are several steps that could be taken to achieve such a balancing act. Firstly, there may be curriculum areas that contribute to both aims. For example, communication skills are essential for both employability and citizenship. Secondly, alternative methods of funding or providing political education may need to be found. These could include applying to trust funds, covering costs through higher fees or recruiting volunteer tutors. Thirdly, the Association has a role to perform as a civil society organisation to seek to persuade Government of the importance of supporting social purpose adult education.

8.7.3 Recommendation

The recommendation below proposes that the WEA expands the amount of political education in order to help fulfil its aim of encouraging active and democratic participation. It acknowledges the reality of current funding priorities by suggesting that alternative ways are found to support the provision, whilst simultaneously recommending that the Association engages with politicians with the aim of broadening their policy agenda in relation to adult education.

Recommendation 10:
WEA should explore ways of expanding the provision of political education, if necessary through alternative funding mechanisms, and should campaign for more resources for social purpose adult education.

8.8 Reflections on the study and ideas for further research

Conclusion: Implications for WEA Policy and Recommendations

This section begins with reflections on the study's limitations before considering the potential for further research in this area.

Whilst the flexibility of a qualitative approach enabled me to gather a substantial amount of rich data and to gain significant insights into the ways in which a variety of actors within the WEA view the organisation and understand citizenship and active citizenship, it is important to acknowledge the study's limitations.

The combination of research method and the small scale of the study imposed restrictions on the sample size. As a result the number of Part-time Tutors included in the sample was very small compared with their overall number. Thus, in Silverman's words I have been 'prepared to sacrifice scope for detail' (2005, p9). Moreover, the sample could be criticised for not being drawn randomly. As a consequence of these two factors it is not possible to make conclusive claims for the study. Indeed, it is possible that with another choice of sample the findings could have differed in certain ways. Whilst the range of responses may well have been the same, the proportions of participants holding particular views are likely to have altered.

Given more resources, a 'combined methods' approach (Gorard with Taylor 2004, p1) would have been ideal for the study. By mixing qualitative and quantitative methods sequentially I would have been able to develop a comprehensive analysis of the conceptualisation of citizenship within WEA and would have been able to make stronger claims for the findings. Starting with a qualitative study would have enabled me to have approached the topic in an open ended way to derive a set of questions that would not have been prescribed by my own preconceptions for a larger sample using a quantitative approach. In this way I could have sought to involve all the trustees and many more of the staff.

In addition to developing the existing study to reach a wider audience within WEA, it would be interesting to undertake research with policy makers within both the Welsh Assembly and Welsh political parties. A starting point for such a study could be the Assembly's founding principle referred to in Chapter 3 of promoting active citizenship amongst all age groups. It would be interesting to explore how actors within Welsh politics understand the concept of active citizenship and to examine their attitudes towards social purpose in adult education.

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Appendix I

The Participants

Name	Group	Role
Alex	Strategic	Senior Manager
Amanda	Operational	Development Worker
Andy	Operational	Tutor
Ashley	Operational	Tutor
Barbara	Operational	Tutor
Ceri	Strategic	Senior Manager
Chris	Strategic	Trustee
Edward	Strategic	Trustee
Fran	Operational	Development Worker
Gwyn	Operational	Tutor
Kim	Operational	Learning Manager
Leslie	Operational	Tutor
Lionel	Strategic	Trustee
Lyn	Strategic	Trustee
Mair	Operational	Tutor
Maria	Operational	Tutor
Marion	Operational	Development Worker
Morgan	Strategic	Trustee
Pat	Strategic	Senior Manager
Paul	Operational	Tutor
Rowan	Strategic	Trustee
Ryan	Operational	Development Worker
Sarah	Operational	Tutor
Terry	Strategic	Trustee
Wendy	Operational	Learning Manager
William	Operational	Tutor

The strategic group

Trustees

Chris
Edward
Lionel
Lyn
Morgan
Rowan
Terry

Senior managers

Alex
Ceri
Pat

The operational group

Development workers

Amanda
Fran
Marion
Ryan

Learning Managers

Kim
Wendy

Tutors

Andy
Ashley
Barbara
Gwyn
Leslie
Mair
Maria
Paul
Sarah
William

Appendix II

Access Request

Copy of e-mail sent on 17th January 2007 to
Graham Price, General Secretary of WEA South Wales

Graham

I think you know that I'm on the EdD course at Cardiff. I've just about completed the taught part and am preparing to submit my research proposal.

I should like to build on the work I did a few years back for my MA dissertation on learning for active citizenship within WEA.

I am writing to ask if I could arrange to look at relevant curriculum policies etc & to interview a number of tutors and some managers and members of Council. My tutor has suggested I should interview 30 tutors, which feels quite a logistical challenge!

I am interested in exploring how tutors understand the concept of active citizenship and how they may or may not be promoting it.

I would like to explore the WEA's role in promoting active citizenship in the context of WAG policies for lifelong learning and the tensions involved for a voluntary organisation, arguably part of civil society, in receipt of state funding.

Please let me know if you would like any more detailed information about the proposal.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Jeremy

Copy of reply received from Graham Price on 12th February 2007

Jeremy,

Sorry for delay. I'm happy for you to go ahead. I know you'll be aware of how pressured everybody is in making the arrangements.

Regards

Graham

Appendix III

Interview Guide

NB Remember contact sheet and consent form + interview number onto recorder

How long involved with WEA & in what capacity/ies?
[NB overlap with contact sheet]

How did you become involved?

What attracted you to WEA?

What did you know about the WEA at the time?
-   aims
-   values
-   history

Probe on knowledge of these

What have you learned since?

In your experience how does the contemporary WEA live up to
-   your expectations
-   your understanding of the founding principles

What does your involvement mean to you?

How do you identify with the WEA's aims and values?

How do your values and those of the WEA's compare?

Probe background

Ask tutors who work for other providers…how working as a WEA tutor compares
with their other employer/s

What does the name WEA mean to you? What is its significance historically and today?
How is it relevant today? Should it be changed? Why/why not?

Bearing in mind the WEA's history, and the political and social changes that have taken place over the years, how do you see the role of the WEA in Wales today?

Prompts on political culture, levels of democratic engagement and WAG policy

---

I'm interested in knowing what you think the term 'citizenship' means

Prompt – what does it mean to you? What comes to mind when you hear the term / what characteristics or words do you think of?

Ditto for 'active citizenship'

In what ways are you an 'active citizen'?

How does this experience contribute to your role in WEA?

When the WEA uses the term 'active citizenship' (as in the constitution) what do you think is meant?

There are various understandings of the what 'active citizenship' may involve across the political spectrum. (Give examples eg. 'speaking truth to power')

What kinds of 'active citizenship' do you think WEA can seek to promote?

Might there be any constraints/risks? If so what?

Prompt on Implications of state funding

What methods do you think WEA can use to promote active citizenship?

How can Branches contribute?

Prompt on possible ways [discrete curriculum incl. CLR courses, indirectly thro' curric/democratic learning environment, participation in democratic structure, combination of these]

What do you think needs to be included in the curriculum in order to enable WEA learners to become 'active citizens'?

Prompt around Benn's typology of skills, confidence and political knowledge

What skills, experience and knowledge do tutors need to have to be able to encourage active citizenship directly through the curriculum or indirectly through creating a democratic learning environment?

What support, if any, do you think tutors need to develop these skills?

Before the second world war the WEA was well known as a source of knowledge and understanding about politics, economics and international relations. A recent small scale study of WEA members revealed that this was no longer the case.

What do you think might be the reasons for this?

Given WEA's commitment to promoting active citizenship and democratic participation what steps can the movement take to change this?

How do you see the future of WEA? If you had your way what would WEA be doing in 5 years time that's different from today?

[If no discussion of class earlier] I'm interested that you've not mentioned the word 'class' during the interview and wonder why this has not come up?

Appendix IV

Research Face Sheet

Interview date		Interview no.		E / W

Name		Tel	
e-mail			

WEA Role	
Council member	
DO	
ESDGC	
General Secretary	
LM	
P/t tutor	
REM	

Years of WEA involvement	

Age	< 30	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	> 60
Gender	M	F			
Ethnicity					

Education [highest qualification]

GCSE	A levels	Undergrad	Postgrad	Other:

Current learning &	

Provider	

Ask tutors

Qualifications	Year	Institution

WEA courses taught + level learners venues/UA CF ?	

Average weekly hours	

Other employment (current)		Previous employment	

Appendix V

<div align="center">Ethics Committee Approval</div>

From: Deborah Watkins [mailto:watkinsd2@Cardiff.ac.uk]
Sent: 06 June 2007 17:20
To: Jeremy Gass
Cc: brownp1@cardiff.ac.uk; chaneyp@cardiff.ac.uk
Subject: Ethical Approval Application: Jeremy Gass

Application ref: SREC/232

Dear Jeremy

You will shortly receive a letter from the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee, Professor Søren Holm, confirming the following:

Your ethical approval application for your project entitled "A critical investigation of the notion of active citizenship within the Workers' Educational Association South Wales" has been approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Cardiff University at its
meeting on 6th June 2007 and you can now commence the project.

If you make any substantial changes with ethical implications to the project as it progresses you need to inform the SREC about the nature of these changes. Such changes could be:
1) changes in the type of participants recruited (e.g. inclusion of a group of potentially vulnerable participants), 2) changes to questionnaires, interview guides etc. (e.g. including new
questions on sensitive issues), 3) changes to the way data are handled (e.g. sharing of non-anonymised data with other researchers).

All ongoing projects will be monitored every 12 months and it is a condition of continued approval that you complete the monitoring form.

Please inform the SREC when the project has ended.

Please use the SREC's project reference number above in any future correspondence.

Regards

Deb Watkins

Deborah Watkins
Research & Graduate Studies Administrator Cardiff School of Social
Sciences (SOCSI) Glamorgan Building King Edward VII Avenue Cardiff CF10 3WT

Appendix VI

Active citizenship and the Workers' Educational Association South Wales

Information for Participants

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before deciding whether or not to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve.

Please take time to read the following information carefully.

Background to the study
The WEA's constitution includes amongst its principles the statement 'It shall provide courses for young people and adults that will widen their understanding of the world and society in which they live, and will assist in the promotion of active citizenship'.

Purpose of the study
The term 'active citizenship' can be understood in a variety of ways and the purpose of this research is to explore how it is interpreted within the WEA in south Wales and how the principle is applied through the curriculum and teaching and learning methods.

The researcher
I was employed by the WEA from 1985 until 1999, first as Tutor/Organiser for Gwent and then as Education Quality Manager. I am currently an Individual Member representative on the WEA South Wales Council.

I am carrying out this research as part of my studies at Cardiff University towards a Doctorate of Education in the School of Social Sciences. I will be supervised throughout by two Senior Researchers and the research has the approval of School Research Ethics Committee.

Why you have been invited to take part
I am looking for volunteers to take part in the study who work for WEA as tutors or managers or who are involved in setting overall policy for WEA as elected members of Council.

What is asked of you
I would like you to take part in an interview which is likely to take no longer than an hour. The interview questions will cover your involvement in WEA, what attracted you to the organization, your ideas about active citizenship and how WEA promotes it, and the ways in which you engage as an active citizen yourself. I would arrange a mutually convenient time and place to meet for the interview.

What I will do with the information
With your permission, I will tape the interview so that I have a record of what was said and then I will write up a transcript. I will draw on this as I write my dissertation which will be assessed as part of my degree. I will also provide WEA and all participants who wish a summary of my findings. Later I may write articles for journals or give presentations to

conferences. I will ensure anonymity by changing your name and that of anyone else you mention. The original recording and transcript will be kept in a secure place. Nothing in the written report will identify who you are. If you wish, I will give you a copy of the transcript so that you can be sure that I've written it accurately and that no-one in it can be identified by others.

You can change your mind at any time about taking part. Whether it's before, during or after our discussion, all you have to do is let me know.

If you are interested in taking part, I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have and look forward to meeting you. You can contact me by e-mail at gassj@Cardiff.ac.uk .

If you have any concerns about any aspect of how the research was conducted you may contact the Chair of the School Research Ethics Committee:

Professor Søren Holm
Cardiff Law School
Tel: 029 208 75447
 Email: Holms@cf.ac.uk

Jeremy Gass

Appendix VII

Active Citizenship and the Workers' Educational Association - South Wales

Consent Form

Researcher: Jeremy Gass

	Please initial
1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for this study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.	
3. I agree to take part in the study.	
4. I would / would not * like to see a copy of the transcript	
5. I would / would not * like a copy of the summary of findings	

* delete as appropriate

_____   _____   _____
Name of participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Name of person taking consent   Date   Signature

2 copies: 1 for participant and 1 for research file

Appendix VIII

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:
WEA should review how it communicates its purpose so that all actors within the organisation understand how they contribute towards its achievement

Recommendation 2:
WEA should determine what it means by both citizenship and active citizenship having regard to values of equality and social justice. This process should take place together with a consideration of the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote and the methods it should use to do so.

Recommendation 3:
In agreeing the kinds of active citizenship the WEA can promote and the methods it should use to do so, the Association should consider a mix of direct and indirect methods including political education through specific subjects and discussion of contemporary issues, and increased opportunities for learning the skills for active citizenship through participation in WEA's democratic structure and learning environments.

Recommendation 4:
WEA should review how its curriculum contributes to its purpose and as part of this process should determine whether or not its aim of promoting active citizenship applies to all or part of its activities and curriculum.

Recommendation 5:
WEA should give further consideration to 'embedding' active citizenship within other subjects whilst having regard to the pressures this puts on tutors.

Recommendation 6:
WEA should review the procedure for recruiting tutors and introduce minimum criteria in respect of the skills, experience and knowledge needed to promote active citizenship

Recommendation 7:
WEA should consider recruiting a smaller pool of tutors with the aim of preventing a dilution of the WEA ethos

Recommendation 8:
WEA should introduce a systematic induction programme for new staff which would cover the WEA's structure, history, aims and values including its approach to promoting active citizenship

Recommendation 9:
WEA should review the amount and quality of support provided for tutors, and enhance staff development for tutors and development workers in order to build capacity for promoting active citizenship

Recommendation 10:
WEA should explore ways of expanding the provision of political education, if necessary through alternative funding mechanisms, and should campaign for more resources for social purpose adult education.

Appendix IX

Abbreviations

ALAC	Active Learning for Active Citizenship
ESDGC	Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EU	European Union
ILA	Individual Learning Account
NCLC	National Council of Labour Colleges
OCN	Open College Network
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
SDF	Social Democratic Federation
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UfI	University for Industry
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WETUC	Workers' Education Trade Union Committee