'Learning Difficulties' and the Academy: a case study

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. I undertake that any citations and references have been duly acknowledged in the work, which I present for examination.

Signed: _____   Date: ___October 2014___

Abstract

This thesis is a critical investigation of the issues around the exclusion of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation. As a qualitative inquiry it is situated within a 'real life' contemporary, interpretive and rapidly changing context. Using a postmodernist conceptual framework it draws upon the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Adopting a case study approach, it explores the insights and experiences of a group of individuals who attempted to develop an undergraduate degree programme in the performing arts.

Using one-to-one interviews, focus-group interviews and participant observations, its principal findings relate to a range of exclusionary barriers; these being attitudinal, cultural, educational, employment, financial and modern higher education. Its contribution is to (critical) disability studies, research and a critique of 'learning difficulties'. Its postmodernist framework offers a theoretical map, insights into discourses of power/knowledge, and makes transparent the competing and contradictory discursive practices, challenging dualism and tree like structures.

It concludes, suggesting that 'learning difficulties' is a constructed and re-constructed discourse. Its relationship with higher education is a feature of *modern* times, which comes to *light* in the turn to postmodernism. It rejects understandings of 'learning difficulties' that have taken-on 'beliefs', 'realities', 'practices' and 'truths' associated with 'deficit', 'personal tragedy', and 'abnormality'. Moreover, individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', despite the rhetoric of 'widening participation', are intentionally positioned, *and* beset by barriers, *and* silenced, *and* excluded from degree level participation. Therefore, it calls for a radical re-think of the notion of 'learning difficulties', segregated provision, access to employment in theatre, associated HE policy and legislation, and to critical questions of modern higher education participation.

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Dedicated to Kikabhai (circa 1927 – 2007)

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List of Abbreviations

CE   - Cutting Edge (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)

DDA   - Disability Discrimination Act

D*f*BIS   - Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

D*f*E   - Department for Education

D*f*EE   - Department for Education and Employment

D*f*IUS   - Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

DRC   - Disability Rights Commission

DSA   - Disabled Students' Allowances

FE   - Further Education

HE   - Higher Education

HEFCE   - Higher Education Funding Council of England

NAO   - National Audit Office

NCIHE   - The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education.

OECD   - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

O*f*STED   - Office for Standards in Education

OIA: - Office of Independent Adjudicators

PMSU   - Prime Minister's Strategy Unit

RADAR   - Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation

RBC   - Red Brick College

SEN   - Special Educational Needs

SENCO   - Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

SENDA   - Special Education Needs and Disability Act

TiE   - Theatre in Education

UNESCO   - United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation.

UPIAS   - Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter describes how this study emerged, my own interest in Disability Studies/Arts as a transdisciplinary field of study, the often forgotten group of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties', and the issue of higher education participation for people thus described. Specifically, it is also concerned with the insights and experiences of a group of individuals, a theatre initiative, their attempt and 'failure' to develop an undergraduate degree programme in the performing arts. Within this introduction is the disclosure, in part, of my personal experience of discrimination which has influenced my own thinking and practice around inclusion and inclusive education. I do this because I feel it is important to acknowledge these experiences rather than claim some kind of mythical neutrality about social issues. This study is described in terms of its rationale, focus and context. It provides a brief overview of this theatre initiative. I also present the research aims and questions, set out my research position and acknowledge the inherent contradictions of writing within this field of interest. I conclude with a summary of the proceeding chapters: mapping out the complex themes, challenging what have become habitual mis/understandings, the taken-for-granted, what commonly are called 'facts'.

1.1 Rationale

The rationale for this study is within a wider struggle for change. It involves a critical examination of the issues which emerged through a case study of a theatre initiative; a degree programme in the performing arts for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. It involves understanding higher education in terms of its purpose, who it benefits and who it excludes. It also involves identifying contradictory discourses and includes questioning the construction of 'learning difficulties' that have taken-on 'beliefs', 'realities', 'practices' and 'truths' associated with 'deficit', 'personal tragedy' and 'abnormality'. It acknowledges that the topic 'disability' *is*, as Davis (1995) suggests, under-theorised. This study draws upon the

post-enlightenment theoretical works of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. These works challenge the belief in rational inquiry, positivism, the idea that 'facts' are out there waiting discovery and alternatively raises questions of the social sciences. It too acknowledges a crisis in methodology and representation.

This case study, a qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), enables a critical examination of the complexities, possibilities, setbacks, challenges, enabling outcomes and barriers. It draws upon an increasing interest in inclusive education (Ainscow, 1999; Daniels and Garner, 1999; Armstrong *et al.*, 1999; Clough and Corbett, 2000) as well as an increasing interest in disabled people and higher education (Corbett, 1996b; Fuller *et al.*, 2004a; Konur, 2004; Hall, *et al.*, 2004; Riddell, *et al.*, 2005b; Adams and Holland, 2006; Browne, 2010) and thus raises questions of rights, equity, and citizenship. This study acknowledges the changing legislative landscape in addition to the political and philosophical debates related to higher education participation, the notion of widening participation, a Disability Studies/Arts perspective, the social and affirmation models of disability, anti-discriminatory legislation; such as the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), the duty of the public sector to '*encourage proactive measures to end institutional discrimination*' (D*f*EE, 1999, p.9), the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001, equality and human rights, and the Disability Equality Duty (2006). This inquiry provides a testing ground to offer insights into 'good' practice and the barriers experienced. The changing policy context is discussed later (refer to chapter two) and is located within an emerging rights-based and social model of disability perspective.

As will be made apparent, higher education participation discourses appear, for example, alongside discourses of equality, difference, elitism and standards. Given this context, Thomas (2001, p.208) argues that an opportunity has arisen to change

higher education, overcome elitism and exclusion and to initiate social change, but reminds readers that '*overcoming barriers to participation in post-compulsory education is complex*'. On the contrary, the debate concerning elitism, equity, and the shift towards a liberal form of higher education has not recently arisen; but, has its roots in nineteenth century debates (Sanderson, 1975). Further, more recent pressures have been placed upon the higher education sector, in terms of financing (Browne, 2010). Nonetheless, Thomas (2001), in the context of widening participation, considered 'barriers' as four overlapping categories, these being the education system, the labour market, social and cultural issues and the individual. Souza (2002), however, who lives and experiences being labelled as having 'learning difficulties', talks of four 'separations' these being separation at birth – through the process of being labelled – from mother and family life, separation into segregated 'special' schools, separation into adult institutions and separation from the work place. It is alongside such themes, layered and interwoven in the accompanying chapters, that the rationale for this study is also understood.

1.2 Focus

The focus of this study is a critical investigation of the issues around the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation through a case study of the 'Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative' (a pseudonym, sometimes referred to as 'Cutting Edge'). Cutting Edge (CE), a theatre performance company, attempted to develop a 'Theatre Performance and Workshop Practice' degree programme in partnership with a specialist college, 'Red Brick' (pseudonym); a higher education institution (HEI), a drama school offering professional training for the performing arts. The proposed three-year degree programme was publicised in 2003 in a theatre arts newspaper as the first of its kind in the UK and was scheduled to start in September 2004. It sought to initiate change and empower individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' to have an active

involvement in higher education, theatre arts and work. Its purpose was to equip individuals with the skills, understanding and confidence to take-up employment in theatre and related professions. However, in 2004 the initiative failed in its attempt to develop the degree programme. The double-take, the multiple reading raises questions as to the place of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' in higher education; specifically, with attaining a degree level qualification.

1.3 Context

In broader terms, Cutting Edge attempted to widen participation, in a time when growing numbers of students with diverse backgrounds and expectations were entering HEIs (National Audit Office, 2002). At that time, HE policy set a goal of 50 per cent of those between 18 and 30 years of age to be in higher education by 2010 (D*f*ES, 2003a). Participation figures for 2010/11 released by the *Department for Business, Innovation and Skills* (D*f*BIS, 2012), under a different political regime, reported that this previous goal had not been met, and that the figure reached a participation rate of 46.5% for that age cohort. With regard to participation, the notion of 'widening participation' is explained later as serving two contrasting agendas (refer to chapter two). First, briefly, it is related to the notion of a national economic need to increase the supply of people with 'higher' level skills and knowledge and; second, to the promotion of a social justice agenda. Therefore, the problem relating to the exclusion of people labelled and described as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation is an important one.

Changes have also related to the funding of higher education, and teaching and learning. Debates have related to vocationalism, liberalism, exams, specialisation, teaching, research, elitism, and mass higher education. Such changes and debates can be traced back to their origins in the nineteenth century (Sanderson, 1975).

Furthermore, questions are being asked as to what universities are for (Collini, 2012; McGettigan, 2013), as they move within the twentieth-first century.

Cutting Edge could be understood to be no different to other initiatives that have sought to widen and increase participation (HEFCE, 1995) or others which have attempted to 'stretch' the academy in terms of participation in higher education (Thompson, 2000). HEFCE (1995), for example, reported findings of the 1993-94 'special initiatives' to encourage widening participation for students with 'special needs'. The report presented exemplars with the majority of initiatives focusing on issues of 'dyslexia' and included access issues relating to blind/partially sighted and deaf/hearing impaired students. Yet none of these initiatives focused on the participation of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Disabled students do attend higher education; according to the National Audit Office 138,000 students declared a disability in 2005-06 (NAO, 2007, p.37). Students are usually ascribed one of the following categories of 'disability': dyslexia, blind/partially sighted, deaf/hearing impairments, wheelchair user/mobility difficulties, personal care support, mental health difficulties, an unseen disability (e.g. diabetes, epilepsy, asthma), multiple disabilities, a disability not listed or autism (HESA, 2007). Nowhere in this list is there 'learning difficulties'. What is more, around the time of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, in 2005-06, of the 138,000 students declaring a disability 54 per cent declared 'dyslexia' (NAO, 2007, p.37). However, with respect to CE, what needs to be borne in mind is that this theatre initiative is related to the higher education participation of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', and not individuals who are currently labelled as having a 'specific learning difficulties', such as 'dyslexia'.

Apart from under-represented groups sharing a familiar experience of exclusion from higher education, another thing all these initiatives also have in common is that

individuals enter without the 'gold standard' of A-level requirements. Certainly, there have been changes in the way the student population has expanded and become more diverse but what was identified by CE of potential students is that their attendance at segregated 'special' schools would not, typically, lead to qualifications – certainly not A levels – that would permit opportunities to pursue higher education (refer to chapter three). Howard Newby former Chief Executive of HEFCE acknowledged the '*present inequalities*' and welcomed contesting the conventional view of the non-A-level student being reflected in the growth of '... *new and existing courses, curricula and assessment procedures*' (Newby, foreword in Duke, 2005). For sure CE attempted to establish a 'new' course and it certainly contested the 'conventional view of the non-A-level student'. Interestingly, the growth and desire to gain higher education qualification has also expanded to the retail sector. For example, described as a '*high street juggernaut*', TESCO has enabled staff to complete a Foundation Degree in Retail, validated by Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of the Arts London (Metro, 2009, p.7).

However, regardless of the growth of 'new and existing courses' at higher education level, the availability of training to learn about improvisation, to run a workshop or to contribute to a performance for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' are just not there (R.Tomlinson, 1982, p.71) and nor are individuals there (teaching, coordinating or participating) in higher education courses which purport to be about 'learning difficulties' (Walmsley, 1997; Race, 2002; Boxall, *et al.*, 2004). And nor is this solely about the maintenance of 'academic standards'. As an area of study what will become apparent is that the term 'learning difficulties' is extremely problematic. Indeed, in legal and medical terms, the 'learning difficulties' label invites a presumption of incompetence. Another particular difficulty relates to the interchangeable terms in use; such as 'intellectual disability', 'learning disability' and 'mental retardation'.

With regard to theatre performance, earlier commentators reported on the inaccessibility of theatre venues, the lack of training opportunities at drama schools (Morris, n.d), and the competitive element of the national arts companies (Fisher, 1981). As a career option, repeated concerns not only identified various barriers; such as: access for members of the disabled audience (wheelchair access, sign interpretation, induction loops, Braille, audio description, etc.), but also the lack of opportunities for various impairment groups as performers, to interviews, employment opportunities, education and training (Pointon with Davies, 1997). Tomlinson (1982) raised specific questions as to the limited roles disabled people more generally had access to, specifically stating that:

> *A natural riposte to the question 'Why Theatre?' would be 'Why not?' One could argue that disabled people have as much right as any other member of society to participate in a performing act. While one would not wish to deny this in principle, the reality for most disabled people was that they would only be accepted on able-bodied terms. That is to say, if they managed to get an entrée to, for example, an amateur theatre group, they could only contribute in a limited number of areas. Disabled people as prompts, or costume makers or scenery painters, were quite often acceptable. As actors they were not.* (Tomlinson, 1982, p.9)

With respect to individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties, the lack of opportunities for participation within the theatre arts has not gone unnoticed; for example, Goodley and Moore (2002, p.5) make the point that the benefits of participation '... *in performing arts for people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties are enormous, and that opportunities for participation should be greatly expanded*'. Given the hierarchy of subjects, the participation of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' into the arts and humanities is far less politically controversial than participation into other academic areas related to what are considered to be the 'pure' sciences (Sanderson, 1975; Schuller, 1995). Interestingly, universities have a history of excluding social groups from participation and when individuals do gain access they are also restricted in their choice of academic subjects

(Sanderson, 1975). Relatedly, there are competing disciplinary territories, vested interests, differences between subjects, and differences between individuals and groups in relation to power and status. Given this context, one pertinent question raised by CE is '*How do prospective performing artists with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties gain access to a relevant professional training such as that open to their non-disabled peers?*' Their own answer was that the proposed degree programme would address this question. This is not the first time a question of this kind has been asked. Interestingly Marshall, then artistic director of Graeae Theatre company, was reported in a 'Theatre and Disability Conference Report' as asking a similar reflective question, Marshall remarked that '*we are almost on the brink of an explosion in disability theatre*' and responded with '*What we all should be interested in now is how to facilitate that demand?*' (Morrison, n.d. p.12). In brief then, employment opportunities for individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' in performance do exist; however, opportunities for education and training at higher education do not.

The issue of employment is not solely related to partaking and gaining any job, but jobs related to the cultural industries particularly in the area of theatre arts. Certainly, some jobs give status but as Richard Tomlinson (1982, p.12) noted '*jobs in theatre give a special kind of status*', ultimately he argues '*they give the entry ticket to the most unlikely levels of society*'. One only needs to read Eric Sykes' autobiography to appreciate that theatre offers the 'entry ticket to the most unlikely levels of society', even though to begin with it feels like '*paddling a leaking canoe up Niagara Falls*' (Sykes, 2005, p.212). Moreover, Tomlinson suggests that theatre as performance gives a performer power and '*by jingo, power is addictive*' (Sykes, 2005, p.291). This 'insatiable' lust for power is also a quest for freedom, a point discussed by Fromm (1942, pp.3 – 4) who also argued that modern rational wo/man is dominated by an authoritarian system over which there is no control. However,

postmodern theatre has shifted towards a radical form, an exploration of gestures, happenings, becomings, and challenges inequalities of social power. Alongside dance it seeks to break from convention, challenging boundaries and overlaps with performance in dis/abled body art (Woods, 1999; Hicky-Moody, 2009).

Whilst Cutting Edge may be understood as an attempt to widen participation, in this example, for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', assumptions and questions arise as to their actual presence in higher education (NAO, 2002). Questions of participation cannot be put down to individuals' choosing not to take part, even though this comes as a surprise when disabled and non-disabled students with entry qualifications do not choose to pursue higher education (Williams, 1997). Further still, examples do exist of individuals who have attended segregated 'special' schools and accessed higher education (McDonald, 1996; Garner, 2005). Apart from these experiences being the exception rather than the rule, they are framed by discourses of struggle, prejudice, discrimination and resistance. Such an experience, for example, is encountered by Mark Ellis who previously '*doctors wrote off as 'uneducable'*', but gained, at the age of 47, 'individual learner of the year' award having graduated in Sociology and American Studies (Garner, 2005, p.11). Garner reports Mark Ellis' early institutionalisation from the age of eight until 11 through comments by Mark's father who said that "*He was on a big ward with at least 20 other patients in it, and hardly anyone of his age,*" where he was 'heavily sedated'. Garner recounts Mark's experience commenting that '*He did receive some education at a special school after coming out of hospital, but his father later discovered he had been tied to his chair while in the classroom. "He never learnt anything", he added*'. Mark at the age of 32, was provided with a note-taker, used a speaking machine to answer questions and gained seven City and Guilds qualifications. Later Mark completed a sociology degree at the Open University and then took the combined degree at a post-1992 university. Mark said

of his first day '*I was quite nervous but excited at the same time. It didn't take me long to settle. I was just accepted as if I was an able-bodied student*' with his father, Tom Ellis, concluding:

> *Mark's a kind-hearted lad – a very understanding and a very loving person … we're over the moon because he has broken through the barrier. Sometimes when people see him people see the wheelchair – they don't see the person*. (Garner, 2005, p.11)

Given that it has been taken-for-granted, an *a priori* understanding that individuals so labelled are assumed to be 'incompetent', and 'suffer' from a cognitive 'deficiency', Mark's experience raises at least three important questions. First, what barrier did he break through? Second, what was understood by the label 'uneducable' and, third, what HESA classificatory category would Mark have been ascribed as a higher education student – certainly not 'uneducable'? Other questions relate to the discourse of 'normalisation' and the way Mark surrenders his 'acceptance' as an 'able-bodied student' (Oliver, 1996; Barnes, *et al.*, 1999; Race, *et al.*, 2005). The analysis of the effects of institutions and social structures on people and how individuals resist or affirm those effects, cannot be ignored (Foucault, 1967, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980); issues that will be considered later.

Another concern in this study relates to the philosophical tradition of 'Enlightenment' and its claim to 'truth'. Indeed, given the philosophical tradition of modernism to seek 'truth' through reason, rationalism, objectivism, dualisms and hierarchical trees, it appears that having individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' makes their exclusion from *higher* [*sic*] education, as an argument of this thesis, all the more enlightening. In this sense the label 'learning difficulties' in the context of higher education participation is an extremely problematic one, an oxymoron. Indeed, it serves a purpose. For individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' to participate in higher education and gain higher education qualifications would

raise questions about the tools of assessment for 'learning difficulties'; they would fundamentally challenge their validity, rendering them flawed. Alongside understanding validity as being a social exercise, it would also raise questions of power. In effect, it seems, that the social judgement of, and usefulness of, 'learning difficulties' as a descriptor serves normative interests. (For a discussion related to the invention and construction of the descriptor 'learning difficulties' being grounded in a psychological 'truth', and yet itself subject to scrutiny given its association and claims to being a 'science', read Rapley, 2004). Moreover, 'learning difficulties', in Jeremy Bentham's (1999) terms is a fictitious entity, a creation of the mind, paradoxically its very absence brings it into the 'real'.

Further still, Cutting Edge, certainly highlights the issue of 'becoming' in contrast to 'being' a student in higher education. Moreover, in the context of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', it is all the more pressing to remember Anya Souza's comment that it takes a lot of '*courage and strength to fight against people who have the power to define who you are*' (Souza, 2002, p.4). The label and social phenomena of 'learning difficulties', assumes an inability to learn, read, write or care for oneself. Relatedly, the inconsistent practice of ascribing an IQ score of less than 70 has commonly been used to quantify the notion of 'learning difficulties' (Sutcliffe and Simons, 1993). The assumption that students described as having 'learning difficulties' cannot succeed in gaining higher education qualifications cannot be ignored and, in this study, is being challenged. Indeed, it is *reductio ad absurdum*. As argued, at the centre of this debate is the '*latent and unacknowledged role in contemporary understandings of normality, the body and intelligence*' (Marks, 1999, p.9). Without doubt, the relationship between normality, the body and intelligence has played a role in determining the presumed levels of educational achievement (Burt, 1937), particularly with the invention and use of the psychometric Intelligence Quotient (IQ). As will be reiterated, the process of labelling, other than a personal

name, is an indication that the individual is not a member of a human society (Turner, 2008, p.173).

In contrast, Disability Studies/Arts literature are challenging the taken-for-granted understanding of 'learning difficulties' as an individual 'problem' and a 'personal tragedy' (Oliver, 1996; Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Oliver and Barnes, 1998; Souza, 2002; Aspis and Souza, 2003; Swain and French, 2008). Moreover, with respect to the work of Michel Foucault, the contemporary issue of higher education participation and individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', one begins to notice the techniques of power/knowledge. Moreover, the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari offer notions of schizo, nomad and rhizome in opposition to the psycho-hierarchical structure of modernism. Thus, the context of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' accessing higher education is not just to stimulate individual or even group mobility, but can be understood to be about changing higher education itself (Williams, 1997; Thomas, 2001). Moreover, acknowledging this under-theorised area of higher education participation (Thomas and Quinn, 2007, p.15), this context makes transparent its power/knowledge discourses of surveillance, control, regulation, punishment, discipline and exclusion. To this extent, this study is not only concerned with disability but also with the politics of 'learning difficulties' and the politics of modern higher education participation.

1.4 Overview of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative

The proposed degree programme, initially, emerged from the experience of two practitioners whose working history in this field spanned some 20 years. Their earlier experiences included developing courses. During these former years the two practitioners were immersed in evening arts workshop, in which acting/teaching staff and the individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' maintained their relationships with each other. In addition, for the two practitioners, this included

being involved in a range of experiences; such as seeking funding, working in conjunction with further education colleges, working for a young people's theatre, giving performances, acknowledging emerging disability issues, the increasing demand of the participating individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', and their emerging understanding of the lack of opportunities for employment, being 'locked out' of gaining qualifications and being under-represented in higher education.

The two practitioners with the individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' decided to set-up the theatre company 'Cutting Edge'. CE held a debut of their work, a performance whose actors were four men who had then been labelled, at that time, as having 'severe learning difficulties'. The opportunity to debut their work at a respected public theatre venue, it seems, was a break from the traditional response to the issue of disabled people and the arts as being based on paternalism, a form of art therapy, often associated with segregated institutions and day centres (R.Tomlinson, 1982; Barnes, *et al.*, 1999; Masefield, 2006). Building upon their experience, Cutting Edge approached Red Brick College beginning discussions over the possibility of a degree programme in theatre performance and workshop practice. Of particular significance was that three of the four actors, previously involved in their debut, labelled as having 'severe learning difficulties' came to be employed as lecturers alongside the two directors of CE. As way of announcement, a formal description of the proposed programme was given in an on-line journal which stated that:

> *The … degree programme in Theatre Performance and Workshop Practice for students with [sic] learning difficulties is to be established at [Red Brick College] by [Cutting Edge]. The course has been developed by theatre and education practitioners … and aims to equip students with the skills, understanding and confidence required to take up employment in theatre and related professions. It is being launched with a £180,000 award … which will go towards employing a team of*

> *lecturers with [sic] learning difficulties to act as mentors,*
> *provide leadership support and role models for the students.*
> ('On-line Journal', 2003, p.4)

The employment of lecturers with the label of 'learning difficulties' seems

paradoxical; given that such individuals are excluded from higher education

participation. As has been noted above, when courses are about 'learning

difficulties' individuals with this label have not been present. Although courses about

skills development, and challenging behaviour have had individuals with the label of

'learning difficulties' teaching on them (Sutcliffe and Simons, 1993). Indeed

Walmsley (cited by Sutcliffe and Simons, 1993, p.109), a member of the course

team, makes an important point, concerning an earlier Open University course

'Working Together', namely that students can contribute to courses and that '... *they*

too can be educators not necessarily the eternal student'.

In addition Cutting Edge sought to identify additional higher education institutions

with a view to disseminating the emerging ideas and work. However, by the end of

2005 the partnership between CE and RBC came to an end; understandably, this

was an immense disappointment for the personnel involved.

1.5 Researcher position

In writing about individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' it is important to

acknowledge my own apprehensions and difficulties with the use of terminology.

Whilst I will question and critique concepts, I will conversely also draw upon them.

For example, one immediate difficulty relates to the use of the descriptor 'severe

learning difficulties'. This term was used in earlier documentation by CE to '*avoid*

confusion' and as one of the directors pointed out when questioned, responded that

'*we must be clear that I'm talking about an historical time*'. Far from the term 'severe

learning difficulties' being situated within 'an historical time' – The Office for

Standards in Education (O*f*STED) (2005) reported that in 2004 there were 1,239 segregated 'special' schools of which 310 were classified as being 'severe learning difficulties' schools – however, this study uses inverted commas to disrupt its continuity and to acknowledge the social, cultural, economic, historical, ideological and political construction of the term (refer to chapter 2). This includes recognising their reinforcing tendencies which can legitimate the agendas of those who have had (and continue to have) the power to construct segregated institutional responses experienced by disabled people (Barnes, 1991; Corbett, 1996a). The descriptor 'severe learning difficulties' was also used by CE to delineate between individuals who would have been described as having 'specific learning difficulties' such as 'dyslexia'. However, as evidenced in later Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative proposals, this was changed to 'learning difficulties'. As will be argued in this study, the changing terminological descriptors are far more than a choice of words. Indeed, they are understood to be part of the struggle to contest disability and the oppression associated with it (Barnes, *et al.*, 1999).

In addition, in using the term '*sic*' in brackets I raise objection to the way the preceding term is being used, for example, in using the phrase 'people with [*sic*] learning difficulties'. The term 'with' is being challenged on the basis that it is being used as a possessive preposition. Thus, my intention is to disrupt continuously the relational link and to argue that people do not come 'with' learning difficulties but that the individual has been labelled and described as having 'learning difficulties'. I contest the notion of 'learning difficulties'. In addition, the term '[*sic*]' is used to raise objection to the process of 'Othering' individuals including its use with terms such as 'handicap', 'learning disabled', 'they', 'them' or as an object of possession such as with the term 'my'. Further, in writing within the field of 'disability' I am aware of the difficulties, uncertainties about what words to use, contradictions and the need for sensitivity around the figurative phrases that can exclude. For example, phrases

such as to hear, to read, to speak and to see; prohibit rather than seek to encompass difference[1]; although I am also aware of the way prejudice fuels assumptions about assumed '*fragile sensibilities*' of disabled people (Morris, 1991, p.20).

My stance with respect to the issue of 'learning difficulties' is to constantly question 'individual deficit', 'personal tragedy' and 'abnormality' and to make transparent the discursive practices, labelling, disempowering and stigmatising language. It is not to ignore the various modalities of power (for example: physical force, violence[2], coercion, or 'consent', and so forth), but to recognise that language is also an important one (Fairclough, 2001, p.3). I locate my own position in this research as being interested in inclusive education, emancipatory research, discourse, participatory research, socially just methodologies and (critical) disability issues. My personal perspective has been informed, as well as from various disabled people, from being a son to parents who acquired impairments, and from being a brother to siblings who are subjected to the oppression termed 'disability'. However, a critical question of this research is the way I write about people labelled and described as having 'learning difficulties' which may itself create an exclusive discourse that I seek to challenge. In this sense, I think it is of little use to say that my intention is not to do harm but to acknowledge, as Stephen Ball (1990) recognised in the context of educational policy and is applicable here, that:

> *We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that a discourse constructs and allows. We do not 'know' what we say, we 'are' what we say and do … So that it does not matter what some people say or think, only certain voices can be heard as meaningful or authoritative.* (S.Ball, 1993, pp.14 – 15)

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[1] Read Keith (1995) for a thoughtful and reflective poem on the way language is used to construct and deconstruct disabled people.
[2] Read Lukes (1974) for an understanding of 'power' and how a one-dimensional focus on behaviour is insufficient and unsatisfactory.

Furthermore, in this context, to say that CE with the college of higher education 'failed' is contentious, rather it being understood as being situated within a broader struggle for change. For me, locating this experience within the social and affirmation models of disability alongside discourses of power/knowledge enables me to make sense of an excluding and disabling society. Thus, as a site of inquiry, the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative offers a rich range of material which makes connections with radical disability politics, disability studies/arts, critical disability studies/arts, contemporary theatre in education, 'learning difficulties', the limitations and possibilities of the social model approach to research and, as mentioned previously, the politics of modern higher education participation.

1.6 Developing the ideas for this study

The developing idea for this study relates to an interest in the field of Disability Studies and the Arts and around the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education. This developing idea also relates to my own personal experience which I cannot avoid disclosing first. I need to say that I have an eclectic experience, journeying from one discipline to another, being here and there. For example, after leaving compulsory schooling I was an engineer, completing a five year apprenticeship. Leaving this industry to study mathematics at a local college, developed an interest as a musician, since gained licentiate music qualifications in performance and theory and simultaneously graduated in mathematics and music.

In this context, and in relation to a theme within this study, I entered into higher education moving away from family and friends, with a grant. My first year was in halls of residence. I recall choosing to walk from campus to campus for lectures because I could not afford the coach service that was laid-on. I never missed breakfast or evening meals and on Sundays, lunch only, I would often take, or on

occasion be given, additional pieces of bread from the canteen staff to save for later in the day. Outside the usual social round of higher education life, I could not financially afford to socialise with my fellow peers; nor could I afford to travel to see family or friends.

With regard to my interest in music, I have performed recitals, ensembles, concertos, and taken my curtain call. I have taught mathematics in local colleges, adult centres and in institutions of higher education. I later drifted into teacher education and actively engaged in issues of inclusive education. Also I have been guided by my own 'lived experience' of discrimination. I have also observed the oppression that is termed 'disability' through having lived with and been with disabled people, attending tribunals, meetings, made representations and supported individuals so labelled. I have made representation at tribunals on issues of both racial and disability discrimination. I have regularly attended meetings at schools with parents when a young person has been subject to a potential permanent exclusion. I have observed, with and through, my father's experience issues related to services for older disabled people, with and through my siblings' experiences who too have their own stories to tell about the discrimination termed 'disability'. Further, I have listened to numerous individuals in schools, colleges, adult educational centres, and universities telling me about their own encounters of unfair, unjust, and discriminatory practices and attitudes. All in all, this has transpired to be a difficult and troubling experience, one that Herb Lovett would argue, in the first instance, requires a process of 'learning to listen' (Lovett, 1996).

Turning to my own personal experiences what immediately comes to mind are my experiences of violence and harassment particularly of being attacked. The very first recollection I have is when I was about six or seven-years-old whilst in primary school where I was attacked by a white pupil who began to hit me simultaneously

calling me a 'Paki'. During that early incident I recall children formed a circle around us chanting the usual ritual of 'do, do, do' the local slang for a fight; a term that I became familiar with during my schooling experience.

Incidents extended outside of my schooling experience. For example, on one occasion, I was about 11-years-old and was earning some money through having a newspaper round after school. Delivering a newspaper at one particular house I remember crouching down to the low letter box at the bottom of the door and as I turned something hit me in the face. Feeling dazed I remember wiping blood from my eyes and face and seeing a figure running away. On another occasion, I was 16 years of age and was making my way home through the local town centre. I recall being attacked by a group of individuals, my head was being held, I saw a boot coming towards my face. After several cries for help I noticed people passed by as this boot was repeatedly making contact with my face, a boot which was connected to an older white man. Another incident I have recounted elsewhere, in previous research entitled '*Working Towards an Emancipatory Research Approach*' (Kikabhai, 2003), involved me being chased by one individual with a stick which struck me on the back of my head; my attacker calling me a 'black bastard'.

My personal experiences also extend to my working experience as a tutor in higher education institutions where the racisms are much more subtle; '*smiling assassins*' as one of Pilkington's (2004, p.24) participant comments. Some tutors would often withhold materials, not act on request for resources, not inform or invite me to meetings or social functions. Ordering equipment always took longer and I also observed tutors make derogatory comments about students which I always found particularly disturbing. For example, working at a university where I was due to teach a mathematics module. During the process of preparing for the module a senior lecturer was providing information as to what material I was expected to

cover. On the wall in this office there were photographs of the student group, as I was taking a look this senior lecturer suddenly began to point to individual students making statements such as "she's thick", "kick him off the course" and "he's an idiot".

Relatedly, what is also interesting is the way subject matter material is controlled, regulated and awash with intentionally excluded and unacknowledged contributions. One of the first revelations, so to speak, was to discover that non-European, disabled people, women, had contributed to science and music too (Boyer and Merzbach, 1989; Eves, 1990; Kennedy, 1990; Hindley, 1994). The following are examples of the way individuals have been intentionally excluded, forgotten, written out of history, irrespective of their significant contributions. Within the field of mathematics, for example, Agnesi du Chatelet, born in Milan, was the first of 21 children from three marriages. She spoke Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Spanish and German. At the age of nine, her Latin discourse defending higher education for women was published. Sophie Germain was born in Paris in 1776 developed a deep interest in mathematics and submitted material under the male pseudonym M.Leblanc. In 1303 the Chinese mathematician Chu Shi-kie presented what is today more falsely referred to as 'Pascal's Triangle'. Girolamo Cardano born in 1501 as the illegitimate son of a jurist, he was imprisoned for a time for heresy and was considered to be an inveterate gambler writing a gambler's manual with questions on probability. In Italy many stories discuss his wickedness, as when in a fit of rage he cut off the ears of his younger son. Nicolo Tartaglia is said to have been born to 'poor' parents around 1499. Under siege by the French in 1512 he fled into the cathedral with his father. His father killed, Nicolo Tartaglia was left for dead, with a split skull, jaw and palate. His mother eventually gathered enough money to send him to school for fifteen days. Tartaglia stole a copybook from the school from which he taught himself how to read and write. As a talented mathematician he received

the nickname of 'the stammerer' (Eves, 1990). Srinivasa Ramanujan (1887 – 1920), self-taught and considered to be a 'genius' for his intuitive reasoning who was 'brought' to England to 'study'. The work of Ramanujan is acknowledged in the film 'Good Will Hunting' (Directed: Gus Van Sant, 1997). In the field of Music too, similar experiences can be found (Kennedy, 1990; Hindley, 1994). Maria Theresia von Paradis (1759 – 1824), blind, a composer, acknowledged by Mozart and Haydn is just one example from many.

I recall that much of these 'Other' contributions were never spoken of. At that time, my own instinctual thoughts, somehow, informing me that I ought not to ask tutors why. I do recall at about the age of 13 writing on a small piece of paper 'the loss of identity for the sake of conformity'. I did, however, ask a tutor why and on at least one occasion was told to 'shut up'. Fortunately, my own resistance (Foucault, 1980, 1988) and hours of self-study led me to finding that needle in the haystack, my own affirmation, emancipation, and to finding my own role models. It has been no surprise to me that I later sought refuge, at least for a short time, in Mathematics and Music, a companion, a rarefied form of philosophy (Massumi, translator's foreword in Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.xiv).

With regard to my experiences of working in the higher education sector I have gained a number of insights into the experience of exclusion. For example, on one occasion, a British white mature student, who was in the process of completing a primary teacher education programme at another HEI, contacted me with regard to an incident whilst on placement where a young Pakistani child was being unfairly treated by a tutor. In supporting this individual through the complaints procedure I observed, so to speak, the walls of the institution closing in. Meetings were held without the student's presence. It was this student who was, euphemistically, shown the door. The teaching practice triad is discussed in the work of Crozier and Menter

(1993, p.99) who wrote specifically about such experiences and have noted that '*The teaching practice triad is unequally balanced in terms of power. It is quite clear that the student is in the weakest position*' (Crozier and Menter, 1993, p.99).

Another earlier example relates to when I was working in an adult education centre where a senior tutor made reference to a student as a 'stupid chink'. Ironically, I was at the time participating, with other tutors, in an in-service course about 'anti-oppressive' materials. To the group this senior tutor began to tell us that this '*stupid chink was a nuisance and was always filling his pot noodle up*'. Incidentally, this senior tutor was delivering this in-service course. More alarmingly, having given permission, a number of the tutors also began to add to the insults about this unsuspecting student. I also recall as part completion of that course that we were asked to complete an assignment. On completion, I had, as had other tutors, been called for a one-to-one tutorial for feedback. In this tutorial I was quizzed as to the content and style of my assignment with ricocheting comments, one of which was '*how did you learn this stuff and write like this?*' My response was to say that I had been interested in educational issues, completed a PGCE, self-study and that I enjoyed reading around educational issues. Sensing a rising tension I decided to respond in kind by asking 'So how long have you been in education?' This senior tutor responded that she had 'been in' education for over 20 years. She reloaded and added that if 'we' were back '*in Rhodesia I would be working on her fields as a slave!*'

Working in the adult education sector, where I was also teaching GCSE/A-level mathematics, I recall meeting an individual who would have been labelled as having 'learning difficulties' and was attending a 'Basic Skills' (more familiarly transformed into, ironically, 'Skills for Life') course specifically focusing on numeracy. Whilst speaking with this individual he showed me the files he had completed. These A4

files were meticulously organised, full of completed worksheets. On asking whether he would consider joining the mathematics course I was teaching he responded decidedly with a 'yes'. I also discovered that he had been attending this numeracy course for the previous eight years. On asking the then staff who were teaching this 'Basic Skills' course if he could join this GCSE/A-level course, he was quickly rebuffed and was told to stay on the numeracy course. I too was affronted by this tutor with the comment '*I'm getting fed-up of hearing your name.*'

Yet another experience occurred whilst working at a Further Education college. I recall entering a student into a maths exam who had never previously, she told me, been entered into an exam. Amina (pseudonym) was a mother of four children and her partner worked, at that time, away from home. Amina, with tribal marks on her face, was from a village community in Africa and told me that as a child she would often give up her bed when visitors arrived to her village. Arriving to England, however, was a shock. She told me she would be spat at, called names and would often be taunted with cat-like sounds being made behind her back. A range of deficit labels were also a part of that affront. Amina struggled with maths but nonetheless tried her best to fit in as much practice as she could get. As the maths course was coming to an end I told Amina that I had entered her into the exam. Amina did miss a number of classes, but when she attended we would spend additional time working through material. On the day of the exam Amina arrived early, I spoke to her trying to reassure her that she would do just fine. As the exam began I recall peering through a small window looking at the student group, Amina sitting in the centre. Amina, with a smile, was sat there with tears rolling down her face, holding her pen which was paused at the side of the exam paper. I, however, was wide eyed, willing her to pick up and use her pen. Those two hours seemed to drag and drag as I was pacing up and down the adjacent empty room waiting for the group to finish. At the end of the exam Amina appeared from the room with a big smile and

tears still rolling down her face. She looked over to me and started running towards me with her towering large frame and arms outstretched. She wrapped her arms around me. Crushing my ribs she whispered 'thank you'. Amina didn't 'pass' that exam, and I would concede that I knew, in all probability, that she wasn't going to. But for me, and I'm sure for Amina that she did not 'fail', at least not from her perspective.

From the very beginning of my teaching career greeting students, learning to listen and asking about their well-being has been, and continues to be, a common preoccupation. Black and Asian students approach me and confide in me about how they are being treated and share their own lived experiences of discrimination. This includes students I do not know or teach approaching me in these educational settings, sharing their general struggles in asking for support. It became a recurring practice of mine to spend some time explaining subjects or going over and checking student's work. Moreover, it was a practice of mine on Saturdays to hold tuition classes at a local library; I was always amazed as to the number of students who turned up and often with their children. Amazed? Principally because of educational assumptions related to the students being 'lazy' and that 'they didn't care'. This particular experience relates to the tension between supporting students and struggling in discriminatory and oppressive institutions. This is immense: an experience that is similar to those incidents reported in the work of Allen (1998) and Housee (2001) for example. Housee introduces the notion of 'othermothering' primarily described as '*a mentoring role that surpasses normal teaching responsibilities*' (Housee, 2001, p.84). Interestingly, on reflection, was my response to students a form of 'otherfathering'? Not necessarily since some students I have had the opportunity to know are older. Maybe then a form of 'otherbrothering'? Again not necessarily. I personally feel and recognise that these students with hopes and aspirations too are merely human. Allen (1998, p.92) similarly made

reference to the issue of supporting students and commented that the '*black lecturer, who is often isolated within the white educational institutions has to juggle the demands of a racist educational structure with the need to maintain credibility with black students*'. For me there is no feeling of a need to maintain credibility. In addition, my experiences are not solely observations of Black and Asian students but also of British white, predominantly working class students, and disabled students, who have also shared with me their experience of prejudice and discriminatory behaviour and practices.

Returning to my experience, what puzzles me is the numerous categorisations of different ethnic groups. None of those individuals or groups asked me to tick a box indicating my ethnicity before they attacked me. Strictly speaking my preferred label, my name, unless I decide to change it, is Navin, first and foremost a human being. Further, if my identity is determined by my place of birth then I am British, or if determined by my parental place of birth then I am Indian and not a Pakistani, Black or even a 'bastard'. Of course such experiences do not come as a surprise to some (Begum, 1992, p.28), although the sense of anger with monitoring does: 'What is the point of putting a tick in a box?' Begum asks, '*when the real issue is about tackling the entire system?*' What also troubles me about these experiences was that I never shared these with my family until I was an adult. Reflecting back, I had always believed that my reluctance to say anything to my family was based on thinking that they too would be deeply upset. I did eventually tell my brothers and sisters but only in passing saying something like 'Yes, I got beat up'. I do remember eventually telling my father when he was in his seventies, I don't know why, but when I did he began to cry, my belief was confirmed and one that still upsets me to this day, since I wonder whether I should have told him or not. In relation to my compulsory schooling and in terms of subject matter, it became obvious to me that I was being subject to a different kind of violence, my identities were being denied

and shaped (violently constructed and invented as 'other'), devalued and dehumanised, a n issue that again I have written about in earlier work (Kikabhai, 2003).

After teaching mathematics at adult centres, colleges and universities, I later drifted into teacher education and completed a post-graduate teacher training qualification. After this, I completed a Master's degree specifically in the area of inclusive education, a Master's degree in Educational and Social Research; particularly interested in emancipatory research and the notion of reciprocity. In all of this time, I have never formally been taught by a Black, Asian and/or a Disabled Person. From a social perspective I never felt at ease in these 'educational' settings. The double take of glaring staff, the omitted 'hello' or 'good morning' or banter, the message has been and continues to be, loud and clear, one in which my presence is and has never been welcomed. For sure, I have managed to find some allies, but these 'some' have been no more than five. What little did students, or for that matter colleagues, know of the struggle: my working-class origins, my puzzling experiences, my multiple identities, the specific details of my own experience and the multiple discriminations. As had been predicted (Layard, *et al.*, 1969, pp.94 – 95), university jobs have become much harder to get, its age structure is '*unbalanced*' and '*prospects lift some people to posts above their stature*'. Indeed, I have accrued fifteen years experience of applying for jobs which resulted in gaining teaching posts that continued to be part-time. In line with comments by Layard *et al.* (1969), I have observed unqualified and inexperienced individuals secure full-time posts and exceed me. To make the point succinctly, I have also observed staff appointed to positions in which they are unsuitably experienced or knowledgeable; and yet such individuals often boast '*professional*' [*sic*] and/or post-graduate qualifications. It seems interesting that whilst UNESCO (2007), concerned with corruption within higher education, have turned their gaze towards non-European

countries and the United States, it ought to, arguably, begin to extend its gaze towards higher education institutions within the UK. Applying for full-time jobs that I had been doing part-time within the higher education sector came to no avail. I have drifted from place to place, from one higher education institution to another, working in various regions of England. I have only recently, after all this time, gained a full-time post within the university sector.

In terms of research, my earliest experience relates to young people and their permanent exclusion from mainstream school. I have researched alongside young people in a residential college exploring the issue of emancipatory research. Later still, my research interests have related to exploring the formal and informal social networks particularly with reference to the relationship map known as 'circles of support/friends'.

With respect to my familial experience and understanding 'disability' as oppression, my observation has emerged out of having a younger sibling who has been labelled with the term 'schizophrenia', an older sibling who is described as having mental health difficulties, and having both parents who acquired visual impairments. What I have observed is the way services such as hospitals, charities, day centres, segregated 'special' schools, social services, were and are 'special' services of and for surveillance and institutionalisation. They are part of what has come to be known as the disability industry. Indeed, there are abundant profits to be made in this work. Outside of family life, I have met numerous disabled people who I have had the privilege to know, to be mutually part of each other's lives. As this experience started to unfold, I became increasingly interested in understanding disability as oppression, the impaired body as breaking with repressive and modernist modes of existence being constructed by power relations and hierarchically ordered by

contrasting dis/abled identities. I reject the idea of a unified rational subject for a

decentred subject liberated from fixed identities and free to become multiple.

My immersion and trajectory through, and within, maths, music, research, personal

experiences and readings, have all contributed to my current understanding of

power relations. Thus, as I stated earlier in terms of putting part of my own lived

experience to the fore, I have been, partially, guided by my own experience. I have

not only puzzled over my own experience but also that of the numerous individuals I

have come to know. In this sense, I bring my experience to this study.

1.7 Research Foci

An initiative of this kind raises a series of important questions. Initially, Cutting Edge

Theatre Initiative had approached the university, in which I was enrolled, with the

intention of seeking to research their attempt to create a theatre related degree.

Initial discussions had taken place, and I had taken-on a role as a Research

Associate. I was invited to meet Trustees, and share my own interest in disability

issues. I was introduced to key members of staff, funders, and individuals interested

in theatre. All the participants expressed their own interest and commitment to this

initiative. Interestingly, this was a time when seeking formal consent from individuals

or organisations was not always clear-cut. As the research began, whilst I was

steadily interviewing individuals, all participants provided verbal consent.

Nonetheless, I also set out to gain written consent, and provided here is a sample of

those letters of consent. In November 2002, a letter had been written to the

participating Higher Education Institution (Red Brick College) as to the possibilities

of the research (Appendix A), expecting the first cohort of students to start in 2004.

At that time I was anticipating three main areas, these being the experiences of

becoming a student, the nature of their partnership, and the perspectives of the

individuals involved. However, given the changing emphasis with the issue of

barriers, unanticipated events and the ending of this initiative, there emerged a

different focus offering unexpected possibilities. Amidst this rapidly changing

context, I had completed an evaluation report in 2003, funded by the then Learning

and Skills Council reporting on the situation as the current circumstances were

taking shape. This prompted questions about the various insights and perspectives

as to why and how this initiative came to an end. Further still, in 2005, due to

unforeseen circumstances, I suspended this study with the HEI my previous

employer. Within this context, the principal aims of this study, formally stated, are:

- To explore why and how Cutting Edge and the college of higher education
  'failed' in their attempt to create a degree level course in theatre performance
  and workshop practice for students described and labelled as having 'learning
  difficulties'.
- To critically investigate the issues around the exclusion of individuals labelled as
  having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation.
- To offer an alternative reading of the politics of modern higher education
  participation in relation to individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'.

In order to address these aims, five specific questions emerged:

- What were the barriers encountered by Cutting Edge?
- What were the views and power/knowledge discourses of the different individual
  participants?
- What can this research approach offer in terms of insight about Cutting Edge
  and the College of Higher Education in their attempt to create a degree level
  course in theatre performance and workshop practice for students described as
  having 'learning difficulties'?

- In what way do the experiences of Cutting Edge offer insight in critical disability studies readings of dis/ability and education?

- How might the insights into these questions inform this area of research?

Since 2005, I had been constantly troubled by the themes related to the theorising of disability and the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation. In 2009 I returned formally to complete 'unfinished work', gaining continued consent (Appendix B, C, D), set out with the aim of exploring the related literature, developing and analysing the data in relation to the emerging questions I previously sought to explore.

What follows is a brief summary of each of the proceeding chapters.

1.8 Organisation of this study

Chapter two 'Understanding Disability' relates to the theorising of disability. It acknowledges the multiple interpretations of disability. It later moves towards a social constructionist stance against taken-for-granted ways of understanding disability. It challenges the conventional idea that knowledge, the notion of 'truth', is based upon objective and unbiased observations. It offers a radically different perspective on the way individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' have come to be marginalised, silenced and excluded. It draws upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 2004) and the work of Foucault (1967, 1980, 1988) which gives a radically different interpretation to understanding power/knowledge discourses of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. The theorising of disability together with Foucauldian discourses of power/knowledge present an alternative perspective to understand the excluding and disabling barriers in society. It draws upon the discourse of resistance and (mis)treatment at a time of widespread concern for rights, equity and citizenship. It offers a 'break out' of

traditional modernist regimes of 'truth', moving towards a nuanced interpretation of 'learning difficulties' and modern higher education non/participation. Moreover, the work of Foucault, his books as a toolbox, offer ways of constructing different and alternative ways of thinking as well as challenging existing certainties and comforting illusions (Oksala, 2007).

Chapter three, 'Disability and Higher Education', the second of two literature reviews, considers the higher education participation policy context; particularly, in relation to the discourse of raising aspirations alongside the issue of under-representation, non-participation and the increasing concern around a rising student debt. Whilst universities have experienced advanced prosperity, chapter three acknowledges a critique of universities for being elitist, layered with inequalities, and lacking in an ability to critically scrutinise itself; particularly from a postmodern perspective. With regard to calculating the number of disabled students, this chapter highlights the problems with disclosure in relation to the fear of discrimination. It also discusses the issue of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) in terms of its individual/medical (biophysical) gaze. Finally this chapter draws upon the discussion related to the notion of reasonable adjustment and assessment.

Chapter four, 'Research Methods, Measures, Procedures and Analysis' explores the methodological issues related to having adopted a case study approach. It includes a discussion of the data collection methods, coding, analysis and construction of the research account. It also recounts the beginning of the research journey followed by an engagement with the epistemological and methodological issues. Whilst exploring what are said to be key features of case study research, this chapter illustrates the difficulties encountered with researching a rapidly moving and changing context, dealing with uncertainty, and attending to a selection of methods for data collection. In particular, the research methodology challenges the viewpoint

of the detached, objective observer and elevates the subjective experience of people in a specific context as a key to understanding. In this sense, to say the business of case study research *is* 'particularisation' and not 'generalisation' (Stake, 1995, p.8) is contentious and that case study research may '*yield insights of universal significance*' (Simons, 2009, p.20). However, generalisations are themselves associated with a mythical 'average' as will be discussed. It closes with setting the ground for multiple interpretations, exploring possibilities for making a play of (and with) the data.

Chapter five presents the principal findings of the data. It begins with personal accounts and experiences of the individual participants. This emerges to be a shared account, experiences and insights into the social, political, economic and cultural context. It draws upon data from archived material and previous proposals. It provides data from having kept a research log, insights into my personal thoughts and emerging research dilemmas. It also presents data taken from documentary sources and related public debates. What emerges are the day-to-day experiences of the individuals, their experiences of working with each other, developing partnerships, developing courses and working within the theatre related industry.

Chapter six, 'Analysis and Discussion' uses the previous insights of the participating individuals and the issues raised in the accompanying literature. It is offered as a traditional response to the related issues. It explores the notion of 'barriers', addresses research questions, uncovers silenced voices and forgotten accounts. Of importance is the previous theorising of disability together with the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari.

Chapter seven, 'Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative (Act One)', is an extrapolation, an analysis, one possible interpretation (hence the term 'Act One'), presented in the

form of a theatre production. I do this to offer an alternative postmodernist perspective on the issue of higher education participation. It draws upon ideas of juxtaposition, drama and poetry (Grbich, 2007). Using terminology related to theatre and its metaphors, it is playful yet serious, unexpected, dramatic, creative and innovative. It ultimately breaks from traditional boundaries and offers a counter discourse to the rhetoric of widening participation.

Finally, chapter eight revisits the main aims of the research, examining them in conjunction with the theoretical orientation adopted in this study and the analytical reading of the research material that followed. It discusses the significant findings, revealing how these insights offer opportunities for understanding and further critical disability studies explorations.

CHAPTER 2: Understanding Disability

This chapter relates to understanding disability. It does not explicitly discuss disability and higher education; this is left for the following chapter. This chapter positions the task of understanding disability, its various interpretations, as a priority in order to understand how these constructions of disability affect the lives of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Whilst it is recognised that there is an increasing number of interpretative and competing models of disability (Hales, 1995; Llewellyn and Hogan, 2000; Turnbull and Stowe, 2001; Brett, 2002; Reindal, 2008), this chapter begins; first, with a discussion of the individual/medical (biophysical) model. Second, a rights-based model; third, the social model and; fourth, the affirmation model which includes its relation to disability arts, theatre-in-education, the issue of 'learning difficulties', higher education participation and employment. It begins with discussing the traditional, rationalist, normalising interpretations, and then shifts to a social constructionist interpretation of 'disability' which acknowledges the importance of a self-critical analysis of the notion of 'truth'. This chapter identifies associated discursive legislative and policy discourses and raises questions as to the way individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' have come to be marginalised, silenced and excluded. Turning to a postmodernist critique, this chapter draws upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1984; 2004) and Foucault (1967, 1980, 1988), which offers an alternative and nuanced view which has been shaped by cultural-historical-political-socio factors. In utilising the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, this chapter includes discussion relating to decentering the disability-impairment dualism, discourse as power/knowledge, conceptualising disciplinary power, questioning the process of research, understanding higher education as being transformed into the 'modern'; as a site of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion.

2.1 Individual/Medical (biophysical) Model of Disability

Barnes *et al*. (1999, p.21) argue that the individual/medical model of disability dominated the early twentieth century, although its diagnosis and solution in medical knowledge continue to be '*securely entrenched*'. Oliver (1996, p.31) suggests that there is no such thing as a medical model of disability but instead an '*individual model of disability of which medicalisation is one significant component*'. Given this previous contention, my own preferred term is 'individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability' which emphasises at least two particular points. First, the co-joined terms 'individual/medical' acknowledges the notion of 'self' in medical terms. Second, the term (biophysical) in brackets recognises the philosophical and scientific roots within rationalism[3] and biological determinism. Nonetheless, the model formed the framework for the 1980 '*International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps* [*sic*]' (ICIDH) which referred to 'disability' as '... *any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in a manner or within the range considered normal for a human being*', and 'impairment' as '*any loss or abnormality of psychological physiological or anatomical structure or function*' and was regarded as the most '*comprehensive catalogue of its kind*' (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, pp.14 – 15). According to this discourse, it is the individual who has the problem; notions of self-esteem are firmly located within the individual, even though some may refer to this as '*patronising nonsense*' (Morris, 1991, p.15). Different interventions aim to provide the person with the appropriate skills to rehabilitate or 'deal with it', possibly assisted by relatives and close acquaintances (Borsay, 1986). Such a view certainly lends itself to the Cartesian philosophy of the body perceived as a machine, which in turn is fixated on health (Synnott, 1997; Townsend, *et al*., 1990). Notably, the term 'health' relates to a belief which can be traced to the healing process: that is, to heal(th), to make whole or to

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[3] Read Weber (1967) for an understanding of how rationalism emerged, and replaced mysticism, from and through the idea of a 'calling' to labour, self-interest and the pursuit of profit.

restore (Townsend, *et al.*, 1980). Disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties', are treated as objects in accordance with the normalising standards of society. The degree of deviation from this constructed norm (mythical average) is often quantified and the person labelled, usually preceded by the term 'mild', 'moderate', or 'severe'. Moreover, it is common that impairments are often preceded with the notion of 'suffering' from.

Deficit interpretations are understood to be based on a range of normative assumptions about what constitutes a 'normal' person. Such a viewpoint is apparent in legislative discourse, for example, the meaning of a disabled person given by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995) states that:

> … *a person has a disability for the purpose of this Act if* [*s*]*he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on* [*her*] *his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.* (DDA, 1995, Chapter 50(1)(2))

In effect, the DDA treats 'disability' and 'impairment' as being the same. Legislative discourse perceives disability as an individual problem to be cured, to be healed and to be healthy. It constructs a '*divisive discourse*' (Fulcher, 1999, p.8), the notion of '*normal*' and '*abnormal*' and of belonging here rather than there. From this perspective the meaning of disability pathologises individuals and some prefer not to be labelled 'disabled' in this way at all (Watson, 2002). Nonetheless, it seems that in order to fight against discrimination individuals are expected to accept the 'disability' label on individual/medical (biophysical) terms, although it is up to the courts to decide whether an individual is 'disabled' or not (Riddell, 2003).

To be accepted on individual/medical model terms is to be as if one were not disabled and in this sense, being disabled is not something to be proud of or embraced. Critiquing 'normalcy', Davis (1995, p.13) argues that '*Repulsion is the*

learned response' which plays out on a societal level through '*incarceration,*

institutionalisation, segregation, discrimination, marginalisation, and so on'.

Ironically, when individuals reject a medical diagnosis, this only adds to the

judgement that individuals are irrational, unreliable, unreasonable, etc. (Berger and

Luckmann, 1991). In an extreme form, this is evidenced from the experiences of

disabled women labelled as having 'learning difficulties' that report incidents of rape

and abuse, and are often referred to as being 'unreliable' (Quarmby, 2011, p.46). It

is the institutional gaze, the observer, that renders the observed to be 'disabled'

(Davis, 1995) and not necessarily for being reasonable but for being unreasonable

and not for being reason(dis)able. Indeed, the government of and total domination

for and over the body – biopower – by the state is a theme taken up by Michel

Foucault (1978).

As will be articulated later in this chapter, the individual/medical (biophysical) model

transforms individuals into being 'disabled' and that notions of 'learning difficulties'

being, at times, outside the realms of physical and sensory impairments, of the body

has historically been all the more problematic. Indeed an identity repeatedly

mentioned in the work of Potts and Fido (1991) is reference to able-bodied disabled

people which is encapsulated in their title *A Fit Person to Be Removed*. In that able-

disabled people (individuals, at times, labelled as having learning difficulties) were -

and still are - exploited due to their ability to assist with un-paid caring and domestic

work (Potts and Fido, 1991, p.134). A re-interpretation of this work is that *their*

individual/medical (biophysical) bodies are being contested and fought for.

Lexicographers' definitions of the term are also embedded in the individual/medical

(biophysical) model of disability. For instance, the term 'disability' is explained as '*a*

severe physical or mental illness that restricts the way a person lives his or her life'

or '*something that disables someone*' (Collins English Dictionary, 2002, p.211). The

term 'disable' is '*to make ineffective. unfit. or incapable*' and uses the noun

'*disablement*'. Although no explicit reference is made to the notion of 'learning

difficulties', the term 'disabled' is explained as '*lacking one or more physical powers,*

such as the ability to walk or to coordinate one's movements'. An additional note in

the Collins dictionary, as to the usage of the term 'disabled', explains that:

> The use of *the disabled*, *the blind* etc. can be offensive and
> should be avoided. Instead you should talk about *disabled*
> *people, blind people, etc*'. (Collins English Dictionary, 2002,
> p.211, original emphasis)

As to the term which refers to discrimination against disabled people, the Collins

English Dictionary (2002, p.2) uses the term 'ableism'. Libraries which categorise

books using the hierarchical Dewey decimal classification system are also,

arguably, embedded in this model too. For example, the subject of 'disability' is

located alongside subjects of 'criminality', 'social and sexual deviance' and 'deficits'.

Where does meaning reside? Gee, for example, makes the point that meaning is

'on site' it is not that which resides in dictionaries; it is '*situated* in specific social and

Discourse practices' (Gee, 2006, p.78, original emphasis). Arguably, the '... *disputes*

and struggles which occur in language and over language ...' is political (Fairclough,

2001, p.19). Thought about in this way it is no surprise that generally society

considers 'disability' as an illness and/or an inability, relating to individual

circumstances: needing to be 'looked after', 'cared for', having a negative image

which is not easy to reverse to one that is positive and assertive. Further still, its

linguistic use is – intentionally – compounded by conceptual confusion. The

individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability has immense influence in

interpreting 'disability' as 'individual deficit', 'personal tragedy' and 'abnormality' and

as Oliver (1996a, p.62) argues '*if disability is seen as a tragedy, then disabled*

people will be treated as if they are the victims of some tragic happening and

circumstances'. Some even reject deficit and personal tragedy dictionary definitions of disability and recognise this as the language of '*oppressors*' (Charlton, 2000, p.67).

2.1.1 Individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability and segregated education

The discourse of disability as individual/medical (biophysical) deficit can also be understood to be operating in schools, colleges and universities. For example, higher education students are expected to reveal their personal/private identities for public and institutional consumption, to 'prove' *their* disability and/or complete an assessment of eligibility in order to be 'awarded' Disabled Students' Allowances (D*f*IUS, 2008); a financial allowance to meet the additional costs incurred by disabled students. It is, however, worth noting two points. First, that it is not unusual for a student to 'discover' during their university career that they have been experiencing difficulties with learning and be labelled as having '*dyslexia*' (Hayes, 1997). Second, that disclosing a disability is no guarantee of preventing the disadvantages disabled students encounter: that is students may choose not to disclose if they fear discrimination (NAO, 2002; Riddell, *et al.*, 2005b). Further, the National Audit Office (2002) made the point that the disability declared was not necessarily the disability for which the allowance was received. A poignant example, of disadvantage disabled students encounter, is provided by Peter White, BBC Disability Affairs Correspondent, drawing upon a previous Radio 4 programme entitled *In Touch.* White (2006, p.xvii) describes an experience of a visually impaired student on a drama course, stating that apart from the usual barriers concerned with getting the right equipment, and getting staff to provide her with accessible information; she encountered difficulties with getting staff to accept that she was a responsible adult which was typified when she went to explain some of the difficulties to her tutor but was met by the phrase '*So, who looks after you, then?*'

Segregated 'special' schooling services are firmly embedded in the individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability alongside notions of 'need', 'care' and 'protection', and any attempt to fuse this discourse, with those that espouse rights and equity, are seen as '*theoretically flawed*' and only '*privileges those who work 'in their best interest*'' (Slee, 1996, p.107). As will become apparent 'protection' is not necessarily solely *for* the individual but 'protection' *against* the individual. Similarly, discourses of individual deficiency are encapsulated in the notion of 'learning difficulties', for example, where young people in primary and secondary schools can be described as having 'Special Educational Needs' and 'Statemented' with an affixed label of disability such as 'severe learning difficulties' (O*f*STED, 2005). This, Fulcher argues, '*theorises problems*' as belonging to individuals and 'as therefore 'needing' extra resources' (Fulcher, 1999, p.9, original emphasis). This discourse resembles a version of the '*individualistic gaze*', which is clearly political and functions as an '*instrument of power*' (Fulcher, 1999, pp.249 – 250). As is noted by Slee, it is this discursive practice that has constructed '*official knowledge*' of, and about, 'the disabled', the 'special educational needs' student (Slee, 2004, p.50) and the 'student with [*sic*] learning difficulties and/or disabilities'. The discourse, within the context of education, was – and arguably still remains – related to the perceptions of the efficiency of teaching groups perceived to think and behave in similar ways which has informed and contributed to segregated provision (Cole, 1989; Hegarty, 1993; Thomas, 1997a; Thomas *et al.*, 1998; Fulcher, 1999). Moreover, 'needs' are bound-up with expectations of what is 'normal' (natural) which is cultural (Turner, 2008, p.31).

Historically, medical and judicial discourses have drawn upon labels such as 'moral defective', later changed to 'moral imbeciles', which were terms enshrined in the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act and the Act of 1927 (Cole, 1989, p.88). The main purpose of the 1913 Act, Alfred Tredgold argued was two-fold:

> *First to afford the nation some measure of protection against the mentally defective [sic]; and secondly, to afford the appropriate care and protection, for which they were so much in need, to the mentally defective [sic]'.* (Tredgold, 1927, p.6)

The mission to ascertain, certify and detain 'mental defectives' was, it has been argued, born out of '*eugenic panic about racial degeneration*' (Borsay, 2005, p.71). Terms such as 'idiot', 'imbecile', 'lunatics', 'feeble-minded', 'inebriates', 'deaf and dumb', 'cretin' and 'moron' were all further official terms enshrined in UK legislation to refer to people who came within the general category of 'educability' (Solity, 1992).

2.1.1.1 Labels and discursive practices

Labels, it is argued, are socially constructed and within an educational context are said to be part of a dehumanising process that has resulted in the segregation of people described as having 'learning difficulties'. For instance, before 1970 individuals labelled as having 'severe learning difficulties', previously 'educationally subnormal', would have been 'graded' as having an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) of less than 50, labelled by medical officers as 'idiots' and 'imbeciles' and said to have been in need of 'Special Educational Treatment' which was a precursor to 'Special Educational Needs'. The phrase '*Special Educational Treatment*' was defined in the 1944 Education Act as education by '*special*' methods appropriate for persons '*suffering*' from '*any disability of body or mind*' (Section.8). Arrangements made by LEAs were guided by '*the expediency of securing the provision of boarding accommodation, either in boarding schools or otherwise…*' (Section.8). Attempts to identify individuals by ability, through IQ testing, were carried out within an administrative system endorsed by a legal framework which involved the collaboration of the LEA, parents, medical and educational professionals. Many of the residential segregated 'special' accommodations were in remote countryside locations (and/or in close proximity to hospitals) away from the urban population.

Under Section 34 of the 1944 Education Act, LEAs were given responsibility to

'*ascertain*' individuals for '*Special Educational Treatment*'. Medical officers, as well

as detecting for disability through medical inspections (Humphries and Gordon,

1992), also carried out this process to 'offer' the LEA 'advice' which took its form as

a completed certificate, the '*Handicapped Pupils Form*' (HP) introduced in 1945,

confirming the extent of the '*child's problem*'. Parents were forced to comply with the

authority's decision even if they did not themselves wish it (S.Tomlinson, 1982;

Barnes, 1991). Any appeal against the authority's decision by parents was made

through written application to the Minister of Education asking for a reversal of the

certification. Such an experience is encapsulated by Marjorie Jacques who

simultaneously recounted the way staff controlled, and censored, letters:

> *Now as I got older I got craftier. I used to be really good for
> the teacher so that she let me put my letter in the envelope
> on my own. I used to quickly scribble on the bottom of the
> letter what was happening at Chailey, all the punishments
> and things like putting sticking plaster over our mouths, if
> we talked. That's how my parents started to realise how
> unhappy I was. Anyway, the next Christmas I landed back
> at home ... my parents decided that was it, I wasn't going
> back. They had to get special permission from the
> education authority to take me back home. I thought that
> was wonderful. I'd never been so happy*. (Jacques,
> narrated by Humphries and Gordon, 1992, p.97)

The institutionalised initials 'HP' represented forms requiring various signatures:

hierarchally these being a medical officer of the LEA, an educational psychologist

and the head teacher, regarding information of 'disability of mind', 'intelligence

tests', 'attainments', 'interests', 'progress', 'behaviour and disposition' and any

'additional information'. The HP1 form required a medical officer to certify, in their

'*opinion*', whether or not a person was '*suffering from any disability of body or mind

so as to require special educational treatment*'. The HP2 form, part one, required

either an officer of the LEA or a medical officer to report on '*disability of mind*'.

Questions five to seven, on '*social history*', sought information on the '*home*

conditions', '*family history*', requiring '*important facts*' such as '*appearances at court*'
and '*absence from home*'. Part two required the report of '*intelligence tests*' by an
educational psychologist or a medical officer. Part three, question 11, sought
information of the '*examiner's impression on parent(s), guardian(s) or relative(s)*'.
The HP3 form required the head teacher to complete the '*report on a backward
child*'. The HP forms formulated 'opinions', 'observations' and 'impressions' and
were, arguably, a technology of surveillance in which parents, guardians or the
extended family were implicated in one way or another as the gaze pinpointed a
person for '*special educational treatment*'. As is applicable in this context, '*... judges
of normality are present everywhere*'; and undoubtedly:

> *We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-*
> *judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker' – judge, ...*
> (Foucault, 1977, p.304)

For individuals described as having 'learning difficulties', the idea of pursuing further
or higher education after segregated 'special' schooling was – and is – outside the
mainstream altogether. Individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' would
have been justified, *de facto*: as being 'ineducable' (Segal, 1974), experienced
institutionalisation (Atkinson, *et al*., 1997; Armstrong, 2003), and would have:
attended long-stay hospitals, junior training centres, adult training centres, sheltered
workshops or stayed at home. The outcome of training for work that did not exist
(Walker, 1982) which was neither meaningful nor remunerated. Experiences of this
kind were – and are – encapsulated by notions of 'rehabilitation' and the quest for
'normality' which were premised on the pathologisation of disability as 'sickness',
'deficit', 'dependency' and 'personal tragedy' (Borsay, 2005). During the late 1970s,
rather than the phrase 'Special Educational Treatment' such individuals began to be
labelled as having 'Special Educational Needs' (Warnock, 1978). This is linked to
the concept of 'learning difficulty', through a 'Statementing' process. Walker (1981,
p.188) argued that labelling is '*part of the process of segregating people with*

disabilities from the rest of society, but more importantly it also creates divisions amongst people with disabilities themselves'. Moreover, Walker's point is that the separation of disabled people in segregated 'special' schools is also a reflection of disabled people's segregation in society as a whole and further remarked that '*Children with disabilities in special schools and those without disabilities in other schools are deprived of the education of each other's company*' (Walker, 1981, pp.188 – 189).

It needs to be borne in mind that throughout history, and across cultures, the actions and practice of labelling is determined by judgements made by others including professionals, policy makers, organisations, institutions and researchers. (And as will be evidenced in the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, judgements are also made by receptionists).

Whilst labelling theory has its weaknesses, it has served as a useful tool to critique the medical model (Turner, 2008, p.175). Indeed with respect to individuals resisting labelling and acknowledging inherent power-relations, Anya Souza made the point that it takes a lot of '*courage and strength to fight against people who have the power to define who you are*' (Souza, 2002, p.4). Further still, the denial of disabled people's 'voice', particularly individuals labelled has having 'learning difficulties', has been an intentionally forgotten account (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1997; Evans, 2004). Individuals are indubitably subject to a social process that renders them marginal and powerless. In this sense, 'learning difficulties' is not 'natural' but part of a cultural landscape that makes the rational pursuit of 'non-learning difficulties' identities all the more 'real'. Arguably the relationship between labels and location could be better understood with reference to the term in-situ-tionalised, being far more revealing.

Ironically, concern has also arisen about the place and experience of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' within the disabled peoples' movement (Aspis cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Chappell, 1997). Aspis, for example, argued that '*people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties face discrimination in the disability movement*' and argued that:

> *People without learning difficulties use the medical model when dealing with us. We are always asked to talk about advocacy and our impairments as though our barriers aren't disabling in the same way as disabled people without learning difficulties. We want concentration on our access needs in the mainstream disability movement.* (Aspis cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.97)

Aspis (cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.97) went on to suggest that this stemmed from '*a fear in the latter of being labelled 'stupid, thick, mental and mad' by the non-disabled public.*' Aspis' call is for people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' to gain positions of power and influence within the disability movement, providing examples such as Chair or a Spokesperson. Chappell too argued that the experiences of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' have been '*omitted from much of the disability literature*' and that, whilst it is assumed that disability encompasses all impairment groups, she argues '*in reality they do not*' (Chappell, 1997, p.52).

Arguably, traditional processes of research too have been implicit in only securing individual/medical (biophysical) labels. Seldom has the label been determined by the individual themselves. Indeed, as Armstrong argues '*thousands of voices have gone unheard in this 'official' history*' (Armstrong, 2003, p.3, original emphasis). Moreover, Armstrong argues that the label 'learning difficulties' permeates '*all aspects of life for an ever-larger number of children*' arguing that:

> *It not only constructs a person as incompetent within the sphere of schooling but also extends beyond school to the*

> *endless treadmill of training courses that people with [sic]*
> *learning difficulties are processed through, with very few*
> *opportunities for real work.* (Armstrong, 2003, pp.70 – 71)

What renders the whole issue of labelling inconsistent is that definitions of 'learning difficulties' are not clear cut. For example, classifications such as 'Special Educational Need' and disabled young people cannot be assumed to be identical groups. *Some* disabled young people will not need additional segregated educational provision. Whilst the word 'some' is used to illustrate the conflict, the issue of 'where' is contested. Indeed, arguments emerge as to whether there is any need for segregated provision at all (Solity, 1992; Oliver 1995; Thomas, 1997a; Whittaker and Kenworthy, 2002; Thomas and Vaughan, 2004). Moreover, when Simone Aspis (1999, p.174) uses the phrase '*disabled people with the learning difficulties label*' she makes clear it is the 'system' that has *imposed* the label upon her.

2.1.1.2 IQ testing

The relationship between educational achievement, the concept of intelligence and the extensive development, and use of the Intelligence Quotient (IQ) played a major role in determining the presumed levels of educational achievement during the early twentieth century. IQ and psychometric testing later became part of the IQ controversy. The first two decades of the twentieth century, for example, saw IQ being promoted by Cyril Burt (1883 – 1971) and its subsequent use in schools. For Burt intelligence was '*conveniently defined as innate, all-round, intellectual efficiency*' (Burt, 1937, p.11). In his work, Burt concluded that the majority of '*mentally defectives*' were '*ineducable*', and could be divided into three sub-groups, these he argued were:

> *… idiots, imbeciles, and the feebleminded. Idiots and*
> *imbeciles – roughly those whose mental ratio is below 50*
> *per cent – are excluded from the public elementary schools*

> *altogether as being, in the technical sense, ineducable: but*
> *their numbers are so small by comparison that they may*
> *here be left out of account.* (Burt, 1937, p.79)

This view stemmed from Francis Galton (1822-1911) who was also interested in the

ways in which heredity was believed to shape differences among humans in much

the same way. It was interpreted that individuals falling in the first percentile were

labelled with an IQ score of 70 and below, defined as being 'Educationally

Subnormal' (ESN), they were selected for segregation in 'special' schools. Burt was

one of the principal architects of the Education Act 1944 in so far as it related to

segregated 'special' schooling (Thomas, *et al*., 1998, p.4) and, as is argued,

developed a cut-off point by working out the number of people who could be placed

within such schools (Barton and Tomlinson, 1981; Marks, 1999). Under Section 57

of the Education Act 1944, individuals with IQs of 50 or less were deemed as being

'ineducable'. It was believed that the 'ineducable' were said to have '*undesirable*

social and personal characteristics' and took up '*an undue share of the teacher's*

time and energy' (Cole, 1989, p.101). No doubt a belief that had been perpetuated

by Burt, who had previously made his view on segregation clear, asserting that:

> *The first and most important step is segregation …*
> *Segregation sounds like a drastic measure; yet it is needed*
> *in the interests alike of the other children, teachers, and of*
> *the backward* [*sic*] *themselves … Segregation, therefore,*
> *seems essential. It may take two forms: the establishment*
> *of intermediate or auxiliary schools, and the formation of*
> *backward or auxiliary classes within the ordinary schools.*
> *The designation for such schools or classes should be*
> *chosen with care, to avoid any reluctance on the part of*
> *children, parents, or teachers.* (Burt, 1937, pp.574 – 576,
> *my emphasis*)

It was to be much later that questions about the validity of and the need for the

concept of educability arose and became contested enough to blur the line between

so-called educability and non-educability. For example, Barnes (1991, p.19) raised

an objection with Burt's work highlighting the serious doubts about the '*validity of IQ-*

type test as objective measures of intelligence'. Earlier still, Labov (1975, p.59) writing in relation 'race' and the 'myth of cultural deprivation', suggested that it has long been known that statistics and the use of scientific speak by educational psychologists attempts to impress on the reader that this field is a science and thus ought to be as *de facto* 'credible'. Yet the whole process of intelligence testing can be, and is, interpreted as being constructed.

Burt's work regarding the inheritance of intelligence took its source from a study of identical twins raised separately from one another. Burt claimed that he had evidence that the IQs of identical twins raised apart were also nearly identical. The implication, or so it was argued, was that the major component of intelligence was hereditary. However, his statistics caused concern. The correlation between IQ for the identical twins remained the same as the number of pairs increased – a statistical impossibility. Evans and Deehan (1990, p.38) made the point that '*Burt had falsified certain data on which his findings rest'* and that '*The importance of Burt's fakery is that much of what he set out is still accepted as true*'. Indeed, the discourse of segregated 'special' schooling, evidenced in the work of Burt (1937) with language such as '*in the interest of the other children, teachers, and the backward* [*sic*] *themselves*', is arguably a constructed and reconstructed legislative and policy discourse which intentionally continues in this discursive field to this day. For example, the SENDA Act (2001, Section 316), compels a young person to a segregated 'special' school if mainstream schooling is incompatible with the '*provision of efficient education for other children*'. Indeed, replace the term 'segregation' with 'protection' and there appears to be little difference from the earlier comments by Tredgold (1927).

Thus, the discourse associated with segregated 'special' schooling can be understood in terms of the construction and reconstruction of individuals currently

described as having 'learning difficulties': a difference which has been determined

by classification and labelling and rooted within the individual/medical (biophysical)

model of disability. Furthermore, the construction of IQ, and the subject labelled as

having 'learning difficulties', constitutes both objects of knowledge as well as

subjects in complex relations of power and knowledge, which also emerged

supposedly naturally (Foucault, 1980).

2.1.1.3 Learning difficulties, educability, reason(able) and the modern

With respect to the notion of 'learning difficulties' and 'educability', interest can be

'mapped' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.13) back to the eighteenth century to the

work of Jean Gaspard Itard with the 'Wild Boy of Aveyron' which roused debate

between hereditarians and environmentalists (Itard, 1962). Itard set to work

believing that 'Victor', described as an '*incurable idiot*', could be transformed only to

feel, however, that after five years he had failed. Humphrey (cited in Itard, 1962)

acknowledged that others, such as Edouard Seguin and Maria Montessori were,

nonetheless, inspired by Itard's work, stating that:

> *… the first great step in the education of the feeble-minded*
> [*sic*] *was taken by Edouard Seguin, Itard's pupil, who*
> *employed what he called the physiological method which*
> *has much in common with the procedures described by*
> *Itard, … Before this time it had been believed that idiots*
> *were ineducable – this in spite of Pinel's diagnosis and*
> *Itard's results. Seguin showed beyond all doubt that this*
> *view was mistaken, and his achievements gained him the*
> *title of the "Apostle of the Idiot".* (Humphrey, cited in Itard,
> 1962, pp.xiii – xiv)

Such individuals who are described in '*individualistic charismatic terms*'

(S.Tomlinson, 1982, p.28) who transmitted '*mythical values*' (Foucault, 1967, p.243)

are representative of an eighteenth century interest in science and medicine through

which it demonstrated its domination in the education of the 'subnormal'. By the late

nineteenth century 'specialist' accommodation was created such as Earlswood

Asylum, Surrey, for the constituted group 'feeble-minded'. '*Sins, crimes and diseases*' start to be classified developing a '*map of human problems*' with institutions of control and surveillance (Turner, 2008, p.180). Swain and French (2008, pp.43 – 44) make the point that the connection between the work of Itard and Seguin within the enlightenment[4] resulted in asylums being thought of as places of sanctuary '*where 'idiots' could be educated and trained to live and work in communities to which they lived, ideally, to be returned*'. Yet, ironically, it seems that for individuals to be 'returned' from the asylum into the community, as useful and contributing members, it was deemed necessary for individuals to be first segregated (Wright, 2008). As has been noted, searches for *cures* and the restoration of health coincide with practises of exclusion (Foucault, 1967, p.10). Further, whilst 'enlightenment' discovered liberties it also invented the techniques of disciplines and the examination (Foucault, 1977).

Such 'special' populations (Foucault, 1977) became *in-situ-tionalised* with the resulting outcome of producing '*docile and dependent residents*' (Hughes, 2001, p.29). Colonies and institutions with their disciplinary regimes continued to be built, usually, on the outskirts of towns in rural locations, circled by high walls, hedges and railings to ensure minimal contact with the outside world (Humphries and Gordon, 1992, p.80) and its overseer, absent yet present. Those who were confined were also, at times, keepers themselves; creating a space between reason and unreason (madness) (Foucault, 1967). Such 'colonies' were also overseas, in which '*misfits*' were expected to seek a '*new*' life (Morris, 1969, p.18). Adopting the 'science' of IQ testing, asylums became self-sufficient, constructing a kind of 'family', running their own farms, laundries and workshops where 'cure' (moral treatment) was associated

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[4] Read Hampson (1968) for an understanding of how the Enlightenment emerged from European thought, the inter-connections of the creation of the arts, discoveries (construction) of science, religion and philosophy which created a set of attitudes rather than 'facts' and in turn influenced the ways of thinking and behaving.

with labour. Asylums also ensured maximum visibility with differential classifications of distinct grades of 'lunatics'. Such language, and associated labels, is arguably used to construct social identities to legitimate specific forms of authority and give rise to relations of power and struggles for power (Fairclough, 2001). Whilst it may be thought that Philippe Pinel (1745 – 1826) in France and Samuel Tuke (1784 – 1857) in England are attributed with the liberation of the 'insane' and the abolition of constraint, Foucault (1967) suggests that we re-evaluate this claim. Foucault (1967, p.245) argues that the asylum, an instrument of segregation with its presence of fear being on the surface, was '*marking the boundary of reason and unreason, and enjoying a double power: over the violence of fury in order to contain it, and over reason itself to hold it at a distance* ...'. He continues this re-evaluation to argue that fear no longer resides on the other side of the gates but '*now raged under the seals of consciousness*' arguing:

> *The asylum no longer punished the madman's guilt, it is true; but it did more, it organised that guilt; it organised it for the madman as a consciousness of himself, and as a non-reciprocal relation to the keeper; it organised it for the man of reason as an awareness of the Other, a therapeutic intervention in the madman's existence*. (Foucault, 1967, p.247)

Attendance at an asylum was equated with social failure. Under this perspective, medical practitioners gained social status, 'patients' surrendered to the individual/medical (biophysical) gaze having been accused, judged and condemned. External violence was replaced by internalisation in modern forms of public provision (Foucault, 1967). Foucault (1970), in relation to scientific discourse, referred not only to the constraints and conditions of thought to particular historical periods, *epistemes*, but moreover sought to consider conditions that have made certain ways of thinking possible and impossible. Foucault describes fundamental breaks in the Western history of thought by distinguishing three epistemic systems: the Renaissance, the Classical age and Modernity. Foucault placed the beginning of

the nineteenth century as the dawn of the Modern Age (Oksala, 2007). Indeed, as Foucault (Sheridan, 1980, p.31) noted, Pinel's action was an act of the '*modern*' and that the '*humane treatment of mental patients and, ultimately, of modern psychology …*' was thought of as being '*... both moral and scientific progress*', or so it was thought. As Weber (Gerth and Mills, 1974, p.355) had also noted but with respect to rejections of religious directions, 'science' in the name of 'intellectual integrity', came forward '*with the claim of representing the only possible form of a reasoned view of the world*'. The grip of religion over the body diminished, becoming within the gaze of institutions and scientific disciplines (Foucault, 1967; Turner, 2008). At the end of the classical age surveillance and normalisation became the 'great' instruments of power (Foucault, 1977, p.184).

2.1.1.4 Disability, education and eugenics

The individual/medical (biophysical) discourse of disability with Social Darwinism, notions of science, and eugenicist interpretations '*promised to cleanse the social body of impurity, imperfection, degeneracy and defectiveness*' (Hughes, 2002, p.61). Tredgold (1910) made clear his views as to the notion of 'feeble-mindedness' being hereditary when he gave an account in the '*Report of the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-Minded*'. Further Francis Galton (1909, pp.81 – 85), in a contribution entitled '*Segregation*', compounded this view and suggested that the '*... propagation of mental deficiency ... is now ripe to be dealt with...*'. Likewise, E. Alec-Tweedie (1912) draws links with eugenics. In its extreme form the notion of 'cleansing' and disabled people is described in the work of Evans (2004) who draws a link between labelling and the killing of disabled people during the Holocaust. In her book entitled '*Forgotten Crimes: The Holocaust and People with Disabilities*', Evans commented that:

> *The labelling of people with disabilities as burdensome,*
> *non-contributing members of society then often becomes a*

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> *self-fulfilling prophecy. As occurs in many forms of*
> *discrimination, the person is labelled inferior and on the*
> *basis of that label is then restricted in education, work, and*
> *life opportunities … Holocaust scholars estimate the total*
> *death toll from the Nazi disability killings to number in the*
> *hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children.*
> (Evans, 2004, p.9)

Likewise Borsay (2005, p.102) made links with the Eugenics Education Society, founded in 1907, which advocated four strategies, which were '*to prevent such degeneration: sterilisation, marital regulation, birth control and segregation of the unfit*'. However, Tom Shakespeare, in contrast to Oliver and Barnes (1998), thinks that eugenics, linked with the experience of disabled people, is a form of '*emotive rhetoric*' and suggests that '*conspiracies to eliminate disabled people seems to me unhelpful*' (Shakespeare, 2008, p.30). What these competing discourses illustrate is the way discourse is seized and (re)produced. In a dual-screen installation by writer and director Liz Crow entitled 'Resistance: which way the future?' addresses some of these points, and has been critiqued (Kikabhai, 2014) (Appendix E), raising objection to comments made earlier by Shakespeare (2008).

Children were sent(enced) to 'special' centres, parents being told that their children were to receive 'special' care. Doctors and nurses were authorised to carry out 'treatment' which took the form of starvation or lethal injection, parents were later told that their children had died of pneumonia (Wright, 2011, p.106). Centres had been established in Brandenburg, Hadamar, Sonnenstein and Eichberg, under a '*double lie*' (Bauman, 2002, p.67). First, they referred to such centres as 'euthanasia institutes' (through 'mercy killing'), or secondly under '*misleading names of a Charitable Foundation for 'Institutional Care' or the 'Transport of the Sick' – or even the bland T$_4$ code (from 4 Tiergartenstrasse, Berlin, where the co-ordinating office of the whole killing operation was located)*' (Bauman, 2002, p.67). The modern universities, in Germany and other countries, cultivated science (research) as a

value-free activity (Bauman, 2002, p.126). According to Bauman, drawing upon the work of Kelman (cited Bauman, 2002, p.21), three important factors transformed ordinary Germans into perpetrators of mass crime; namely that violence was authorised, actions were routinised and victims of violence were dehumanised. Bauman (2002) succinctly made the point that modernity, modern science, modern technology, and modern bureaucracy made the Holocaust possible. Separation by distancing in modern society became an issue, reproducing itself. Those in roles of authority assumed authority over others, generation after generation without any noticeable change (Bauman, 2002).

2.1.1.5 Discourse of resistance and (mis)treatment

The majority of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' were and are with families (Hirst and Michael, 2003; Wright, 2008); not necessarily with parents. However, there are some for whom compulsory incarceration in long-stay 'mental subnormality' institutions, colonies, being away from families and communities was – and is – a defining feature of services *for* people described as having 'learning difficulties' (Atkinson, *et al.*, 1997; Borsay, 2005). Borsay explains that interventions in the 1920s and 1930s included drug-based (mis)treatments, which were replaced by electro convulsive therapy and psychosurgery, and where:

> *Doctors believed that passing electrical currents through the brain was a cheap and easy way of inducing a shock that improved their clinical control and delivered good results. Psychosurgery was likewise regarded as a wonder cure. Its most common procedure – leucotomy – involved severing nerve fibres within the brain to reduce acute emotional dysfunction in patients whose behaviour was deeply disturbed. The Ministry of Health reported that in the 12 years from 1942 10,365 leucotomies were carried out, two-thirds of them on people with schizophrenia. But the side effects – memorably portrayed by Ken Kesey in One Flew Over the Cuckoos Nest (1962) – meant that the popularity of the operation was relatively short lived.*
> (Borsay, 2005, pp.85 – 86)

Likewise, Silent Minority (1981) depicts scenes of *(mis)treatment*. The opening

scene of the programme shows St Lawrence's Hospital with the narrator

commenting that:

> *The Victorians called this place the South London Asylum*
> *and here in 1871 they sent their inadequates, the idiots, the*
> *imbeciles, the feeble-minded and the mental and moral*
> *defectives. All human wreckage of a newly industrialised*
> *society*. (Silent Minority, 1981)

The programme highlights the way the hospital is under-staffed, and how

behaviours are produced due to the lack of stimulation, affection and human

contact. For example, one 'patient' is shown rocking back and forth, throwing chairs

and removing table cloths from tables. After failing to receive attention the person is

tied to a post. The narrator of the programme quotes from a Department of Health

statement which was of the view that '*There will always be a need for these*

hospitals to accommodate the most disabled people … those who need nursing and

medical care and the special facilities of hospital care' (Silent Minority, 1981). The

narrator echoes comments by the nursing staff that such approaches are an '*affront*

to human dignity'. The programme gives examples of a centre where individuals are

subjected to behaviour modification techniques with comments by a psychologist,

Malcolm Jones, who describes the behaviours. If individuals were to return to the

hospitals, Malcolm Jones suggests, they would revert back to *their* previous

behaviours. The programme, whilst showing examples of institutionalisation (in-situ-

tionalisation) where individual 'patients' described as '*unpaid nurses*' (able-disabled

people, people described as having 'learning difficulties') are bathing, feeding and

dressing other 'patients', critically questions the notion of segregated 'special'

facilities.

2.1.2 Individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability and employment

The way disability is understood significantly affects employment opportunities.

Describing the Eugenic Education Society '*as one of the great movements of the*

day' Alec-Tweedie said of the issue of unemployment that:

> *With the unemployed question ever before us, or, more*
> *important still, the "unemployable" and "incorrigible rogues,"*
> *which form the greater number, we must face facts. The*
> *life-blood and power of the country are being sapped. If we*
> *cannot cure the canker, at least, prevent its progress.* (Alec-
> Tweedie, 1912, p.865)

Not forgetting that Alec-Tweedie (1912) earlier noted, '... *never mind how competent*

they are to work …' suggesting a Eugenic agenda was taking shape. Ironically,

during times of war during the first half of the twentieth-century disabled people,

people described as having 'learning difficulties' worked alongside non-disabled

people (Humphries and Gordon, 1992), although when the conflicts ended disabled

people were removed from these jobs. Mitchell (1999, p.761) identified that the

opportunities for disabled young people, '... *especially those with pronounced*

learning disabilities to gain a 'real', long-term job, have not significantly improved in

recent years'. Arguably, not surprising, given that the 'idea' of disabled people and

productivity continues to be ill-perceived, particularly so for young people attending

segregated 'special' schools.

2.2 A Rights-based Model of Disability

A rights-based model of disability is one of the important approaches through

political activism favoured by disabled people around the world (Barnes, *et al.*,

1999) and it marks a direction towards a human rights model of disability (Campbell

and Oliver, 1996). Its focus is on systemic change to eliminate inequalities (Rioux,

1997). It also effectively marks a change in the way umbrella organisations of

disabled people such as the British Council of Disabled People (BCODP) (now the

United Kingdom Disabled People's Council (UKDPC)) and Disabled Peoples

International (DPI) challenge discrimination. The earlier work of Barnes (1991,

p.217) contains an extensive and '*alarmingly depressing picture*' of the institutional

discrimination against disabled people and argues a case for the development of

civil rights and anti-discriminatory legislation. In the process of organising disabled

people, particularly during the 1980s and through the then BCODP, Campbell and

Oliver (1996) described the significance of adopting a rights-based agenda,

commenting that:

> *… no other disability pressure group had forced society to*
> *consider the disabling barriers and negative attitudes that*
> *disabled people faced as a denial of their human rights. No*
> *other body has managed to identify charity and segregated*
> *institutions as part of that process in a way that the 'public'*
> *could understand and appreciate. And finally, no other body*
> *had managed to make disabled people proud of who they*
> *were and feel that their impairments were to be embraced,*
> *not denied or eradicated.* (Campbell and Oliver, 1996,
> p.103)

However, legislative inconsistencies still existed. For example, whilst the Disability

Discrimination Act (DDA) (1995) set out provisions to end discrimination against

disabled people in employment, access to goods and services, and transport; it

omitted substantive provisions with regard to education and gave limited protection

from direct discrimination. Given no enforcement mechanism, Fletcher and O'Brien

(2008) argue that this resulted in individuals challenging discrimination themselves.

Discrepancies within the DDA (1995) were increasingly being challenged by

disabled people particularly from a rights-based and social model perspective. This

point is articulated by Fletcher and O'Brien (2008, p.527) who note that '*the chief*

intellectual force shaping the development of disability as a rights issue in the

United Kingdom was the social model of disability …'. Political action to gain civil

rights and anti-discriminatory legislation culminated in the development of the

Disability Rights Task Force (DRTF), established in December 1997, to identify a

range of issues regarding barriers that prevent participation in society and to consider ways to implement enforceable rights for disabled people. Whilst DRTF included an '*uneasy coalition*' between representatives from both organisations *for* and *of* disabled people (Barnes, *et al.*, 2005, p.163) it identified, as one of its aims, the creation of a Disability Rights Commission (DRC), which was duly established in 2000. Its purpose was to provide an effective mechanism to enforce civil rights. An important factor was that it required a majority of the Commissioners to be disabled people (Sayce and O'Brien, 2004). In their report '*From Exclusion to Inclusion*' (D*f*EE, 1999) the DRTF stated that the DRC:

> … *should play an important role by promoting best practice policies and, where necessary, through conducting formal investigations. A new duty on the public sector should also encourage proactive measures to end institutional discrimination.* (D*f*EE, 1999, p.9)

It was acknowledged (Barnes *et al.*, 1999) that the demand for civil rights and anti-discriminatory legislation in terms of disability, had been advanced by the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the '*experience of other oppressed groups*', and further reinforced by:

> … *the people's self-organisation to promote change: to improve the quality of our lives and promote our full inclusion into society.* (Barnes, *et al.*, 1999, p.167)

From 2007, with different commissions, the DRC amalgamated to form the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. Proposals for a Single Equality Bill have since brought together disability, 'race', sex, and other grounds of discrimination within one piece of legislation. This, arguably, signals a change in thinking towards a complex articulation of difference and diversity. Moreover, it was not solely focused on equality in terms of opportunities and treatment, or even 'reasonable adjustment', but with equality of outcome and experience (Fletcher and O'Brien, 2008).

2.2.1 A rights-based model of disability and inclusive education

With regard to rights to education and the legislative changes, the introduction of Part 4 of the DDA 1995 the 'Special Educational Needs and Disability' Act 2001 (SENDA), since September 2002, has made it unlawful to treat disabled students less favourably and a duty lies with schools, colleges and universities to make 'reasonable adjustments'. In Section 316(2) it ensures that children with 'SEN' and without a 'statement' are educated in mainstream schools. Likewise, Section 316(3) ensures that children with 'SEN' and with a 'statement' are educated in a mainstream school, part 1 states that:

> *If a statement is maintained under section 324 for the child,*
> [*s*]*he must be educated in a mainstream school unless that*
> *is incompatible with – (a) the wishes of* [*her*]*/his parent, or*
> *(b) the provision of efficient education for other children.*
> (SENDA, 2001, Section 316(3) part 1)

Part (a) means that where parents do not want a mainstream school, LEAs do not have to provide one. No doubt, the permutations of 'choice' between parental choice, children's rights and the 'choice' of either mainstream or 'special' are extremely problematic. An interesting reflection of this tension is encapsulated by Anya Souza (2002) who provides a useful perspective on the attendance at segregated 'special' schools and the notion of belonging 'here rather than there'. Souza (2002) suggests that decisions about attendance at segregated 'special' school should not be made on the basis that it is at least 'somewhere'. Souza's recollections are of her mother being adamant that she would not attend a segregated 'special' school, but later relented. On reflection, Souza commented that '*she* [*her mother*] *must of thought that somewhere was better than nothing* [*no where*]' and asserted that '*she was wrong. A school like that should not exist anywhere on Earth today*' (Souza, 2002, p.8, *my insertion*). Moreover, with respect to adult life and the issue of 'learning difficulties', Ward and Stewart (2008, p.305) argue that individuals are '*frequently*' denied the opportunity '*to live their lives*

according to their own interests and preferences' given the misguided view that '*It is often assumed that they are eternal children, unable to speak on their own behalf and therefore not competent to make their own decisions*'. They are also under-represented at polling stations (Oliver and Zarb, 1989; Redley, 2008). Ward and Stewart (2008) list a '*wide range*' of violations and argue that for people described as having 'learning difficulties' the:

> *… violations could be much greater but suffices to press home an important point: distressingly intellectually disabled* [*sic*] *people are frequently treated as objects and not with the dignity due them as agents of a life. They are often vehicles through which others (even if well intentioned) express their own preferences and interests.*
> (Ward and Stewart, 2008, pp.307 – 308)

Oliver argues that '*critical voices of disabled people*' have begun to call for 'decarceration' of institutions of modernity such as from segregated hospitals, homes, villages, workplaces, 'special' schools or units and that political struggles have emerged around '*our rights to go to the schools, colleges, and universities of our choice as well as all other areas of economic and social life*' (Oliver, 2001, p.159). Unfortunately, however, the critical voice of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' are not always heard.

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) places a legislative requirement upon all educational institutions to be proactive in engaging with disabled people as a 'positive duty' and goes further to be 'anticipatory' in order to eliminate discriminatory practice. The Disability Equality Duty (2006), similarly, places a responsibility on the various Secretaries of State to publish a tri-annual report (from 1 December 2008) to provide an overview of progress made by public authorities to actively promote disability equality. In assisting this Duty, public bodies are expected to produce an annual Disability Equality Scheme which should focus on specific actions in relation to the Disability Equality Duty. In an overview of the

Equality Duty for the public sector, Bert Massie, then, Chairman of the Disability

Rights Commission, commented that:

> *The Disability Equality Duty is a new way for public*
> *authorities to tackle disability discrimination in a practical*
> *way by introducing policies that actively promote*
> *opportunities and so prevent discrimination taking place. By*
> *taking an organisation-wide approach you can achieve*
> *tangible outcomes and improvements for disabled people. It*
> *will need the personal commitment from the top of your*
> *organisation and will make a real, positive change to your*
> *employees and service users.* (DRC, 2006, n.p)

The Duty required all public authorities to have published their Disability Equality

Schemes by 4 December 2006; although primary schools were given and additional

year. As is pointed out, crucial to the Disability Equality Duty is the '*requirement to*

involve disabled people in producing the Disability Equality Scheme' and that '*it is*

important to consider the full diversity of disabled people – in terms of type of

impairment and barriers people experience, as well as other equality issues such as

ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation and religion or belief' (DRC, 2006, pp.10 –

12).

In adopting a rights-based model to evaluate inclusive education, Peters *et al*.

(2005) concluded that the place of disability is:

> *... not simply to deepen our understanding of disabled*
> *people themselves. At a more fundamental level,*
> *understanding the meaning of disability in society is a key*
> *to interpreting the very nature of human difference and*
> *diversity.* (Peters, *et al.*, 2005, p.155)

Despite the shift in terminology to inclusive education there continues to be

competing and conflicting discourses. As was pointed out by the House of

Commons Education and Skills Committee (D*f*ES, 2006, p.22), the term and

practice of '*inclusion*' has produced considerable confusion with a wide range of

meanings. The term evokes a '*great deal of strong feeling and antagonism*' (D*f*ES,

2006, p.22). Such confusion, and range of meanings, is manifested in practice and arguably reflected in the findings by the Centre of Studies for Inclusive Education (CSIE) which in a report by Rustemier and Vaughan (2005, p.22) revealed a '*postcode lottery*'. Despite local authorities being duty bound by the same legislative framework on inclusion, '*there are huge variations in the placement of children in segregated settings by LEA in England*' (Rustemier and Vaughan, 2005, p.22). The authors make the point that '*a child with a statement maintained by South Tyneside LEA was a staggering 24 times more likely to be segregated from the mainstream than a child with a statement maintained by Newham LEA in 2004*' (Rustemier and Vaughan, 2005, p.22).

The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) made a direct link with human rights and inclusive education and called upon all Governments to adopt the principles of inclusive education. One of the educational industry's most quoted paragraphs of the 1990s (Thomas and Vaughan, 2004) states:

> *Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system* (UNESCO, 1994). (cited in Thomas and Vaughan, 2004, p.128)

The declaration provides an action plan for an inclusive agenda where 92 countries and 25 international organisations signed-up to comprehensive human rights in education across the world. For example, in England in 1997, the incoming New Labour government published their Green Paper '*Excellence For All Children Meeting Special Educational Needs*' (DfEE, 1997) in support of the UNESCO Salamanca Statement to promote '*the inclusion of children with* [*sic*] *SEN within mainstream schooling wherever possible*' (DfEE, 1997, p.5). Five years on

UNESCO (1999, p.10) reported that the task of attaining the '*universally accepted goal of Education for All*' remains one of the most '*daunting challenges facing the global community today*'. Such a challenge is acknowledged to be part of a '*wider struggle*' against exclusion and against the '*ideology that each individual is completely separate and independent*': reiterating that '*inclusion is about the improving of schooling*' and that it '*lays the foundation for an approach that could lead to the transformation of the system itself*' (UNESCO, 1999, p.9).

The idea that inclusion '*could*' lead to the transformation of the education system is not necessarily the articulation of the situation argued earlier by Oliver (1995) but rather that it will. Oliver argues that the whole system of segregated 'special' schooling is one of '*abject failure*' (Oliver, 1995, p.68). No longer believing in '*tinkering*' with the '*massive failures of special education*', he argues that nothing short of '*a radical deconstruction of special education and the reconstruction of education in totality will be enough, even if such a journey takes us another hundred years*' (Oliver, 1995, p.68). Oliver (1996) contends that further questions need to be asked about wider notions of education in general and argues that the old view of integration is underpinned by deficit and personal tragedy theory. He asserts that:

> *… the new view of integration is underpinned by an entirely different philosophy, what might be called the politics of personal identity which demands through a collective identity, that difference not be merely tolerated and accepted but that it is positively valued and celebrated.*
> (Oliver, 1996, p.89)

Thomas *et al.* (1998, p.15), rather than adopting the term integration, use the term '*inclusion*' and argue that it is about a philosophy of acceptance, and that it '*... is about providing a framework within which all children – regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with equal opportunities at school*'. Thomas argues that such a shift,

towards schools becoming more inclusive, will depend on society's values and attitudes, and that if inclusion succeeds '*it will have done so because society considers it is right to do so*' (Thomas, 1997b, p.104). Acknowledging detractors to an inclusive philosophy, Thomas points out that the argument for inclusion '*should reside elsewhere than in empirical evidence*' and not just in curriculum, pastoral systems, attitudes, and teaching methods, but also in wider notions of inclusion in society. Thomas (1997b) makes the point that principles are the key, and that research can only provide a crude pointer to the success of inclusion. Considering the future, Thomas proffers that inclusion will increasingly happen over the new century regardless of dissenters in that such individuals will '*have to respond to an increasingly anti-discriminatory legislative environment backed by vigorous rights movements across the world*' (Thomas, 1997b, p.106). The United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), for example Article 24, relates specifically to Inclusive Education to mean all disabled children can attend mainstream school with 'reasonable accommodations'. Furthermore, the Convention (2006) also includes non-discrimination, full-participation and inclusiveness in society and respect for difference. The Convention came into force in May 2008, a number of countries ratified it. However the UK placed a reservation against fully endorsing an inclusive education system, in affect meaning that segregated 'special' school will remain under the guise of 'parental wishes' (Joint Committee on Human Rights, 2009).

To summarise, in redefining disability, a rights-based model emerged out of atrocities experienced during the Second World War. Since its conception in 1948, the Declaration of Human Rights has been influenced by the political activism of disabled people. The incorporation of a human rights perspective has broader European and global concern with discrimination against disabled people. However, the rights-based model, defines 'disability' in individual/medical (biophysical) model

terms, it ascribes a label and it makes comparisons with 'normal day-to-day activities'. 'Reasonable adjustments' is however, arguably, in social model terms. Nonetheless, for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' their individual struggle for systemic change, equality and participation as citizens, arguably, makes their exclusion all the more puzzling. Not so puzzling given that human rights has its roots in Enlightenment thinking. Indeed, as has been argued by Rae (2009, pp.72 – 73) the '*underpinnings of Enlightenment humanism may be one of the greatest impediments to the universalisation of 'human' rights'*. Given the notion of freedom[5] and that Article 1 states that 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights', pertinent questions arise when understanding the experience of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', particularly in terms of trying to gain mainstream experiences and entry qualifications for higher education participation.

2.3 Social Model of Disability

A shift in understanding disability has emerged from the social model from which there is a difference between disability and impairment (UPIAS, 1976). Within this model the notion of 'disability' is defined as:

> … *the disadvantage or restriction caused by a contemporary social organisation which takes no or little account of people who have … impairments and thus excludes them from the mainstream of social activities.*
> (UPIAS, 1976, p.14)

This original statement specifically referred to 'physical' impairments which later changed to encompass all impairments. It is the disabling barriers in society, and the failure of social organisations to provide opportunities for individuals to

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[5] Read Fromm (1942) for an understanding of how freedom whilst bringing the modern wo/man independence (motivated by self-interest), individuality and rationality, it also rendered her/him isolated, helpless, insecure, afraid, anxious and with an unbearable aloneness. Thus, freedom is ambiguous.

participate that dis-able people. Disability is not an individual affliction, failing or

limitation. Social oppression theory does not argue that the individual/medical

(biophysical) model is always inappropriate but recognises that it is limited and fails

to account for the social aspects of disability that oppress disabled people. As

Barnes (1991, p.24) argues '*While medical intervention for treating illness and*

disease may be quite appropriate, from the perspective of the disabled person it is

quite inappropriate for treating disability'.

Disabled people have refused to view themselves as victims with defective bodies:

in need of care, cure or charity (Oliver, 1996; Swain, *et al.*, 1996; Oliver and Barnes,

1998). In order to avoid the persistent assumption of disabled people as inevitably

tragic, phrases such as: 'disabled and proud', 'rights not charity', 'label jars, not

people', 'piss on pity', 'choices and rights', 'free our people', 'nothing about us

without us' and 'strong, angry and proud' are slogans that represent criticisms by

disabled people (Barnes, *et al.*, 2002; Allan, 2005; Swain and French, 2000, 2008).

Interestingly, the People First slogan 'label jars, not people' has been identified

alongside the earlier North American normalisation movement associated with

labelling theory as opposed to the British disabled people's movement associated

with the social model of disability (Walmsley, 1997). The social model of disability

has also been adopted within the field of emancipatory research (Oliver, 1992;

Barton, 1998; Mercer, 2002; Barnes, 2002, 2003b; Kikabhai, 2003). However, the

social model definition of 'impairment' is given to mean:

> ... *lacking all or part of a limb, or having a defective limb,*
> *organism or mechanism of the body; ....* (UPIAS, 1976,
> p.14)

In conjunction with the representation of disability in art, and the troubling definition

of impairment, Hevey (1993, p.424) made the point that '...*disablement means*

impairment and impairment means social flaw'. 'Impairment', Hevey (*ibid*) argues, is

predicated on social 'non-worth' and in relation to the construction of the impaired

body is 'dysfunction', and is enveloped by the 'tragedy principle'. For Hevey (1993,

p.427), the task is to '*undo the tragedy principle and to undo the notion of*

impairment as flaw'. However, as is noted, the medical conceptualisation of

impairment has been retained (Barnes, 2003a) and the biophysical '*faulty machine*'

model of disability remains (Hughes and Peterson, 1997, p.329) and even though

attempts had been made to reconceptualise the term (Thomas, *et al.*, 1997)

impairment remains '*increasingly troubling*' (Goodley, 2001, p.208).

2.3.1 Emerging challenges to the social model of disability

There has been a critique of the social model, creating debate about potential

alternatives (Gabel and Peters, 2004; Thomas, 2001, 2004; Deal, 2003; Swain and

French, 2000, 2008; Shakespeare and Watson, 1997, 2002). This critique, however,

does not discard the value of the social model but posits that while it may, in part,

provide an aid to understanding the social oppression of disabled people it cannot

fully explain '*disability in totality*' (Oliver, 1996, p.41). Whilst Corker and French

(1999) suggest the social model is a theory, Oliver asserts that the social model '*is*

not a social theory of disability and it cannot do the work of social theory' (Oliver,

1996, p.41). Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.91) explain that the contention has arisen from

separating out the '*different worlds*' of impairment and disability, and succinctly

summarise the situation thus:

> *There remains a basic disagreement about the ways in*
> *which experience is properly integrated into a social model*
> *perspective. There is no dispute that experience is central,*
> *but writers divide on whether the focus should be restricted*
> *to disability or extended to impairment as well.* (Barnes, *et*
> *al.*, 2005, p.93)

Earlier, Oliver (1996, p.42), for example, suggested developing a social model of impairment alongside a social model of disability. Earlier still, Abberley (1987) offered an analysis of disability and impairment as oppression. In this sense impairment is understood to be equally social as disability; it is socially imposed. Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.179) suggest that the difficulties experienced by various impairment groups, joining in a shared political struggle, are due to separating tendencies of medicine and welfare which '*separate the old from the young, … segregate people with different conditions, and levels of 'severity', even where they share otherwise similar social experiences*'. Moreover, Hughes (2008, p.82) suggested '*impairment itself is a product of medico-welfare discourse*'.

Given the contentions with the social model of disability, Mark Deal (2003) considers the attitudes of disabled people towards other impairment groups. His concerns relate to a hierarchy of impairment, making the point that for a variety of complex reasons disabled people like non-disabled people do not always wish to be associated with other impairment groups (Deal, 2003). In a related example, Gina Levete, founder of Shape, (an organisation of disabled and non-disabled performers), refers to such differences as '*degrees of handicap* [*sic*]' as being elitist attitudes towards different impairment groups, recalling that:

> *'I'm not going to be his partner because he hasn't got legs,'*
> *was a remark made by a child with legs but with only one*
> *arm. At the time it shocked me, although on reflection it*
> *was no different from the labels we all use every day.*
> (Levete, 1982, p.17)

Similarly, Peter McDonald (1996, p.119) makes reference to a 'hierarchy of impairment' having attended a segregated 'special' school and suggests that such schools also perpetuate the '*general invisibility of people with disabilities throughout society*'. In his explanation, McDonald reflected that:

> *The school also had its share of bullying, name-calling and occasional bouts of gang membership, from the nursery to the senior classes, whereby one's particular disability, race or any other distinguishing feature was likely to be used as a target.*
>
> *Despite the fact that we were all in the school because of our supposed disabilities, I believe we all felt the need, particularly at times of stress and uncertainty to develop 'hierarchies of disability' whereby we could prove (according to our own logic) that although we might be more disabled than some, we could also demonstrate to ourselves that we were less disabled than others. Therefore, in some ways at least, we could argue that we were better than other people.* (McDonald, 1996, pp.120 – 121)

McDonald recalls that he travelled to school several miles in an adapted bus, where there were few opportunities to develop contacts or common interests with other schools apart from other segregated 'special' schools and apart from family members having friends who were also disabled people. Similar experiences are also highlighted by Jackie Downer in Goodley's (2000) study, who attended a segregated 'special' school up to the age of 16. She is described as '*a central figure in the Black People First movement*', was noted for saying '*You can segregate yourself, people need to unite and segregating doesn't help the movement*' (p.83), and was later cited as saying '*I'm lucky I'm not like people with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties*' (Downer, cited in Goodley, 2000, p.124). Ann MacFarlane (cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.37), who also attended a segregated institution, on reflection describes how discussion emerged as to the issue of hierarchies amongst different impairment groups based upon medical interventions. Macfarlane explains that such debate '*pervaded the consciousness of the other disabled people*' based upon who had the '*best surgeon, those who perceived themselves to have the most operations and those who perceived themselves to have the most serious illnesses thought they were the most important…*' (MacFarlane cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.37). It is not unusual for groups and individuals to, in part, engage in the process of labelling (self-defined or otherwise) but then to distance themselves from

people who they position as 'less' in some way or other (Sutcliffe and Simons, 1993, p.27).

Micheline Mason (cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.136) in calling for a '*nurturing*' atmosphere for a '*broader-based*' disability movement, urges changes in behaviour towards one another which includes '*no more denying that there is a nasty hierarchy at work, but instead always giving platforms to people 'lower down' to communicate ideas*'. Charlton (2000, p.78) believes that this has been a failure; a contradiction that limits the disability movement. Swain and French (2008, p.20) raise an objection to the existence of a '*supposed 'hierarchy of disability'*' explaining that '*the notion that some disabled people are 'better off' than others, on the grounds of severity and, sometimes, types of impairment*' can, in part, be explained '*as a denial of the 'disabled' label that carries such negative connotations*'. For Charlton (2000, p.97), however, '*there is a hierarchy of disability*' which '*extends across continents ...*'. Such acknowledgements are not 'recent' concerns, and at times it seems as though debates are lost in the details associated with 'degrees of oppression' (Oliver, 1996, p.23). Making reference to '*the appearance of degrees of exclusion (degrees of disability)*' Oliver, in an edited version of the Fundamental Principles of Disability, 1976, stated that:

> *… it is the same society which disables people whatever their type, or degree of … impairment, and therefore there is a single cause within the organisation of society that is responsible for the creation of the disability … Understanding the cause of disability will enable us to understand the situation of those less affected, as well as helping us to prevent getting lost in the details of the degrees of oppression at the expense of focusing on the essence of the problem.* (Oliver, 1996, p.23)

The tension between individual and collective experience, whilst being problematic in terms of the 'degree of impairment', is also evidenced across gender. Keith

(1994), for example, gathered contributions of poetry, focusing on the writings of disabled women, made the point that:

> *… there are enough hierarchies created for us from outside – the benefits system, decisions about who deserves to be rehoused or receive a proper education, whose lives are worth living – without us creating new hierarchies for ourselves.* (Keith, 1994, p.7)

As has been argued (Oliver, 1996), the social model is not a social theory of disability, which incidentally, Corker and French (1999) later concede. It does, however, offer an explanation to understanding 'disability' experienced as social oppression. This is all the more complex when disability is layered with additional identity characteristics. Nevertheless, whilst such debates continue, commentary also exists about the place of (or lack of) personal experience of impairment within the social model discourses of disability.

2.3.2 Personal experience and social model discourse

Another emerging debate within social model discourse relates to the place of personal experience of impairment (Morris, 1991; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare and Watson, 2002; Swain and French, 2000, 2008; Gabel and Peters, 2004; Thomas, 2001, 2002). Morris (1991) suggests that debate about the place of personal experience has been a serious omission and that a feminist perspective can readdress this. Carol Thomas (1999, 2001b, 2002), for example, adopting the term '*disablism*', discusses feminism and disability and the necessity of recognising that some restrictions (unlike the earlier WHO (1980) definition which equated all impairments with restrictions) of activity '*are*' caused by the '*effects of impairment*' and cannot be causally attributed to social barriers. C.Thomas (2002, p.43, original emphasis), preferring to use the term '*impairment effects*', asserts that 'the potential for impairment to limit activities is not denied, but such restrictions do not constitute *disability*'.

In exploring the meaning of disability C.Thomas (2004, pp.569 – 570) asks 'what is disability?' and reviews literature examining whether there is an overlap between medical sociology and disability studies and suggests that '*there is evidence of common ground on what constitutes disability*'. C.Thomas (2004), for example, explains that central to these differences is the view that some impairments *are* disabling rather than Oliver's (1996, p.35) view that disability is '*wholly and exclusively social*'. Oliver does acknowledge that the social model does not '*deny that some illness may have disabling consequences*' but as a long-term social state 'disability' '*is not treatable and is certainly not curable*' (Oliver, 1996, pp.35 – 36). '*It is society that has to change not individuals*' Oliver argues; the message '*should not be mystified by conceptual misunderstandings about the meanings of terms like illness and disability*' (Oliver, 1996, p.37). Goodley, (1997, p.368) suggests that when impairment is perceived as creating disability, this '*leads to a myriad of disabilities: disabled learning, disabled interactions with others …*'. Swain and French argue that '*pain and chronic illness*' are recurring examples of impairments not addressed by the social model of disability and add that '*Pain and chronic illness are neither impairments nor restricted to the experiences of disabled people*' (Swain and French, 2000, pp.571 – 572). Swain and French suggest that '*The argument is basically, then one of admitting that there may be a negative side to impairment and accounting for this by extending the social model*' (Swain and French, 2000, p.571).

Shakespeare and Watson (1997) in critiquing both the psychological and medical sociology perspectives argued that the social model, being '*in a process of development, exploration and analysis*', underplayed the importance of impairment in people's lives and made the point that '*No theory emerges into the world fully formed, and getting the balance between the experience of impairment, and the experience of disability is a continuing endeavour*' (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997, p.298). Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.55), in relation to medical sociology literature and the

issue of chronic illness and impairment, make the point that '*medical sociology may be deflected into ever more intensive studies of the 'subjectivity of experience' … and lose sight of disabling processes and structures*'. On the contrary, Turner (2008, p.74), who makes a connection between the sociology of religion and medical sociology, suggests that scientific medicine '*cannot*' address and '*does not*' provide answers to issues of '*pain*' and '*suffering*'. However, Shakespeare and Watson's conclusion is that debates are necessary, and argue that '*recognising difference within the disability community is overdue*' but they emphasise that:

> *… our main efforts must be to fight for a social model analysis in society as a whole, and to take the insights and evidence we have gathered into other disciplines and areas of public discussion. Rather than putting energy into internal arguments, we need to challenge the continuing complacency of the intellectual establishment, and to win the battle for a social model understanding of society and our lives.* (Shakespeare and Watson, 1997, p.299)

Gabel and Peters (2004) suggest that the Disability Rights Movement has undervalued resistance from disabled people themselves. Shakespeare and Watson (2002), for instance, make an admission of being amongst those who have 'policed' the social model within academia and argue that the time has come to move beyond the debates over the 'strong' version of the social model and focus on issues of impairment, the impairment-disability dualism, and on issues of identity. In their admission, the authors further express their view that '*the very success of the social model is now its main weakness*' and state that:

> *… our contention is that many British activists in their public discourse use exactly this 'strong' version of the social model that we are critiquing. It may be that in private, their talk is at odds with the 'strong social model'. Most activists concede that behind closed doors they talk about aches and pains and urinary tract infections, even while they deny any relevance of the body while they are out campaigning.* (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p.6)

Shakespeare and Watson advise that it is time to put the whole thing to one side and start again. They argue (amongst others) that a barrier free environment is a myth; removing environmental barriers for someone with one impairment may create barriers for someone with another impairment (French, 1996; Shakespeare and Watson, 2002). French (1996, p.19) provides an example of moving home; the difficulties of interaction with her neighbours, and when lecturing, the difficulties of 'reading' non-verbal signs, but makes the point that these experiences are '*not concerned solely with visual impairment, for it involves social interaction, but neither is it born of social oppression*'. Shakespeare and Watson, in their conclusion, argue that only a proportion of people experience the additional disabling processes of being '*excluded, disempowered and oppressed*' and assert their belief that '*the claim that everyone is impaired, not just 'disabled people', is a far-reaching and important insight into human experience, with major implications for medical and social intervention in the twenty-first century*' (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p.29). Such debates reverberate with those similarly discussed by Abberley who earlier retorted that if disability is the '*normal condition of humanity*' why are '*only some members of the human race accorded the label 'disabled'?*' (Abberley, 1987, p.170). Similarly where the term 'differently abled' is used, this could be applied to everyone (Davis, 1995, p.xiii). However, Shakespeare (2006, original emphasis), after '*a decade's worth of thinking and talking about disability, bioethics and care*' (p.1), concludes that the social model has reached a '*dead end*' and argues that 'people are disabled by society *and* their bodies' (p.2).

No doubt such issues raise complex, contentious and controversial arguments that question what is understood about the body, disability, identity, and how the body is constructed through lived experience. Oliver and Barnes (1998, p.xv) critique resides in their argument that such positions, primarily 'postmodernist', '*play down the materiality of disabled people's lives*' where '*the idea that the world is somehow*

constructed through discourse alone has become predominant'. Oliver and Barnes,

moreover, argue that '*Constructing varying and often competing disability*

discourses around genetics, experience and policy may be academically expedient

for some but, we believe, such practise are unlikely to change the materiality of this

disturbing and deplorable situation' (Oliver and Barnes, 1998, p.xv). Such

sentiments are echoed in the foreword by Maggie and Ken Davis who share their

insights of the barriers experienced in trying to set up home together: identifying

issues such as trying to find accessible accommodation, negative attitudes towards

disabled people as home owners, rudimentary support services, and the lack of

financial support. The point being that '*We were in the same position as most other*

disabled people. Finding helpful information was like looking for a needle in a

haystack' and express a view that this:

> *… little story is a tale that has been, and will no doubt*
> *continue to be played out by many other disabled people.*
> *Some will achieve their objectives, but many will remain*
> *unfulfilled while ever the unnecessary, wasteful and*
> *oppressive barriers in society remain in place. Our*
> *reference to it here, at once connects real lives with spare*
> *but telling text and serves to reinforce the book's early*
> *point, that the stuff of intellectual enquiry and academic*
> *discourse has real purpose only when it is applied to the*
> *concrete task of overcoming disability.* (Davis and Davis,
> 1998, pp.xi – xii)

What is more:

> *A concern for the relation between the individual interaction*
> *and the wider discursive and social structure not only*
> *makes for a form of analysis which is more complex and*
> *more finely nuanced, but also makes for an analysis which*
> *is self-critical in terms of its own claims to 'truth', and is*
> *aware of the dangers of naively ascribing meaning to texts.*
> (Mills, 2004, p.141)

Mills' point is that it is this fusion between the larger and smaller-scale social

questions which offers '*greatest potential for future work in this field*' (Mills, 2004,

p.141).

2.4 The Affirmation Model of Disability

In advancing an affirmation model of disability, Swain and French (2008, p.32) suggest that this model directly challenges the tragedy model of disability and impairment, and could make a '*major*' contribution to a theory of disability. In their argument, Swain and French suggest that:

> *In doing so it explores the disablism inherent in western culture, within the disablist language, images and ideologies that are the warp and weft of daily living. It also challenges the professional policy, provision and practice founded in presumptions about disabled people, and looks towards possibilities for change generated by the proud, angry and strong voices of disabled people*. (Swain and French, 2008, p.1)

Swain and French (2000, p.569) make clear that this arises out of disability culture. '*Far from being tragic*', Swain and French (2008, p.70) assert that '*being disabled can have benefits*' and conclude that '*impairment is part of human diversity, a phenomenon integral to the human condition, and reveals a significant understanding of humanity*' (Swain and French, 2008, p.185). Morris (1991, p.34) pointed out that the idea that disabled people wish to be 'normal' rather than just as they are, is '*one of the most oppressive features of prejudice…*'. Vernon and Swain (2002, p.85) argue that '*disabled people have celebrated difference and rejected the ideology of normality …*' in order to create alternative images of strength and pride. In this sense, the notion of 'affirmation' is one of '*great depth*' (Swain and French, 2008, p.70). Allan (2005, p.32) too argues that this model encompasses '*positive social identities*' both individually and collectively, and proffers that it '*makes a connection between disabled and non-disabled people*'. The affirmation model builds upon, rather than replaces the social model of disability (Allan, 2005; Swain and French, 2008). Swain and French conclude that:

> *It is fundamentally about critique, the critique of supposed tragedy. It challenges the image and discourses of disability and impairment that convey and construct people and their*

> *lives as by necessity tragic. The affirmative model is, thus,*
> *not a model for judging disabled people's feelings and*
> *understandings of themselves and their lifestyles/quality of*
> *life (whether or not they have recently acquired an*
> *impairment) but it is a model that stands in opposition to the*
> *dominant, 'commonsense' beliefs about disabled people's*
> *feelings about themselves, their bodies and their lives.*
> (Swain and French, 2008, pp.74 – 75)

This model engenders positive social identities, and relates to the work of Davis (1995, p.xiv) who draws parallels with Deaf culture and suggests that disability with a capital 'D' is gaining ground. Indeed, so much so that Davis (1995, p.8), with regard to ageing, affirms that the '*odds are pretty good*' that many non-disabled people (at least temporarily abled bodied people), within two or three decades, will become impaired. In contrast, whilst history has provided some insight into ageing, in terms of both 'life span' and 'longevity', it has also raised a question as to notions of living forever (Turner, 2008). Vernon and Swain (2002, p.85) suggest that identity has become central to disability '*challenging the values that underlie institutional discrimination*'. This being through the various art forms such as song lyrics, poetry, performance, theatre, writing, sculpture, photography, painting, and drama. These challenges and struggles may be understood within the broader context of disability arts, fuelled by politics that arose in the 1970s (Arts Council England, 2003; Masefield, 2006). Indeed, Paddy Masefield (2006, back cover) described as an '*innovative theatre director and arts consultant … [who] became a disabled person at the age of 44 … [and] has campaigned for and represented disabled people on boards, committees and enquiries concerned with arts funding and policy making*' recalls of the early 1980s that drama groups for individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' emerged accidentally and that attitudes began to change. '*The perceived definitive of barriers to potential were shown to be socially imposed and not part of a medical condition*' argues Masefield, who also states that:

> *I believe that we stand on the shore-line of an ocean of*
> *potential, once we the foreigners have discovered the*

> *relevant language of communication. I am fascinated by the*
> *speed with which learning-disabled [sic] audiences can pick*
> *up complex stage parts that other communication may not.*
> *But one thing is paramount – the arts of learning-disabled*
> *[sic] people are the strongest tools to enable society to put*
> *an end to its own difficulty in learning.* (Masefield, 2006,
> p.77)

As is discussed, disability arts is inextricably linked to the affirmation model of

disability being advocated by Swain and French (2008) which builds upon the social

model of disability.

2.4.1 Disability Arts

Oliver and Barnes (1998, p.76) make clear that disability arts is not that which has

traditionally been associated with rehabilitation and care: painting, pottery, and

basketry, which are activities in institutions *for* disabled people. Barnes (2003a)

suggests that whilst there is a place for art therapy, he argues that:

> *… disabled people do not deserve this presumption of*
> *perpetual infantilisation, and increasingly, have refused to*
> *put up with it.* (Barnes, 2003a, p.8)

Traditional responses of 'perpetual infantilisation', as Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.205)

argue, '*depoliticised creativity*' and in some instances are used for commercial

purposes such as making Christmas cards, calendars, postcards. Such a traditional

response is likewise succinctly summarised by R.Tomlinson (1982) writing

reflectively about the Graeae (pronounced 'Gray Eye') Theatre Company, a

company consisting of disabled actors. Tomlinson, similarly, experienced watching

shows performed by people described as having 'learning difficulties', usually

performed at segregated 'special' schools as an end-of-term offering, consisting of:

> *… a lot of bonhomie and group singing, combined with the*
> *expectation that the audience would make allowances for*
> *the poorness of the performance because all the*
> *participants were disabled. We summarised this sort of*

> show as the 'didn't they do well, considering' type.
> (R.Tomlinson, 1982, p.9)

Understanding art as therapy also extends to the cultural images of disability where disabled people are portrayed as either victims of some tragedy or as struggling superheroes (Oliver, 1990). Oliver (1990, p.62) argues that such cultural images '*violate the actual experience of disability*', do not provide role models for disabled people and do not challenge prejudice in society.

'Art and disability' is not 'disability arts'. Indeed, disability arts has been emerging: one that is challenging notions of 'personal tragedy' and associated with the politics of participation within the arts (Morrison, n.d; Hevey, 1993; Oliver, 1996; Pointon with Davies, 1997). Morrison, evaluating a conference, paraphrasing the comments of Sian Vasey made the point that '... *disability arts is interesting and vital because it is political*' (Morrison, n.d). Hevey, noting the shift from 'arts and disability' to 'disability arts' added that:

> *The disability arts movement is the first sign of a post-tragedy disability culture.* (Hevey, 1993, p.427)

Oliver (1996, p.124) echoed this view and added that the aim of disability arts is not only to challenge personal tragedy but for it to '... *celebrate difference and produce its own disability culture*'. Jenny Sealey also describes the importance of disability arts as a '*fantastically diverse arts movement*' which should be recorded for generations of artists who will follow (Arts Council England, 2003). Director of Graeae Theatre, Sealey's sentiments are allied with the recognition that disability arts is one of the ways in which it is used to challenge existing discriminatory attitudes and practices. Barnes (2003a, original emphasis) suggests that disability arts is '*inextricably linked to a radical new 'disability politics of culture'; its aim is to bring about a more equitable and inclusive future*' (for an historical summary of

disability arts read: Barnes, *et al.*, 1999; Barnes, 2003a; Sutherland, 2008). Former members of UPIAS, the Liberation Network and BCODP had all been influential in creating a disability arts movement, including non-disabled members of the Network such as Richard Tomlinson the cofounder of Graeae Theatre and Gina Levete founder of Shape (Sutherland, 2006, 2008). What is crucial about the 'new' disability arts movement, Oliver and Barnes (1998, p.76) argue, is that '*for the first time it is linked to a collective political movement*'. The disquiet amongst disabled people about disablist imagery and cultural stereotyping, which was being used as a '*metaphor for evil*' prompted a positive alternative, namely, the disability arts movement (Barnes, *et al.*, 1999, p.182). Therefore, for Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.206) disability arts is potentially '*educative, transformative, expressive, emotionally exploratory, participative and involving*'. Johnny Crescendo, for example, an activist, songwriter and singer who coined the phrases 'disability pride' and 'piss on pity' echoes these sentiments and challenges the deep held prejudices against disabled people, he suggests that:

> *The art of any given time provides a unique social commentary. The mainstream is made up of many views of consciousness, mixtures of diversity and madness, joy and sorrow. Disability art is not mainstream but it is a river of hope that challenges our exclusion from modern day culture. It provides an effective way of conveying important messages, the battle for inclusion, messages from those of us at the sharpest end of the oppression we call disability. Messages that confirm we are strong, angry and proud, and should be accorded the basic rights that go along with that. Disability art comes from our very soul, it cannot be bought, but it can be supported. When disabled people are accepted in society, only then will the dam burst as our river flows into the mainstream.* (Arts Council England, 2003, p.12)

What is clear, is that the voices of the disability arts are engaged in a different form of discourse with '*new language and metaphors in a creative burst of pride and assertion*' and which '*jars uncomfortably with the disability discourses in the disability movement*' (Corbett, 1996a, p.33).

The way arts education enables disabled people to engage in a process of self-realisation is also discussed by Taylor (2005). Specifically, students explored the notion of identity, the issue of disability, impairment and felt that '*negativity* [*was*] *not associated with any limitation that impairment may impose but with social interaction and the oppressive perceptions others have, or that they think they have, about them*' (Taylor, 2005, p.765). One of the students, 'Hardy', when interviewed, shared the experience of completing '*hundreds'* of self-portraits and was recorded as saying '*each time I was doing it I was analysing myself and after a while I became very comfortable with who I was*' (Taylor, 2005, p.771). Taylor (2005, p.777) concludes that the arts provision at the college began a process of empowerment which included '*high levels of disability awareness … highly developed support systems in terms of practical assistance … an accessible arts curriculum … and critically, disabled artists as role models*'. Similarly, when the statue by Marc Quinn of Alison Lapper who posed naked whilst pregnant was placed in Trafalgar Square, in 2005, she was noted as saying:

> *It is so rare to see disability in everyday life – let alone naked, pregnant and proud.* (BBC News, 2004)

Barnes (2003a) and Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.207), however, make the point that notions of 'disability pride' and 'celebration of difference' are problematic, particularly for individuals '*whose impairments are debilitating, painful, or likely to result in premature death*'. On the contrary, Crescendo (2008) citing a letter by Justin Dart, a disabled activist, two days before his death wrote in part:

> *Death is not a tragedy. It is not an evil from which we must escape. Death is as natural as birth. Like childbirth, death is often a time of fear and pain, but also of profound beauty, of celebration of the mystery and majesty which is life pushing its horizons towards oneness with the truth of mother universe. The days of dying carry a special responsibility.* (Dart, cited Crescendo, 2008)

Dart's notion of death is highly contentious and problematic, but no doubt is consistent with Crescendo's rallying call for being 'strong angry and proud' and in this sense death, like impairment, is not a tragedy.

Sutherland (2006) explains that the standard definition of disability arts is that it is art which is informed by personal experience of disability, in a social model sense. Sutherland further explains that it is not exactly clear who its membership is because new groups of people have been pushing '*their way in through that open door*', for example, people described as having 'learning difficulties' have made '*their way in and become part of what we do, extending our idea of who we are*' (Sutherland, 2006, p.8). As an example, a video entitled 'Over the Edge' (1994) describes the experience of 'Heart'n Soul' which is a theatre group consisting of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties'. The video describes the group touring Luxemburg in 1993, and performing at the Mulberry Centre and the Albany Theatre, in London. Another theme relates to two of the individuals, Janet and Pino, who have been in a relationship for five years and are wishing to get married, Pino comments that:

> *I'd like to have a place with my girlfriend to live with each*
> *other. It's not very easy to get. I've got to go through a*
> *social worker which I have not got at the moment. I've got*
> *epilepsy and another bit is because I can't see very well*
> *that's the reason why probably my parents put me behind*
> *with the others.* (Pino, Over the Edge, 1994)

Janet responds first by reiterating Pino's sentiments and adds that '*we'd like to have a flat together soon and get married hopefully*' (Over the Edge, 1994). This scene is abruptly interrupted with one of the cast members asking, no doubt the viewer, 'love, who loves you?' The video presents a 'creative burst' conveying an important message with a song – a battle cry for inclusion – by Pino and his partner Janet entitled 'You can't do that!' referring to their hopes to live together and marriage.

Another theme the video highlights is the issue of being 'held back' and the way 'day centres' are implicit in this surveillance/controlling effect. Geoffrey Goodall, for example, one of the actors is shown entering a day centre and gives an impassioned message from 'the sharpest end of the oppression' stating that:

> *This place, this is a place we come to. We don't want to be held back anymore. Look at it, just look at them. They've got the same thing like us. It's about time we spoke up. We've got to have a voice and that's what we are, we're people.* (Goodall, Over the Edge, 1994)

Heart'n Soul challenge conventional attitudes in society with audience participation being a key element, and performances are infused 'with anger, based on the presumption that *things do not have to be like this'* (Sutherland, 2008, p.83, original emphasis). What Sutherland (2008, p.83) was highlighting is the poem 'Scars' by Simon Briesenden which works within the social model of disability. The poem begins '*the man who cut your skin*' and all but the last stanza finishes with the phrase '*has he got any scars*'. The final stanza concludes '*His blood is on this page*' referring to the '*arrogant surgeons*'. The poem does not seek the approval of non-disabled people. It illustrates that the body is a site of struggle and oppression with respect to what is done to 'it' by the actions and '*the gaze of 'normal' people*' (Abberley, 1987, p.14, original emphasis). Sutherland (2008, p.83) explains that this is about much more than what happens to one person: it is about disabled people being 'treated' in a discriminatory society, medical paternalism and the imbalance of power. Arguably, all surgery is an assault on the body (Murphy, 1990, p.55). Indeed, Finger (1990) describes how she explores the intersection of pregnancy and disability. Ironically Finger openly discusses the notion of choice, reproductive rights, how the body is fought over, and yet makes clear how pregnancy like disability is shrouded by uncertainty, and that "*nothing fits together neatly*" (Finger, 1990, p.199). Finger, with reference to the body, succinctly made the point that:

> ... *the doctors have written on it. It's true, I don't experience*
> *my body as me; sometimes I don't even experience it as*
> *belonging to me; it seems that it belongs to the medical*
> *world.* (Finger, 1990, p.180)

'... *[G]ods with knives*', Finger (1990, p.182) remarks in terms of the medical control of bodies. Indeed and much more, '*surgical graffiti*' raises questions about how the body is inscribed, literally (Sokol, 2013).

The emerging debates about, around and into the body have now filtered into debates relating to notions of embodiment. Post-modern dance can be understood as that which creates a space between '*text and performance*' (Turner, 2008, p.218). Turner's criticism is that debates about the 'body' have become '*too theoretical*' and that '*human performance*' has been neglected, specifically that:

> ... *the body cannot be understood without attention to*
> *performance, and post-modern readings of textuality of the*
> *body have obscured not illuminated this basic point.*
> (Turner, 2008, p.218)

And neither can performance be understood through merely a choreographic text (Turner, 2008). Such insights and contentions relating to the body, performance, the politics of identity and theorising the body as a site of struggle offer a turn to postmodern interpretations of dis/ability.

2.5 Theorising Disability and the turn to Postmodern Perspectives

The turn to postmodern perspectives offer a fundamentally different way to theorise the social, particularly with regard to disability and the notion of 'learning difficulties'. Whilst there is disagreement as to the meaning of 'postmodernism' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, Woods, 1999), Skrtic (1995, p.xii) suggests that postmodernism offers a '*multiplicity of ways to interpret social phenomena like education, special education, and disability*'. In addition it offers, as is argued (Kikabhai, 2014), a wide

ranging critique with the systems of 'reason'. Postmodern perspectives

reconceptualise a notion of the human subject, marginality, the institutional, and the

political in the context of power relations (Foucault, 1988). For Burr, postmodernism

offers:

> *… a questioning of and rejection of the fundamental*
> *assumptions of modernism, the intellectual movement*
> *which preceded it (and exists alongside it, generating much*
> *argument and debate) and which in many ways embodies*
> *the assumptions underlying intellectual and artistic life that*
> *have been around since the mid-eighteenth century.* (Burr,
> 1995, p.12)

It raises the question as to why some discourses of representing the world receive

the label of 'truth' or 'common sense' (Burr, 1995, p.15). Postmodernist critique has

highlighted the 'weakness' of a social model perspective (Thomas, 1999). Thomas,

for example, suggests that social model perspectives tend to ignore culture (or

'*downplay*' the role of culture) in the oppression of disabled people. They ignore

impairment and '*naturalise*' it, and question the '*rigid*' distinction between the

personal and political, or the '*private and the public*' in that they are of no '*real*

concern' (Thomas, 1999, pp.138 – 139). Thomas (1999, p.139), with respect to

culture, highlights that for postmodernist there is no '*point in searching for 'the roots'*

or 'causes' of disability in relations of production or anywhere else because such an

enterprise belongs to a bygone Enlightenment fixation with linear causal processes

and the search for universal truth claims'. Moreover, the notion of 'culture'[6] is

problematic, particularly in terms of it being connected to, and understood as, the

pursuit and study of perfection (Williams, 1967, 1981).

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[6] Read Williams (1967, 1981) for an understanding of culture, how its meaning has shifted from
relating to the cultivation of the land to the *cultivation of the mind,* to perfection and as a '*whole way of*
life'.

2.5.1 Using Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari

Using Foucault's analyses helps in understanding that social structures are made by people acting intentionally (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). For Thomas and Loxley (2001, p.41), Foucauldian perspectives have caused a sense of unease about the '*disciplinary castles*' within which knowledge is constructed. With regard to segregated 'special' schooling, a Foucauldian perspective invites and offers an entirely different perspective of so-called '*professional knowledge(s)*' that have located 'problems' and 'difficulties' within people (Thomas and Loxley, 2001, p.41). Foucault's historical methodology of archaeology and genealogy helps to build a picture through the varied fragments of information emanating from the insights and experiences of individuals at the margins (Thomas and Loxley, 2001). Four methodological principles distinguish archaeology: the attribution of innovation, the analysis of contradictions, comparative descriptions, and mapping transformations (Sheridan, 1980, p.104). The work of Peters (1996, p.221) adopts the notion of multiple identities to challenge the objectification and passive acceptance: she argues, of ourselves as 'Others'. She adopts a postmodernist perspective to highlight the cultural borders that exist in educational institutions. Alongside attitudes, these include '*special schools that separate and exclude people with disabilities from their peers*' (Peters, 1996, p.222), and from each other.

With respect to unemployment, Foucault's (1967) work identified that it was during the seventeenth century that 'the great confinement' in institutions was a solution to the problems of unemployment and 'idleness'. 'Houses of correction', which were being built throughout Europe, disappeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century only to be replaced by the birth of the asylum (Foucault, 1967; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982). Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) work is also an attack on the repressive discourses, representation, and the subject. Deleuze and Guattari, like

Foucault, understand modernity as an historical stage of domination through discourses and institutions seeking to normalise.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) focuses on the way power has shifted from public spectacle to discipline, incarceration and surveillance in the present day. Self-regulation and the exercise of power occur through institutions, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, colleges and universities. Indeed before '*Damiens the regicide*' (Foucault, 1977, p.3) screams of torture were to be heard, one example of a public spectacle is that experienced by William Lithgow, an Englishman who had been '*brought to the rack*' in 1620 by the Spanish Inquisition. Lithgow survived and described his experience thus:

> *I was brought to the rack, then mounted on the top of it. My legs were drawn through the two sides of the three-planked rack. A chord was tied about my ankles. As the levers bent forward, the main force of my knees against the two planks burst asunder the sinews of my hams, and the lids of my knees were crushed. My eyes began to startle, my mouth to foam and froth, and my teeth to chatter like the doubling of a drummer's sticks. My lips were shivering, my groans were vehement, and blood sprang from my arms, broken sinews, hands and knees. Being loosed from these pinnacles of pain, I was hand-fast set on the floor, with this incessant imploration: 'Confess! Confess!'* (Lithgow cited by Bronowski, 1973, p.216)

Discipline with respect to the spectacle and relational power sustains itself by its own mechanism, and '*seems all the less 'corporal' and more subtly 'physical'*' (Foucault, 1977, p.177).

With regard to present day spectacles, a transformation, passive acceptance, Mills' interpretation of Foucault makes the point that:

> *Discipline consists of a concern with control which is internalised by each individual: it consists of a concern with time-keeping, self-control over one's posture and body functions, concentration, sublimation of immediate desires*

> *and emotions – all of these elements are the effects of disciplinary pressure and at the same time they are all actions which produce the individual as subjected to a set of procedures which come from outside of themselves but whose aim is the disciplining of the self by the self.* (Mills, 2009, p.43)

One message from this is that: in no way should more current methods of controlling those considered to be 'abnormal' be seen as necessarily more humane (Mills, 2009). Indeed, therapies from pastoral care to personal counselling, exorcism to psycho-analysis, arguably are legitimating apparatuses belonging to aspects of social control (Foucault, 1977); albeit, in the subjective satisfaction to pursue 'normalcy' (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, p.132). The therapeutic gaze intervenes on the body its reach extends '*even in the bedroom*' (Synnott, 1997, p.3).

Similarly using Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 2004) offer opportunities to move beyond dualisms and boundaries. *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984), for example, offers a postmodern articulation of plural and multiple identities developing the notion of 'schizoanalysis', displacing consciousness and Freudian psychoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari argue that society has repressed and controlled 'desire', to have 'territorialised' it. Contrary to psychoanalysis, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that desire is essential and that the 'deterritorialised' body is a 'body-without-organs' – a body without organisation. In *A Thousand Plateaus* the notion of 'deterritorialising' the body is based upon the concept of the 'rhizome'. Succinctly, the theoretical work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004) offers opportunities and possibilities to challenge arborescent thought, dualisms, tree-like structures through the concept of a 'rhizome'. Arborescent thinking represents closed, unidirectional and totalising systems of thought. Deleuze and Guattari, summarise the principle characteristics of the 'rhizome' as being:

> *… unlike trees of their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily*

linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsigns states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that derived from the One, or to which One is added (n + 1). It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted (n – 1). (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.23)

For Deleuze and Guattari, the schizo, rhizome and nomad are all postmodern themes of breaking with '*repressive, representational identity and producing a fragmented, liberated, libidinal body*' (Woods, 1999, p.32). Alvermann (2000, p.18) uses the notion of a rhizome as a method of examining texts '*that allow us to see things in the middle*'. Rather than beginning or endings, Alvermann suggests, that from Deleuze and Guattari's perspective, it is how texts function outside themselves that is of interest, making it possible to '*decenter key linkages and find new ones*' (Alvermann, 2000, p.18). Allan (2008) too, for example, draws upon the concept of a 'rhizome' as a way of describing how power/knowledge threads and extends everywhere. The 'rhizome', Allan (2008) describes, challenges conventional knowledge which has been organised by hierarchical principles as the metaphor 'tree of knowledge' assumes. The rhizome, then, becomes a way to 'uproot[7]' these philosophical trees and to challenge their foundations. It becomes a model of non-hierarchical, unregulated relationships flowing in a myriad of directions (Allan, 2008, p.61). Deleuze and Guattari (2004, p.8) suggest that a rhizome '*ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences and social struggles*'. The tree inflicts the verb "to be" but the rhizome is alliance, '*uniquely alliance*', always the

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[7] Read Foucault (1967) for an understanding of how the symbol of knowledge, the forbidden tree, the tree of knowledge, in relation to madness had previously been uprooted and formed the mast of Bosch's *Ship of Fools (Stultifera Navis)*, which later transformed; no longer a ship but a hospital. In terms of higher education Foucault discovers, later, that behind the doctoral cap is a fool's cap sewn with bells.

conjunction "and … and … and …". This conjunction carries enough force to shake

and uproot the verb "to be". The questions '*Where are you going? Where are you*

coming from? What are you heading for?' are all useless questions (Deleuze and

Guattari, 2004, p.27). For Deleuze and Guattari:

> *The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it*
> *is where things pick up speed. Between things does not*
> *designate a localisable relation going from one thing to the*
> *other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a*
> *transversal movement that sweeps one and the other way,*
> *a stream without beginning or end that undermines its*
> *banks and picks up speed in the middle.* (Deleuze and
> Guattari, 2004, p.28)

The rhizome is 'interbeing', the *intermezzo*, a line of flight, a nomad thought not

confined to philosophy. On a strictly formal level '*it is mathematics and music that*

create the smoothest of the smooth spaces' a rarefied form of philosophy (Massumi,

translator's foreword in Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.xiv). The rhizome collapses

and blurs dualisms and renders them meaningless and thus offers a network of

infinite meanings.

2.5.2 Disability-Impairment dualism

An example to decenter the 'impairment-disability' dualism has emerged from

Hughes (2004) who argues that 'impairment and disability' are cultural constructs

and that put another way:

> *… the impaired body is a historically contingent product of*
> *power and, therefore, not – as the medical profession*
> *would have it – a set of universal biological characteristics*
> *amenable to and objectively defined by diagnostic*
> *practices.* (Hughes, 2004, pp.65 – 66)

Hughes and Peterson argue for a sociology of impairment as an extension of the

social model of disability proposing an embodied, rather than a disembodied, notion

of disability (Hughes and Peterson, 1997, p.326). They argue that the social model

creates a conceptual barrier to the development of a sociology of impairment in as much as '*debate about the body is silenced*' (Hughes and Peterson, 1997, p.330). Their proposal is to pursue post-structuralist and phenomenological discussions, which they argue constitute the body as a sociological problem (Hughes and Peterson, 1997, p.331). Indeed, recall the experience of Mark Ellis (Garner, 2005, p.11) labelled as being 'uneducable' and his claim that he was 'accepted as an able-bodied student' when he completed a combined degree. Arguably, not only did Mark surrender his acceptance as an 'able-bodied student' but he succumbs in a power struggle for and over 'his' body (Foucault, 1970, 1980, 1988). Moreover, there is no need to conduct an analysis of contradictions, or to cite the countless parallel examples linked with other social groups, but to ask a question: Does Mark make this statement knowing that he would not be accepted as a disabled student?

The body is not just a 'medical marvel' it is riddled with controversies about ownership, its boundaries, its meaning, its value, '*the criteria of life and death, and how it should be lived, and loved*' (Synnott, 1997, p.1). For Synnott, whilst the body and the senses are socially constructed, the difficulty is to demonstrate how and why. '*The body is not a 'given'*' Synnott (1997, p.1) argues but a 'social' category with various meanings and which is also '*highly*' political.

The centrality of the body is a theme discussed by Tamboukou and Ball (2003) who argue that genealogy highlights:

> … *the body as a site of interaction of material and symbolic forces, a battlefield of power relations and antagonistic discourses. It reveals the total inscription of history on the body and everything that touches and surrounds the body.*
> (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003, p.6)

Genealogy, a term borrowed from Fredrich Nietzsche (1844 – 1900) but not a faithful adaptation, refers to the themes that assume no history, such as the body

and its assumed fixed instincts and functions or its supposedly timeless moral

values (Oksala, 2007). Oksala (2007, p.47) suggests that genealogy is thus better

'*understood as a multilayered, critical practice rather than as a strict method*'.

Foucault, in contrast to Nietzsche, did not operate with psychological explanations

but rather questioned the importance of psychological attributes (Oksala, 2007,

p.47). Oksala, summed up genealogy thus:

> *It involves the study of history and documents detailed*
> *facts, but this does not mean that it is without philosophical*
> *or critical impact. In fact, exactly the opposite is true: its*
> *historiographical method represents a new way of doing*
> *philosophy that radically challenges idle meta-physical*
> *speculation. The aim is to historicise in order to radically*
> *question the timeless and inevitable character of practices*
> *and forms of thinking.* (Oksala, 2007, pp.47 – 48)

Scientific practice, Foucault's genealogy claims, is always tied to power relations.

Like the body, 'learning difficulties' too are moulded by norms and have a history.

Thus, genealogy questions individual/medical (biophysical) model explanations. The

dramatic features of genealogy are an essential part of a critique:

> *… the critical edge of genealogy lies in its ability to seeing*
> *something we have refused to see so far. … the point is not*
> *to understand the past, but also to change the way in which*
> *we see the present. The aim is to 'liberate' not only*
> *marginal groups such as the mentally ill, [people described*
> *as having 'learning difficulties'] and the imprisoned, but also*
> *the rest of us, by showing the contingencies at play in the*
> *formation of what we hold as inevitable, scientific truths.*
> (Oksala, 2007, pp.53 – 54, my insertion)

Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.7) concede that medical sociology literature has been given a

'*fresh impetus*' by recent studies inspired by Foucault's theorisations of the body.

For example, Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.61) suggest that under the influence of

Foucault's analysis of viewing the body, medicine served, in the late eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries, a moral and clinical function grounding them in 'truth'.

However, Oliver (2001, p.158) in a chapter entitled 'disability issues in the

postmodern world' cautions that for disabled people the potential for celebration with the '*coming of postmodernity*' is at least tempered by the '*threats of genetic engineering, selective abortion, non-resuscitation policies, health care rationing and euthanasia*'. Such 'threats' have not gone unnoticed (Kikabhai, 2014).

2.5.3 Discourse as power/knowledge

Different discourses construct social phenomena in different ways, they also position people. They play and replay, for example, through institutionalised practices which adopt beliefs, values, attitudes, expressions of interest and are underpinned by historical, social, economic, political and cultural power. Discourses involve multiple identities. Burr argues that when we ask why some discourses receive the label of 'truth' or 'common sense' this raises the issue of power relations, adding that '*some ways of representing the world appear to have an oppressive or constraining effect upon some groups of society*' (Burr, 1995, p.15). Discourses do not just reflect social relations they construct and reconstruct them (Foucault, 1980, 1988; S.Ball, 1990; Fairclough, 1992). Discourse, as is noted (Mills, 2004, p.116), '*extends beyond the boundaries of the sentence*'. Drawing upon the work of Foucault, S.Ball (1990) notes that:

> *Discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations.* (S.Ball, 1990, p.2)

S.Ball argues that the key concepts of the exploration of the social subject are those of power and knowledge and that these are '*two sides of a single process. Knowledge does not reflect power relations but is immanent in them*' (S.Ball, 1990, p.5). Power and knowledge always go together as a pair; they are inseparable and often written as 'power/knowledge' or known as the '*power/knowledge couple*' (Burr, 1995, p.70). Moreover, where there is power there is also resistance (Burr, 1995),

indeed, '*it exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple* …' (Foucault, 1980, p.142).

In thinking about discourse, in '*The order of discourse*', Foucault (1981) puts forward the view that:

> *… in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. … discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.* (Foucault, 1981, pp.52 – 53)

Unlike Weber (Gerth and Mills, 1974) who links 'power' with class, status, and political party, but yet similar in respect to power relations and bureaucracy, Foucault's interest is with the way discourse is regulated, produced and reproduced. Discourse, he suggests, consists of three external systems of exclusion: the forbidden speech, the division of madness and the will to truth (Foucault, 1981). The 'will to truth' – knowledge as an act of will (Turner, 2008) – like other systems of exclusion rests on institutional support, by practices such as pedagogy, courses; books, libraries, universities, government departments, publishing houses, academic journals, scientific bodies, etc. Knowledge, or at least some knowledge, is valorised (Foucault, 1981, p.55). The notion of 'truth' is supported by a whole range of practices (Mills, 2009). All these discourses (Galton, 1909; Alec-Tweedie, 1912; Burt, 1937) work to exclude statements which they characterise as false, and they perpetuate those statements which they characterise as true. Scientific discourse, or at least perceived 'scientific' discourse, produces 'truths' that function as the norm. Norms further the objectification by reducing individuality to a common measure, and of course, '*we can all be reduced to a dot on a curve*' (Oksala, 2007, p.59). However, those in positions of authority, who are seen as 'experts' or

'professionals', are those who can speak the truth, yet those not in positions of power will be viewed as speaking untruths (Mills, 2009). In order that discourses are presented as facts or as true, other discourses (equally valid) will be excluded, silenced or discredited and presented as false.

2.5.4. Disciplinary power

As an example of how to conceptualise disciplinary power, and understand how it operates Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's design of the ideal prison. Bentham's 'Panopticon' is a '*device*' in which an observer from a watch-tower can observe every prisoner without the prisoner being able to tell whether or not they were being watched (Foucault, 1980). Over time the prisoners, separated and out of view of each other, begin to police their own behaviour because they think they are being watched. Foucault describes the 'device' as a perimeter building in the form of a ring, divided into cells having two windows, the outer window allowing daylight to enter while the inner facing window faces the observation tower, he continues:

> *All that is then needed is to put an overseer in the tower*
> *and place in each of the cells a lunatic, a patient, a convict,*
> *a worker or a schoolboy. The back lighting enables one to*
> *pick out from the central tower the little captive silhouettes*
> *in the ring of cells. In short, the principle of the dungeon is*
> *reversed; daylight and the overseer's gaze capture the*
> *inmate more effectively than darkness, which afforded after*
> *all a sort of protection.* (Foucault, 1980, p.147)

Visibility is a trap. Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, p.189) comment that the conceptualisation of the Panopticon brings together '*knowledge and power, the control of the body, and the control of space into an integrated technology of discipline*' and suggest that it is '*perfectly designed*' for '*constant surveillance of its inhabitants*' and that it operates through a '*reversal of visibility*' which is '*perfectly expressed in its form*' (p.191). Cultural references include, for example, *Casa da Locos* (The Madhouse), a painting by Francisco de Goya (1746 – 1828), which

shows mass confinement. Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870), in *Great Expectations,*
also makes reference to a rush-light which consisted of a candle that was placed in
high perforated tin tower, with holes that '*made a staringly wideawake pattern on the
walls ... I could no more close my eyes than I could close the eyes of the foolish
Argus[8]. ... in the gloom and death of the night, we stared at one another*' (2003,
p.366).

Foucault argues, Bentham had '*invented a technology of power designed to solve
the problem of surveillance … and the exercise of power*' (Foucault, 1980, p.148).
For Bentham (1995, p.31) the Panopticon was a '*simple idea in architecture*', the
spectacle of punishment was not intended for the individual but for all others; that is,
the innocent. Fairclough (1992, p.50, original emphasis) points out that 'Power does
not work negatively by forcefully dominating those who are subject to it; it
incorporates them, and is '*productive*' in the sense that it shapes and '*retools*' them
to fit in with its needs'. Foucault argues that power is not '*wholly in the hands of one
person who can exercise it*' but that:

> *It's a machine in which everyone is caught, those who
> exercise power just as much as those over whom it is
> exercised … it becomes a machinery that no one owns.*
> (Foucault, 1980, pp.156 – 157)

In this sense, the conceptualisation of the Panopticon becomes the model for all
forms of surveillance and domination. As will be explained later, this examination is
one example of the way power is embedded in institutions and which establishes a
truth.

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[8] Read Dickens (2003) for an explanation of the connection between Argus Panoptes in
Greek mythology who had a hundred eyes, of which at any one time fifty were always open
and the rest in sleep. Mitchell (contributing notes) suggests that this is relevant to the prison
imagery in relation to Bentham's model for a prison, in which a single guard could keep an
eye on many prisoners, each 'in solitary confinement'.

2.5.5 The rise of the institution

The rise of the institution (Foucault, 1967), and its role in structuring the exclusion of disabled people from mainstream society, has been noted (S.Tomlinson, 1982; Skrtic, 1995; Oliver, 1990). Oliver (1990, p.42), for instance, contends that the institution has '*played a key role in structuring both perceptions and experiences of disability, and facilitated the exclusion of disabled people from mainstream social life*'. With regard to segregated 'special' schooling, Skrtic's (1995, p.xv) summation is that it is the '*dark side of public education*' born out of '*the institutional practice that emerged in twentieth-century industrialised democracies to conceal its failure to educate all citizens for full political, economic, and cultural participation in democracy*'. Sally Tomlinson (1982, p.2) too argued that the segregated 'special' subsystem emerged out of the '*dominant social and economic and professional vested interests*' and not just out of humanitarian motives. As with industrialised societies and the demand for qualifications, Tomlinson stressed that:

> *… to be categorised out of 'normal' education represents the ultimate in non-achievement in terms of ordinary educational goals. Occupational success, social mobility, privilege and advancement are currently legitimated by the education system; those who receive a 'special' rather than an ordinary education are by and large, excluded from these things. The result of exclusion is that the majority of the children are destined for a 'special' career and life-style in terms of employability and self-sufficiency.* (Tomlinson, 1982, p.6)

In terms of the segregated 'special' school curriculum, Tomlinson (1982, p.134) further suggested that '*at the heart*' of a sociological analysis is a consideration of '*what teachers and pupils actually do*' and that it is here that the '*beliefs that the special needs of children are being met can be tested*'. Tomlinson noted that the '*unofficial, informal activities which count as learning, but which would not appear on a timetable*' – i.e. the hidden curriculum of mainstream schools – '*becomes* the curriculum of special schools' (Tomlinson, 1982, pp.137 – 138, *original emphasis*).

In addition, as to 'race' and segregated 'special' schooling and the over-representation of racial and '*migrant minorities*', Tomlinson (2004, p.84) asks 'What is going on?' and notes that the use of a '*special subsystem*' to '*remove black children in disproportionate numbers from mainstream education must be questioned*'. Education and its subsystems are not neutral elements. Tomlinson argues (2004, p.77) that it is important to discuss the persistent assumptions behind placements in segregated provision of 'racial and migrant minorities' given that this '*does not appear to be changing significantly*'.

Oliver makes the point that '*the twentieth century for disabled people has been one of exclusion*' and notes that the twenty-first century will see the struggle of disabled people going from strength to strength in which '*segregated education has no role to play*' (Oliver, 1996, p.94) and neither, as argued earlier (Walker, 1981, p.196), does segregation in hospitals and employment. Further, Skrtic (1995) was of the view that:

> *Had the profession of education been grounded in different discipline or in one of the other paradigms of modern knowledge, special education would be something other than what it is today. Indeed, had the profession of education been grounded in a different paradigm, the need for special education might not have emerged at all.* (Skrtic, 1995, p.76)

Barnes *et al.* (1999, p.107) state the position adopted within the disabled people's movement; namely, that '*the special education system is fundamental to the disabling process and therefore must be abolished*'. They assert their view that:

> *… the British education system has failed disabled children by not providing the same educational opportunities as for non-disabled children and, moreover, through special provision, helping to reproduce their isolation and exclusion from mainstream society.* (Barnes, *et al.*, 1999, pp.109 – 110)

Moreover, Vernon and Swain (2002, pp.92 – 93) reiterated the point that segregated 'special' schooling not only separated disabled people from non-disabled people but also '*separated disabled people from other people, as categorised by impairments, and continues to do so*'. As was argued by Finkelstein and Stuart (1996, pp.172 – 173), services *for* disabled people and the idea that disabled people's 'needs' are 'special' has become part of the uncritical dogma that informs service provision. It has furthermore become part of a '*disabling culture*' (Finkelstein and Stuart, 1996, p.175). It has become the discourse in which the exercise of power is all too enlightening. Jenny Corbett maintains that the label '*special needs*' implies relative powerlessness on the part of those to whom it is applied and that it is '*the language* [*and discourse*] *of sentimentality and prejudice*' (Corbett, 1996a, p.5, my insertion). Indeed, Fulcher (1999, p.15), in her work, established policy within a political framework consisting of discursive social practices arguing that it had the '*capacity to make decisions and to act on them and this involves, by definition, the exercise of power*', making decisions whether to '*divide schoolchildren into those with disabilities and those without …*'. Moreover, as madhouses replaced leper colonies at the close of the Middle Ages (Foucault, 1967), marking a shift from the body to the mind, so too began the age of Reason which made visible not only deafness (Davis, 1995) but also 'feeble-mindedness'; becoming a discourse of *treatment* by professionals. Indeed medical, educational and social care professionals are all, it seems, dedicated to the proposition that disabled people, particularly people labelled as having 'learning difficulties', have 'special' needs that require *their* expertise.

2.5.6 Disability and the rise of the modern higher education institution
The turn to postmodern perspectives offers a fundamentally different way to theorise disability and higher education. Disabled students' experiences, it is

argued, are constituted by power relations, embedded in the history and mechanisms of institutions and their relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault (1967) argues that power is not a possession or a capacity, nor should it be thought of as belonging to an individual or group, rather it is characterised by a network which threads and extends everywhere.

In relation to power/knowledge, Radford (2000, p.106) draws upon parallels between the academy and the asylum. Radford, for example, suggests that they are both '*creations of the Enlightenment*' and by comparison, states that:

> *The modern university evolved as a seat of learning and scholarship. At its best it has been a champion of [*its*] truth, outward-looking and cosmopolitan, its self-image increasingly identified with a secular search for knowledge and truth in the interest of human progress. The asylum represents its antithesis, a closed world of ignorance and failure.* (Radford, 2000, p.106, my insertion)

Radford describes the initial similarities, of the geographical locations of the university and the asylum, only later did they follow divergent paths. Ironically, as their ideals became incompatible, academic disciplines and related professions (especially law, education, medicine and psychology) assumed authority over the asylum. Radford argues that '*the university lent powerful authority to arguments asserting the necessity for the incarceration of so-called mental defectives* [*sic*] *for the social good*' and that despite following apparent divergent paths the academy and the asylum were – and continue to be, albeit in a different guise – '*closely interconnected*'. For Radford (2000, p.121), the '*academy remains part of the problem*'. Indeed, when Radford (2000, p.108) made reference to research consistently producing negative views about individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' he also made the point that such views '*are still rampant*' and '*are still persistent and deeply embedded*' within the academy. Indeed the experience of David Parson, a ward nurse, who appeared in the programme 'Silent

Minority' (1981), in his justification of the nurses' role, said '... *they've got to get through this*' and '... *they've been told to do these things…*'. Further still, comments by Mabel Cooper, who was incarcerated for 32 years in St Lawrence's Hospital, said '*In them days they said you wasn't able enough to learn so you didn't go to school … You weren't allowed out of the hospital.*' One wonders, then, by whom have they 'been told to do these things' – the modern higher education institution?

Usher and Edwards (1994) argue that, given education is influenced by the values of Enlightenment, it is no surprise that such 'grand narratives' which sustain and '*embody these values benefit the few and the cost of being paid most by*':

> … *the environment, by women, by black* [*and disabled people*] *and poor people. Many would argue that modern education in all its form, liberal progressive and conservative, has been disabling rather than enabling.*
> (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p.31, my insertion)

The widening participation is a misleading discourse (Taylor, *et al.*, 2005). Its discourse relates to: non-participation, under-representation, individual aspirations being raised, the role of careers, counselling and guidance services having a key role (C.Ball, 1990; Gutteridge, 2001), including 'advice' concerning DSA (D*f*ES, 2005) and the issue of disclosure. For example, the OECD (2003, p.85) had urged HEIs to be proactive in taking reasonable action to encourage people to disclose *their* disability and, more generally, '*to prevent, as far as reasonable, the disadvantages that disabled students encounter during their course of study*'. However, Taylor *et al.* (2002, p.65) make a poignant point, suggesting that this '*external discipline is replaced by self-discipline*', various forms of '*confessional practices*' through the various techniques reveal '*people's inner lives are brought into the realm of power, through educating them to govern themselves*'. It seems that the comments made by Oliver (1996, p.69) concerning social policy and welfare are applicable in this context, that '*the price of those services is usually acceptance*

on the invasion of privacy' of services that modern higher education institutions '*thinks you should have or is willing to pay for, rather than those that you know you need*' a form of socialisation into dependency. There are also connections with understanding the way power/knowledge incorporates individuals. No doubt this institutional gaze extends to the rising number of student complaints (OIA, 2007, 2012) and raises questions as to the role and purpose of an assumed 'independent' adjudicator. Indeed, what a Foucauldian power/knowledge complex offers is an understanding that lecturers, professors, adjudicators, counsellors are all instruments of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. Lecturers, professors, adjudicators, counsellors, and the like, have authority not because they have 'knowledge' but because they represent the normative demands of society (Foucault, 1977, 1980). Power, perceived in this way, is subtle and effective, and operates at the level of '*desire and also at the level of knowledge*' (Foucault, 1980, p.59). This also extends to policy rhetoric. In relation to schooling, when Tony Booth (2000, p.92) referred to the term 'SENCO' being a discriminatory label, being carried around '*like a bell summoning the 'dull and backward' to come forward and be identified*', one wonders if it was not necessarily implied just as a metaphor.

Further, Robertson and Hillman's (1997) report, for example, on widening participation in higher education, adopts a 'climbing frame' metaphor where students, particularly students from '*lower socio economic groups and students with disabilities*', can 'progress' through a number of routes/roots to the award of an 'honours' degree (Greenbank, 2006, p.146). This tree-like 'climbing frame' is hierarchical, imposing, vertical, regulated and spreads out into 'many branches' and assumes a single 'trunk' of 'oneness'.

Similarly, using a Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari perspective makes Woodrow *et al.*'s (1998) 'schooling' as a metaphor for 'prison', which is not assumed to be accidental, all the more pertinent. This metaphor provides a graphic image of the different ways schools, intentionally or otherwise, discipline, control and punish 'inmates', to conform, reform and transform individuals to society's non-disabled 'norms'. Those who are considered as being 'un-able' are sent(enced) to the 'segregation' wing; of course in the interest of the other 'inmates', the gaolers, and for the 'un-able' themselves. Its goal is not to teach the 'inmates' something, but rather '*to teach them nothing, so as to make sure that they could do nothing when they came out of prison*' (Foucault, 1980, p.42). Moreover, in the context of disability and higher education, the turn to a postmodernist perspective makes transparent the disciplinary technologies of modernity which are imbued with discourses of power/knowledge and normative interests.

2.6 Summary

This chapter draws upon a range of literature in relation to understanding disability. It begins with an explanation of the deficit interpretations of disability, i.e., the individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability. Whilst there are benefits to this model of disability it certainly has limitations to understanding disability. Indeed, who disabled people are is not self-evident. Of particular focus is the issue of 'treatment', which ought to be more accurately rephrased as 'mistreatment', and the emerging segregated provision as a response to individuals recently labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. The eugenic movement, the Eugenic Education Society, cannot be overstated in terms of its influence at the beginning of the twentieth-century in its response to the issue of 'feeble-mindedness' and 'mental deficiency' (Kikabhai, 2014). The aforementioned Eugenic discourse seeks, intentionally, to position and dehumanise individuals described as having 'learning difficulties'. Not

necessarily focused on the body *with/out* impairment but to the notion of intelligence and racial hygiene. Further, and all the more problematic, is the assumption that people described as having 'learning difficulties' also have physical or sensory impairments too, when they may not.

This chapter also discusses the shift to inclusive education, a rights-based and social model discourse of disability. The social model of disability has been used as a tool to understand disability with an associated oppressive society; it has been used as a tool for social change. However, questions have emerged as to critiquing the social model of disability for its absence of acknowledging the experience of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties'; it has neglected personal experience and the theoretical place of the body and, arguably, normalised impairment. To this end, disability arts has emerged and exposed complex matters; a place where questions are asked.

The following chapter relates to disability and higher education. It identifies the various interpretations of disability which underpin legislative and policy directions. It recognises the tension between raising standards and widening participation. Whilst the participation rates of disabled students have been increasing it raises questions as to the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Keeping in mind that higher education has an ability to reproduce its host society, it examines the shifting landscape of higher education, asking questions as to its purpose and its ability to transform and reform individual lives.

CHAPTER 3: Disability and Higher Education

This chapter draws upon the literature related to disability and the academy. It begins by setting the policy context in relation to higher education participation. It concerns itself with defining higher education; understanding its purpose, function and beneficiaries. It highlights the policy discourse of raising aspirations which are often situated alongside issues of under-representation, non-participation and the increasing concern about a rising student debt. This chapter asks 'how many disabled students are there?' to illustrate the contested terrain in which the quest for an exact number in higher education is not only problematic but is in direct tension with issues of disclosure, privacy and the fear of discrimination. It also discusses Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA) in relation to an individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability. Finally, it concludes with a discussion relating to assessment in relation to the notion of 'reasonable adjustments' and the requirement of the Equality Act.

3.1 Discursive Policy Context

In terms of gaining an understanding of the policy context of higher education for disabled students what emerges is a complex set of issues, particularly with defining higher education; understanding its purpose, function and relationship with society. Fundamentally, policy discourse about the expansion of higher education is situated between those who argue 'more means different' and those who argue 'more means worse'. Earlier discursive themes (Tomlinson, 1996; Dearing, 1997; Kennedy, 1997; Fryer, 1997) focus on two themes; firstly, the notion of a national economic need to increase the supply of people with higher level skills and knowledge and; secondly, the promotion of a social inclusion agenda which sought to widen and increase participation by under-represented groups, particularly individuals who have a family history of non-participation (Watson and Taylor, 1998; Hayton and Paczuska, 2002). Given this context, the New Labour government had

proposed a target of 50 per cent of 18 – 30-year-olds to participate in some form of higher education by the year 2010 (DfES, 2003). Incidentally, it is not the first time the target of 50 per cent has been proposed, it was suggested by Christopher Ball (1990) that it could be reached by the year 2000. Whichever, this proposed target arguably relates to the massification of higher education and meant that 'everybody' or at least every other person in this age group needed degree level qualifications; the result of credentialism (Thomas, 2001a) or a form of 'qualification-escalation' (Dore, 1976, p.5). The idea of a mass higher education is contested, and has raised questions as to who it benefits and who it excludes. Who will this 'every other person be'? Woodrow *et al.* (1998, p.1), for example, reported that whilst improvements in the relative participation rates in higher education for '*women, most minority ethnic groups, and mature students*' there has been a drive to increase participation by young people from lower socio-economic groups; considered to be '*the last frontiers*'. The National Audit Office (NAO) (2002) identified disabled people and people from lower socio-economic groups as having significantly lower participation rates in higher education and made the claim that '*some disabilities involve learning difficulties that make higher education impracticable*' (NAO, 2002, p.7). Whilst not making clear what was meant by 'learning difficulties', such observations by the NAO raise questions as to why higher education is 'impracticable' for 'some disabilities'.

Given this changing policy context, higher education has been described as mass in size but elite in its values (Schuller, 1995), unsympathetic to non-traditional groups, and reproduces its host society. Duke (2005a, p.152) phrased the latter situation of institutions being able to reproduce themselves as '*awesome*'. However, Thomas (2001) argued that an opportunity had arisen to radically change higher education to overcome its elitism; to either maintain the *status quo* or to initiate social change. Hurst (1996, 1998) made the point earlier still as to the potential change element of

higher education. The recognition of 'being' is commented upon by Thomas who states that:

> *Being a 'disabled student' is certainly an official marker of difference in HE, but I suggest that this may be operationalised and experienced in enabling rather than disempowering and stigmatising ways*'. (Thomas, 2001, p.68)

The presence, thus, of students labelled as having 'learning difficulties' in higher education raises important questions as to the way HEIs respond to disabled students. How does becoming or being a student at higher education particularly students labelled as having 'learning difficulties' challenge the values of higher education?

3.2 Defining Higher Education

Whilst there is debate as to understanding what is meant by 'higher' education it is recognised that the boundaries between universities, colleges of higher education and colleges of further education are indistinguishable (Barnett, 1990; Schuller, 1995; Watson and Taylor, 1998, Thomas, 2001a, Duke, 2005). Moreover, further education '*acts as a residual*' for higher education study, it has been '*quantitatively unplanned*', and the offer of degree courses has been steadily increasing since the 1960s (Layard, *et al.*, 1969, p.73). Riddell *et al.* (2005b, p.64) reported that one further education college had enrolled twenty-thousand students, of which 3,800 were studying at higher education level. Likewise, Garrod, (2005) discussed the merger in 2004 between Thames Valley University with Reading College and School of Arts and Design with over 45,000 students with various levels of provision ranging from further education access courses through to doctoral research work with '*over 126 nationalities, 45 per cent ethnic minorities, 60 per cent female, 60 per cent part-time students and 50 per cent over the age of 30*' (Garrod, 2005, p.57).

Leicester (1993) raises the question: What, then, is distinctive about higher education that makes it somehow 'higher' than the other stages – primary and secondary? Leicester (1993, p.49, *original emphasis*) is of the view that it is characterised by being a '*second order*' activity based on earlier stages of education which operates 'over and above such material and is higher in *that* sense' and sees higher education as a form of '*final – although unending - stage in the pursuit of knowledge*'. Barnett (1990), however, asks 'What is it all about?' suggesting that a particular characteristic of higher education is its relationship with wider society. Leicester, drawing upon the work of Barnett (1990), also writes that there is a conceptual difference between the sectors of education between primary, secondary, further and higher education and argues that it is not simply a matter of ages. For Coffield and Vignoles (1997) higher education is described with '*disturbing accuracy*' as:

> *… mass in size but still elite in its values, crowded and under-funded, largely traditional in its pedagogy, with staff untrained in effective learning, senior management unskilled in introducing change and with too many of the pre-1992 universities espousing a culture unsympathetic to non-traditional groups.* (Coffield and Vignoles, 1997, p.5)

Higher education in crisis and understood as a system reproducing inequalities is also a theme taken up by some authors (Barnett, 1990; Barnett and Griffin, 1997, Watson and Taylor, 1998). For Barnett (1990) higher education is marked by the absence of any effort to understand itself from an educational perspective and commented that the term 'higher education' amongst terms such as: student, lecture, tutorial, seminar, degree, (bachelor, master, doctor), course, interdisciplinarity, academic freedom, research and academic community, are not only elements of a language game but are also carriers of and symbolise a set of traditions with medieval origins with international currency, suggesting that:

> *They are testimony to intention, embodied in special*
> *institutions, regarding educational processes which reflect*
> *certain kinds of values and are designed to have particular*
> *kinds of outcomes.* (Barnett, 1990, pp.6 – 7)

Higher education, for Barnett, is a contested concept '*whose functions include its capacity to reproduce its host society, both economically and culturally*' (Barnett, 1990, p.8). Williams and Abson (2001, p.20) ask '*why does it matter who has access to higher education?*' and respond that predominantly '*white males, had access to an elite system which led to higher paid and more prestigious occupations*' and that higher education was considered a positional good '*part of the cultural consumption of certain classes and a site for the reproduction of social difference*'. Thus, higher education may not be the sole mediating site for the production and reproduction of social difference but it is certainly an important one.

3.2.1 Higher Education as Inequality

In terms of inequality, Barnett (1990) draws upon the theoretical work of Pierre Bourdieu and the notion of cultural capital as a way of understanding how higher education reproduces its host society suggesting that when it comes to graduates getting senior positions cultural stratification has much more influence than academic accomplishments. Inequalities not only exist amongst its participants but between institutions themselves; Barnett (1990) argues. Making the point that there is a '*hierarchy of academic institutions*' founded on social status rather than on their academic reputation, Barnett stresses the point that:

> *A first-class honours degree from a college of higher*
> *education still counts for less in the world than a third-class*
> *degree from Oxbridge, and even less than a sporting 'blue'*
> *from the ancient universities.* (Barnett, 1990, p.107)

Moreover, when it comes to inequalities and higher education employment, Konur, (2004) and Fenton, Carter and Modood, (2000) argued that disabled people and

people from ethnic minorities are under-represented, stating that '*of the 136,000 staff in higher education in the year 1999/2000 only 1% and 4% were disabled or from ethnic minorities respectively (HESA, 2001)*' (Konur, 2004, p.83). In addition, a summary report by NIACE (Fullick, 2008, p.1), underscored by the social model of disability and disability rights focus, echoed parallel concerns relating to the under-representation of disabled staff in the lifelong learning sector, which the author argues is '*an indication that, 10 years on, the legislation designed to reduce discrimination against disabled people in the workplace is not having a sufficient impact …*' and that there is:

> … *systemic failure to address the issue seriously, which has led to widespread institutional discrimination against disabled staff.* (Fullick, 2008, p.1)

Fullick argues that this is not '*rocket science*', it requires an '*anticipatory approach, energy and commitment, starting at the top*' (Fullick, 2008, p.1). However, one of the issues related to '*disabled staff being reluctant to disclose impairments because they feared discrimination*' (Fullick, 2008, p.7). With regard to '*particular kinds of outcomes*', Watson and Taylor (1998, p.19) pointed out that it is hardly surprising that higher education reflects inequalities and argued that '*Overwhelmingly, the beneficiaries of the expansion of higher education since the 1960s have been the middle classes, broadly defined*'. Hayton and Paczuska, (2002, p.ix) suggested that what a historical analysis demonstrates is that while higher education has expanded '*it has not fundamentally changed because many of the new participants have simply been absorbed into traditional higher education provision*' – arguably, 'participants' have been 'normalised' (Foucault, 1979b, cited in Morley, 2003, p.92). Hayton and Paczuska's analysis of why higher education maintains this position, relates to: '*selectivity, competition and elitism, qualifications and standards, funding mechanisms and student finance*' (Hayton and Paczuska, 2002, p.ix).

It seems then, as the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative was starting to take shape a number of concerns were already beginning to be raised.

3.2.2 Beneficiaries of Higher Education

In identifying the beneficiaries of higher education, Robertson and Hillman (1997) present a range of factors which distinguish differences between social groups. Lower socio-economic groups, defined as groups IV and V and disabled students, Robertson and Hillman (1997) argue are twice as likely to be concerned about financial matters and working part-time; in addition, to be more likely to study part-time, remain at home, study at a local higher education institution, encounter financial difficulties, incur debts and less likely to rely on parents. In the work of Reay *et al.* (2005) their concerns relate to the forms of inequalities in higher education and the '*different sorts of higher education that are now on offer*' and argue that '*We may have a mass system of higher education in the twenty-first century but it is neither equal or common for all*' (Reay, *et al.*, 2005, p.vii). Corbett (1996b, p.165) fears '*a real danger*' referring to a three-tier HE system in which 'elite' universities remain undisturbed, 'newer' universities accommodating a comprehensive mix and the former polytechnics containing a '... *disproportionate number of students with* [*sic*] *evident learning disabilities (the special education sector of HE)*'. Watson and Taylor (1998) suggest that whilst the growth of higher education has been a painful and slow process and meant increased fairness in some instances there are also concerns that in some cases the gap has been widening. In this sense, the beneficiaries of higher education have generally remained the same, particularly with pre-1992 institutions, and so-called 'elite' universities

3.2.3 'More means different' or 'More means worse'

The work of Leicester (1993) contributes to the 'more means different' argument of higher education and explores the debate related to what people mean by 'academic standards' and how they are maintained. Williams and Abson (2001) argue that the expansion in numbers of students has introduced a '*bitter debate and struggle over the meaning of higher education and how access to this high status, publicly funded resource should be regulated*'. They suggest that this debate has been between academics and politicians who have held the view that 'more means worse', and those who prefer 'more means different' or 'more means fairer'. Williams and Abson explain this debate with two questions, these being:

> *Has an expansion in degree level study allowed less academically able students to succeed and so devalued a degree from an English University for all students (more means worse)? Or has expansion provided access to individuals who show academic potential later in life, or in unconventional ways, or who flourish when different learning patterns or subject areas are on offer (more means different or more means fairer)?* (Williams and Abson, 2001, p.15)

These questions, Williams and Abson (*ibid*) state, are '*key political questions about who has the right to enter higher education and on what basis*'. Preece (1999) identifies similar political questions as being problematic. Preece notes that in spite of increased participation in the last thirty years the social class make up of learners has '*barely changed, particularly amongst adults*' stating that much of the criticism is centred on the '*way universities teach, what they teach and how the learner is construed*' (Preece, 1999, p.8) and, no doubt, who is doing the 'teaching'. Additionally, Preece (1999) also comments that '*more should mean different and also inclusive*'. Watson and Taylor (1998) historically position the 'more means worse' debate in the 1960s and suggest that there is no evidence that increased participation has meant a drop in academic performance and argue that the pessimistic view that 'more means worse' entails its own paradox, namely that

'*Mass participation will defeat the fundamental purposes of higher education*' and that '*you can only prove standards are being maintained by showing that more people are doing worse*' (Watson and Taylor, 1998, p.33). Layard *et al.* (1969), reflecting on the Robbins Report, made the point that expansion did not only take place in the 'new' universities but also the older traditional universities. In the work entitled 'Degrees of Choice' by Reay *et al.* it addresses concerns with the growing inequalities in higher education the authors conclude with quoting the work of Bourdieu arguing that whilst his words seem '*slightly shocking … they have a powerful ring of truth*'; Bourdieu who wrote in relation to the French educational system commented that:

> *There has been a devaluation as a simple effect of inflation, and also as a result of the change in the 'social quality' of the qualification holders. The effects of educational inflation are more complicated than people generally imply because a qualification is always worth what its holders are worth, a qualification that becomes more widespread is ipso facto devalued because it becomes accessible to people without social value.* (Bourdieu, 1993, pp.97 – 98, cited Reay, *et al.*, 2005, p.163)

Reay *et al.* argue that such sentiment applies also to the UK higher education system. Whilst making a point about social class the authors conclude with the work of Walkerdine *et al.* who assert that '*There is a creeping assumption … that if we open up higher education to working class students then we can all become professionals. This is the biggest fiction of all*' (Walkerdine, *et al.*, 2001 cited Reay, *et al.*, 2005, p.163). Thomas also comments that as students attain more higher qualifications the value of educational credentials declines and argues that an '*ever-increasing proportion of the population will not challenge existing discrimination on the basis of class, gender, ethnicity and so on, but will reinforce social divisions*' (Thomas, L., 2001, p.24). Moreover, as Thomas (2001, p.25) adds, recognition of this phenomenon is not new and refers to work from the 1970s describing the spiralling educational requirements as '*a race in which all run harder but nobody*

gains'. Such debate is also found in the work of Ronald Dore in 1976 referring to the phenomenon as '*the diploma disease*' who noted that:

> *… the situation is that the worse the educated unemployment situation gets and the more useless educational certificates become, the stronger grows the pressure for an expansion of educational facilities. … The mechanism of 'qualification escalation' ensures that once one is in the modern-sector-qualification range, the higher the education one gets the better one's chances of getting some job.* (Dore, 1976, pp.4 – 5)

Dore goes on to explain, in the context of employment, that it is not entirely clear why qualifications escalate but posits that the chief reason seems to be that employers are '*victims of the widespread myth that education 'improves' people, and that they are getting more for their money…*' (Dore, 1976, p.5). Coffield and Vignoles (1997, p.20) argued that expansion in higher education is likely to increase and whilst 'elite' culture clings on to the belief that the national pool of ability is limited; looked at from a broader international perspective comments '*no arbitrary ceiling should be placed on numbers, unless it is believed that English and Welsh people are less capable of benefiting from HE than the Scots, the Irish, the Germans or the Japanese*'. Discussing the issue of widening access to higher education Christopher Ball's (1990) final report entitled '*More Means Different*' also considered the international perspective. Ball, commenting on the findings of the 1989 Confederation of British Industry skills survey, noting that '*47% of respondents were unable to meet their skills needs*'. Ball reports that, on average, '*British children are two years behind the Japanese in terms of basic mathematical competence*' adding that '*West Germany produces one and half times as many graduates in engineering and technology as the UK; Japan produces two and a half times as many*' (Ball, 1990, p.8). In the final report Ball argued that for education to be fully effective no-one should be '*deprived of the opportunity to achieving health, wealth and happiness*' but added that:

> *In the UK many are. Other nations are doing better. The problems of the inner cities, the environment, racism, unequal opportunities, unemployment, the family and young people – even of Northern Ireland – are, in part, educational. Of course, it is absurd to suggest that the educational service should take sole responsibility for such problems. But education is the means whereby a society shapes it[s] future. Its responsibility is commensurate with its importance. Higher education is a small part of the entire education service, but it is a key component, in some measure controlling the rest of the system through the definition of excellence, the establishment of orthodoxies of knowledge, the training of teachers and public examinations.* (Ball, 1990, p.10)

Moreover, Ball referring to widening access to higher education asks '*Why doesn't it happen?*' and makes a link with quality contending that '*the defence of quality is often a code for elitism*' (Ball, 1990, p.5). Nunan *et al.* (2000) asking: '*Why is it important that universities aim for inclusive education?*' reply that '*it is fundamentally in their own interest to do so*' and that in contrast to advantaging the already advantaged '*it is possible to aim for an education system that strives to bring about greater participation, democracy, equality and emancipation for all*' (Nunan, *et al.*, 2000, pp.64 – 65). Nunan *et al.* (2000, p.66) argue that the term inclusive is built upon ideals of social justice a form of 'curriculum justice' involving '*rethinking teaching methods, the organisation of knowledge, and educational assessment, from new points of view*'. In asking '*Is higher education experienced as an enabling or disempowering space?*' Anderson and Williams (2001, p.175) claim that '*higher education provides an enabling space, allowing changing identities to flourish*'. Although, with respect to disabled students, Fuller *et al.* suggest that:

> *… even when disabled students start out with comparable qualifications to other students in the same university, they nevertheless tend to encounter more barriers to learning and to achieve poorer outcomes in terms of final degree classification. Success at degree level can be critical in terms of lifelong earning capacity and location in the labour market; that is, in terms of financial and occupational empowerment.* (Fuller, *et al.*, 2004b, p.304)

The idea that higher education is creating or challenging social disadvantage, as well as being a key player in the formation of individual identities is not being questioned, but, as to the question as for whom is. That is, higher education for individuals described as having 'learning difficulties', and the opportunity to experience 'changing flourishing identities' is difficult, given that such individuals are excluded. Moreover what is recognised within the widening participation discourse is an increasing interest in raising aspirations, and the growing reasons for under and non-participation.

3.3 Raising aspirations

With respect to raising aspirations, Woodrow *et al.* (1998) make a link between the lack of aspiration and poverty. Woodrow *et al.* (1998), drawing upon 14 case studies, which focus on preparing access strategies for higher education particularly for young people, including disabled young people, from lower socio-economic groups. The causal link between low participation and lower socio-economic groups in higher education has been, they argue, the '*lack of aspiration and achievement of many of the students who leave school as soon as they are free to do so*' (Woodrow *et al.*, 1998, p.1). The authors note that '*the roots of this problem lie in the persistence of poverty and deprivation in society which is well beyond the scope of the education system to remedy*' (Woodrow, *et al.*, 1998, p.4). Walker (1982), concerned about labour market opportunities, previously suggested that when considering disabled young people and further education, the majority leave at the age of 16. Particularly, Walker suggests (1982, p.135, *emphasis added*), individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' who seldom recognise the need for continued education and '*are glad to escape from the failure associated with school and are naturally reluctant to undergo 'more of the same*'', having argued that:

> *If schools, especially special schools, limit – intentionally or otherwise – the extent of the handicapped* [*sic*] *young*

> *person's aspirations, it is not surprising that there is a difference between handicapped [sic] and non-handicapped [sic].* (Walker, 1982, p.73)

L. Thomas (2001, p.107), making links with the labour market and decisions about post-compulsory education, refers to the notion of 'opportunity costs' and suggests that students who choose higher education limit their ability to seek work. Thus there may be financial penalties associated with choosing to undertake a degree. Burchardt (2005, p.xi), however, using information from the 1970 British Cohort Study and Youth Cohort Studies, found that the level of aspirations of disabled young people and non-disabled 16-year-olds were similar, but reported that young people described as having 'mental health difficulties', 'complex needs', and those who acquired impairments later, individuals between the ages of 11 and 16, did '*seem to be at risk of lower aspirations*'. Burchardt found that for all young people educational and occupational aspirations were linked to parental educational and social class background, arguing that '*parental background is more important than disability … despite high aspirations educational and occupational outcomes are significantly worse for disabled young people*' and that '*the gap between the proportion of disabled and non-disabled people out of work widens as they get older*' (Burchardt, 2005, pxii). Where groups had gained employment Burchardt reported that at age 18/19 earnings were lower for disabled than for non-disabled employees; 11% less, and argued that:

> *The raising of disabled young people's aspirations is surely to be welcomed. The discouraging aspect is that disabled people's experience of early adult life continues to be beset by frustration and disappointment: high aspirations are not translated into comparable educational and occupational attainment.* (Burchardt, 2005, pp.xii – xiii)

Burchardt (2005), further, gives various descriptions of the permutations between aspirations and low chances suggesting that the combination of high aspiration and low chances may be worse than low aspirations and low achievements, possibly

creating feelings of demoralising disappointment and intense frustration. In this sense, Burchardt (2005, p.50) concludes that poor outcomes of early adulthood are not the result of a 'poverty of aspiration' and that '*further advice and encouragement for young people are not primarily the way forward*'. To repeat a point made by Walker (1982) who, some 23 years earlier, discussed issues of the labour market, found that disabled young people were 'careerless' in comparison to non-disabled young people and suggested that when the issue of aspirations was raised, these were a reflection and internalisation of the social construction of the work setting and opportunity structure.

3.4 Under-representation

Another theme relating to the widening participation agenda is the discourse of under-representation and the link between increasing economic efficiency in order to create a fairer society. Watson and Taylor for instance, amongst others, argue that one of the key catalysts for change in higher education to improve provision for disabled students is the focus on a need to actively consider access for 'non-traditional' groups of students (Watson and Taylor, 1998; Hurst, 1999; Adams and Brown, 2006; Thomas and Quinn, 2007). Watson and Taylor (1998, p.xii) suggested that the Dearing Report, published in July 1997, was '*the first officially sponsored systematic examination of the United Kingdom's system of higher education*' since the Robbins Report (1963) being charged with making recommendations about contemporary issues and looking '*ahead, in this case for at least 20 years*'. Commissioned by the UK government, the Dearing Report's concerns related to: funding, expansion, the maintenance of standards, and increasing competition between nations. Its recommendations included a shift from grants to tuition fees, government loans and widening participation through the introduction of 'sub-degrees' (NCIHE, 1997). The Summary Report, particularly paragraph 29, emphasised the issue of increasing those groups '*under-represented in higher*

education, notably those from socio-economic groups III to V, people with

disabilities and specific ethnic minority groups' (NCIHE, 1997). Watson and Taylor

(1998) are of the view that '*education and particularly higher education, has been a*

key agency for emancipating, informing and empowering the disadvantaged' adding

that the Dearing Report made a commitment to:

> *… increase economic efficiency and to create a fairer*
> *society, in terms of greater equality of opportunity for*
> *individual citizens.* (Watson and Taylor, 1998, p.145)

Hurst (1999) suggested that the movement to promote levels of participation from

under-represented groups in higher education occurred between 1980 and 1990.

However Hurst (1999, p.65), amongst others (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004), recounted his

surprise when he found that '*nothing was said about disabled people in the terms of*

reference ...' of the inquiry. Christopher Ball (1990) suggested that the '*first steps*' to

promote wider participation in higher education was to increase the proportion of 16-

year-olds who continue their education; arguing that:

> *It is probably cheaper to do this than to bring them back*
> *later. Although there is some evidence of an increase, it*
> *remains true that in 1988, 66% of 16 year-olds left school,*
> *of whom 69% chose not to continue their education*
> *elsewhere either full-time or part-time. It is probably this*
> *single statistic that marks the underlying problems of our*
> *educational system, explains the severity and intractability*
> *of the skills shortages, and distinguishes the UK from other*
> *developed countries.* (Ball, 1990, p.37)

Ball (1990, p.37) argued that educational counselling and guidance services have

an important task in raising the aspirations and confidence of 'youngsters' who

could '*with benefit and enjoyment, continue their education*'. Whilst setting targets

for increases in participation of at least 15 per cent by 1995 and 50 per cent by

2000, Ball (1990, p.56) suggested that the main '*impediment to growth is not lack of*

students demand for places, but shortage of places for those who apply and could

benefit'. Anderson and Williams (2001, p.1) comment that the growth of higher

education over the past four decades has been '*dramatic*' and indicate that over '*30% of 18 year olds now participate in full-time higher education, together with a huge increase in mature and part-time students*' and suggest that the label '*mass higher education*' has been an appropriate one. In contrast, Hodgson and Spours (2002, p.56) argue that the rate of participation has slowed down since the 1990s making the level of '*expansion the Government is aiming for less secure than it might wish*' and contend that government policies rely '*too heavily on the idea that there is a latent unmet demand for higher education*'.

Thomas (2001, p.42), drawing upon findings from the Kennedy Report (1997), is of the view that post-compulsory education has expanded internationally and is driven, in part, by economic arguments and national competitiveness within a context of globalisation. She suggested that, including adults, there were in the 1990s about five million post-16 learners. In an international study which drew upon interview data of 67 first generation participants, Thomas and Quinn (2007, p.2) opt for a view that access to higher education should not only be about '*broadening diversity*' but of facilitating '*success*', adding later that anything else is '*insincere*'. Whilst no acknowledgement is made of the direct discrimination, attitudinal or institutional barriers, or power relations within the academy, their analysis suggests that parental education is the key factor which contributes to access and success (Thomas and Quinn, 2007, p.3). This they claim explains '*voluntary drop out*' amongst working-class students (Thomas and Quinn, 2007, p.4).

Minter (2001, pp.253 – 254) is of the view that the theory of widening participation makes assumptions which invariably constructs excuses for blaming the '*non-participant*'. Minter suggests that HEIs have a tendency to make a direct correlation between non-participation and '*poor experience of school or lack of academic achievement at school*'. HEIs '*repackage learning opportunities to make them more*

palatable' without addressing underlying assumptions, arguing that '*this is far more complex than often portrayed*' rather than facing up to '*inadequacies of what is being offered as learning*' (Minter, 2001, pp.253 – 254).

Adams and Holland (2006, p.12) pointed out that barriers to higher education may be structural, organisational, behavioural and attitudinal '*but all are underpinned by a society that, despite the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation*' does not embrace the inclusion of disabled people – at least, not in the social and affirmation models of disability sense. Adams and Holland's examination give as one example students living away from family and friends, but suggested that for disabled students this was more complex. In this respect Adams and Holland asserted that where an individual has previously received personal support from family members, or had employed personal assistants, they would be additionally adjusting to a new support structure. A successful higher education experience, they argue, is not simply about '*academic study but also the development of social skills and achieving independence*' (Adams and Holland, 2006, p.15). Although in contrast, Pumfrey (2008, p.44), using data from 1998-2005 of '*the first-degree results of students with and without disabilities in higher education*', reports that '*the government's aspiration to develop a more inclusive HE system is on track*' but cautions that '*this rosy picture is an oversimplification*'. Pumfrey records that, from the 1,502,658 sample, the number of students completing their first degrees has '*increased for all students, for both non-disabled and disabled students*' but concludes that whilst there is evidence that the UK is moving towards a more inclusive HE system. However, '*it is unlikely that this view represents a consensus among academics*' (Pumfrey, 2008, p.45).

3.5 Non-participation and Rising Student Debt

Another discourse related to widening participation is the issue of non-participation and the view that lower socio-economic groups are said to self-exclude because of *their* lack of confidence and low self-esteem (Robertson and Hillman, 1997). Yet another includes low aspiration and poverty (Woodrow, *et al.*, 1998). However, some authors (Woodrow, *et al.*, 1998; Minter, 2001; Hale, 2006) suggest that the issue of low participation is more complex. In this respect Hale's, for instance, takes a broader view of the education sector as a whole and argues that '... *universities comes* [*sic*] *far too late in the potential student's education and social experiences to overturn or compensate for accrued disadvantage*' (Hale, 2006, pp.98 – 99). Preece (1999) places the blame for non-participation on educational institutions rather than the learner, arguing that:

> … *'non-participants' in formal education are indeed active participants when their own needs, values and social networks are recognised. Their absence from the mainstream is due to attitudes from within institution, rather than a lack of interest in learning amongst the marginalised.*
> (Preece, 1999, p.viii)

Preece aimed at conceptualising the cultural, structural and social power relations which surround and silence the '*marginalised voice*' (Preece, 1999, p.111). She acknowledged that the life experiences of people *could* mean that they contributed to their own silences and social exclusion. Preece argues that university adult education excludes by not recognising these excluded voices. Earlier, Preece (1995) conducted a survey of the educational experiences of 44 disabled students with physical impairments. Preece (1995, p.87) found that whilst education was pursued for its own sake, and was seen as an opportunity for social integration, she reported that the '*earlier someone had acquired a disability, the less likely they were, as adults to have achieved professional or higher qualifications*'. Preece (1995, p.87) noted that the qualification levels amongst the women being surveyed

were '*particularly low*' and that barriers to course attendance tended to reflect '*both attitudinal and practical access issues, with underachievement often the result of oppression from a variety of sources*'.

Gutteridge (2001) linked retention and on-course support for disabled students with increasing costs and argued that among 'marginalised' groups the lack of life skills may be a significant factor. Gutteridge (2001, p.140), concerned about under-representation and '*redressing the balance*', added that '*self-management are crucial for all students for effective coping with the experience of higher education*'. Drawing upon a disabled student's comments on withdrawing from their course, Gutteridge (2001, p.143) noted three aspects of life skills which '*may be important predictors of successful participation*', these he argued were the ability to manage self, the ability to appraise one's own situation and communication skills. It seems that the work of Foucault (1977) is extremely relevant and pertinent; that is, surveillance and normalisation (life skills) become instruments of power. Gutteridge's (2001, p.149) point is that barriers to participation in higher education arise not only as a direct result of structural barriers but may also result from '*the way individuals react to and learn from their life experiences*' concluding that '*Advice guidance and strategies to widen participation are integral to retention*' (Gutteridge, 2001, p.151). Although commentary from Peter McDonald, who graduated in Sociology, in his reflection of having attended a segregated 'special' school made the point that:

> *Coming from a segregated education system, I quickly*
> *realised how poor were my basic study skills, such as note-*
> *taking in lectures, essay planning and writing, and time-*
> *management. I had not been taught these skills, and they*
> *were rarely demanded of me by special education.*
> (McDonald, 1996, pp.123 – 124)

Robertson and Hillman (1997) commented that various attempts had been made to explain under-participation in higher education particularly amongst lower socio-economic groups, suggesting '*places in higher education are held to be purposefully rationed*' and allocated preferentially according to merit criteria and/or social attributes. Robertson and Hillman (1997, p.36) suggested that such explanations emphasise the relationship between power, wealth and class hierarchies, adding that whilst screening for labour market placements higher education is by design '*seeking to perpetuate elite renewal but structurally excluding students from lower socio-economic groups*' and students described as having 'learning difficulties'. Indeed, Williams (1997, p.93) suggested a '*selectors*' discourse which has meant that there has been an institutional discourse about meeting targets around the financial penalties of under- or over-recruiting.

Williams and Abson held the opinion that students are rationed by governments and targets, through funding which influences the size and structure of higher education and thus limits opportunities for expansion, commenting that:

> *Higher education is thus structurally rationed according to perceptions of national need and/or costs and rationed to individuals in various ways: through criteria which establish eligibility for financial support (fee payment and eligibility for student loans are geared to particular kinds of students, with full-time undergraduate degree level students receiving the highest and most consistent level of funding)….*
> (Williams and Abson, 2001, p.17)

The opinion that governments use funding to influence the size and structure of higher education is a theme that emerges throughout their book (Anderson and Williams, 2001). Layard *et al*. (1969), in relation to the Robbins Committee, previously put the figure of participation for 1967-8 at around 172,000. With respect to participation figures, Robertson and Hillman (1997) argued that higher education remains a young person's experience. Participation rates amongst 18 – 20 year-

olds were at more than twice the rate of any other group and at nearly ten times the

rate of the general population, argue Robertson and Hillman (1997, p.38), and state

that there is still a long way to go '*before participation in higher education can be

regarded as a lifelong learning experience*'. And yet more than a decade later,

McGettigan (2013, p.67), argues that '*undergraduate places are rationed*' and for

September 2012 entry put the figure around '... *325,000 places at HEIs (with a

further 25,000 HE places available at FE colleges)*'.

As opposed to higher education participation, Watts and Bridges (2006) interviewed

and documented the life histories of young people about the value of non-

participation in higher education. Watts and Bridges found that 'many' young people

resented the assumed link with low aspiration and non-participation in HE arguing

that 'non-participation is not simply a matter of *low* aspiration but that it may arise

from *different* aspirations; and that these different aspirations are linked to the lives

and lifestyles of young people who may not recognise any benefit afforded by HE'

(Watts and Bridges, 2006, pp.267 – 268, *original emphasis*). Green and Webb

(1997, pp.133 – 134), who are interested in the discourse of selectivity and equity,

also identified a small group of interviewees in their study who decided not to

pursue higher education at the age of 18 as an option but disparagingly label this

group as '*wasted potential*' because they were exercising a resistance to higher

education. Forsyth and Furlong (2003, pp.216 - 217), however, identified reasons

for qualified young people who choose not to pursue higher education being related

to individuals deferring their place '*but most*' were saving in order to pursue their

studies. Hale (2006) made the point that widening participation in higher education

cannot compensate for social and educational disadvantage, is ineffectual in

promoting equality of opportunity and carries serious 'disbenefits'. Hale argues that

whilst the New Labour equality of opportunity rhetoric of '*a fair chance for everyone*'

is politically attractive '*individuals can have their lack of progress and feeling of

personal failure compounded by the implications that it is 'their fault', when in reality it is much more complex' (Hale, 2006, p.94).

With regard to rising student debt a number of authors are expressing a growing concern (Minter, 2001; L.Thomas, 2001; Callender, 2002; Forsyth and Furlong, 2003; Hale, 2006). Minter (2001) in critiquing the widening participation agenda, for example, aligns the view that non-participation results from the combination and interaction of diverse factors, rather than any one factor. The work of Forsyth and Furlong (2003) found that higher education is taken up when jobs are difficult to attain; a finding that was reflected in the work of L.Thomas (2001). Hale (2006) draws upon the work of Forsyth and Furlong (2003), with reference to the serious 'disbenefits' of entering higher education which relates to the financial costs and identified that the prospect of debt was a particular deterrent for potential students.

With respect to rising student debt, Callender (2002) found that the prospect of pursuing higher education is an increasingly risky investment decision especially for low-income students. Ainley *et al.* (2002) found that student debt and hours of paid work have both increased commenting that any such impact will be felt disproportionately by those from less affluent backgrounds known to be debt averse. Archer *et al.* (2002) in their research found that, alongside identifying reasons of social and economic risks, costs, financial hardship and insecurity, respondents' reasons for non-participation were also grounded in discourses of identity and emotion. They recorded comments from participants who regarded routes designed to widen access as 'money-making' schemes, with comments such as:

> '*It's a complete utter rip-off, education. The older you get …*
> *the more money they get off you' (Jodie, 18 white female,*
> *unemployed). 'They would be after your money, not how*

> *brainy you are' (Laura, female, 30, bank worker)*'. (cited in
> Archer, *et al.*, 2002, p.116)

Such comments are echoed in a newspaper article entitled '*University degrees are a waste of time – the damning verdict of British students*' which reports that undergraduates fear that the drive to increase participation to 50% by 2010 will make '*degrees worthless and leave them struggling to get a good job after graduation*' (Cassidy, 2008, p.4). Despite, on average a graduate owing £21,500 students believe that '*they will be forced to take on more debt to study for postgraduate qualifications*' (Cassidy, 2008, p.4). It seems ironic, that when in 1964 the Robbins Committee recommended the mass expansion of higher education as a 'universal' provision, that participation would rest on merit rather than ability to pay. Beckett (2002, p.215), working as a higher education adviser at a 6th form centre, suggested that when the government abandoned grants and introduced tuition fees, payments and loans, policy-makers made '*two gross errors*'. First, that the new system was not explained well enough and; second, that the issue of debt aversion of low participation groups was '*totally ignored*' (Beckett, 2002, p.215). Since September 2006 the cost of higher education has shifted from taxpayers to students with HEIs starting to charge fees to full-time undergraduates which have risen, in some instances, to £9,000 per year. It seems then, that the meaning and function of higher education is problematic particularly when arguments about academic standards and who is an acceptable candidate for higher education are raised. In addition, it raises the question about the number of disabled students participating in higher education.

3.6 So, how many disabled students are there?

Calculating an exact number for the population of disabled students in higher education is fraught with difficulty. Figures by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2007) recorded that between 2002 and 2005 there had been an

increase in the percentage of students attending a full-time first degree and in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA); this is a term used to monitor the participation of disabled students in higher education. Figures for 1999 – 2000 recorded that the intake of full-time higher education students included five per cent who had declared a disability and one per cent had received DSA (NAO, 2002, p.7). The figures presented by HESA (2007) ranged from 23,200 (2.6 per cent) students in 2002/03 to 38,950 (4.1 per cent) students attending in 2005/06 and in receipt of DSA. Earlier, Robertson and Hillman (1997, p.69) reported that, of the disabled students studying full-time, 72 per cent declared a disability as dyslexia or diabetes, epilepsy and asthma and added that '*the true extent of students with disability in higher education is obscured by the large numbers of 'not knowns' … and a significant proportion with 'not-listed' disabilities*'. Using DSA as a measure of participation is not accurate, irrespective of incentives to disclose. Indeed, as was noted in some HEIs, the majority of disabled students do not claim DSAs (NAO, 2007). Whilst it could be argued that disabled students are positioned between issues of privacy and disclosure, whether through UCAS, at registration or through applying for the DSA, two other points are worth noting. First, that the individual/medical (biophysical) category declared is not necessarily the category for which the DSA allowance is received, and; second, that disclosing a disability is no guarantee of preventing disadvantage (NAO, 2002; Riddell *et al.*, 2005b). Numbers for individuals described, inappropriately, as having 'learning difficulties' are non-existent.

Up to 2002/03 nine categories of disability were recognised by HE institutions and a year later in 2003/04 the category 'autism' was added. Thomas (2001, p.54) noted in her work that for monitoring purposes disability may be self-defined and identified by students. However, what makes the HESA dataset unreliable is that only those students who declare a disability on the University and Colleges Admissions

Services (UCAS) or registration forms are actually recorded. Tinklin *et al.* (2004) made the point that whilst disclosure is problematic for higher education institutions there have been increased incentives to disclose an impairment '*particularly for students with dyslexia*', stating that:

> *Nowadays, students declaring dyslexia may be entitled to buy a computer through the DSA, which will help them with grammar and spell-checking, and to extra time in examinations.* (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004, p.640)

Whilst the construction of 'dyslexia' is a contested area (Riddell and Weedon, 2006), when it relates to assessment in higher education, as is discussed later, there is an emerging critique (Sharp and Earle, 2000; Konur, 2002; Adams and Brown, 2006; White, 2006; Healey, *et al.*, 2006; Hanafin, *et al.*, 2007). Returning to the issue of student numbers, Thomas (2001, p.54) pointed out that institutions received financial incentives (premium funding) to recruit more disabled students referring to the HEFCE Circular letter 7/00, making the point that '*non-traditional students are likely to require extra support to help them succeed and thus colleges incur additional costs, both to recruit them initially and support them through their learning*'. However, Riddell and Weedon (2006, p.64) noted that whilst premium funding may encourage institutions to accept students who qualify for DSA, the process '*disincentivises the recruitment of students with much greater needs*' which no doubt raises questions as to the recruitment of disabled students with '*much greater needs*'.

It seems that gaining an accurate figure of disabled students' participation in higher education is also problematic across countries. For example, the OECD (2003) identified that in 'many' countries there was an absence of statistical data. In addition, the OECD highlighted the lack of information on courses that disabled students choose, and lack of attainment rates and made the point that '*Most*

institutions show great concern for the career prospects of their non-disabled

students, but not of students with disabilities' (OECD, 2003, p.23). This makes it

difficult to gauge attainment and monitor inclusion and support (OECD, 2003).

Similar concerns with nomenclature were noted by Adams and Brown (2006, p.2)

who explained that even when statistics are gained they underestimate the actual

numbers of disabled students '*particularly those with* [*sic*] *mental health difficulties*

and various unseen impairments' due to issues of disclosure. Adams and Brown

used figures for 2003-04 reporting that 41 per cent of disabled students declared

'dyslexia' as a disability and 20 per cent reported having an unseen impairment

such as 'epilepsy', 'diabetes' and 'asthma'.

3.7 Disabled Students' Allowances (DSA)

DSA are need-based allowances intended to account for the extra costs and

expenses incurred due to a disabled student's support needs; such as with:

computers, software, tape recorders and the employment of personal assistants,

sign language interpreters and note-takers (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004). For most students

the formal assessment for the DSA, previously administered by the LEA, is required

for accessing support, technology, tuition and personal support. However, a number

of difficulties had been identified (Ghallchoir-Cottrell, 1996; Robertson and Hillman,

1997; Watson and Taylor, 1998). In order to receive DSA individuals are required to

provide evidence of disability, and students identified as having a 'specific learning

difficulty' such as 'dyslexia' must be assessed by an educational psychologist or

provide equivalent evidence (OECD, 2003). Earlier, with respect to LEAs,

Ghallchoir-Cottrell (1996, p.62) made the point that they varied in how they

administered DSAs particularly in relation to the '*evidence of difficulty*' resulting in

delays and students having to begin courses '*without knowing if they will have the*

support they need to succeed'. In some instances students with '*undisputed*

physical disabilities' had waited up to 18 months for awards to be approved

(HEFCE, 1995, p.13). As a consequence Ghallchoir-Cottrell described the accumulated frustrations and additional financial pressures placed upon university departments which offer 'support' which cannot be made '*until funds have been agreed, which can be many months into the student's course*' (Ghallchoir-Cottrell, 1996, p.93). Whilst originally, DSAs were only available to full-time students, there have been significant changes. For example, DSAs are available to full- and part-time students, for postgraduate study, and currently administered via the Student Loans Company on behalf of LEAs (D*f*ES, 2005). Eligibility is neither affected by age nor means-tested and where the issue of disclosure arises the guidance (D*f*ES, 2005, p.6) advises applicants to contact the 'disability adviser' suggesting that '*He or she may be able to advise you and give you more information about the help the university or college can provide*' but acknowledges that some disabled students do not want to disclose their '*disability or specific learning difficulty*'. The OECD (2003, p.88) noted that whilst students need not be registered as disabled or disclose their impairment '*they must be assessed by university staff or by an independent assessment centre*'. In being awarded DSA the rates of allowances for students for 2013/14 are for:

- Specialist equipment allowance – up to £5,161 for the whole of the course.
- Non-medical helper's allowance (such as readers, sign language interpreters, note-takers) – up to £20,520 a year.
- General Disabled Students' Allowance (includes items such as tapes and Braille paper) – up to £1,724 a year.
- Reasonable spending on extra travel costs (if extra costs are incurred because of a disability). (D*f*lUS, 2013)

Ghallchoir-Cottrell (1996, p.62) highlighted concerns in relation to some LEAs who support applications for technology '*but not support the technology tuition which would ensure its use*'. However, given recent changes the D*f*IUS (2008, p.16) guidance currently states that you can '*get some initial training in using any equipment that is recommended*' the costs being absorbed by the non-medical helper's allowance of the DSA. Cooper and Corlett (1996), Tinklin *et al.* (2004) and Riddell *et al.* (2005a), however, raise some concern. Cooper and Corlett's (1996, p.156) concern relates to institutions that have begun to use the DSAs to fund *their* service by charging disabled students '... *for the person who arranges the hire and purchase*' and '*towards the help received from institution staff in claiming the allowance in the first place*'. It seems that the comments made by Oliver (1996, p.69) concerning social policy and welfare are possibly applicable in this context that, '*the price of those services is usually acceptance on the invasion of privacy*' of services that higher education institutions '*thinks you should have or is willing to pay for, rather than those that you know you need*'. A form of socialisation into dependency. Tinklin *et al.* (2004), whilst welcoming the changes with regard to the eligibility and availability of DSA, raise the point that there is a risk that:

> *… the emphasis on provision for disabled students remains too much on providing students with individual support to access an otherwise inaccessible 'mainstream' system, which remains largely unchanged.* (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004, p.649)

Tinklin *et al.* suggest that an alternative model informed by the social model would say that it is the '*environment that needs to change, in order that barriers for disabled students are tackled and removed*' (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004, p.649). Likewise, Riddell *et al.* (2005a, p.627) noted that '*It might be argued that the DSA reflects an individualised view of impairment as residing within the student, which is somewhat at odds with social model thinking*'. Arguably, these concerns also extend to organisations that claim to represent the interests of disabled students at higher

education as was succinctly expressed when Oliver (1996, p.12) resigned his interest from, the then, '*National Bureau for* [*sic*] *Handicapped* [*sic*] *Students*' which in 1988 became commonly known as '*SKILL: The National Bureau for* [*sic*] *Students with Disabilities*'. Oliver (cited in Campbell and Oliver, 1996, p.182) with a tone of disillusionment felt that '*as a disabled student, I thought it [SKILL] was a way to open up higher education to more and more disabled people*'. Oliver's concern raises a question about the difference between organisations *of* and organisations *for* disabled people and no doubt raises a key political question in relation to the controlling possibilities of SKILL in determining the participation rate of disabled students at higher education level (although now disbanded). These issues raise interest in understanding how higher education responds to disabled students.

3.8 Reasonable adjustments and the requirements of the Disability Equality Duty

Part of the response from the university sector has included issues of physical access and 'reasonable adjustments'. However, the issue of access not only relates to physical aspects but also to teaching, learning and assessment. Due to the SENDA Act 2001 adjustments to physical features or premises came into force on 1 September 2005. As with the Disability Equality Duty (2006), a case study of six public bodies were judged in their production of their Disability Equality Schemes, one being the Department for Education and Skills (D*f*ES) and two of which were higher education institutions (RADAR, 2007). RADAR, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, had been commissioned by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) to examine the implementation and involvement processes by interviewing individuals from two disability organisations about their involvement in the Disability Equality Scheme. Whilst presenting a positive view of two of the participating higher education institutions, RADAR (2007) found that individuals representing disability organisations had 'limited influence' due to not being involved from the start. There were difficulties with finding a suitable second interviewee from

one of the HEIs and therefore not being able to say whether they were involved in the drafting of the Disability Equality Scheme. In response to the D*f*ES, Colin Barnes from the Centre of Disability Studies, and Tara Flood from the Alliance for Inclusive Education, commented on their participation, stating that:

> *The DfES contains clear directives and practice action points. … This is an ongoing process so it is too early to evaluate the impact, but the initial start by the DfES is promising.* (Colin Barnes, Centre for Disability Studies)
> *The DfES has done more than some other Government departments but there is still a long way to go. … The DfES has now recognised that implementation has to happen in partnership with disabled people. … We welcome their involvement of disabled young people, but one-off events aren't good enough. The DfES need to resource that process, and they need to encourage schools to take this process seriously.* (Tara Flood, Alliance for Inclusive Education) (RADAR, 2007, p.7)

In conclusion the report highlighted the '*apprehension*' amongst disability organisations and disabled people, and was concerned with the subsequent implementation processes, pointing out that '*It must be recognised by all public bodies that implementation is just as important and that adhering to the duty is an ongoing process of continual improvement*' (RADAR, 2007. pp.17 – 18).

The DDA 1995 required universities to produce a disability statement setting out their policy on provision and implementation for disabled students, to describe the education and research facilities available and to designate a disability co-ordinator, described as a '*mover and a shaker*' (OECD, 2003, p.93). Yet, as observed by the OECD, institutions have not always drawn up an explicit disability statement and defined how it will be implemented. The OECD contends that the participation of disabled students in higher education tends to be an:

> *… occasional act of philanthropy on behalf of the needy than an educational duty inherent in the institution's mission; the work involved in accommodating and supporting SWD [students with disabilities] rests on the*

> *shoulders of a single individual rather than being a community effort involving everyone, from students and academics to administrative and other staff.* (OECD, 2003, p.26)

Similar findings were reported by Tinklin *et al.* (2004) who noted the difficulties experienced by disability co-ordinators in influencing developments in this area. Tinklin *et al.* identified, amongst difficulties with an increasing workload, that providing 'extra' support for disabled students, making reasonable adjustments, were problematic issues. In particular, providing lecture notes in electronic format which raised fears as to students not attending lectures, or when lecture notes were not routinely used would require individuals to make changes in practice, amongst '*concerns about lowering standards through providing extra support or alternative means of assessment*' (Tinklin, *et al.*, 2004, p.652). SKILL (2004) highlighted, however, that the legal definition of 'reasonableness' is problematic. Under the Disability Discrimination Act factors such as: the need to maintain academic standards, financial resources available to the education provider, grants or loans available to the student, cost of the adjustment, the extent to which the adjustment is practicable, the extent to which aids and services may be provided by other agencies or parties, health and safety requirements and the relevant interest of other people including other students. These are considered when assessing 'reasonableness' (SKILL, 2004).

3.8.1 Assessment trap

Using education as an example, Fairclough (1992, p.50) argues that modern power is not forced from above, it develops '*from below*' in certain '*microtechniques*' via examinations, which are embedded in institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools, colleges and universities. As to discourse in relation to the issues of assessment (Sharpe and Earle, 2000; Konur, 2002; White, 2006; Arora, 2005; Hanafin, 2007), this creates a divisive discourse which avoids the question of its

purpose. Fairclough (1992) made the point that assessments are a form of modern power – an instrument of exclusion and social control. Indeed, the work of Arora in the field of 'race' makes the point that '*Lecturers have also been accused of using the setting and marking of essays as a tool to control students.* (Arora, 2005, pp.15 – 16). The '*basic goal*' of disciplinary power, argue Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982, pp.134 – 135, original emphasis), is to produce '*a human being who could be treated as a "docile body". This docile body also had to be a productive body*'. Such disciplinary, regulatory and confessional regimes become internalised by individuals and can be seen as self-discipline to regulate future behaviour (Mills, 2004). As Foucault noted:

> *The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgement. It is a normalising gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualised.* (Foucault, 1977, p.184)

The examination objectifies, deploys a force which establishes a truth. What follows is an example, a re-interpretation of the way assessment is fought for and over. It exemplifies how this territorialised space intentionally avoids the question relating to its purpose.

Turning to the issue of assessment, an article by Sharp and Earle (2000) focuses on concerns about differences between compensatory assessment and alternative assessments in relation to disabled students in higher education. For the authors '*Compensation refers to a range of practices that are designed to offset the limitations resulting from a student's disability. These include measures such as allowing extra time in examinations, providing an amanuensis or word-processor, as well as giving exemptions from all or part of an assessment*' (Sharp and Earle,

2000, pp.191 – 192). The authors examine the principle of offering alternative forms

of assessment which they argue reveal confusions about the purpose of

assessment. Using the concept of validity, Sharp and Earle (2000) raise questions

about whether assessment tools do in fact assess what they claim to be assessing.

Sharp and Earle (2000, p.194) who draw upon their survey and highlighted the

range of practices, recording that 83 per cent of participating HEIs implemented

procedures of compensation and that 90 per cent allowed disabled students to take

an alternative form of assessment replacing the usual time-constrained

examination. The authors further recorded that 60 per cent of participating HEIs

'*possessed no formal guidelines on the matter*' and contend that '*for an alternative*

form of assessment genuinely to be equivalent to an original, there should be no

reason why all of the candidates should not be assessed in this alternative way'

(Sharp and Earle, 2000, pp.194 – 195). Sharp and Earle argue that compensatory

assessment methods produce problems and one central issue is in relation to

validity. Moreover, Sharp and Earle point out that such concerns run contrary to

UPIAS (1976) definition of disability, and state that:

> *Alternative assessments, it has been argued, are only*
> *acceptable if they are genuinely equivalent in terms of the*
> *skills and knowledge they test, and if they are genuinely*
> *equivalent in this respect, then there can be no conceivable*
> *reason to prevent any candidate from being assessed in*
> *this way. Common practice of, for example, allowing some*
> *students extra time in examinations, permitting them to take*
> *examinations under 'sheltered conditions' and allowing*
> *dyslexic student to take examinations using computers with*
> *enhanced spelling and grammar checking facilities are, it*
> *has been argued, without justification and indeed threaten*
> *to undermine the whole purpose of assessment.* (Sharp and
> Earle, 2000, pp.197 – 198)

The authors argue that the practice of offering disabled students alternative forms of

assessment is compensatory in nature and that this threatens the requirements of

assessments with respect to validity and unfairly discriminates '*against people who,*

for whatever reason, are unable to undertake the assessment in question' (Sharp

and Earle, 2000, p.198). In response Konur contends that the arguments put forward by Sharp and Earle (2000) '*not to make any such reasonable adjustment may be taken as a good example of such informal constraints and attitudes*' (Konur 2002, p.135). Konur argues that the provision of student assessment services is '*one of the most problematic area*s' (Konur, 2002, p.131). Konur (2002) is calling for a closer scrutiny of assessment and disabled students in higher education. For Konur (2002, p.147) such scrutiny about the design and implementation of assessment adjustment for disabled students should be considered in a wider public policy context observing that:

> *… the educators and administrators in the UK higher education programmes may play an historical role as the main players in the game in making proper assessment adjustments for disabled students undertaking examinations to ensure that their academic achievement is measured rather than their disabilities … The research also shows that attitudes towards making assessment adjustments for disabled students in particular, are embedded in the social norms of the society … Therefore, educators and administrators should engage in a long-term attitude change process in making higher education programmes and their assessment services accessible for disabled students as public policy initiatives ….* (Konur, 2002, p.149)

On the contrary, it is not, arguably, only about making 'assessment services accessible' but that such assessment measure disability; that is, assessment like visibility is a trap. Indeed, such comments reverberate with those made by Peter White, Disability Affairs Correspondent, who provided the foreword to Adam and Brown's (2006) book entitled '*Towards Inclusive Learning in Higher Education*' commenting:

> *I cannot be equal without Braille; Tani Grey-Thompson cannot be equal without ramps; a deaf students cannot be equal without signers and interpreters; and none of us can be equal if academic and support staff don't understand that 'inclusion' means far more than just being in the same lecture room as everyone else: it means being able to take part fully in the life of the institution; joining societies,*

> *enjoying the social life, and being treated with informed*
> *respect.* (White, 2006, p.xvii – xviii)

Healey *et al.* (2006) explain such dilemmas differently in that they position disabled students along a continuum of 'learner differences' rather than as a separate category explaining that sometimes the barriers are more severe for disabled students, but sometimes not. Their position is that the beneficiaries of disability legislation with regard to reasonable adjustments are non-disabled students. The point being that such things as '*well-prepared handouts, instructions given in writing as well as verbally, notes put online, and variety and flexibility in forms of assessment, are simply good teaching and learning practices which benefit all students*' (Healey, *et al.*, 2006, p.41). Hanafin *et al.* (2007, p.447) argue that under present arrangements '*the best students with disabilities may hope for*' is that some adjustment may be made in their assessment although this might be no more than '*assistive technology, a scribe, or a little extra time*'. Their argument being that assessment practices are not subject to critical scrutiny particularly not in terms of how they discriminate against individual groups, adding that:

> *When we measure what a learner knows through what he*
> *or she can write about a topic in an hour, we assume this to*
> *be an adequate measure of the student's knowledge or*
> *understanding of the topic.* (Hanafin, *et al.*, 2007, p.443)

Increasing emphasis can be made of standards but the implied quality in those standards is rarely open to scrutiny (Hanafin, *et al.*, 2007). As Hanafin *et al.* (2007, p.444, *original emphasis*) point out the problem with assessment is that it 'emphasises assessment *of* learning rather than *for* learning, missing opportunities to use assessment to improve learning'. Their argument is for inclusive assessment practices which they suggest are likely to be of importance to '*many students*' and has the benefit of drawing on research and practice carried out in the compulsory education sector '*where many of the same problems have been faced*' (Hanafin, *et*

al., 2007, p.445). Although in contrast Preece found that where participants commented on the quality of their education in 'special' schools, units or hospitals, they felt the education had been '*poor – whether this occurred 5 or 25 years ago*' (Preece, 1995, p.91) and moreover found that:

> *Due to past experience, disabled people, especially those*
> *who attended segregated education, seem often to develop*
> *psychological barriers to learning.* (Preece, 1995, p.94)

Hanafin, *et al.*, however, are of the opinion that in relation to assessment practices and disability '*the special education sector has much to contribute to mainstream education practices*' (Hanafin, *et al.*, 2007, p.445). McDonald (1996) noted a contrary view from his experience of having attended ten years of segregated 'special' schooling. McDonald (1996), whilst conceding that he held a negative attitude developed a sociological critique, rather than an individual/medical (biophysical) model perspective. McDonald (1996, p.119) identified barriers within the 'special' schooling system itself and argued that disabled people do not benefit from segregated education, and stated that '*there is no doubt in my mind, that the medical model is dominant within special schools*' and that this model '*provides much of the justification for the existence of special education itself*'. What is unclear about the work of Hanafin *et al.* (2007) in relation to the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative is knowing exactly what 'special' schooling can contribute to mainstream education, particularly when students described as having 'learning difficulties' are excluded from higher education.

To recapitulate, the preceding context has provided a complex set of issues, the majority of which, when referring to disabled students, have been embedded within the individual/medical (biophysical) model of disability which interprets disability as 'deficit', that individuals need to change if they are to participate in higher education. As Riddell *et al.*, (2005b, p.17) note '*disabled students are forced to operate within a*

system which understands disability in terms of mental or physical deficit', and

recognition of this situation, from a social model perspective is increasingly being

noted (Oliver, 1996; Riddell, *et al.*, 2005a; Campbell and Oliver, 1996; Tinklin, *et al.*,

2004) alongside an affirmation model (Swain and French, 2008) and postmodern

perspective (Radford, 2000; Allan, 2008).

3.9 Summary

This chapter has sought to explore literature related to disability and the academy.

What is apparent is that a detailed search of the literature offers limited association

with the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. However, opportunities are

beginning to emerge. Postmodernist perspectives offer radically different

understandings which raise questions as to the exclusion of individuals described as

having 'learning difficulties' from higher education. However, what does emerge is a

discourse of raising aspiration, under-representation and non-participation is the

lack of recognition given to 'marginalised voices' (Preece, 1999; Fuller *et al.*,

2004a). Identified issues include a lack of support around issues of life skills, self-

management and effective coping with the demands of higher education (Gutteridge

2001), issues of power, wealth and class hierarchies (Robertson and Hillman,

1997), opportunity costs (Thomas, 2001), the assumed link with students' low

aspirations (Burchardt, 2005; Watts and Bridges, 2006) and the lack of

acknowledgements with the 'disbenefits' of higher education participation (Forsyth

and Furlong, 2003; Hale, 2006). These issues are also bound to affect disabled

students labelled as having 'learning difficulties'.

This chapter highlights the emerging discourse of selectivity, rationing, rising

student debt, counselling/guidance and drop-out, all in tension with a social

inclusion agenda. Of note is an emerging discourse related to the value of non-

participation and the experience of different aspirations, not necessarily of low

aspirations (Watts and Bridges, 2006); a theme currently limited in this field. What seems troubling is the notion of widening participation appearing to be more accurately described as a 'widening gap', principally where disabled young people and people from lower social economic backgrounds are considered. On reflection and in connection, is the interesting choice of words chosen by Woodrow *et al*. (1998) who, arguably, drew upon schooling as a metaphor for prison when trying to explain the link between 'low' participation and the 'lack of' aspirations commenting that students leave school as soon as they are '*free*' to do so.

In addition, this chapter discusses the problematic issue of measuring the participation of disabled students. Changes in DSA have been welcomed but concerns have also been raised; namely, that DSA reflect an individualised/medicalised (biophysical) view of disability and that problems reside within the student rather than within the higher education environment needing to change. Likewise, the debate concerning standards has been raised, and arguably standards, in part, camouflage discrimination.

CHAPTER 4: Research Methods, Measures, Procedures and Analysis

This chapter presents the research methodology adopted in this study. In doing so, it necessarily considers epistemology. It begins with defining case study, followed by a discussion of the issues concerning anonymity, confidentiality, values, ethics, and acknowledges the problem of assuring confidentiality. In doing this, it offers a counter discourse, acknowledging unease with the positivist terms 'validity' and 'reliability' and explains why the idea of 'generalisation' is problematic. This chapter also contains reflective accounts that were recorded in a research log, sharing my own research journey, identifying research problems and questions. In summary it seeks to learn from this qualitative inquiry, to immerse myself in understanding the lived experiences of the individual participants. This chapter provides an overview of the qualitative methods used in this study, and discusses the process of data collection and analysis. It accounts for the various interpretations of disability, and is mindful of questioning the process of research. It concludes by preparing the ground for a representation of the data, preparing the floor for a postmodern perspective; breaking from traditional methods of representation, and offers a conceptual space for a performance, an alternative creative burst.

4.1 Defining Case Study Research

In defining case study research a number of authors proffer varying definitions (Easton, 1982; Curzon, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995; Bassey, 1999; Gillham, 2000; Travers, 2001; Robson, 2002; Wolcott, 2002; Gerring, 2007; Simons, 2009; Ragin and Becker, 2009). Easton (1982), for example, adopts case study as an aid to teaching and learning. Curzon describes case study as a '*mode of instruction*' and argues that case study research was designed originally to aid decision making in business as an active, participatory teaching-learning situation '*which mirrors the outside world*' (Curzon, 1990, p.295). Curzon's (1990, p.298) description primarily resides in the teaching approach associated with 'learning by

doing' which he suggests is one of its advantages. Understanding case study research as a qualitative endeavour is problematic. Indeed, in trying to answer the question 'What it is a case?', Ragin and Becker (2009, p.16) note that it has no beginning or end. Moreover, Wolcott (2002, p.101), in discussing how he could represent qualitative approaches, uses a tree analogy conceding that the '... *problem was not that case study didn't belong anywhere but that it seemed to belong everywhere*', and preferred to regard case study 'in a narrower sense: *a format for reporting*'. Yin (1994, p.1), preferring to focus on the type of questions being asked, argues that:

> *In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" and "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.* (Yin, 1994, p.1)

Moreover, Yin argues that as an empirical inquiry, the boundaries between '*phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*' (Yin, 1994, pp.12 – 13). For Stake (1995, p.xi), not paying attention to quantitative approaches, suggests that case study is '*expected to catch the complexity of a single case*'. He draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological and biographical methods and argues that case study research is the study of '*particularity and complexity of a single case*' (Stake, 1995, p.xi). Stake suggests that there are '*many, many ways to do case studies*' as a '*disciplined*' qualitative inquiry and states that '*before you is a palette of methods*' (Stake, 1995, p.xii). Stake (1995, p.xii) adds that the method of inquiry is dependent upon one of three categorisations of case study. These categories he states are intrinsic, instrumental or collective. The reasoning behind this categorisation, is that the '*methods we will use will be different, depending on intrinsic and instrumental interests*' (Stake, 1995, p.4). Knowing the differences between methods is to get the most out of using a case study research approach. Thus for Stake (1995) an 'intrinsic' case study is described as a personal interest,

'instrumental' is described as a way of trying to understand something else 'through' the case study, and 'collective' involves more than one case study in relation to a number of instrumental studies. Bassey (1999) argues that 'knowing the differences' also involves engaging in the philosophical debates concerning research methodology, particularly, in relation to mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches. (For a discussion of the mixing of quantitative and qualitative approaches refer to Robson, 1985; Burton, 2000; Travers, 2001; Scholz and Tietje, 2002; Scott and Usher, 1999 and Bryman, 2006).

Gillham (2000, p.1) defines a 'case' as being a unit of human action embedded in the 'real' world which can 'only' be studied in context and '*which exists in the here and now; that merges in with its context so that precise boundaries are difficult to draw*'. For Gillham a 'key' question relates to the relationship between the 'method' and the 'phenomenon' asking '*In other words does the method used mean that important elements are missed out or constrained*' (Gillham, 2000, p.6). In response, he argues that '*experimental science*' type approaches are '*ill-suited*' to the embedded character of '*real-life phenomena*' (Gillham, 2000, p.6). Gerring (2007, p.7), however, attempts to provide a 'scientific' (quantitative) type approach in order to better understand the method and to counterpoise the competing literature which suggests that case study is '*highly suspect*' and '*survives in a curious methodological limbo*'. On the contrary, Simons prefers the definition that:

> *Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in 'real life' context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), programme, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action.* (Simons, 2009, p.25)

Moreover, Simons (2009, p.20) contests the idea that case study can be mathematically represented by *n = 1* and acknowledges the view that '*studying the particular in depth can yield insights of universal significance*'.

As stated, it appears that providing a definition of case study research is a problematic one. It is no surprise that it has become a 'catch all' category, a portmanteau term (Burns, 2000, p.469). Gomm *et al.* (2002) associate this dilemma to the term itself in that it is not used in a standard way. They attribute this to the meaning of the term which overlaps with others; notably, with '*ethnography', 'participant observation', 'fieldwork', 'qualitative research' and 'life history*' (Gomm, *et al.*, 2002, p.1). Gerring (2007, p.69) suggests that ethnography is rightly identified as a case study method, and like ethnography, case study also learns *from* people rather than studying people (Spradley, 1980, p.3). Nonetheless, Gomm *et al.* suggest that a weakness with the approach is due to its use in varying fields, commenting that:

> *… the notion of case study is not restricted to the research context. Lawyers deal with cases, so do detectives, medical practitioners, social workers and others; and, for this reason, the case method has been an influential component of several fields of professional education, and has also figured significantly in the training of managers, most famously at the Harvard Business School.* (Gomm, *et al.*, 2002, p.1)

Whilst describing this broad appeal the authors reason that the weakness of case study is related to a '*less-than-scientific or even unscientific character of this kind of research*' (Gomm, *et al.*, 2002, p.2), a concern shared by Gerring (2007). No doubt such 'reasoning' relates to the 'methodological quarrels', related to notions of 'truth' generally associated with large-scale quantitative, positivist, approaches; what Oakley (2000, p.23) refers to as '*paradigm wars*'. Moreover, as has been argued

(Bloor, *et al*., 2001, p.39) '*all research tools in the social sciences have significant flaws*' and this also includes, no doubt, the perceived 'pure' or 'hard' sciences.

For me, the interest in doing and adopting a case study research approach was primarily influenced by a number of uncertainties within the area under investigation and not as Yin (1994, p.55) has claimed of many people being drawn to the strategy '*because they believe it is "easy."*' For Yin, the assumption that case study research is 'easy' is related to prior skills; however, he goes on to argue that '*In fact, case study research is among the hardest types of research to do*' (Yin, 1994, p.54). For Yin (1994, p.78) these prior skills relate to '*many sources of evidence*' from which he identifies six, these he argues are '*documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artefacts.*' Similarly, Travers (2001) identifies five main methods, these being observation, interviewing, ethnographic fieldwork, discourse analysis and textual analysis. Incidentally, Travers remarks that '*each is simple to do, and requires little, if any, specialist training*' (Travers, 2001, p.2). On the contrary, Yin suggests that:

> *… a well-trained and experienced investigator is needed to conduct a high-quality case study because of the continuous interaction between theoretical issues being studied and the data being collected.* (Yin, 1994, p.55)

For Bassey (1999, p.69) '*case study research has no specific methods of data collection or of analysis which are unique to it as a method of enquiry*'.

Thus, in selecting to use a case study approach it is apt for me to proffer my own definition which emerged from this research experience. First of all, I had purposefully chosen to use the term 'approach' with case study to acknowledge that there is not one consistent way of 'doing' case study research. On the contrary, its strength is that it resists tree-like structures belonging nowhere and everywhere. Its

emergent design is related to the approach being flexible, open, and sensitive to a rapidly changing and interpretative context. As a qualitative method of inquiry, case study research approach offers a range of methods, and an ability to consider why, how and what. In the context of this study, CE is a single case study, a unit of human activity, an in-depth exploration, a contemporary phenomenon, not necessarily where $n = 1$: a singularity studied and interpreted in socio-economic-political-cultural-historical context with boundaries that are difficult to define. As an analytical tool used in the construction of knowledge, this case study approach is an important factor, which critically examines and analyses an educational initiative of this kind, and is particularly sensitive to the lived experience of the participating individuals.

4.1.1 Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative

The case study is a critical investigation of the 'Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative'. The case involves two principal partners, Cutting Edge and Red Brick College. Red Brick College is a specialist college: a drama school offering professional training for the performing arts. From RBC, one senior individual took part in this research. Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative consists of a team of theatre practitioners who contacted Red Brick College with the intention of developing a 'Theatre Performance and Workshop Practice' degree programme for individuals described as having 'learning difficulties'. The team from CE included two theatre artistic directors and four appointed lecturers labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Collectively, the partnership, sought to initiate change and empower individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' to have an active involvement in higher education, theatre arts and work. However, in 2004, CE announced that the initiative had come to an end. This outcome offered a different set of research questions for this case study, ones that focus on understanding why and how the initiative failed, the barriers experienced, and to gain an insight into the experiences of the participating

individuals. One of the participating individuals, an individual who had previously been a student at RBC, was sought through the Vice Chair of CE having adopted a 'snowballing' process, as discussed by Miller and Bell (2002). Four individuals who participated in a workshop activity were identified serendipitously having sent out, an email after the workshop, requests about their involvement.

4.1.2 Participants

The study involves, principally, fourteen participants including myself, these are Iris and Mathew who are the two joint directors of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, Val who is the Chair, Jane who is the Vice Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, Richard who is one of the appointed Lecturers, Adam who is the Vice Principal of Red Brick College; a College of Higher Education, Heather who is the Director of Education of one of the funding bodies, Catherine who is a drama tutor and who previously took part in an associated project (Catherine had been a student at Red Brick College studying on a theatre education course), and Lee who is a senior member of staff who was also involved in an earlier evaluation. There are also four participants who took part in a workshop activity.

4.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Beyond using pseudonyms and laying false trails, one of the immediate dilemmas in this case study research approach is the issue of anonymity and confidentiality. Indeed, one particular troubling question is: why take such an ethical stance when the proposed degree programme by the theatre initiative was acknowledged in public discussions and in the theatre related media? Public discussions relate to the lack of employment opportunities for disabled people in theatre and related professions (Debate, 1999; 2002). Individuals from higher education, theatre companies and funding agencies, similarly made reference to the degree programme, not only the name of the initiative but also to named individuals. The

theatre company CE also gave performances to actively engage and introduce audiences to their work. Therefore, on reflection, how can anonymity and confidentiality be assured if advertisements for potential students and employment positions are all part of the developmental and awareness raising of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative degree programme? It is recognised, that there exists tensions between the somewhat, (possibly), methodological futility (naivety) with issues of anonymity and confidentiality, and the 'uniqueness' of an initiative of this kind. Moreover, participants' anonymity and confidentiality may not necessarily be desirable particularly if there is a feeling that *their* voices are being silenced. Interestingly, during my interviews with participants about the dilemma of anonymity and confidentiality two individuals, Vice Chair and a joint director, made the respective comments:

> *I'm very happy to have my name used, that's fine, I'll stand up and be counted.* (Interview – J160304, 2004, Lines: 45 – 46)

> *I'm happy that you quote anything I've said if we've checked it through …* (Interview – I020304, 2004, Lines: 28 – 29)

Moreover, such participants were members of focus group settings in which, as is noted (Stewart, *et al.*, 2007, p.93), the '*setting already makes all comments public*'; a point previous noted by Morgan (1988, pp.39 – 40). Further still, paradoxically, the theoretical framework related to genealogy itself is concerned with recovering silenced voices, trivia and unrecorded narratives, as Tamboukou and Ball state:

> *… the genealogical search concerns itself with 'lowly beginnings' detail and trivia, the ephemeral, with what has remained unnoticed and unrecorded in the narratives of mainstream history. In searching in the maze of dispersed and forgotten events, it provides a conduit for submerged voices which are obscured and marginalised by specific power-knowledge arrangements.* (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003, pp.5 – 6)

As is noted by Davis (1995, p.117) '*silence is in the text. It is between each word, and in some sense, it accounts for meaning; it frames articulation*'. Davis suggests that on a graphic level, '*silences are represented by space between the letters and between words*' (Davis, 1995, p.117); and as this case study reveals silence can be deathly.

Thus, it is not my intention to cause 'harm' but to adhere to the ethical guidelines and, indeed, endeavour to represent or even re-represent participants' views (BERA, 2004). I recognise that attempting to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants becomes increasingly difficult. In addition, as the case study becomes more detailed, I recognise that 'people reveal *themselves* through what they say' (Booth, 1996, p.251, my emphasis). Arguably, research can be understood as a panopticon-like device in which the researcher's gaze pinpoints an interviewee (Foucault, 1980), a disciplinary, regulatory, self-discipline confessional tool (Mills, 2004), makes the practice of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality all the more problematic. Here then, for me, lies the inherent contradiction and part of the difficulty. Succinctly, a part of this case study approach is about tracking 'the journey' of the initiative which involves understanding the context, experience, and viewpoints of key participants. Nonetheless, whilst attempting to adhere to ethical guidelines, the issue of anonymity and confidentiality is borne in mind. Although commendable it is recognised that such a stance can in no way be an absolute guarantee and therefore possibly insufficient (Elliot, 2005). It nonetheless, needs to be acknowledged that this research discourse enables me to say (Ball, 1993) that I have used pseudonyms, laid false trails, and assured individuals anonymity and confidentiality, only to ward off an alternative and competing discourse (Foucault, 1981).

4.3 Values and Ethics

Values are ingredients of educational research, their elimination is only possible by eradicating the research process itself (Carr, 1995). Those educational researchers who claim a value-free stance, Carr argues are simply failing to recognise features of their work (Carr, 1995, p.88). The exploration of ethical issues involves a number of concerns in relation to this study, particularly with reference to the complexities of making private lives public. Mauthner *et al.* (2000), for example, remark that:

> *The complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena raise multiple ethical issues for the researcher that cannot be solved solely by the application of abstract rules, principles or guidelines. Rather there are inherent tensions in qualitative research that is characterised by fluidity and inductive uncertainty, and ethical guidelines that are static and increasingly formalised.*
> (Mauthner, *et al.*, 2000, pp.1 – 2)

The authors contend that they '*address the gaps between the practice of doing research and the ethical principles, both formal and informal that guide it*' and pose the following question: 'How are theory and intention 'lived' in the research context?' (Mauthner, *et al.*, 2000, p.2). This question weaves through this case study approach and raises a number of interesting conundrums particularly in relation to the 'doing' of qualitative research. In a chapter entitled 'Ethics and Feminist Research: Theory and Practice', two contributing authors, Edwards and Mauthner argue that '*Ethics is about how to deal with conflict, disagreement and ambivalence rather than attempting to eliminate it*' (Mauthner, *et al.*, 2000, p.27). However, what may also be considered are issues of 'voice' and power relations which influence and govern research ethics (Kikabhai, 2003). One particularly useful example, which illustrates the notion of power relations, is that of Leicester's (1993) experience in which she describes visiting her brother with her daughter Jane. Leicester explained:

> *… I have recognised a distinctive voice in those labelled mentally deficient [sic]. My 'mentally handicapped' [sic] daughter Jane often teaches me new ways of comprehending the world. For example, when she was quite young, my brother Eddie lived in a flat at the top of our house and her cat once shat in his bath. We thought Jane ought to clear up the mess because it had been made by her cat; Jane thought Eddie should clean it up because it was his bath. At first, I thought she was 'missing the point', but as we discussed the situation I became aware of a distinct and alternative moral perspective – the view of one who controlled events less than I did but was subject to them more than I was.* (Leicester, 1993, p.74)

One thing is for sure it will not, it seems, be Mal Leicester who clears up the mess. Why not? Thus the notion of power relations and issues of control and authority are particularly important considerations.

In relation to values and ethics, what is evident in this study is the importance of understanding the individuals themselves. Simons (2009) gives three reasons why the study of individuals within case study research is central. These she argues are, first, the need to understand programmes and policies through the perspective of those who enact them. Second, case study research has an orientation to be educative and thus an interactive social process, and third:

> *Interpreting individuals' experience of a programme or aspects of their lives in specific socio-political context helps to understand not only how socio-political factors influence the actions of individuals but the impact of these factors on the individual and the case itself.* (Simons, 2009, p.69)

Thus, asking research questions is important.

4.4 Asking Research Questions

Asking research questions such as why, how and what are a particular recurring feature of my critical reflective thinking. For me, this research context is challenging to investigate particularly in relation to the emerging research questions and thinking

of an appropriate method of investigation. Stewart *et al.* (2007, p.53) for example, suggest that a well-defined research question is one that '*identifies the topic of the research, the population that is relevant to the question and the specific issues of interest*'. Bryman (2007, p.7), however, questions whether the research question is 'crucial' with regard to the direction of the investigation and suggests that there were uncertainties even a '*rejection of the view that research questions drive research*'. Gregory (2000) suggested that '*Trying to formulate your research questions as clearly as you can force you to address the issue of just what it is you want to understand better*' (Gregory, 2000, p.19). In describing the uncertainty of trying to search for questions and seeking to make sense of case study research, Gillham advises that it is useful to do '*some*' reading around the research topic before being immersed in the actual setting, and that:

> *… the notion that you do an extensive literature review first from which you derive an hypothesis to test is a nonsense in real-world research. It represents an adherence to an inappropriate paradigm … To a great extent you won't know what you're looking for in the literature until you do get into the real context. And what you find in the literature will sensitise your perceptions. This progressive influence is one dimension of the emergent character of case study research.* (Gillham, 2000, pp.37 – 38)

Interestingly the union of literature about issues of 'learning difficulties', higher education participation, theatre arts and employment is extremely limited – and more so from a postmodern perspective which draws upon the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Nonetheless, whilst describing the importance of '*framing good questions*' Gillham raises a moot point concerning research questions capable of being answered. Gillham argues that such questions are not easily achieved and that a great deal of time will be spent on developing and modifying them. His reasoning being that '*It's no use asking questions that can't be answered*' (Gillham, 2000, p.17). At times this also involves, according to Gillham (2005, p.159), adapting research questions to '... *better fit the character of what you are*

researching'. Gillham (2005, p.159) suggests that there is nothing '... *corrupt about this: it happens all the time – it just isn't formally recorded because it violates the convention of 'logical' structure'*.

Another troubling question is: how do individuals 'know' what questions cannot be answered? The work of Andrews (2003) addresses this concern and suggests that questions being 'answerable' should be related to the research context. For Andrews (2003), a research question '*must be answerable*'; he suggests that it is not advisable to have questions that are '*so all-embracing*' that would be impossible to answer '*within the confines*' of the research project (Andrews, 2003, p.2). However, Andrews explains that the research question '*does not*' have to have an answer and that this is '*acceptable*', reasoning that '*at least you have tried to answer it*' (Andrews, 2003, p.3). Andrews advises that even if questions are not answerable results may be illuminating. Factors such as the amount of time, costs and the number of researchers will all influence the kind of questions that can be asked (Andrews, 2003, p.7). Although another question that may be asked is: how do researchers know how much time is going to be taken to answer a question? Andrews' response to this question is that:

> *Research questions can take time to develop. While in many ways they are the starting point for the focused research, they can take weeks or months to develop. In some fields and on some projects, the whole aim might be, over several years, to work towards a research question!*
> (Andrews, 2003, p.9)

For me, research questions relating to why and how the initiative 'failed' in its attempt to set up a degree level programme, took no less than 26 months to emerge (from June 2003 to July 2005) and, arguably, years with regard to theorising disability, and understanding the exclusion of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' from modern higher education participation.

In addition, there are reservations with asking why type questions. Patton (1990), for example, suggests that questions which ask 'why' can imply that the person's response is inappropriate. For Patton, asking 'why' type questions presuppose a cause and effect relationship (Patton, 1990, p.313). Similar reservations are also held by Rubin and Rubin (2005) who advise against using 'why' type questions particularly as main questions. Rubin and Rubin suggest that the interviewer ask about the experiences of the interviewee and '*from what you have heard work out the reason why*' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.158). Kvale (2007, p.58) suggests that understanding reasons and explanations 'why' something happened is primarily the task of the interviewer, and which may '*go beyond the subjects' self-understanding*'. By this, Kvale suggests that interviewing, being a personal craft, is not a valid method given that validation becomes a matter of checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings (Kvale, 2007, p.87). Yin, however, makes the point that '*One insight into asking good questions is to understand that research is about questions and not necessarily about answers*' (Yin, 1994, pp.56 – 57). Moreover, Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003, p.3) make the point more generally that social research is problematic, and suggest that '*anything that will go wrong will go wrong*' and advise that this is a situation researchers ought not to fear and '*accept it is part of the challenge of research, and try to make the most of it.*'

4.5 Contesting Validity, Reliability and Troubling Generalisations

Notions of validity and reliability are tied to understandings of 'knowledge' (Kirk and Miller, 1986), and are positivist terms. Indeed Kirk and Miller (1986) go to some length in explaining the way science has been the traditional template. Qualitative research has tried to emulate quantitative research practice claiming 'objectivity' and embedded within an epistemology commonly known as 'positivism'. This research tradition, aligned to positivism, assumes that there is a world 'out there' waiting discovery irrespective of the observer. Kirk and Miller (1986) explain that

objectivity can be partitioned into both validity and reliability. Generally, reliability relates to a measurement that yield the same answer irrespective of the number of times the measurement is taken; validity is said to be related to the 'correctness' of that measurement. However, the notion of validity is an extremely contentious and problematic one. Earlier debates which raise questions as to the neutrality of the researcher are encapsulated in a paper by Becker (1967), entitled: '*Whose Side Are We On?*' However, my stance, with regard to validity, is borne out of an interpretation made by Gee, who stated that:

> *The validity of an analysis is not a matter of how detailed one's transcript is. It is a matter of how the transcript works together with all the other elements of the analysis to create a "trustworthy" analysis* ... . (Gee, 2006, p.106)

In this sense, as Gee (2006, p.114) later reiterates '*Validity is social, not individual*'. Alongside being 'trustworthy', my stance moreover with regard to this study, involves transparency, honesty and reciprocity. Indeed whilst Kirk and Miller (1986, p.32) advocate the pursuit of objectivity, they did recognise that with respect to qualitative research and the notion of validity, a sensitive researcher with a '*good theoretical orientation and good rapport over a long period of time is the best check we can make*'. Further still, the notion of 'reliability'; the idea that procedures can be replicated (as with standard tests or with measurement), is highly contentious in qualitative research. Jorgensen (1989, p.37), for example, had noted that with regard to conducting participant observations '*notions of reliability are not especially appropriate*'. Therefore, the methodology for participant observation, is likewise, concerned with '*dependable* and *trustworthy* findings' (Jorgensen, 1989, p.37).

The notion of generalisation from a case study research approach has also been a subject of increasing concern (Stake, 1995; Simons, 2009). To say that the business of case study research *is* 'particularisation' and not 'generalisation' (Stake,

1995, p.8) is contentious and according to Simons (2009) case study research may '*yield insights of universal significance*'. However, generalisations are themselves associated with a mythical '*average*' (Thompson, 1965, p.215). In the context of this study, the average university, the average student, the average theatre company, the average course; are notions which obscure rather than reveal; because, as Thompson noted, data is collated together when there can be details neglected which provide meaningful sources of information. Interestingly, are not the observations of a few, or even the one, applicable to the many in psychological understandings? One only need to read the work of Fromm (1942, p.118) to know the response to this is an '*emphatic affirmation*'. Therefore, important to this study is the uniqueness of this theatre initiative and the specificity of the related issues, understanding the aims of this study and addressing the unique questions.

Much of what has been discussed, thus far, is related to research methodologies and its relation to epistemologies having used a case study approach. What follows, then, is an overview of the qualitative methods used in this study.

4.6 Methods of Data Collection

The primary sources of data for this study emerges through a multi-method approach, specifically using three complementary methods of data collection. These are in-depth one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews and participant observations. Secondary sources of data include a range of documentary sources, journal and video material. Interviews, both one-to-one and focus groups, were audiotape recorded as well as taking notes, partly due to taking heed of Kvale's (2007, pp.93 – 94) advice, that some researchers had discovered interviews not being recorded due to technical problems. This was too important to take lightly; I had therefore tested the recording equipment and ensured it was regularly

maintained and stored. The audiotape recordings were later converted to digital files for storing purposes and imported into NVivo for analysis.

4.6.1 Interviews

In total 13 individual one-to-one interviews were conducted with nine participants; four of whom were interviewed twice. Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate the experiences, opinions, aspirations, insights, attitudes and feelings of the participating individuals; data that according to May (1997, p.109) '*constitute the fundamentals of interviews and interviewing*'. The interview method is also chosen due to its flexibility and adaptability (Robson, 2002, p.272). Although, for some (Alldred and Gilles, 2002; Kvale, 1996) the method is fraught with ethical implications, given the assumption that individual's can represent themselves to the interviewer. Alldred and Gilles, (2002, p.149) suggest that '*the very idea of interviewing someone is rooted in particular understandings about what being a person is*' and that interviewing is seen as a 'snap shot' of an individual's perspective. Kvale (1996, p.2) argues that an interview is literally an *inter view*, that is '*an inter change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest*'. In this sense, the traditional dualism of interview-interviewee or research-researched becomes blurred. In part this is created by my research position, avoiding a traditional approach and setting the tone by attempting to create a relationship in which participants can also ask any question of me. For example, my typical opening comments to participants included the position that:

> *Things that you say are confidential and I am hoping to construct a research relationship that I hope you feel that you can ask any question of me if you need, and I am hoping to construct an open, honest and trustworthy relationship …* (Interview – M020304, 2004, Lines: 22 – 25)

Such a stance had been adopted in previous work (Kikabhai, 2003) in which I had explored the notion of 'reciprocity' in research.

4.6.2 Focus groups

In total two focus group interviews were conducted. The first focus group was conducted in March 2004, lasted for approximately 50 minutes, and involved four participants (five including myself as facilitator/moderator), Mathew, Iris, Val and Lee. The most frequent turn-taking response was from Iris who responded on 43 occasions, Val responded on 39 turn-taking occasions, Mathew responded on 33 turn-taking occasions, and Lee responded on 15 turn-taking occasions. The table below provides the frequency of turn-taking during the first focus group interview:

Table 1: Focus Group (032004) Turn-taking

Name	Frequency (Turn–taking)
Navin	21
Mathew	33
Val	39
Lee	15
Iris	43

The themes explored were varied and included, to name but a few, participants previous experiences, their own experiences of being students studying theatre, their experiences of higher education, shared experiences of community theatre, engaging in issues of empowerment, working for various theatre organisations, experiences of developing working partnerships, acquiring funding for projects, the possibility and opportunity to be creative with developing courses, working with the further education sector, an awareness of the experiences of disabled people attending 'special' schools, day centres or training centres, an emerging understanding of the lack of theatre related employment opportunities for individuals described as having 'learning difficulties', an acknowledgement of the changing labels and language of 'severe learning difficulties', being aware of the complex issues around identity, presence, power/knowledge and resistance, acknowledging the changing demands of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' to have an active part in the theatre related industries, acknowledgement of the

emerging disability arts movement, the changing political landscape, funding cuts, the developing partnership with higher education and the transformative capacity of theatre.

The second focus group was conducted in June 2004, and lasted for approximately 59 minutes, and on this occasion involved Mathew, Iris, Val and Jane. The most frequent turn-taking responses was from Iris who responded on 35 occasions, Jane responded on 34 turn-taking occasions, Mathew responded on 32 turn-taking occasions, and Val responded on 21 turn-taking occasions. Similarly, the frequency table below provides the frequency of turn-taking during the second focus group interview:

Table 2: Focus Group (062004) Turn-taking

Name	Frequency (Turn–taking)
Navin	56
Mathew	32
Val	21
Jane	34
Iris	35

Likewise, the themes explored were varied and included, previous work in schools, working collectively at a Young People's Theatre, developing fundraising experiences, securing funding, emerging confidence out of having set-up previous courses, the changing landscape of higher education provision in relation to studying theatre, the experience of supporting student placements, continued frustrations with the lack of employment opportunities, the precariousness of theatre related roles, recollections of the previous 'Project Theatre' course, observation of the emerging student partnerships between students described as having 'learning difficulties' and non-disabled students, experience of working in other HEIs, experiences of redundancy, pursuing teacher training, recruitment of appointed lecturers, acknowledging the emerging issues and the partnership with Red Brick

College, feelings of frustration, raising questions, the changing landscape of higher education; in relation to types of provision, foundation degrees, issues with validation at degree level, emerging funding issues, support costs, changing perceptions of higher education, power/knowledge, pursuing alternatives, and notions of 'failing'.

The two focus group interviews both generate substantial amounts of data (Morgan, 1988; Bloor, *et al.*, 2001; Robson, 2002). Focus groups are useful for exploring 'what' participants think, and as Morgan (1988, 25, original emphasis) argues, 'they excel at uncovering *why* participants think as they do'. Gillham (2005, p.60) also suggests that focus group interviews are useful in the early 'exploratory phase' of research. As with the interviews, for the focus groups I similarly transcribed all speech whether unfinished or interrupted (Bloor, *et al.*, 2001, p.72), since transcripts are a fundamental product of focus group interviews (Morgan, 1988). The venue of the two focus group interviews was mutually agreed between participants. I had booked a room, ordered refreshments, and arranged the seating in a circle. As to the actual seating and issues of proximity, space and territoriality (Bloor, *et al.*, 2001) these were left to the individuals to negotiate. For example, noted in my research log, the first focus group interview consisted of, in clockwise direction, the facilitator, Chair, senior evaluator, 'Mathew' and 'Iris'; the two joint directors of CE. The second focus group interview consisted of, in clockwise direction: facilitator, the Chair, 'Mathew', Vice Chair and 'Iris'. The choice of participants was restricted, initially, to individuals from CE, directly involved in the discussions around the developing ideas of the proposed theatre initiative.

Even though the typical focus group interview is said to involve between eight and twelve people (May, 2005, p.125) this by no means limited the '*valuable insight into both social relations in general and the examination of processes and social*

dynamics in particular' (May, 2005, p.126). There are differences of opinion as to what constitutes the minimum and maximum group size for a focus group. Bloor *et al.* (2001, p.26), for example, make the point that group size will be dictated by the context of practical constraints, such as the size of an organisation, members of a group, and so on. Interestingly, Morgan (1988, p.44) suggests that the focus group size should be between four and (less clear) an upper limit of '*around*' 12. However, given the context of this research, the focus group was with a pre-existing group (Bloor, *et al.*, 2001), that is, with individuals from CE and a senior evaluator. As is discussed by Bloor *et al.* in using focus group interviews, its attraction was related to having limited control over the direction the discussions were going to take. Moreover, advice from Bloor *et al.* (2001, p.28) suggest that given that focus groups are '*labour intensive in recruitment, transcription and analysis, where possible, numbers should be kept down to the bare minimum*', although this could be thought to be one of its disadvantages. Nonetheless, the purpose of using focus group interviews in this case study approach is to: focus, facilitate, recover, discover, uncover, and explore the complexities of shared meanings, feelings, experiences, aspirations, insights and opinions. This also includes a focus on interaction (Morgan, 1988, p.9). As is acknowledged, within focus groups there are combined elements of both individual interviews and participant observations approaches, and as Morgan notes one of the hallmarks of focus groups is:

> ... *the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group.* (Morgan, 1988, p.12)

Although focus groups do have disadvantages; that is, they tend to be in '*unnatural social settings*' (Morgan, 1998, p.16), focus group interviews provide an opportunity to explore participants' experiences and perspectives and, in part, to contextualise the relationships, and situate a collective 'voice' to be heard in this study (Van Dyke and Gunaratnam, 2000; Bloor, *et al.*, 2001; Stewart, *et al.*, 2007). As in this case

study approach more generally, focus group interviews are likewise used, not only because participants would actively discuss the topic of interest but also, to provide an in-depth exploration of a topic in which little is known.

4.6.3 Participant observations

The key participant observation site is a theatre venue secured by Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative where emerging ideas and workshop practices were being rehearsed. Additional participant observation sites include attending meetings, trustee meetings, meetings at Red Brick College and attending a funeral. Workshop practices, typically, are full-days starting at approximately 10:00 and finishing at around 16:00. In partaking in participant observations, the data gathered was from having kept a research log which documented expectations and reflections of being involved in the various workshop sessions. The theatre venue dates back to the 1930s. It later, from the 1960s, became a site which hosted a range of experimental theatre relating to social justice issues. My approach to making notes involves pencil-and-paper, beginning with general descriptions of the setting, activities and people involved. Pencil notes include my own reflections, jotting down emerging questions, personal feelings, and impressions. I noted reflections on interviews, excitements and disappointments and any methodological issues. I transferred these pencil-and-paper notes onto the computer using Microsoft Word, clearly logging each participant observation with the respective date. In total, I amassed 60 entries equalling approximately 9,400 words of participant observation data. The first entry into my research log begins in June 2003 with the last entry being in June 2006. At first glance, Tim May suggests that participant observation:

> *… appears to be just about looking, listening, generally experiencing and writing it all down. However, it is more plausible to argue that participant observation is the most personally demanding and analytically difficult method of social research to undertake.* (May, 2005, p.153)

Indeed, my participant observations are far more than just looking and listening. A difficulty of this method stemmed from recognising and ensuring that I did not make judgements and claim 'special competence'. I took this opportunity to immerse myself in the day-to-day activities, and the social relations of the individuals whom I have attempted to learn from and understand (Spradley, 1980; May, 2005; Cohen and Manion, 2000; Robson, 2002, Simons, 2009). Jorgensen, makes this point and suggests that participant observation involves:

> *Direct involvement in the here and now of people's daily lives provides both a point of reference for the logic and process of participant observation inquiry and a strategy for gaining access to phenomena that commonly are obscured from the standpoint of a nonparticipant.* (Jorgensen, 1989, p.9)

Later, Jorgensen (1989, p.14) adds that it aims '*to generate practical and theoretical truths about human life grounded in the realities of daily existence*'. As such, it was also about: spending breaks and lunch times together, engaging in conversation, sharing experiences, and getting to know each other. I also became aware of Jorgensen's (1989, p.55) experience that '... *the more you participate, the less you are able to observe* ...'.

During one participant observation CE had invited five individuals from theatre related professions to participate in workshop activities with the intention of demonstrating their ideas and practice. On another occasion CE had invited an individual to lead on a session relating to relaxation and breathing exercises using the Alexander Technique. On the workshop occasion, where five individuals were invited, I sought to gain their perspective, to ask about their involvement and views as to the developing work of CE. Through email correspondence I asked the invited group for their reflections of their participation in this workshop. In a sense, not only did this provide additional participant observations, I recognised the comment made

by Spradley (1980, p.124) that '*all informants are participant observers without knowing it*'.

The participant observations emerged through being invited by the two joint directors to observe the activities, practices, development of ideas and their multi-sensory approach to teaching and learning. This invitation occurred due to convenience and opportunity, a point discussed by Jorgensen (1989, p.50) who explains that the researcher also affects these decisions. Although I was invited to attend as many as possible I have been restricted by time and finances. At the time I recall travelling to get to the theatre venue. The notes in my research log, of these participant observations, mention the creativity, motivation and enthusiasm of the directors and appointed lectures. I recorded that the day usually began at 10:00, breaking for lunch at 12:00, resuming at 13:00 and finishing around 16:00. The participant observations relating to the workshops occurred between December 2004 and May 2005 and typically began with warm-up exercises, supported movement exercises – starting with the upper body and then eventually involving the whole body. As I steadily became immersed in their work I participated in improvisation work and activities involving trust exercises, physical contact, touch, emotions, communication, exercises for voice, memory and character building. On each attendance I noticed the group were keeping a log of their developing work, through taking notes and at times using photographs. My research log describes arriving at the theatre venue at approximately 09:15. Over this data collection period I note that one of the appointed lecturers would arrive first followed by myself then Richard, followed by the remaining two appointed lecturers, then it was usually the two joint directors: Mathew then Iris. It was on my first visit to the theatre venue that I spoke to William who told me that he would travel by taxi which usually arrived at 09:00. My research log reads:

> *I got to the theatre venue about 9:22ish. [William] was there, then [V] and [Richard] arrived. [Richard] welcomed me with a hug, [D] arrived then [Iris] and [Mathew]. [William] told me that the work was going well and that they had delivered a workshop to a group of teachers, said it went well. [Iris] told me that … lots of things had happened with respect to [Cutting Edge] – serious concerns.* (Research Log, 2005: Participant Observation)

During this participant observation, after the warm-up exercises, the group explored movement, sound, rhythm, role-play, non-verbal instructions, working in pairs emphasising coordination and listening, levels and dynamics, improvisation using objects to create stories, plots and characters. In reflection, written in my research log, I note that '*this was great fun!*' Immersed in this context, I was steadily getting to understand. This experience is recognised by May who suggests that:

> *… researchers must become part of that environment for only then can they understand the actions of people who occupy and produce cultures, defined as the symbolic and learned aspects of human behaviour which include customs and language.* (May, 2005, p.149)

I had participated in workshops and witnessed the group developing exercises and creating resources and materials. Along with attending meetings I witnessed their emotional highs and lows, and observed individuals being upset and tearful as news emerged as to the difficulties Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative were experiencing in terms of the prospect of the degree programme coming to an end. I also attended the funeral of the Chair of CE, and thereafter was invited to a theatre venue where her life (and death) was remembered as a 'celebration'. At this event various performances, dances, recitations were offered, one of which involved CE, a performance by one of the appointed lecturers who played the synthesizer, one of the joint directors (Mathew) on drums, and a bass player. This performance was noted in my research log and has become part of my analytical perspective and analysis. I came to understand the importance of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative,

the immense struggle for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' to pursue both training and a degree level qualification.

I also wrote, at the time, that if the degree programme did come to an end this '*would be a devastating outcome for all the [Cutting Edge] team*' (Research Log, 2005). I also noted that the appointed lectures had '*expressed how important the work is – and they would want to see the work continuing regardless of the outcome*' (Research Log, 2005). This paraphrased comment is a critical point in my thinking; that the individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' would want to carry on regardless. This had a profound effect on my own thinking; it reminded me of my own struggles and resistance. This lead to a radically different perspective, an analysis, one that reconsiders the site of modern higher education as a domain of power/knowledge discourses, struggle and resistance. This led me to the work of Foucault (Foucault, 1967, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981), and Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 2004). In summary, participant observation, involved negotiating the insider-outsider machine (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004), to be a map-maker, and to play forever with becoming the research instrument (Spradley, 1980). Spradley (1980, p.81) also suggests that, whilst immersed in fieldwork, the researcher is '*like a map-maker*' exploring an uncharted domain, a practice advocated by Deleuze and Guattari (2004).

4.6.4 Documentary data

Additional sources of evidence included access to archival documentary evidence such as newspaper coverage, college documentation, public discussions, private collections and theatre publications. This also included visual data such as advertisements of theatre productions. Gaining access to such archived data involved visiting libraries and theatres. Public discussion took the form of transcripts of debates in which questions were being raised about the participation and

representation of disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' in the performing arts, and the lack of opportunities for professional training (Debate, 1999; 2002). The issue of accessing documentary sources is a point raised by Tim May who cites Scott (1990, cited May 2005, p.181) and divides documents into four categories according to the degree of accessibility, these being: '*closed, restricted, open-archival and open-published*'. In this sense, whilst some sources of evidence were openly accessible (open archival) for example in library archives, others were restricted in that they are owned by individuals as part of their private collections.

4.6.5 Interview schedules

Interview schedules outlined potential themes for exploration and took account of the different perspectives of the participating individuals. The focus group and one-to-one interviews lasted between 50 and 60 minutes. The research schedule for the directors, Chair and Vice-Chair of the CE Theatre Initiative focused initially on three broad themes, these being: their past and present experiences, and future expectations. With respect to the past and present this was in relation to their experiences. With respect to the future this was in relation to their anticipation, vision; particularly in relation to opportunities, challenges and barriers. The research schedule for the representative of one of the funders focused on understanding and support of the CE Theatre Initiative, particularly with: expectations, notions of 'success', opportunities, challenges and barriers. The interview schedule for the Vice Principal of Red Brick College focused on their role, past experience, the nature of the 'partnership' and expectations. My research schedule with an ex-student of Red Brick College related to their specific experience of being on placement on the earlier two-year non-accredited course in theatre practice, particularly their recollection and view of working with students described as having 'learning difficulties'. This interview was conducted at a local community theatre

centre. The interviews, with both the Vice Principal of Red Brick College and one of the funders, were conducted on their own respective places of work. The interview with one of the appointed lecturers was conducted after one of the workshop sessions. This interview focused upon their experience of being involved in workshops, developing practice and their previous experience elsewhere. Once I had started to consider the various methods of data collection I was simultaneously reflecting on analysing the data.

4.7 Data Analysis

Alldred and Gilles (2002) suggest that data analysis is influenced by the way data is processed and how transcripts are produced, stating that:

> *Researchers are 'processing the data' consciously and unconsciously as we make decisions about the form and conventions to use to represent the 'data'. The phrase 'data analysis' implies wrongly that there is a prior stage of data collection that occurs without interpretive involvement of the researcher.* (Alldred and Gilles, 2002, p.159)

In addition, Alldred and Gilles (2002, p.160) point out that it is not easy to '*type every repetition, or to omit oddly used phrases that sit uneasily in a written sentence and it's hard to resist making sentences neater and arguments clearer when it merely involves transposing the word order slightly*'. This point was recognised through the experience of waiting to receive an interview transcript from the representative of Red Brick College (Appendix F). On return of this transcript a number of changes had been made which involved deleting repetitions and omitting phrases (Fig 1, below). As a way of illustrating these additions, deletions, repetitions and omissions I used 'track changes' in the 'Tools' submenu of Microsoft Word. The opening section, for example, from the transcript began:

Navin: Let's begin, [Adam] is it possible for you to go back in time and tell me what your involvement with the college is first of all?

I'm a long serving member of staff. I first came here in the late 1970s when the college was at the point of ceasing to be a teacher training institution. The College had a unique history. It was founded in the 1950s by ▮▮▮▮▮ on the principle that you could train and educate somebody with the dual skills and expertise as a theatre person and a teacher, and people left here with dual qualifications in both professions. Some went off to teach drama with young people and others went off into the theatre professions, so it had this dual role. Teacher training was rationalised in the mid to late 70s and the college had to stop being a provider. I think the number of providers were being reduced and the College had to go in another direction. It chose to pioneer a route which is now common in theatre – that of degree-level Theatre Education and Training, vocational training for the theatre at degree level; first, a BA in Acting that started here in 1976 with its first graduates emerging in 1979. I came in the beginning of that development and it was interesting from that point of view. The notion of combining vocation skills with educational was a very excited opportunity. The college, simultaneously, started a programme (which I was initially involved) which was first of all called a Diploma in Drama, but it soon was transmuted into the Community Theatre Arts course. This operated

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Fig 1: Extract taken from interview transcript

The response to this opening question consisted of 44 lines, a total of 556 words and involved no less than 25 changes. It was acknowledged that none of the participants, nor I, spoke grammatically, and that transcripts contained the usual 'er', 'ah', sighs, laughter, silences and pauses. Indeed, as has been noted everyday speech, '*is not grammatically neat and tidy*' but usually '*disorganised and messy*' (Wooffitt, 2005, p.10).

Interesting how this would be interpreted if we too had been labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. With respect to individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' and being interviewed (Edgerton, 1971), this raises an important question; namely, who becomes labelled as having 'learning difficulties' because of their response in interviews? Indeed, the understanding of power differentials between interviewer and interviewee is an important acknowledgement. Moreover, it is not only interviewers who express themselves 'poorly' (Rapley, 2004, p.97) but all participants. The Chair of CE also encapsulated this experience when she reviewed her own transcript stating '*I'm awfully rambly aren't I?*' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Line: 514). Indeed, Gibbs (2007, p.14) makes the point that individuals stop and start with ideas and themes '*without following the grammatical rules used in writing*'. This issue is noted by May (1997), citing the work of Pahl (1995), who preferred the term 'restructured interviews'. Pahl noted in his work that:

> *… not only were transcripts sent to interviewees for their comments and amendments after the interviews, but the purpose for which the data was collected was altered both during and after the interviews were conducted.* (Pahl, 1995, pp.197 – 201, cited in May 2005, p.125)
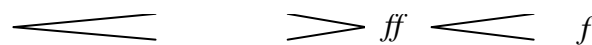
As is noted, transcription is a form of translation (Gillham, 2005, p.121). The translation from an oral language to a written language may as Kvale (2007, p.93) suggested be more accurately described as a process in which translators are traitors – '*traduire traittori'*. My decision to transcribe all the interviews verbatim was based on being able to acknowledge the presence of intonation, tone, volume, emphasis, pauses, interruptions, rhythm, dynamics, laughter and gesturers which were all part of 'processing the data'. I used conventional symbols that captured speech utterances (Appendix G). Indeed, discourse involves far more than just the verbal (Fairclough, 2001). A word of caution, however, as with making transcriptions, as Gee (2006, p.106) suggests that whilst it is tempting to believe that transcription represents an 'objective' interpretation of 'reality', researchers ought to be aware that speech has '*detail in it that any recording or transcription system could ever capture (or human ear could hear)*'. Indeed, has had been noted by Williams (1981, p.111) in terms of the means of cultural (re)production, the '*tape-recording of this or that speaker is significantly different*' from the written form of that which is spoken. Deciding to transcribe more detail was time-consuming but added to the meaning of what was being said and no doubt influenced the emerging research questions (Alldred and Gilles, 2002). In another sense this was part of interpreting the data and acknowledged that I was '*interpreting all the time*' (Fairclough, 1992, p.199). Fairclough (2001) suggested that at the stage of analysis, for critical discourse analysis, three procedural stages are necessary, these being: description, interpretation and explanation. Gibbs (2007, p.3) suggests '*there is no separation of data collection and data analysis*'. Further, once transcribed I proceeded to explore the transcripts by: coding, making comments, asking

questions of the data, with reference to its situated meanings, its intertextuality in relation to the various discourses, and making connections with the literature (Grbich, 2004; Gee, 2006).

4.7.1 Coding

After transcribing each transcript I began with a focus on the research questions asking why and how the initiative 'failed' with regard to the views and experiences of the participants and the identification of barriers. I began with attempting to transcribe each utterance, silence, nuance and interruption. Even though I had taken measures to avoid background noise, there was the simultaneous clatter of cups (when possible I had arranged to have tea and coffee available), the passing of a helicopter, traffic outside, the distant noises of hearing the hustle and bustle of everyday life being recorded. Fortunately, I did not befall the experience that Bloor (cited in Bloor, *et al.*, 2001, p.42) encountered, that of having a dog '*repeatedly cracking a bone beside the recorder*' rendering the audio recording 'useless'. In addition, I had thought of using rudimentary musical symbols to reflect the variation in volume in speech. As noted in my research log, whilst travelling by train, I had noted an example:

<div align="center">

The next stop will be Rugby due to arrive at 14:27

$\diagdown\diagup$ $\diagup\diagdown$ *ff* $\diagdown\diagup$ *f*

(Research Log, 2004)

</div>

I had contemplated the idea of representing the text alongside musical notation and symbols, only to discover that I could end up with a 20 or more stave score dependent on what I decided to omit or include. In this sense, the idea that transcripts are a 'true' reflection of what the interviewer 'heard' is extremely contentious (Williams, 1981). This became all the more problematic as I noticed that

tape recording equipment would offer varying sensitivities. For example, a tape could be audible in one machine but not in another – this certainly resonated with comments made by Williams (1981), which rendered, possibly, my hearing impaired. Such issues, of course, were not unfamiliar given my own training and interest in music.

With respect to 'barriers', I began initially by representing the themes as discussed by Thomas (2001), and decided to expand the idea beyond the four broad categories being proffered. In order to 'live with' the data I decided to code and index the transcripts with and without the aid of NVivo (Bazeley and Richards, 2000). Initially I had printed out the transcripts, using landscape page orientation (Appendix H), and placed them into a spiral bound folder. Using this folder required me to read and re-read each transcript. I started to make notes about the themes and highlighted links within and across the transcripts. With using NVivo I decided to code the transcripts without choosing to group the codes together. I avoided using hierarchical 'trees' and preferred using what Bazeley and Richards (2000) call 'free nodes'. In total I had created 188 free nodes. These varied from identifying the permutations of the different relationships and partnerships, to discussions relating to experiencing theatre workshops. These free nodes included identifying a range of discourses related to barriers, these were: attitudinal, cultural, educational, employment, family, financial, individual, and modern higher education. The whole process was similarly repeated using the print copy of transcripts in my folder. Pages in the folder were easily updated, linking themes across and within transcripts using specific line numbers as reference points.

4.7.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

Earlier understandings of discourse analysis are those which have been associated with speech acts and the illocutionary rules (linguistic structures) (Coulthard, 1985;

Fairclough, 1992, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005). Wooffitt (2005) explains that earlier

understandings can be traced back to conversation analysis reciting two studies;

one being related to telephone conversations; concerned with turn-taking in day-to-

day interaction, and; the other being related to disputes within scientific knowledge

which later became increasingly associated with discourse analysis. As approaches

began to converge, overlap and diverge, critical discourse analysis began to be

shaped by relations of power, ideologies, social relations and systems of knowledge

(Fairclough, 1992). Indeed, Fairclough's (1992, p.8) objective was to develop an

approach '*for investigating social change*'. Drawing upon the work of Foucault,

Fairclough (1992, p.36) suggests that (critical) discourse analysis is concerned with

'*how power relations and power struggle shape and transform the discourse*

practices of a society or institution ...'.

In offering a Foucauldian perspective, various discourses (refer to chapter 2)

construct social phenomena given that they position people in different ways.

Discourse analysis, at least from a Foucauldian perspective, attempts to uncover

much more than conventional ways of talking and writing within a culture. It includes

events, objects, symbols, processes, official records, current affairs, speeches,

parliamentary debates, newspaper reports, institutional discourses, visual images,

music (and maths), dance, sounds which are imbued with cultural, political,

ideological and economic interest. It is multi-modal. Exploring individuals' histories

and the social, economic, political, cultural context (Simons, 2009, p.70), including

being aware of power relations within the context of a modern higher education

institution, helped in understanding the interpretation of the participant's role and

experience in this case. Gee (2006), also referring to the work of Foucault, makes a

distinction between D/discourse with either a capital 'D' or lower case 'd', and

suggests that Discourse with a capital 'D' is:

> *... a "dance" that exists in the abstract as a coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here-and-now as a performance that is recognisable as just such a coordination. Like a dance, the performance here-and-now is never exactly the same. It all comes down, often, to what the "master of the dance" (the people who inhabit the Discourse) will allow to be recognised or will be forced to recognise as a possible instantiation of the dance.* (Gee, 2006, p.28)

The goal of (critical) discourse analysis, Gee (2006, p.102) argues, is to make that which is familiar 'strange': examining the way situations are produced and reproduced, understanding how such repetitions are sustained by institutions, making clear the effort involved in their maintenance in terms of what seems 'normal' and 'right' to individuals. In this sense, critical discourse analysis has an emancipatory goal. Discourses can appear '*long before*', waiting for chance happenings and unfoldings and its '*possible disappearance*' (Foucault, 1981, p.51). Moreover, it produces and reproduces desire, to be freed from the obligation to begin, outside ritualised forms, and for Foucault:

> *Here is the hypothesis which I would like to put forward tonight in order to fix the terrain – or perhaps the very provisional theatre – of the work I am doing: that in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.* (Foucault, 1981, p.52)

Put succinctly, discourse is understanding change through critical analysis; it is struggle, a site of power, and that which is to be seized.

4.8 Postmodern Perspectives and the Process of Research

In relation to research, concerns are about the process of research itself. Traditional research approaches, adopting the individual/medical (biophysical) model to researching disability, has little more than positioned disabled people, people

described as having 'learning difficulties' as an *object* of study. The centrality of

disabled people's 'voices' has had less legitimacy than medical, rehabilitation,

educational and welfare discourses. Postmodernist frameworks offer insights into

understanding research process as a tool of surveillance, control, regulation,

discipline, punishment and exclusion. Indeed, Spradley (1980, p.22) makes clear

that the method of participant observation '*represents a powerful tool for invading*

other people's way of life'. More than this, the research process is imbued with

power/knowledge discourses hierarchically ordered, controlled by ethics committees

existing of dualisms such as supervisor-student and researcher-researched. The

work of Robert Edgerton, for example, considered to be a significant milestone in

understanding the lives of individuals labelled as 'mentally retarded', is itself a case

in point (Edgerton, 1971, 1984). Using a social interactionist framework, Edgerton

sought to understand the lives of individuals, who had been 'deinstitutionalised' from

a state hospital in America. Edgerton's methodological gaze began, for instance, by

explaining:

> *In June 1960, the search for the 110 members of the cohort*
> *was begun. All available sources were utilized in the effort*
> *to locate the former patients: Pacific's records, living*
> *relatives, former employers, hospital-affiliated social*
> *workers, Los Angeles welfare agencies, training schools,*
> *police files, coroners' records and private hospital*
> *admissions, private physicians and dentists, telephone*
> *directories, credit agencies, credit departments of larger*
> *retail stores, and finally, the advice of a retired private*
> *investigator.* (Edgerton, 1971, p.11)

Thus, arguably, it seems that such individuals are positioned within a

power/knowledge discourse, a reiterative re–search process which secures their

position as '*powerless, inept people who were in a trap, from which the chances of*

escape were [and are] very small' (Gerber, 1990, p.11, my insertion). Indeed, twelve

months after Edgerton's search concluded, 12 of the participants had not been

located (Edgerton, 1971, p.11); moreover, they had escaped (probably free and

alone, and de-in-situ-tionalised). Incidentally, Edgerton (1984, p.502) also advocated the use of participant observation and whilst suggesting that '... *retarded* [*sic*] persons *remain, for us, first among equals*', he also earlier made the point that, 'What retarded [*sic*] persons say they do or feel often bears little resemblance to what they *actually* do. (Edgerton, 1984, p.500, original emphasis). So much for, so called, 'retarded' being first among equals. Arguably, the object of such 're-search' is frequently *on* people (rather than *with* people) who are in less powerful positions (Mills, 2009). Mills draws upon the way Foucault characterises power/knowledge to discuss this point, citing:

> *… the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of [the] fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.* (Foucault, 1991a, pp.27 – 28, cited Mills, 2009, p.70)

Mills' point being that the myth related to the development of knowledge is due to the devotion and best intentions of innumerable scholars who work to improve on past knowledge, should be interrogated. Indeed, it is power/knowledge which produces facts, and individual scholars are simply the vehicles or sites where this knowledge is produced (Mills, 2009), they cannot but establish power relations between themselves and the group.

No doubt, the 're-search' process is part of the problem. Scott and Usher (1999), for instance, argue that the internal conditions of research are spurious and place philosophical issues as being integral to the research process itself. It is not just about methods and outcomes. They question assumptions that tend to portray research as mechanistic and algorithmic. Moreover, they urge researchers to

become more aware that research '*is not a technology but a practice, that it is not individualistic but social and that there are no universal methods to be applied invariantly*' (Scott and Usher, 1999, p.10). Further they argue that 'the rules' '... *for policing knowledge claims are themselves culturally located; epistemologies thus become as much as about politics or power as they are about logic*' (Scott and Usher, 1999, p.12). With reference to power, they draw upon a colonial analogy, stating that it is the colonist who:

> *… defines the problem, the nature of the research, the quality of the interaction between researcher and researched, the theoretical framework and the categories of analysis; and, of course, who writes the final text.* (Scott and Usher, 1999, p.17)

Thus, for Scott and Usher (1999, p.22) research has been acknowledged as an inter-textual field where text is pitched against text where '*writing is a necessary condition for claims to knowledge, it is also the means by which this condition can be denied*'. The incessant obsession with re-search, which consistently produces and reproduces the 'Other' as 'abnormal', 'deficient' and as a 'personal tragedy', serves only to justify its institutional gaze onto those it excludes without any contact or physical proximity (Foucault, 1967, 1977, 1980). Indeed, as positivism loses its grip, postmodernism has turned the re-search gaze on itself as a critical tool questioning why, how, what and asking 'in whose interest does research serve?' Such concerns relate to the work of Becker (1967) who asked 'Whose Side Are We On?' a theme I have discussed before (Kikabhai, 2003).

4.9 Constructing the Research Account

In reporting and constructing the account of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative I decided that the phrases and statements chosen would be italicised and when appropriate indented into the text with their corresponding referencing details. In addition, I have purposefully avoided paraphrasing the material in order that

participants 'speak for themselves'. Indeed as Foucault acknowledges, the production of information by the 'marginalised' themselves can influence the status quo. What is particularly troubling is deciding upon the way to present the experiences and insights of the participating individuals. The process of writing and rewriting the account of CE was problematic as the contributions are: intertwined, fragmented, overlapped and entangled. Eventually, I decided to start 'at the end', and steadily uncover, discover and recover their contributions, insights and rhizomatic experiences of the participating individuals. The multiple 'voices' and discourses of the participants interpretations became the focus of attention in writing about this journey in which the proposed CE degree programme emerged. Its presentation was guided by repeatedly asking how to construct this account. In representing CE as a case study, possibilities emerge in terms of constructing poems, songs, music, stories, a dance or even a drama production. Such possible readings reflect the complexity and ambiguity of the situation with multiple interpretations (Grbich, 2004, 2007). The construction of this account draws upon Foucault's (1967, 1970, 1977, 1980, 1988) archaeological and genealogical approach, and the interpretations of Alvermann (2000), Radford (2000), Kendall and Wickham (2003), Peters and Besley (2007), Tamboukou and Ball (2003), Walmsley and Johnson (2003), Grbich (2004, 2007) and Oksala (2007).

I seek to engage with power/knowledge discourses, silenced voices, and forgotten events. The account creates a 'pause for thought', enables multiple readings of the data. Moreover, I favour a polyphonic display, a dramatic performance of the voices of the individuals, and my voice will only be one amongst many (Grbich, 2007). The ideas relating to 'juxtaposition', 'poetry', 'dance' and 'drama' become particularly useful (Grbich, 2007). 'Juxtaposition' is a display which places information against each other in an '*echoing manner in order to bring out differences*' (Grbich, 2007, p.216). 'Poetry' is associated with rhythm, tone and diction, pauses and repetition

(Grbich, 2007, p.219). 'Dance' or 'drama' utilises possibilities with '*dramatic performances of data*' (Grbich, 2007, p.221), lines of flight and possibilities for escape (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004).

Thus, I decided to offer two, amongst many, possible interpretations of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. First I offer a conventional presentation of data of how it began to unfold. Second I offer a presentation of data through a dramatic performance of events (Grbich, 2007), using juxtaposition, poetry, dance, drama, and of resistance and of 'breakout' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). In this sense, I seek to take this chance event, to listen to excluded and silenced 'voices' of people who inhabit this discourse.

4.10 Summary

This chapter began with an exploration of the methodological issues associated with using a case study approach. It provides an overview of the qualitative methods unique to this case study approach, principally, one-to-one interviews, focus groups and participant observation. Of importance are the issues of anonymity, confidentiality, values and ethics. In addition, a recurring dilemma for any research approach is the issue of assuring confidentiality, particularly important when such concerns are placed and understood within a power/knowledge discourse. Indeed this chapter raises a number of questions relating to a process of research which creates a hierarchal process controlled and regulated with binary dualisms. Indeed, it opens possibilities with a myriad of alternative processes of presenting and analysing and playing with data.

The following chapter presents an array of findings having adopted a case study approach. The findings chapter is typical of a case study. It presents what was done

and found. It charts out threads, linkages, and social phenomena in order to prepare

the way for its analysis, critique and subsequent discussion.

CHAPTER 5: Findings

This chapter presents findings from the data. Primary data is gathered from one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews and participant observations. In addition this includes data from email and letters of correspondence. Data is also gathered from having kept a research log. Secondary data is gathered from related: literature, policy documents, reports, journal articles, newspapers and websites. This also includes information from the participating higher education institution's prospectus, videos, theatre related literature and from both public and private archived material. Thus, presenting this data, this chapter begins with the individual participants (using pseudonyms), their experiences of the emerging issues, and with working with each other. It then presents data from three proposals, dated 2001, 2002 and 2003, which documents the experiences of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. Following this, this chapter presents the emerging themes relating to previous experiences; namely, a three-year theatre arts course, a two-year accredited theatre course, a collaborative project which enabled practitioners with performers with the label of 'learning difficulties' to share their work, and a performance at a concert hall which led to the formation of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. Finally this chapter recites two public debates relating to the issue of disability and theatre.

5.1 Interview and Focus Group Data

What follows is data gathered from having conducted one-to-one and focus group interviews, principally relating to who the individual participants are, their previous experiences, and their perspectives of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative.

5.1.1 Iris (Joint Director of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)

Iris, one of the joint directors of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, had previously graduated from Red Brick College and recalls that she '*was on the first year of the new community theatre course as it was then … it was fantastic being at drama*

college doing what you really wanted to do. It was fraught with difficulties because, like the course we're trying to set up, it was a new course' (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 31 – 36). Iris recalls that the course at Red Brick College was initially a 3-year diploma which '*was made a degree course later … that is where it all started developing those kinds of skills that kind of approach to going into theatre*' (Interview–I071203, 2003, Lines: 46 – 47). After graduating from Red Brick College, Iris performed at '*The Fringe*' festival (an arts event lasting for three weeks in August in Edinburgh, Scotland and which also has a key aim of consciousness-raising (Rae, 2009, p.15)), and engaged in Fringe theatre for '*a year or two*' (Interview – I020304, 2004, Line: 108).

Iris recalled the development of the 2-year course (Project Theatre) which was '*for individuals who clearly wanted to do more in terms of theatre and [who] have the potential*' (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 149 – 150). As a graduate and having experience of performing at *The Fringe Festival*, Iris began work as an Actor Teacher with a Young People's Theatre. For Iris this was her first experience of working with disabled individuals, and reflects that '*… it was the first time I'd ever met anybody, anybody disabled possibly but certainly somebody with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties'* (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 64 – 65). With regard to labels, Iris recalls that:

> *… the labels in those days were very much 'mental handicap' or 'severe learning difficulties'*. (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 74 – 75)

Iris also added that:

> *… I left [the Young People's Theatre] ... [and] came back and worked on the pilot project of [Project Theatre] from which students were recruited ... a 6 week project and I then became involved in the evening workshop at [the Young People's Theatre] with the group with [sic] 'learning*

difficulties. (Focus Group Interview – MIVL020304, 2004,
Lines: 540 – 550)

When Iris left the Young People's Theatre she worked for a Community Arts Centre
'*where they started up a City and Guilds course for disabled people in theatre* …'
(Focus Group Interview – MIVL020304, 2004, Lines: 578 – 579). Initially Iris was
employed to recruit individuals onto a City and Guilds course which was open to
people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' but later ended up '... *teaching it for
3-years ...*' (Interview – I1170203, 2003, Line: 171) until it was closed. Related to
this closure, Iris recalled that there was a '*management takeover*' (Interview –
I1170203, 2003, Line: 183) which resulted in the course ending and her leaving. Iris
described this change in terms of unfairness particularly with the lack of news about
the sudden closure of the course and the impact on students. When this course
closed down, Iris and Mathew (Joint Director of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)
began to talk about their frustrations and working experiences given, as Iris
comments, '*there was no way forward for these individuals*' (Focus Group Interview
– MIVL020304, 2004, Line: 607).

5.1.2 Mathew (Joint Director of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)
Mathew is the partnering joint director of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, and like
Iris, he also worked at the Young People's Theatre. Mathew was '*a lecturer*'
(Interview - M171203, 2003, Line: 343) when he joined the theatre company.
Mathew specifically recalls the date he first as a Stage Manager having originally
seen an advertisement in a theatre newspaper which at the time he was reading in
a van on the way back from a tour as a percussionist. Archived in library sources
the newspaper advertisement appears on two consecutive prints both, at the time,
priced ten pence. The advertisement reads:

> *To work in a highly active Arts based Community Centre for*
> *young people. Applicants must be interested in working with*

> teams devising material for Theatre-in-Education
> programmes. Must be Equity member and holder of current
> driving licence. (Theatre Newspaper, date withheld)

This work involved evening arts workshops. At that time, Mathew was unfamiliar with the idea of theatre-in-education, and recalls being interviewed by Jane (Vice Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative) who was then director of the Young People's Theatre. As part of this role Mathew recalls working in '*Junior schools, secondary schools, and adult education work in the community … as well as in the evenings contributing my music and percussion skills in music workshops and so forth*' (Focus Group Interview – MIVJ070604, 2004, Lines: 48 – 52). Two years into this work Mathew, with another colleague, formed an arts workshop for '*people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 61 – 62). Mathew states:

> ... *a number of us got more and more excited and inspired
> by the distance that individuals were beginning to travel,
> though again it didn't have formal aims and outcomes or
> anything like this. It was evening arts workshops in which
> individuals decided through improvisation, through working
> both in music and acting and so forth, to get productions
> together for parents and carers and so on.* (Interview –
> M171203, 2003, Lines: 179 – 186)

The team consisted of approximately 20 full-time staff, devising projects in '*day centres and things*' (Interview - M171203, 2003, Line: 194). Many of the students attending the evening arts workshops would have been attending segregated 'special' schools. The associated terminology is an important point for Mathew, he comments:

> ... *this is important historically, probably slightly uncover
> some of the confusions, and our difficulties over expressing
> why we mention things like 'severe learning difficulties'. The
> history of the work very much we worked with people who
> would have previously been termed as having 'severe
> learning difficulties'* .... (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines:
> 205 – 210)

It was soon after this that Mathew and colleagues, through the Young People's Theatre, had secured funding to go abroad, '*a major trip*' with a group of students to perform and on return started a two-year 'Project Theatre' course. This Mathew stated was '... *our first go at a non-accredited training programme* ...' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 358 – 359), and that '... *it was as much about learning for us than it was for students*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 362 – 363). Mathew recalls that the Young People's Theatre had previously encouraged and arranged a visit to Czechoslovakia for students to share their skills through theatre and performing arts and that in his view the 'major' trip was a '*breakthrough*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Line: 350).

Mathew left the Young People's Theatre and started a Cert.Ed (Certificate of Education) teacher-training course and then created a three-year accredited Theatre Arts Course. It was after this experience of developing, designing and delivering an accredited course that Mathew with Iris later formed the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative after they had been commissioned to perform a dance piece which '*was out of a 9-week residency*' (Interview - M171203, 2003, Line: 48), performing at a concert hall. The performance was a dance piece and was performed by five men labelled as having 'learning difficulties'; individuals who had previously completed the Theatre Arts Course. For Mathew this earlier Theatre Arts Course '....*was the first time ... students having graduated out of, what we refer to now as the pilot project to what we are now setting-up*' (Interview - M171203, 2003, Lines: 87 – 89). After this Mathew and Iris began discussions with a former Assistant Principal of Red Brick College which Mathew describes as a '*well respected drama school*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 558 – 559), with a view to the higher education institution hosting a three year degree programme. Mathew comments:

> ... *it seemed that we were going to be very fruitful with [Red Brick College] and in particular [the previous] assistant Vice*

Principal there, that institution opened up to us ... (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 504 – 507)

The previous Assistant Principal had formalised their commitment for the proposed degree programme via a letter dated 4 November 2002 (Appendix I). The tone of this letter is positive, beginning by outlining the college's mission and strategic aims. With reference to supporting a theatre group which works to encourage young people '*with a range of physical and learning disabilities*' into theatre, it also lists its '*expression of this commitment*', which it states are to:

> ... *respond to the stated national and institutional objectives of creating a learning and teaching environment that does not discriminate against students with* [*sic*] *disabilities, provide an educational environment that provides effective support for disabled students, raise the awareness of those with disabilities to the potential for viable careers in the performing industries, to promote inclusive and non-discriminatory opportunities for disabled practitioners in performance-based creative industries*. (Appendix I, Letter: Private Correspondence, 2002, p.2)

The data thus far presents the experiences of two individuals enthused by their own curiosity, chance meetings, emerging questions around the place of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' and their emersion into theatre work. This was, of course, a time when opportunities and aspirations were focused on a vision of prospective students described as having 'learning difficulties' were, in the forthcoming year, not being but becoming higher education students, or so it was thought.

5.1.3 Val (Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)

Val is the Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative and had also completed her training at Red Brick College on the Community Theatre course which she recalls '... *later became a degree course, but it wasn't a degree course when I was there*' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 202 – 203). Val recalls being taught by Jane

(Vice Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative). Val had met Iris earlier at Red Brick College as a fellow student and recalls starting work together at the same Young People's Theatre. Val worked there as an Actor Teacher. Val recalls being involved in two residencies for people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' although looking back she says, '*on my old files*', the term '*mentally handicapped*' was being used (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 215 – 216). As an Actor Teacher, and at that time Val was '*a drama workshop leader*', she describes the projects which, she describes as '... *two 3-week long residencies in local Adult Training Centres with* [*Mathew*] *… it was probably the first time I'd ever professionally worked with people with* [*sic*] *'learning disabilities' in any way that I was aware of, and from that I became very interested*' (Focus Group Interview – MIVL020304, 2004, Lines: 396 – 411). Val recalls the experiences of residencies at the Adult Training Centres, recalling that the participating individuals:

> *… wouldn't really be expected to get employment and who would now be in a Day Centre … and … probably, would have been to a school for people with* [*sic*] *'severe learning difficulties' … I was quite nervous of just knowing how I would be able to communicate and how I would react to people with* [*sic*] *'learning disabilities'. Embarrassment, I think, in that, that embarrassment that, you get, a lot of people get when you don't quite understand what somebody's saying.* (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 131 – 158)

During this early work Val describes going abroad with the group of individuals described as having 'learning disabilities' for two weeks and considers this to be '*a real turning point*' for the group (Interview – V120104, 2004, Line: 395). Val left the Young People's Theatre to work for another theatre company and did a '*little bit of freelance work and then returned to [the Young People's Theatre] as Theatre in Education Director*' (Focus Group Interview – MIVL020304, 2004, Lines: 462 – 463). As director of the Young People's Theatre, Val was also responsible, with a team of

actors, writers and designers, for maintaining school relationships and devising new programmes.

5.1.4 Jane (Vice Chair of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)

Jane, the Vice Chair of Cutting Edge, is currently working for a specialist college of one of the universities of London, a teaching role that she has been doing for the last '*eight and a half years*' (Interview – J160304, 2004, Line: 65). Jane had also worked previously at the Young People's Theatre, where she would have known the individuals associated with the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. Jane started at the Young People's Theatre '*... as an Actor/teacher then became Assistant Director, and then became Director of the company*' for three years (Interview – J160304, 2004, Lines: 169 – 171). As director of the Young People's Theatre, Jane was responsible for a company of 28 people until she left to work at Red Brick College. As director, Jane was involved in various workshops and programmes. At that time Jane recalls that these were '*with ESN* [*Educationally Sub-Normal)*] *(Moderate) and ESN* [*Educationally Sub-Normal*] *(severe) schools*' (Interview J270304, 2004, Line: 195). Jane did do some freelance work after leaving the Young People's Theatre, '*doing a play*' (Focus Group Interview, 2004b, Lines: 77 – 78).

Prior to her current role, Jane had worked at Red Brick College for 13-years teaching Acting and was, then, Head of Contemporary Theatre Studies and was responsible for Community Theatre. During that time Jane recalls the tensions that were emerging as to the degree worthiness of acting, she explains:

> *… the acting courses were degree courses by my second year, ... the courses converted to degree … the battle then was whether acting could be seen as degree worthy, I mean, that was the battle ground then, that's what we thought that actually the study of acting could be considered degree worthy and there were academics saying "no way, no way, no"* ... (Interview – J270104, 2004, Lines: 394 – 400)

At Red Brick College, Jane recalls arranging placements for students on the non-accredited two-year 'Project Theatre' course, and explains that:

> *I had a project in the second year with students where they had to go out and work as communicators, facilitators and in various different roles with people in the wider community and … we thought it might be an interesting project … for some of the students, four of the students, to come in and work with the [Project Theatre] students who were just in their first term of a two-year project and my students were in their second year* …. (Interview - J270104, 2004, Lines: 81 – 88)

During the students' second year Jane recalls that disabled students on the 'Project Theatre' course objected to the prospect of being 'taught by' their peers, she recalls:

> *… they didn't want to be taught by the second years from [Red Brick College] they wanted to do a project together and that was a real moment of learning for me, [Project Theatre] students … said, "why we working in an old school in [place name] when we're doing an acting course we should be here with these acting students" and of course they should … So we did those two projects and the second year, as I say, my students from [Red Brick College] worked alongside the [Project Theatre] students because they were both second years* …. (Interview – J270104, 2004, Lines: 114 – 128)

In addition Jane recalls that she had never experienced supporting individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' on Red Brick College courses, and her unequivocal response is '*No way, no way*' (Interview – J270103, 2003, Line: 180), she explains that:

> *... in theatre schools, acting colleges they're still struggling with the concept of creating programmes that have people with physical difficulties, let alone 'learning difficulties'. It is still for some a huge leap of the imagination to think that a) people have got anything to offer, anything to say and b) that the courses, the very set structures and the enormity of an actor's training can be adapted, either adapted or a new way of training can be found to support disabled people and what they have to say. So it's still very revolutionary.* (Interview – J270103, 2003, Lines: 182 – 190)

With regard to supporting students on placement, Jane also remembers:

> … *having to support my* [*sic*] *students particularly in the first*
> *year when, I think none of them had really had much*
> *contact with people with* [*sic*] *'learning disabilities'. There*
> *was one student, and I can't remember which, first or*
> *second year had a brother with* [*sic*] *a 'learning disability'*
> *and somebody else had actually done some work in a*
> *youth club or something which is why they wanted to do the*
> *project, but the sort of thinking I had to go through in order*
> *to be able to support my* [*sic*] *students while I was still*
> *learning myself that was quite eye opening really.*
> (Interview – J270104, 2004, Lines: 197 - 206)

One of those students was Catherine who particularly was keen to be on placement on the 'Project Theatre' programme.

5.1.5 Catherine (drama tutor, ex-student of Red Brick College)

Catherine is currently working as a '*drama tutor*' with a theatre company, she explains '*basically they are a theatre company but basically they are a band, so they tour Europe with a band of mixed ability people, so there's some people with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties' there's some people with physical disabilities and there's also members of the [theatre company] sort of management structure that play in the band*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 22 – 25). In addition, Catherine is teaching on a Performing Arts diploma course at a FE college, '*I'm teaching, acting, performance and various other things on that course*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 590 – 591). Recalling various events from the past, Catherine describes how she first started to think about going to university. Catherine had previously completed an A-level in Theatre Studies which '*... had taken me seven-years to get back on track, because you know, it's that thing about taking time out to go to work, thinking about what you want to do and then never quite making it back into full time education in all that time*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 56 – 59). Catherine did not '*come from an academic background*' and was the '*first person in my family to do a degree of any kind*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 90 – 94). At that time,

Catherine recalls how difficult it was for her as a mature student being amongst the majority of students who were younger. A significant difference for Catherine was that she had already experienced moving into her own accommodation. Catherine recalls her first year, which she '*found it difficult*' and added that during her first year, '*I hated it at [Red Brick College]*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 72 – 73). Of this experience Catherine reflects that:

> *… it's amazing how much difference those few years of working being independent made and also I was living in my own flat in ... so I was commuting everyday and I wasn't sharing a student house or any of that kind of stuff so that distanced me slightly.* (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 74 – 79)

Catherine described the weight of expectation with being a '*mature student*', from tutors and explains that the '*tutors give me an awful lot of respect*' which felt '*a little bit kind of weird, so I felt also an expectation to behave in a particular way*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 84 – 89). Catherine recalls that her family's response to her doing a degree was one of scepticism and comments '*my mum was never supportive of me wanting to be an actor it was kind of this thing that other people did and if you did it you'd get into drugs and sleep with the directors, you know*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 101 – 104). Catherine recalls meeting and being drawn to other 'mature' students '*probably because we worked, because we had been independent…*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 112 – 113). At Red Brick College, Catherine '*... did the 3 years BA (Hons) Theatre Arts Degree as it was then called*' and before this had worked in youth theatre for five years (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 41 – 43). Whilst at Red Brick College, as part completion of that course, Catherine completed a placement on the 'Project Theatre' course which was being run by several people including Mathew and Iris.

Whilst being a 'mature' student Catherine recalls working for four hours a week at a youth club delivering theatre workshops. Catherine was aware of the Young People's Theatre company and was interested in being on placement with the 'Project Theatre' course. Catherine recalls that:

> *… it was a 2-year theatre training course that was funded by European Social Fund money, as far as I can remember, and so it was actually training people with [sic] 'special needs' to become actors with the hope that they might get placed in theatre companies and alongside that it was also promoting self advocacy skills so I was quite interested in that whole area.* (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 162 – 168)

Catherine recalls being with two other students and members of staff from the 'Project Theatre' course devising workshops, warm-up exercises, trust games '*all that kind of thing plus working towards a piece of theatre*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 188 – 189). As to her first impression, Catherine on reflection states '*Oh, I was terrified, it was quite scary...*', and comments:

> *... and so ... It was scary because one of the big issues I think when you've never worked with [sic] 'special needs people' is about discipline. When you come across 'special needs people' for the first time, is because they tend to be very physical, i.e. they want to shake hands or kiss you or hug you or you know. Actually not having had that contact with [sic] 'special needs people' can be quite frightening at first and then knowing when to say it is inappropriate, "I don't feel comfortable with your physical contact with me" and also feeling under pressure to be a bit more open a bit more freer and for me as a woman some of the guys would be quite evasive in how they touched you or how they greeted you. Actually I had to say to myself "hang on would I if these guys, want of a better word 'straight' wanting to use better language than that, if they were my mates at college, would I allow them to touch me in the same way?" No I wouldn't I wouldn't feel comfortable with that in a workshop situation. So therefore, it was quite hard to negotiate those boundaries because of also not wanting to seem like you were, you've got the 'eer' factor that "Oh my god I don't want them to touch me" or things like that. But you know, they were real genuine issues … prejudices basically that you were having to go away and say to them "hang on a minute, what's going on why am I feeling like this, is it because people look strange?". They look kind of*

> *strange. I'm not use to them I don't feel comfortable you
> know.* (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 204 – 230)

Catherine explains that this was her first experience of meeting students and adds that '*there were issues for all of us, I think we all suffered, the 3 of us*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 233 – 234). When asked to explain in what way she 'suffered', Catherine replies:

> *Sort of silently, you know, sort of like feeling. Am I supposed
> to be feeling like this? ... Actually I feel wrong in terms of
> feeling like this. I feel awkward I don't know how to talk
> about this and I need to in order to get over it. But then it
> was also about what you also forget in those situations. It's
> like any group of people coming together to do theatre,
> there's always that initial thing of feeling uncomfortable, so
> why the hell shouldn't you feel uncomfortable meeting a
> new group of people and you're being asked to trust people
> very very quickly and that is often to do with physical trust.
> The expectation is also of you as an actor that you can just,
> if somebody, if you walk into a room full of strangers you
> can run around naked and you don't feel any shame or you
> don't feel embarrassed but actually that's not true but it's
> one of those very difficult things. So then to have the whole
> 'special needs' issue on top of that, about how do we relate
> to each other. What is acceptable behaviour for all of us in a
> group?* (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 242 – 258)

Catherine, responds with her own reflective and probing questions, about her own behaviour, interspersed with an acknowledgement of the individuals, observing staff leading on the 'Project Theatre' course '*modelling their behaviour*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Line: 254), recognising the transformative potential of theatre arts, and attributes this experience to her continued interest. In her own words, observing staff, Catherine explains:

> *... they were amazing they were absolutely fantastic, and
> then it meant the more we relaxed the more we were able to
> build up relationships with the students and it was fantastic
> and they were an amazing bunch of people and so very
> talented as well. So very very talented. So it's that whole
> thing again for me which is why I suppose I've ended up
> staying in theatre for so long is that through performance
> through that social kind of democratic working situation.
> That all these amazing changes, because that's what*

> *theatre is about, it's about transformation and its whether or not you are a performer of what your role is in that you transform yourself in that and I believe that for me personally through working with people with* [*sic*] *'special needs' that I have transformed on a very personal level, I've also transformed as a performer….* (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 276 – 289)

Catherine, relating to the transformative element of theatre, questions the '*nature of performance*' which has informed her later experience of working with theatre groups and adds that '*your expectations change enormously … there's a lot of letting go that you have to do about perceptions, learned perceptions about prejudices about expectations about what performance is*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 299 – 302). In trying to explain how her expectations changed, Catherine contrasts her experience by drawing upon a discourse of location, physicality, racism and 'disability' as discrimination, and comments that:

> *… if you grow up in a community particular that's outside of [the city] and you come into [the city] to live you have to readdress all those prejudices that you've grown up with … and I think that's something that you have to continuously work with throughout your life, you know … living in Britain it's a huge part of one's life and you know you're very lucky if you've grown up in an atmosphere where that hasn't been an issue, as you become more educated as you become more, what's the word, part of a multicultural society. You actually are then I think, much more able to question your own prejudices. If you're living outside of that its very easy to say from a distance "oh I don't have those feelings", actually when you have to confront it, you really have to face your own demons and I think it's a similar issue with disability … it's all very well talking about inclusion and, you know, oh yes everybody should be included. Actually when you come face-to-face with people you have to face your own demons and your own prejudices and often I thought, often for me it's how its manifested has been a physical reaction and I'll be honest I think sometimes a repulsion and that's to do with about being unfamiliar about it being very strange and fear. I think the same thing perhaps happens with regards to racism and I think a lot of it is to do with fear. The fear of the unknown and fear of somehow that's going to affect you. It's going to change you in the wrong way or rub-off on you or something bizarre thing that happens to you as a human being. And I think for me a lot of it was to do with the physical. How do I overcome my own physical repulsion? and thankfully that's not very long lasting that's*

> *something that goes away very very quickly, and any new
> person you get to know the person beneath the disability. I
> think there's an advert isn't there on the TV at the moment. I
> spotted it the other night saying 'See the Person not the
> Disability'. But it's like saying well we have to acknowledge
> that we have to. We must not ignore the disability because
> it's there and that's what the prejudice is actually*. (Interview
> – C150304, 2004, Lines: 354 – 389)

Catherine recalls finishing the placement, finishing her degree course and then finding work '*doing a project a co-project with a company of actors with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties'*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 415 – 416). Catherine also recalls the various labels, particularly the term 'severe learning difficulties' and responds '*it's quite funny when you become so, you stop thinking about the differences*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 429 – 430).

5.1.6 Adam (Vice Principal of Red Brick College)

Adam is a Vice Principal, and began working at Red Brick College '*when the college was at the point of ceasing to be a teacher training institution. It had a unique history, ...'*. (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 24 – 26). Adam remembers teaching two individuals associated with the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, and working with another, commenting that:

> *I taught [Iris] very briefly at the beginning and I taught [Val]
> who's on the Board. [Jane] was a colleague alongside me
> as a teacher, but the courses diverged quite radically in
> educational terms and … the Community Theatre Arts
> course went very much down a TiE (Theatre in Education)
> road.* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 159 – 163)

Adam recalls that the college pioneered a vocational training course at degree level, '*... I came in the beginning of that and it was interesting from that point of view, the notion of combining vocational skills and education which was a very exciting opportunity*' (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 39 – 43). Simultaneously Red Brick College started offering a Diploma in Drama, which soon '*transmuted into a*

Community Theatre Arts' degree programme (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 45 – 46). Adam, also recalls the struggles that Red Brick College were faced with and mentioned the time when the first degree programme was offered by the college, he recalls:

> *… training was rationalised ... and the college had to stop being a provider. I think a number of providers were being reduced and it had to go in another direction. It chose to pioneer a route which is now common in theatre which is degree level Theatre Education and Training, vocational training for the theatre at degree level now a BA in Acting, ...* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 33 – 40)

At Red Brick College, Adam witnessed the diversification of courses and took on greater senior responsibilities. Several changes had been made to course programmes, and Adam recalls that he was increasingly '*drifting*' into:

> *... other roles in the college. Things like distance learning ... then there were other developments post-graduate things and so on. So I tended to work on the more what people would call the academic side but my own background is in theatre as a director and as an actor* .... (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 68 – 73)

Adam also recalls the various student placements, including the 'Project Theatre' course and the link Jane had with the Young People's Theatre. Adams also recalls the changing social, economic, political and cultural context and emphasises how this impacted upon theatre, he explains:

> *... with the Thatcher period when the funding dried up and there was an engineered recession in this country, the local companies, the TiE companies, certainly lost most of their funding. The Arts Council itself contracted, local regional arts associations attracted civic support regional borough support for companies disappeared and where repertory theatres had satellite TiE companies they also shrivelled in that period and the employment prospects dried up frankly for any kind of publicly subsidised small group theatre. It was a period of great attrition and destruction and [pause]. When the performance programmes were rationalised ....* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 234 – 244)

This political climate, with a cut in funding and the lack of specific theatre related

employment opportunities, all affected 'Project Theatre', Adam states:

> *Although [Cutting Edge] has roots in this college in some*
> *respects, this college is part of a real world were some of*
> *the roots snipped by some of the ruthless economic factors*
> *that have affected us all.* (Interview – A120504, 2004,
> Lines: 303 – 306)

In relation to meeting Cutting Edge, Adam had taken over lead role in October 2003

from his predecessor who had originally formalised the working relationship, Adam

explains:

> *Well my first knowledge of it was actually that, the*
> *discussions were taking place with my predecessor. My*
> *first knowledge is that I didn't know that there was a*
> *company initially based upon the work that grew out of, well*
> *I'm thinking right back to [Project Theatre] days. But*
> *obviously I knew the personnel involved it seemed like a*
> *timely and appropriate development to happen because of*
> *the work that had been done, and really not advanced*
> *much beyond the, I suppose ... I don't know when the*
> *[Project Theatre] finished I lost track of its work, do you*
> *know?* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 498 – 507)

With regard to disability, theatre and access, Adam makes the point that the

legislative changes were starting to take place in terms of physical access for

disabled people, but that understanding of access issues for individuals labelled as

having 'learning difficulties' were not, he explains:

> *I would say the more ... high profile issues about disability*
> *are linked to physical disability, because that's were*
> *conspicuously were money is now being spent upon*
> *changing facilities or leading right through to the current*
> *legislation. So I think that people with* [sic] *'learning*
> *difficulties' have had a less high profile clearly than people*
> *with physical disabilities simply because you have to*
> *transform the space to make it accessible but, I'm also*
> *aware that in performing arts that the same applies that*
> *people with physical disabilities have a profile in performing*
> *arts for 10, 15 years now. So, and the same ground hasn't*
> *been covered by people with* [sic] *learning difficulties, so*
> *that would be my perception.* (Interview – A120504, 2004,
> Lines: 514 – 525)

Having taken over lead role for Red Brick College of the partnership with Cutting

Edge, Adam recognises two key issues, these are:

> ... *validation by a university and resourcing.* (Interview –
> A120504, 2004, Lines: 542 – 543)

Adam describes a change in the partnership and the inherent problems and barriers

that were starting to emerge. Issues were starting to impact on Red Brick College;

Adam explains the rapid changing context in these terms:

> ... *we had to move very swiftly because our student*
> *numbers are very strictly controlled by the funding council*
> *so we have a contract that allows us within certain margins*
> *to fall below the target or above the target to work to a*
> *certain number of students across our ... programmes. So*
> *part of the challenge is actually making sure that we've got*
> *to balance the numbers between the programmes, so little*
> *that it can't run or so much that it at least stabilises the*
> *collaborative modes of working we have between the*
> *theatre disciplines. So it's quite a tricky operation. But that*
> *was locked by the funding council so there's no movement*
> *on student numbers and the only option open to us was to*
> *work swiftly on the foundation degree because the*
> *government was funding access through foundation*
> *degrees towards widening participation.* (Interview –
> A120504, 2004, Lines: 547 – 563)

Adam recalls the more recent discussions that were taking place; namely, that

foundation degrees being two years in duration and how this would be accompanied

by a third year of study. Adam recalls having placed a bid for student numbers to

the funding agency which, he says:

> ... *was successful, it got high rating they give number letter*
> *rating and they got top rating as a bid. So we knew we had*
> *the numbers to start in September 2005. The next hurdle of*
> *course to prepare for, and all this was telescoped in time*
> *that really time to reflect and think was not great for me,*
> *and therefore it was important to get on with three things:*
> *bidding for numbers, getting a validating partner who would*
> *be sympathetic,* ... (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 572
> – 579)

Red Brick College, are a non-validating university, and Adam shared that their existing validating university was:

> *... out of the frame because they're not interested in foundation degrees and they wouldn't be prepared to help develop this one on a short timescale.* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 580 – 582)

For Adam, seeking a validating partner was a dilemma. Working initially with an internal colleague, Adam recalls taking a lead role with working through the required foundation degree documentation with Mathew and Iris, and comments:

> *I took it over so the three of us worked on the document that went into ... But, so it's difficult to, I didn't frankly have a lot of time to reflect and I think it was just a question of acting quickly on all of those things and that's what we've been doing since.* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 587 – 591)

Adam and Cutting Edge managed to locate another validating university, attending an initial meeting which raises a number of anxieties about the potential of a foundation degree course, and the emerging uncertainties about the relationship with Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. On reflection, Adam shares the uncertainties for Red Brick College, as a non-validating institution, at a time of 'mass' higher education, diversification, and how this impacts on the sector and the college specifically.

5.1.7 Heather (Director of Education, Funding Body)

Heather is a Director of Education for a funding body and has been in this role for almost four years. With regard to her role, Heather explains what this means in practice:

> *… I'm in charge of policy and operational management of the education programme … in a variety of areas including Early Years and hard to reach adult learners, and young people excluded from school. Another variety of innovative*

> *and cutting edge themes including democracy in schools,*
> *which we've introduced more recently.* (Interview –
> H110604, 2004, Lines: 20 – 27)

Reported in their Annual Report, this funding body awarded 'Cutting Edge' a

£150,000 grant for the three years for the development of this degree programme.

Like many of the individuals associated with the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative,

Heather had also worked for the Young People's Theatre. Heather recalls that she:

> *... managed the education policy stuff at [the Young*
> *People's Theatre] and worked quite closely with the*
> *teachers placed between the college and the school. I*
> *looked at the educational content of the programmes.*
> (Interview – H110604, 2004, Lines: 42 – 45)

Heather recalls a number of job roles she had before she started working for the

Young People's Theatre.

As a Board member of a funding body, Heather recalls her initial impression of the

Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative application for funds. Heather describes the

application as a '*risk*' and comments:

> *... it's a huge financial risk, it's very expensive, not*
> *necessarily feasible.* (Interview – H110604, 2004, Lines: 94
> – 95)

Heather recalls the '*battle*' with fellow board members at the time to approve the

Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative application for funding. Heather shared her

experience of determination and resilience in support of the funding application on a

number of points, these she explains:

> *I think it is an important precedent. I think there are*
> *problems with it, I really do. Not in the least, whether it was*
> *ever possible for this to be a degree course, given that the*
> *new Foundation Degrees have come in. ... Whether the*
> *content of the course would be appropriate for a degree*
> *level course. That was one of the major concerns.*
> (Interview – H110604, 2004, Lines: 102 – 108)

For Heather the notion of access and inclusion in higher education was a key factor in terms of financially supporting the initiative, she recalls:

> *Whether I actually believe it ought to be a degree course is a different matter at the moment. I feel it's important, access to higher education is very important for young disabled people and in the light of the DDA at the moment it's very important to test the boundaries of that. But I also think that you're realistic about the difficulties that HEFCE and some of the other bureaucratic bodies will have in implementing that and there are also cost implications, its expensive. But in principle its fine, in practice it's quite difficult.* (Interview – H110604, 2004, Lines: 112 – 120)

5.1.8 Richard (Appointed Lecturer – Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative)

Richard, when asked, declared '*I'm a teacher*' (Interview – R071204, 2004, Line: 18) and had previously been a student who attended evening arts workshops at the Young People's Theatre. Richard was anticipating teaching prospective students '*to learn about dance, drama, singing, about voice, workshops, ...*' (Interview – R071204, 2004, Line: 23), and also mentioned how things had recently changed with respect to the development of the proposed degree programme. Richard has been employed, for the last 7 months, as a lecturer to act as a role-model to potential students, contributing to developing the emerging work; commenting that '*We've done lots and lots of work*' and that '*It's very good hard work ...*' (Interview – R071204, 2004, Lines: 27 – 29). Richard described the emerging work as warm-ups, learning about 'voice', technique, dance, and to '*teach other students to learn about your ideas, your interests*' (Interview – R071204, 2004, Lines: 50 – 51). Richard recalls working with other appointed lectures, some of whom he had known when at the 'Young People's Theatre' participating in evening arts workshops. Asking Richard why he initially pursued theatre, he replied:

> *Dancing is my past, my world. ... I built up a dance, I don't like acting style, acting it's not my skill. My skill, I like dancing, and voice, and workshops and warm-ups. ... I don't like acting style. Workshop is very very hard work, is*

built into the work in theatre. (Interview – R071204, 2004, Lines: 109 – 115)

Richard was one of the students who went abroad performing, for him '*It was good there, it was hot weather, food is [pause] don't like*' doing '*Dancing, I played eight nights, playing King Arthur and a baddy, not real, just acting. I did acting ...*' (Interview – R071204, 2004, Lines: 124 – 131). After this Richard explained that he worked at a disabled person led theatre organisation, supporting disabled people. Richard was also a student on the accredited 'Theatre Arts Course' and performed at a Concert Hall, as part of their Festival. Currently, being employed as a lecturer, Richard stated that the work is '*hard work*' and also shared his disappointment when news emerged as to the difficulties CE were experiencing in terms of developing this degree programme (Interview – R071204, 2004, Line: 263).

5.1.9 Lee (Senior Evaluator)

Lee is a senior evaluator, situated within a higher education institution. A previous letter of correspondence by Lee to funders, dated 11 November 2002, described the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative as a '*unique opportunity*' for a detailed study of '*both policy and practice*' in relation to the development of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative (Appendix A). Lee described his involvement with CE, first with having been previously involved in an evaluation; and secondly, with sharing information in the form of an academic paper. Lee explains that:

> *What was of interest in the paper was the fact that here was a group of people, in higher education, researchers, trying to work closely on issues that I have some empathy with and some concern with, trying to work from their understanding of the social model which is well articulated by them, and it is a rare paper. There are not many papers relating to higher education where these sorts of issues are actually articulated or raised and the implications of the paper, I hoped, would be, and I hope nothing more than this that it would be a basis for them actually to come together to discuss, though I never actually said this to them. I just assumed it would hopefully generate that type of engagement between them and that they would then*

> *begin to use that material to strengthen their case in relation to members of the higher education fraternity who have little understanding of disability issues and don't appreciate any significant contribution that have been made by this type of work.* (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 31 – 48)

For Lee, it is important that CE has access to information, and adds:

> *I actually sent them a copy of the thing [academic paper] myself as well. ... the one thing I did say to them, I said they ought to get in contact with these people, and I thought that was a very important issue.* (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 51 – 57)

For Lee, there are a number of similarities that the academic paper (Boxall, *et al.*,

2004) presents; namely:

> *... here was people in higher education attempting to see developments take place within higher education with groups of people who are essentially marginalised. Secondly, there was an attempt, and again, I'm not going into the quality of the attempt, the fact there was an attempt made to get these voices heard and expressed within this context is important and thirdly, that they had a social model approach to their activities and their concerns and a couple of these people I know quite well and have got a lot of regard for them. So in that sense here was an area of work going on that [Cutting Edge] didn't know about, I certainly didn't know about, and therefore I wanted that to be accessible to them and for them to use it, to pursue it in whatever way they wished, most importantly that they do establish links with them.* (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 66 – 80)

Lee also added that:

> *... it was also a delicate position because as an evaluator I didn't want to determine what they should do.* (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 82 – 83)

For Lee the paper presents:

> *... complex institutionally contextualised difficulties and when we talk about barriers to participation we are talking about barriers that have multiple forms and we're talking*

about power relations, we're talking about institutional
forms of exclusion that are deeply rooted within the system.
So here are a group of people and of course, one has to
bear in mind, that these people are themselves at the lower
echelons of higher education as it where. There is nobody
here who holds a significant post in terms of the hierarchy
of higher education. (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 103
– 111)

Lee discussed the various relationships and associations with individuals associated

with CE, he also shared his insight into higher education, the structures, institutional

barriers, power relations, problems of inequality of opportunities, access to

knowledge, information and ideas, notions of voice, questions of inclusion,

participation and entitlement. With regard to questions, Lee rhetorically asked:

... What does it mean to listen to the voices of disabled
people? What about those voices that are objectionable
that we don't want to hear, and what about those voices
that are not expressed through oracy or language, how do
you deal with that? (Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 103
– 111)

As well as discussing his insight into the processes of research, keeping a research

log, the supervisor-student relationship, Lee also offers his reflections on higher

educational institutional structures, the various power relations, and suggested:

There are all these connections, wheels in wheels …
(Interview – L081204, 2004, Lines: 250 – 251)

The previous data from the participants, thus far, has emerged from having

conducted a series of both interviews and focus group interviews. What follows is

data from having kept a research log.

5.2 Participant Observation Data

Participant observation involved taking part in exercises and themes such as:

exploring space, movement, using voice, levels, rhythm, and participating in

improvisation. One improvisation, I describe in my research log, involved using a

table and another using a vase. My research log reads:

> *On the way to meet the CE team, it's been sometime – and I'm wondering how things are in terms of the work and the development of resources/materials. I wonder if any meetings have taken place. Feeling quite anxious yet looking forward to getting to the Theatre. Hoping to get there early about 09:00ish – see W, Richard, D,V then it is usually M and I. ... Let's see what happens!*
>
> *Got to the Theatre about 09:22ish. W was there as anticipated, then V and Richard. Richard in his usual way welcomed me with a hug. Then D arrived then I. W told me that the work was going well and that they had delivered a workshop to a group of teachers – said it went well. [Iris] told me [about her own research] ... and also told me that lots of things had happened with respect to Cutting Edge – serious concerns.*
>
> *The improvisation involving 'The Vase' began with [W] miming that it had been stolen. My participation involved entering the scene as a house keeper who had gone to buy some milk but on return discovered that the vase had been stolen. [Iris] acted as the owner of the vase and [V] was the governor of the house. [Richard] entered the improvisation as a police officer. The plot was thickening and creatively evolving. This was great fun!* (Research Log, May, 2005)

On another occasion, CE had invited theatre practitioners to participate in a

workshop. Via email correspondence I had sought their interpretation of the

workshop. Their responses related to this workshop being pleasurable, challenging

and inspirational, their comments were:

> *I would just like to say what an absolute pleasure it was to participate in the workshop.* (Invited Participant 1)
>
> *I can't resist saying again how fantastic the day was. It felt like a tremendously successful development of the company's work of the last few years. I had a text from … who said "it was the best!" I feel really inspired.* (Invited Participant 2)
>
> *I thought it was a fantastic workshop. … What struck me is that it takes a lot of experience and understanding of the way that drama works – and what people need to do to be encouraged to join in, to be able to run a workshop like that. Your experience was evident in the examples that you gave. … I liked the idea of drama starting with a location, very much. I have never seen that before. … Your*

workshop gave me so many ideas – thank you. … You have developed a unique way of working that many people could learn from. I hope that you will share your practice as much as possible. I would love to do another workshop with you. (Invited Participant 3)

On reflection, I thoroughly enjoyed the workshops and enjoyed meeting all the participants, I can honestly say that it was my first workshop that I have attended where I felt the least anxious and was more willing to participate – I feel that this was due to the atmosphere that the workshop leaders created and the sense of generosity. On reflection, I did not expect the workshop to be as physical as it was, I am not sure why I thought this. (Invited Participant 4)

Attending meetings was also another opportunity to immerse myself in the 'lived experience' of the participants. One meeting involved the two joint directors of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative and staff from Red Brick College. Two specific themes related to the increasing recognition of the complex web of relationships that existed, and the issue of validation where starting to emerge. My research log attempts to illustrate the relationships and reads:

07:27 on the way to [Red Brick College] meeting [Mathew], [Iris] and CD; Head of Learning. Expected to be there for 12:00. CD was mentioned in [Val's] transcripts, wonder if she knows any of the [Cutting Edge] team from the past? Would be interesting as a number of connections are becoming to be realised. Again probably a number of concerns will emerge. CD will be an interesting perspective with her role currently. Wonder what I will be writing on the way back! (Research Log, February, 2004)

I also attempt to illustrate the complex web or relationships, thus:
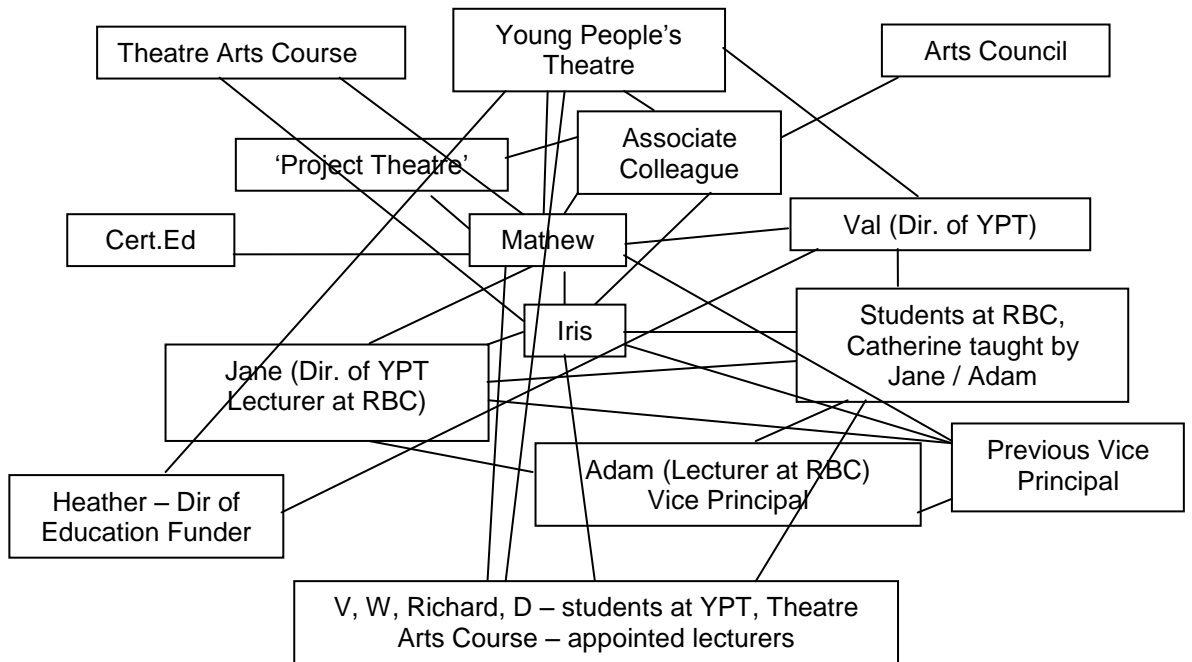
Arrived early read notes in the library. I was surprised how familiar it seemed as the first and last time I had visited was in July 2003. Overall the meeting lasted 12:00 to 4:00, scheduled with a half-hour break. Present were [Adam], CD was the first time meeting [Mathew] and [Iris]. [Adam] started by stating the position of the validation processes. He introduced the issues about mapping aims and outcomes using templates from [the validating university]. Whilst going through these I noticed that [Mathew] and [Iris] appeared to be being 'left behind'. It was interesting, on reflection, how [Mathew] and [Iris's] proposal had been planned for a 3 years course and effectively this needed to be re-formatted to 'fit' the proposed foundation route. After a while [Iris] asked [Adam] to slow down as the process was moving rapidly. At this point [Mathew] remarked that "I feel that you are travelling at 75 mph and I am going at 35 mph" on which [Adam] acknowledged and apologised. Overall the importance of 'fitting' aims with outcomes with demonstrable outcome was made. With this in mind [Adam] suggested moving the validation to June rather than April that had originally been planned. In this process CD clarified for [Mathew] and [Iris] many of the concerns with the current importance of the intended proposal and appeared to be positive and constructive. My impression of what had just happened was mixed involving:

- *The relationship between CE and RBC*
- *The use of language*
- *The related documentation of the proposed course.*

I also add:

> *We broke for lunch and [Mathew], [Iris] and I went to the
> canteen. On reflection I was surprised how the session, the
> first part of the meeting had unravelled particularly
> concerned with how [Mathew] and [Iris] were feeling and
> how they felt about moving the validation process to June.*
> *Having the experience of supporting students over the
> past years I made connections with how overwhelming it
> may have been for [Mathew] and [Iris]. I remember also
> from the interviews that both [Mathew] and [Iris] had
> expressed how sometimes they felt as the 'partnership' was
> being 'led' by RBC. I suggested to [Mathew] and [Iris] that I
> felt that they may have felt overwhelmed by their previous
> experience. I asked [Mathew] and [Iris] if they felt
> comfortable with moving the validation to June, they felt
> that it was OK ...* (Research Log, February, 2004)

Reflective comments are also a recurring theme throughout my research log. As I
was immersed in this work, various troubling questions emerged. I gained different
insights and understandings, and I started to reflect on the research approach and
methodology. I have noted themes relating to research as entrapment, anonymity,
resistance and escape, and the concerns of disabled people; people labelled as
having 'learning difficulties'. My thoughts drift to maths and music, of territories, and
of plateaus. I also reflected on my own experiences of discrimination, and my
experiences of higher education; how higher education is corrupted and corrupting,
a place in which power resides. I wrote critically, reflectively, creatively and at times
poetically. These writings, imaginings, creative bursts and insights enabled me to
gain a different perspective of the developing work of Cutting Edge Theatre
Initiative.

5.3 Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative Proposals

During the earlier work of the two joint directors and the various participating
disabled students labelled as having 'learning difficulties', three proposals exist.
What is apparent, chronologically, is the subtle changes, experiences, emerging
ideas and insights relating to the development of a degree programme in the

performing arts. In addition these proposals reveal, in part, the changing partnership

between CE and RBC, the degree course, and the changing number of interested

higher education institutions. Set out here are the three proposals dated 2003, 2002

and 2001, in this order, documenting the unfolding experiences of the Cutting Edge

Theatre Initiative.

5.3.1 Proposal 2003

The 2003 proposal, dated in June, refers to '*students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties*'

and describes the relationship with Red Brick College as '*in partnership with a major*

performing arts conservatoire'. A considerable change described in the 2003

proposal is the degree programme being referred to as '*a two-year foundation*

degree programme, with a third year leading to honours degree'. The introduction

mirrors the two earlier proposals but with a change in the number of linked HEIs

from ten to seven, expecting the '*7 higher education institutions will develop their*

policies and practice regarding training relating to people with [*sic*] *learning*

difficulties'. In its rationale it asserts that:

> *The [Cutting Edge] degree programme along with the*
> *partnership with [Red Brick College] and the work with 10*
> *employers and the 7 HE institutions, is an attempt to begin*
> *to establish this pathway, in order that talented artists with*
> *[sic] learning difficulties can enter the cultural industries and*
> *become 'change agents'.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative,
> 2003)

In describing the learning styles of individuals labelled as having 'learning

difficulties' the 2003 proposal suggests that these are '*radically different*'. In addition

it questions the adequacy of the DSA, and the distinction between the different

impairment groups, stating that:

> *It is assumed that physically and [sensory] disabled*
> *students and those with [sic] specific learning difficulties*
> *such as dyslexia, will enter existing programmes and take*

> *up the Disabled Student's Allowance to meet additional*
> *needs such as travel assistance, signers, IT equipment, etc.*
> *This is totally inadequate to meet the needs of learning-*
> *disabled students.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2003)

In its summary the history of the joint directors of CE is equated with a '*23 year journey*', informing that Mathew and Iris '*have worked separately and together with people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties in the performing arts in theatre and in educational settings*'. This proposal states that the joint directors collectively have experience in directing, teaching, production management, musical direction and performance, acting and project management. It outlines what it considers to be '*four key landmarks*' in the history of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. These it states are; first, the work developed in the 1980s at a Young People's Theatre. Second, between 1994 and 1998 the development of a Theatre Arts Course accredited through the Open College Network. Third, forming in 1998 the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, and; fourth, in 2000, beginning dialogue with Red Brick College and the establishment of a higher education programme for '*learning-disabled students*'. Using statistical data, to describe the situation facing individuals described as having '*severe learning difficulties*', the proposal makes an assertive statement that '*the time has arrived*' and states that:

> *This picture that is painted by these figures is of a group*
> *who are largely disenfranchised from society, mainly cared*
> *for by the family and not able to take up opportunities that*
> *most of us take for granted, e.g. employment, marriage,*
> *independence. With the extension of the Disability*
> *Discrimination Act into education (SENDA) the time has*
> *arrived to enable talented artists with* [*sic*] *learning*
> *difficulties to enter higher education, and re-position*
> *themselves to make a significant contribution to the cultural*
> *life of the UK.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2003)

The 2003 proposal includes a reflective comment from a head teacher of a segregated 'special' school who was attending a workshop on a M.Ed programme, at one of the targeted HEIs, by the CE, and responded that '*After more than twenty*

years experience as a teacher, I now have to completely re-evaluate how I see my [*sic*] *pupils and what they could achieve*'. In describing the relationship with Red Brick College the proposal repeats commentary found in earlier proposals but informs that the partnership has developed:

> *… over the past two years through the Assistant Principal, Academic Affairs, [name]. [Red Brick] welcomes the collaboration with [Cutting Edge] and the expertise that [Cutting Edge] will bring, enabling the college to open its doors to students with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties.*
> (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2003)

In terms of the progress with meeting its quota of working with ten employers, the 2003 proposal reports that CE have received funding and has met with eight interested employers. In terms of meeting targets to work with seven HEIs the proposal lists four active relationships with a fifth HEI being reported as expressing an interest. In explanation of the change to the proposed foundation degree programme, discussion mirrors the earlier proposals. For instance, the course is described as being delivered in modules and there being a production in the third term of each academic year. In addition, the 2003 proposal raises the issue of funding and exit strategies discussing '*two main strategies*' for ensuring the degree programme's continuation. These are to '*build on the relationship with [Red Brick College] to embed the programme in their practice and working closely with them for funding*' and to establish an '*administrator post*' to carry out fundraising activities. In addition with regard to identifying potential students, the 2003 proposal suggests that there will be '*expert advice and support to negotiate through the state benefits issues arising in relation to becoming a higher education student and taking up a student loan*' (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2003).

5.3.2 Proposal 2002

The 2002 proposal dated in November refers to '*students with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties*'. Its summary reiterates the point that a team of '*lecturers with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties*' would be central to the delivery of the degree programme, '*acting as mentors, providing leadership, support and role models for the students*'. These lecturing posts were funded over the three years with an £181,574·00 award. Posted on their website, at that time, the funder was of the view that:

> *[Cutting Edge] is challenging the precepts of academia and education by setting up a performing arts degree course for students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties. The teaching team for this innovatory programme will include learning-disabled lecturers.* (Funder, 2003)

In explaining what is meant by the term '*severe learning difficulties*' the 2002 proposal states:

> *It is assumed by many in the University world that the term learning difficulties, refers to individuals who have a specific learning difficulty or dyslexia. In order to avoid confusion, the [Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative] uses the term 'severe learning difficulties'. An example of such a student might be someone who has attended a special school for pupils with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties and has Down's Syndrome. The course may also include some individuals who are referred to as having moderate learning difficulties. Students with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties are not traditional learners, may not have literacy skills or high levels of verbal skills, but may demonstrate considerable talent in the performing arts.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002)

With regard to meeting its target of working with ten employers and ten HEIs, the 2002 proposal describes, the work to date since 2001, with having met with six employers and four HEIs. The theatre initiative's ambition includes working with ten targeted HE institutions and ten targeted employers – towards the employment of the graduates – anticipated that '*15 graduates will become change agents*'. With

these targets the proposal asks a key question, namely '*How do prospective*

performing artists with [*sic*] *learning difficulties gain access to a relevant*

professional training such as that open to their non-disabled peers?' responding that

the proposed degree programme attempts to address this question.

In explaining the changing working relationship between CE and RBC the 2002

proposal refers to '*developing a partnership*' adding that the college '*have a history*

of pushing back boundaries' and give as an example their '*Community Theatre*

Course in 1976 and the establishment of the first degree course in acting in 1979'.

As part of the CE 'developing partnership' with RBC, the 2002 proposal explains

that negotiations had been taking place over the previous two years. The 2002

proposal notes that:

> *It is clear that [Red Brick College] would not be in a position*
> *to undertake such a project without the expertise of [the*
> *Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative], and that the funding*
> *received via the Higher Education Funding Council England*
> *(HEFCE), including the funding strand related to widening*
> *participation, would not allow for the setting up of such a*
> *completely new model.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative,
> 2002)

The 2002 proposal lists the ways Red Brick College would be contributing with such

things as accommodation, access to learning resources, financial management in

relation to administration, leading on the validation of the programme as a degree,

advising on the writing of the degree course, acting as a conduit for funding of some

of the standards aspects of the course, applying for additional funding through

HEFCE Widening Participation strand to provide a disability officer, and to facilitate

the employment of a Pastoral Support Co-ordinator for the CE students. The 2002

proposal refers to informal research into existing provision, the gap in provision and

a demand for a degree level programme of study. In its justification the proposed

degree programme is described as being 'innovative'. This proposal uses supportive

comments, initially, from three senior individuals:

> *… higher education has never found ways of including*
> *people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties. This innovative*
> *programme may act as a prototype, providing others with*
> *fruitful ideas for the development of further work in this area.*
> *(Professor X)*
>
> *I am not aware of any such course in the UK – or indeed in*
> *mainland Europe. I commend this endeavour … (Head of*
> *Acting)*
>
> *The proposal is excellent and much needed. It is also*
> *ground-breaking and certainly pioneering both in the UK*
> *and Europe. We certainly endorse its strategy, aims,*
> *objective and very much hope to see the course up and*
> *running in the very near future. (Arts Director)* (Cutting Edge
> Theatre Initiative, 2002)

Describing the general lack of routes into higher education, the 2002 proposal

makes reference to two pieces of research. First, naming one of the directors, Iris,

who would be working towards a Ph.D on the learning processes and the

implications for education professionals and policy-makers. Second, a separate

piece of research by a senior evaluator and an associate researcher focusing on the

impact of the programme on stakeholders.

CE gave workshops of their developing work, the 2002 proposal highlights that they

had been '*approached by individuals in higher education who wish to learn more*

about the project at this stage' and were asked to make a presentation at a

conference. As to an explanation of the learning approach the proposal suggests a

multi-sensory model of learning which is described as being interactive, including

aural, visual, kinaesthetic and verbal inputs and an exploration of non-verbal

learning and teaching materials. Central to their pedagogy is the employment of four

lecturers described as having 'severe learning difficulties' the proposal noting that

this would be for two and a half days per week. The 2002 proposal also states that:

> *This will be the first model of artists with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties at degree level. … The team will also have a wider role as mentors to the students, bringing their own experiences as artists with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties into the teacher/student relationship. They will be key to the creation of an appropriate learning environment to meet the needs of students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties through providing role models, motivating students and promoting confidence and through their practice and their insight into the learning styles of students with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002)

In terms of delivery, the 2002 proposal informs that the curriculum will be delivered by the two joint directors, the team of lecturers described as having 'learning difficulties' and a learning co-ordinator. In addition it proposes visiting lecturers and from time-to-time visiting artists/companies will be brought in. Further the 2002 proposal adds that:

> *The programme will be delivered in modules: some modules will be optional. There will be productions in the third term of each academic year, including a touring performance in year two and a show-case production in a ... venue in year three.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002)

As to identifying potential students, CE had established relationships with colleges, day centres and arts organisations through practical projects carried out and through the network of '*organisations that work with and for people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties in the arts*'. In order to identify '*talented individuals*' this proposal explains that there would be a two-stage audition/interview process, which will be co-led by the team of 'learning–disabled artists'. The 2002 proposal states that the degree will start in September 2003 and thus expects the programme, for the first cohort of students, to finish in September 2006, recruiting students in the May and June period of 2003 and in addition to recruiting staff in June 2003. There are also financial aspects of the proposed degree course outlining the total cost as being £860,610 for the programme, with funds received from a funding body and a list of

additional funders, principally, these being HEFCE, the Learning and Skills Council and an Educational Trust.

5.3.3 Proposal 2001

The 2001 proposal is much shorter, than the two proceeding proposals, in terms of background and rationale, but more substantive in its detail. In describing the group of learners it adopts the term 'severe learning disabilities'. This proposal describes the working relationship as an '*association with*' Red Brick College – a university sector institution directly funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) – proposing the course title to be 'Theatre Performance and Workshop Practice for Students with [*sic*] Severe Learning Disabilities'. The 2001 proposal is presented in six sections and begins its introduction thus:

> *This innovative programme for the first time opens the doors of higher education for students with* [*sic*] *severe learning disabilities (SLD)* to study to degree level. It will enable these students to progress beyond usual expectations, to become "thinking practitioners" and to make a valuable contribution to a profession where people with* [*sic*] *severe learning disabilities are underrepresented. The programme offers a comprehensive vocational training to degree level in theatre performance and workshop practice in a multi-disciplinary context. The purpose of the programme is to equip students with the skills, understanding and confidence required to take up employment in theatre and related professions. There are currently no equivalent programmes in higher education for students with* [*sic*] *severe learning disabilities.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001)

As to the asterisk and the use of the term 'severe learning disabilities' an explanation is given, in a footnote, which explains this categorisation as '*students who will have attended special education schools for people with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties*'. The rationale of the 2001 proposal states that the proposed degree programme is underpinned by a '*twenty-year history in education and training in the performing arts, for people with* [*sic*] *severe learning disabilities*'. It

describes the experience of having established, previously, an accredited three-year

course in the performing arts (discussed later). It also provides a list of 15 aims

alongside 17 learning outcomes, these take eleven A4 pages of detailed description

of the course structure, including the design, content and organisation. The proposal

begins with explaining that:

> *The programme is offered as a four-day week course. The academic year is divided into three terms of thirteen weeks. There are three levels, which correspond to each academic year. Students learn progressively, each level building upon the knowledge and skills base of the previous level. Experience has shown that pastoral and learning support is a crucial factor in enabling students with* [*sic*] *learning disabilities to sustain three year's training. This is built into the programme at every level. Trained staff who have* [*sic*] *learning disabilities are involved in the teaching of the course, enabling students to identify with positive role models.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001, p.7)

The proposed degree course throughout the three-year course expects students to

study modules in ensemble skills, workshop skills, dance and movement skills,

performance practice and preparation for work and study either music skills or

acting skills. Assessment of the modules is through practical work, performance

presentations, group projects and a reflective journal. In terms of entry qualifications

to the proposed degree programme the proposal states that:

> *The course will primarily target people with* [*sic*] *severe learning disabilities, but some individuals with more moderate learning disabilities may be accepted. The definition in this instance of severe learning disabilities is the previous attendance of a special education for people with* [*sic*] *severe learning difficulties. However, the programme may still be deemed to be appropriate for some individuals who do not fit into this category. There is no prerequisite for any formal academic qualifications. If applicants do possess qualifications these will be taken into account.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001, p.25)

In contrast to the entry requirements for Red Brick College, the 2001 proposal

asserts that '*candidates will need to demonstrate a level of maturity commensurate*

with embarking on a three-year period of study in the performing arts' and expects students to be aged nineteen years or over, have completed a course of study in further education or equivalent, and have participated in regular performing arts workshops or other types of performing arts project (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001, p.25).

As part of an audition the 2001 proposal explains that the interview will involve a discussion of the programme to ascertain '*the candidates commitment to and interest in the programme*' the '*ability to cope*' and '*to assess the individual's support needs*' and would involve a discussion as to how these might be met. The 2001 proposal further suggests that the audition/interview will involve an examination of '*vocal and physical ability, communication skills, ability to function as part of a group, imaginative ability, an engagement with the creation of ideas, characterisation, instrumental ability, ability to reflect and energy levels*' (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001, p.25).

5.4 Additional Themes Emerging from the Proposals

Three additional themes emerge from the three proposals. One theme relates to a previous course, 'Project Theatre', which was a non-accredited two-year course which was offered at a Young People's Theatre. A second theme relates to an accredited three-year Theatre Arts Course offered at a Community College. A third theme relates to a performance at a concert hall. What follows is a description of these three themes.

5.4.1 Project Theatre

The earlier work of Mathew and Iris with students labelled as having 'severe learning difficulties' led to '*the [Project Theatre] two-year full-time course in performing arts*'. As stated the 'Project Theatre' course emerged from '*workshop*

projects for people with [*sic*] *learning difficulties*' and contributed to the '*development*

of a style of working using a combination of drama, music and physical skills'. In

addition, this earlier work resulted in developing a training video '*as an example of*

good drama and teaching practice'. Mathew recalled that '*a range of lecturers in FE*

colleges were being challenged to work more and more with people with [*sic*]

'learning difficulties' and saying that they had no experience of this' (Interview –

M171203, 2003, Lines: 65 – 67). As an example of one student, Steven

(pseudonym) who completed the non-accredited two-year 'Project Theatre' course,

the 2002 proposal provides their background in a series of ten bullet points, eight of

which describes the student as:

> *… passionate about acting. He has Down's Syndrome and*
> *attended a school for students with* [*sic*] *severe learning*
> *difficulties. … had little functional literacy or numeracy skills,*
> *though he was able, with support to identify the correct*
> *number on the front of a bus. After a period of training, he*
> *was able to use public transport for specific journeys …*
> *required a significant amount of support in organising his*
> *domestic life … was able to successfully live with a land*
> *lady on a weekly basis, while attending the two year course*
> *… he was able to articulate his needs and feelings verbally.*
> *He was able to be quite perceptive about other people.*
> (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002, p.19)

The remaining two bullet points, added that:

> *… he appeared in a significant speaking role in* [*a film*] *…*
> *has gone on to undertake further film work most notably*
> *working with David Jason in A Touch of Frost, in a*
> *significant character speaking role. … While working on* [*the*
> *film*]*, [Steven] was given the nickname – "one take*
> *[Steven]", by fellow actors. This referred to [Steven's] ability*
> *to quickly respond to direction.* (Cutting Edge Theatre
> Initiative, 2002, p.19)

The film is a First World War tale of Romany culture set in Eastern Europe

concerned with the destructiveness of war, and the struggle for survival. The part

played in *A Touch of Frost*, was a two-part episode. In addition Steven appeared in

three episodes of two popular peak time television dramas. The 2002 proposal

identified three outcomes as a result of the 'Project Theatre' course, as stated these

were:

> *It became clear that there were people with [*sic*] severe learning difficulties who could develop skills in the performing arts. On leaving the course individuals took more control over their lives by enrolling in Adult Education rather than returning to day centres. The need was identified for a three year full time accredited course with progression routes.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002, p.17)

However, the 2002 proposal notes that at that time the Young People's Theatre

'*was unable to identify funding for the continuation of this work*'. Val's recollections,

as Chair of the Young People's Theatre, of 'what happened' were that:

> *[Mathew] and other colleagues were ready to take it on to a really significant other level where you could see follow through was when the whole funding base started to collapse, so the [Project Theatre] course was seen as a pilot and which would be evaluated and then recommendations and those recommendations funded and that's when things fell to pieces. The company got huge funding cuts because [the Local Education Authority] went, and lots of people made redundant, [Mathew] included, and we were not able to continue to resource the work with people with [*sic*] 'learning difficulties' until, then that's, we tried to keep things going a little bit but it was, we just didn't have the resources to do it for the staffing levels that we needed….* (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 436 – 448)

Val reiterated that overall the 'Project Theatre' course '*was very good but sadly*

wasn't able to continue because of funding' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 470

– 471). Mathew also recalls this difficult political and economic time making

reference to campaigning against cuts, he recalls:

> *... it was marches in the town hall or whatever. I'm afraid it was inevitable once Thatcher had decided ... but clearly whatever was going to happen, the budget was going to be, about, halved or something.* (Interview – M020304, 2004, Lines: 498 – 502)

Mathew and Iris also relayed their frustrations with what was happening more generally. Iris recalled, whilst also working at another theatre venue, that she began talking '... *a lot more ...*', about what was happening and commented on the situation that '... *this is ridiculous, there's no commitment*' (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 189 – 190). Mathew recalled the way the structures within the FE college '... *locks a whole lot of people out of it, obviously well before you get to the range of students we work with*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 497 – 499). Mathew recalled feeling '*challenged*' and having discussions with '*FE and looking at how our work might be able to work within the structure. We realised, no it wasn't really going to ...*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 499 – 502).

5.4.2 Theatre Arts Course

Each of the three proposals describes the experience of developing an accredited three-year pilot Theatre Arts Course at a Community College from which '*9 students from 12*' successfully completed in July 1998. For Iris and Mathew, this '*demonstrated that given appropriate training, students with* [*sic*] *learning disabilities can achieve high levels of skill and understanding*'. The 2002 proposal describes this three-year pilot course as '*the first course for students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties to be accredited to level three of the ... Open College Network ...*'. Advertised in an information booklet, from archived material, this three-year pilot course is described as a 'Professional Theatre Training for Students with [*sic*] Learning Difficulties'. The course was advertised as '*a new initiative*' offering '*a unique opportunity for fifteen students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties to train for three years to a professional standard in theatre arts*'. Four aims of this three-year pilot course are listed as being; first, to '*provide a high quality of training specific to the needs of students with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties*'. Second, to '*actively demonstrate the potential of performers and workshop leaders with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties to contribute to the theatre profession*'. Third, to '*enable students to access*

professional theatre work'; and fourth, to '*raise the status of each student; to enable them to take greater control over their own lives*'. This information booklet, informs prospective learners, that the course is for three years and states that '*During the first term students will attend three days per week, increasing to full-time by year two*'. In choosing out of three study options from 'acting and physical theatre', 'music for theatre' and 'leading drama workshops', the potential learners are informed that they will study 'Core Skills'. These core skills are described as sessions that '*focus on group co-operation, trust, confidence, self-awareness and self-assessment and the development of evaluation skills*'. As a qualification outcome it stated that the learners '*will receive a certificate from the ... Open College ...*' and adds that the accrediting Community College '*is committed to providing further professional accreditation when it becomes available*'. With regard to employment opportunities, the information booklet informs that:

> *As you may know unemployment in theatre is very high!*
> *The course however has already attracted support from*
> *leading figures in theatre and related industries. The college*
> *will work to 'open doors' in order to provide students with*
> *real employment opportunities in theatre, film, and the*
> *music industry.* (Archived Material: Course Information
> Booklet, date withheld)

Where prospective learners may have concerns about support, the information booklet states that '*each week students will meet with a tutor to discuss any problems*' and '*where appropriate, individuals will be put in contact with other agencies*'. In addition prospective learners would be expected to arrange their own transport to the theatre venue '*assistance will be offered initially in learning routes or organising escorts*'. As a financial charge, individuals are asked to pay 20 pounds per term which '*will include any other classes/courses students may wish to attend at the college*' (original emphasis), but add that individuals with '*serious financial difficulties*' should speak to the course co-ordinators. Entry onto the accredited course suggests a two stage selection process consisting of taking part in a '*one*

hour workshop, to see the studio theatre, meet other potential students, and discuss

any questions' the learners may have had. This is, it informs, followed by an '*all day*

audition and interview'.

As a result of this three-year accredited theatre course, Mathew and Iris commented

that '*a number of individuals found work opportunities as performers in theatre,*

video, film and TV, and as workshop tutors in the community'. As such, the 2001

proposal states that '*the [validating examining board] was not adequate to value the*

high level of professional skills developed by some students'. Identifying the need to

develop a learning model to accommodate the learning styles of this group of

'*atypical learners*' the 2001 proposal notes that:

> *However, people with [sic] severe learning disabilities*
> *remain largely excluded from the career opportunities*
> *available to their non-disabled peers. They are*
> *underrepresented in higher education and in the theatre*
> *related professions. At the present, degree courses do not*
> *cater for the learning needs of students with [sic] severe*
> *learning disabilities, in either content or the style and*
> *structure of delivery. The proposed programme addresses*
> *the specific learning needs of these students in order to*
> *enable them to progress their learning to degree level …*
> *The programme provides a national blueprint for the training*
> *of students with [sic] severe learning disabilities within the*
> *higher education sector and will make a major impact on*
> *social inclusion.* (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2001)

At the end of the Theatre Arts Course, experiencing frustrations with the lack of

formal training at higher education level, the group name 'Cutting Edge' emerged.

The 2002 proposal suggests that this was for the purpose of '*creating a coherent*

pathway through training into employment and enabling a new cultural voice to be

heard' (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2002, p.17). From Iris's perspective the

Theatre Art Course '*closed and that was the point we decided to go independent,*

that actually we weren't just going to drop this whole thing ...' (Interview – I171203,

2003, Lines: 326 – 328), we '*were made redundant actually because they'd decided*

to close the course ...' (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 521 – 522). However, simultaneously, an opportunity arose to perform at a concert hall. Mathew recalled that they '*were asked to create a piece for percussion and dance ... which was a performance for the ... Festival in the ... Centre ...*' (Interview, M171203, 2003, Lines: 40 – 42).

The proposals thus far focus on two of the themes that were constantly affirming the experiences and insights of a group of individuals who were increasingly getting closer to the formation of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. A third theme to emerge out of the proposals relates to a performance that was given at a concert hall.

5.4.3 Festival Performance

Mathew and Iris, formed the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative as a registered charity and company after approximately twenty years of work in the performing arts with people described as having 'learning difficulties'. The directors, supported by the Head of Performing Arts from a Concert Hall, directed a dance piece which came out of a 9-week residency and was looking at expression through dance and percussion of men in both leisure time and at work. The debut performance was performed by four men aged in their 20s and 30s who had previously been students on the accredited three-year Theatre Arts Course. Mathew referred to this earlier theatre arts course as a pilot which was informing the proposed degree programme commenting '*what we are now setting-up*' (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 88 – 89). With respect to the debut performance, Iris reflects that this commissioned piece:

> *… backed right onto the finish of the course. It was*
> *absolutely manic and we made the decision, [Mathew] and*
> *I, really to work with a small group of individuals who were*
> *available and interested and we created a dance piece for*

the [concert hall]. About 6 weeks after we finished the last performance of the course and we needed a name for the show and we needed a name for the company … we did a photo shoot of the guys. Somehow we came up with a name ... for the performance and ['Cutting Edge'] for the company and that stuck. And we really decided that would really be our springboard to go independent. (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 371 – 383)

According to documentary sources concerning this period, stored in the concert hall archives are postcard size advertisements. One postcard shows a photo of the four actors positioned as '*men working, men sweating, men moving, men dreaming*', whilst another card gives information regarding the festival. On the reverse side of this postcard size advertisement is an inscription of the production which states:

Men working. Men sweating. Men moving, Men dreaming
Don't miss the debut performance of this sharp new company who have just graduated from the Theatre Arts Course … for Students with [sic] Learning Disabilities. [The performance] is inspired by images of men at work and has been developed during a month long residency at the [concert hall]. (Archived Material: Festival Performance, date withheld)

5.4.4 Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative – Red Brick College 'Partnership'

The early discussion between CE and RBC as to the development of a degree programme initially took place between a previous Assistant Principal, Mathew and Iris. Mathew, recalls that '*it seemed that we were going to be very fruitful particularly with the Assistant Principal*' who '*opened up*' and who suggested that the proposed programme '*was degree worthy*' (Interview – M170203, 2003, Lines: 504 – 508). Likewise, Iris recalled that the previous Assistant Principal '*was immediately taken with what we were doing*' (Interview – I170203, 2003, Lines: 577 – 578). During these early discussions, Mathew recalls that the previous Assistant Principle had '*... suddenly got a job somewhere else ...*' which highlighted that '*... he had not really been talking with the institution enough in sharing those ideas, to the degree he*

should have been' (Interview – M170203, 2003, Lines: 661 – 664). This issue was

raised with Adam, the current Assistant Principal, who concurs that:

> *Well my first knowledge of it was actually that, the discussions were taking place with my predecessor. My first knowledge is that I didn't know that there was a company initially based upon the work that grew out of, well I'm thinking right back to ['Project Theatre'] days, but obviously I knew the personnel involved it seemed like a timely and appropriate development to happen because of the work that had been done, and really not advanced much beyond the, ... I don't know when the ['Project Theatre'] finished I lost track of its work, do you know? … my first reaction was to say it was good … I took over at the point when … my predecessor brought a paper to our academic board … The discussions were all, to my knowledge, informal before that. Frankly I was out of the frame, I was doing different kinds of jobs altogether but in, I think September, October … last year anyway, but my recollection was the autumn … and we took it to the academic board … with a proposal to pursue in principal the collaboration of a formal basis and subject to obviously the two key issues validation by a university and resourcing.* (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 498 – 543)

In asking Val for her understanding of the relationship between CE u and RBC, she

responded:

> *Yes, that's an interesting question [laughter]. It's developing, it's a developing relationship, it's changed a lot with the change of personnel with, you know, our initial sort of contact and collaboration.* (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 552 – 555)

As to the proposed degree programme and the early discussions with the pervious

Assistant Principal, Val recalled that '*I think it was a surprise to [Mathew] and [Iris]*

that he would go that step…' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 562 – 564). As to

the 'developing relationship' Val, on reflection, was of the view that:

> *I think, if early on there had been sitting down and sharing the philosophy with more than the [previous] Vice Principal and actually engaging more of the college I think it would have been much better if that could have happened. But of course that might have meant that we wouldn't have got as far as we got now because so often it's one person slightly*

> *off the mainstream idea that will get things going and you need to move things on before you can bring your colleagues on because if we'd sat down earlier and said, "right we want to have a meeting with the Principal and a couple of members of the board and so and so" they'd probably gone this is … you need those risk takers to run with new and different ideas but unfortunately risk takers sometimes can miss the mark.* (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 587 – 603)

Reflecting back in comparison to the earlier 'developing relationship' and more recent discussions Val stated that '... *we feel much more embedded in the college, no embedded is a big word, in much better dialogue with the leadership of the college*' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 718 – 720).

5.5 Public Debates

For this research case study there emerged two related public debates in 1999 and 2002. The first debate (1999) concerns itself with the employment and training of disabled people. Its focus is with raising the concern of disabled people in the performing arts, access to qualifications which would lead to theatre related work. The second debate (2002) relates to the cultural attitudes about disabled people, people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' within the performing arts, concerns relating to the media representation of disabled people, access issues, the issue of training at higher education level, the transition from benefits to employment, and the monitoring of disability equality legislation.

5.5.1 Debate 1999

In part this debate (1999) acknowledges barriers, and in particular notes that disabled people are '*twice as likely to have no formal qualifications*' (Debate, 1999). It recounts evidence from SKILL, the National Bureau *for* [*sic*] Students with Disabilities, and debates points as to the continuing '*discriminatory attitudes amongst education and training providers*' (Debate, 1999). It mentions the rising

number of students within higher education, having doubled between 1994-5 and 1998-9 accounting for 4.5 per cent; but, yet still under-represented in the HE sector. Other themes relate to the DSA, the Further Education sector and the previous Tomlinson Report. With regard to examinations within FE, this public debate states that:

> *Excellence should not be measured solely by examination results but also by how well a college or sixth form does in opening up opportunities for people with physical or sensory impairments, those with [sic] learning difficulties and people with mental health difficulties.* (Debate, 1999)

Of interest is the acknowledgement around gaining 'basic skills', linking education to enable 'independent living'. Specific reference is made to the CE in relation to seeking funding for courses for people described as having 'learning difficulties'. This public debate ends with a request to undertake an audit of good practice in relation to '*what changes are required to create more opportunities for people with [sic] learning difficulties ...*' (Debate, 1999).

5.5.2 Debate 2002

The second public debate (2002) addresses the cultural attitudes towards the employment of disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' in the performing arts. The first presenter drew upon the experience of Eric Sykes stating that:

> *I have planned this short debate for some time, but the catalyst was seeing Eric Sykes perform on stage. His star quality was not dimmed by age or his hearing and sight difficulties. Not a bit of it. His sense of comic timing and delivery enchanted the whole audience.* (Debate, 2002)

This debate raises the issue of representation, and argues that society should '*harness the ability of disabled people to play a full part*' making the point that '*star quality is not confined to performers who have no disability*' (Debate, 2000). The

debate raises comparable concerns with Asian and Black people as performers, raising the question:

> *Why is it that disabled performers today face a similar situation to that of Black and Asian performers 30 years ago – that is, few are given the opportunity to perform at all and are likely to be confined to the main to stereotypical and limiting roles?* (Debate, 2002)

In response to their own question, the first presenter raises the issue of having targets, equal opportunities policy, and positive action. One of the points being raised relates to cultural attitudes which inhibit the employment of disabled people as performers, and crucially, the question: who should take action? The discussion turns to physical access and acknowledges the lack of access to theatre venues. With respect to training, a point is made that it is '... *vital that disabled people should have access to the same professional training opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues*' (Debate, 2002). The first presenter names 'Heart'n Soul' as one theatre arts organisation that offers opportunities for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. However, the first presenter's concern is with theatre organisations and their reliance on trusts and foundations, they add that:

> *I am told that ... [Cutting Edge], in association with the [Red Brick College], is currently trying to set up such a course but that financial support for it has not yet been confirmed.* (Debate, 2002)

Noting the extension to the DDA, the first presenter asks whether the Government is taking action to assist educational bodies to review their recruitment policies, courses and buildings in terms of access to comply with Part 4 of the Act. In addition, the issue of benefits is raised, given, the first presenter suggests (Debate, 2002), that theatre arts work can often involve full-time commitment, interspersed with periods of unemployment, arguing that:

> *... people need to be able to return easily and immediately to benefits following a period of work. Due to the inflexibility in the benefits system, many disabled people working in the performing arts draw a salary way below their worth or indeed do not accept any remuneration at all.* (Debate, 2002)

The issue of parity of pay, between disabled and non-disabled performing artists, is raised, making reference to 'therapeutic earnings' being increased to £20 a week. In addition the first presenter suggests that 'Access to Work' is failing disabled people, particularly individuals who are seeking employment in the performing arts (Debate, 2002). Factors such as travelling to and from venues, personal assistance and that Access to Work is not available to disabled people in training are three identified barriers (Debate, 2002). The presenter gives credit to schemes that have started to provide apprentice schemes and opportunities for disabled people to access arts organisations; however, it notes a '*vicious circle*', and encouraging an '*open mind*' stating that:

> *We can take a constructive attitude. We can have an open mind and a willingness to engage with the issues and challenge our own perceptions of what constitutes an entertaining and successful performance. So are we stuck with a vicious circle or can we break free? The vicious circle is that the arts can play a vital role in changing attitudes, but the general invisibility of disabled people, particularly in the performing arts, and to a woeful extent in television, will not change until all the issues I have mentioned today are addressed. The problem is that the issues will not be fully addressed until the arts help to change our attitude towards disabled people.* (Debate, 2002)

As a call to action the first presenter notes that the following year is the 'European Year of Disabled People' and suggests that '*let us set that as our deadline for breaking free of the vicious circle*' (Debate, 2002).

In response to the opening debate, a second presenter, who has been an executive director of an institution of music and drama, starts with acknowledging this important debate suggesting that besides being a performer there are:

> ... *many other jobs to be done, from stage management to payroll management, and from lighting technician to press officer. The people who fulfil those functions are as vital to the success of any production as the actors, dancers or musicians who appear on the stage.* (Debate, 2002)

In drawing parallels with the under-representation of Black and Asian people performers in the arts, this second presenter raises the issue of training. They recite a number of disabled people led theatre companies suggesting that such companies:

> ... *have done a huge amount to break down the barriers and to show just how extraordinary can be the impact of seeing performers whose ability to communicate is in no way limited, and indeed is sometimes actually enhanced, by their disabilities* ... (Debate, 2002)

Indeed, these comments relate to Nabil Shaban, a performer who has had a '*distinguished career*' (Debate, 2002). The comments highlight the shortcomings of organisations, music and drama higher education institutions and turns to equality legislation relating to access. The second presenter references Jenny Sealy who raised the question '*Are people not employing disabled actors because of lack of accessible rehearsal spaces?*'" (Debate, 2002). The second presenter then expresses concern about education and training, noting that there '*are additional costs involved in such inclusivity, which training organisations find hard to bear from currently available resources*' (Debate, 2002). The issue of 'learning difficulties' is discussed with reference to the second presenter having worked with young people, in a performance, stating that this was:

> ... *a play of their own devising about falling in love and the difficulties that the well-meaning world of caring parents*

> *and anxious teachers put in the way of disabled people making relationships. It was a powerful piece.* (Debate, 2002)

The second presenter reiterates the call to improve employment prospects for '*all*' disabled people and closes with arguing that:

> *I believe that attitudes as well as physical barriers are stopping disabled representation on the stage. Surely there are only two possible reasons for this state of affairs: either disabled actors are no good or there is institutional discrimination at work. I believe that Graeae and others have proved that the talent is there ... These are powerful, angry words. We have a lot of work to do before they will cease to resonate.* (Debate, 2002)

A third presenter contributes to the debate and raises the question as to whether disabled people can be cast when impairment is not specified in a script, and identifies a barrier to be related to a '... *reluctance to employ disabled people in the performing arts*' (Debate, 2002) in addition to drama colleges who:

> ... *refuse places to disabled people on the grounds of the self-fulfilling prophecy that they could not possibly get work.* (Debate, 2002)

This of course, the third presenter suggests, has led to the formation of the disability arts movement. They go on to suggest that:

> ... *the disability arts movement wanted to combat more than the purely physical and attitudinal barriers to disabled people's participation in the arts. It also aimed to deal with the cultural barrier of absence – disabled people did not exist. Rarely in mainstream art is the experience of disability depicted and disabled people are seldom to be seen in cultural output of any type. The prime objective of the disability arts movement is to achieve visibility for disabled people. It is committed to creating a world where disability genuinely has a place and to ensuring that the issues that disability raises are given a cultural platform.* (Debate, 2002)

The third presenter discuses the contributions of a number of theatre companies that have facilitated the performance opportunities of disabled people. As with the previous two presenters, the third presenter also discusses the issue of training, or more accurately the lack of formal training for disabled people in the performing arts. Indeed, the issue of monitoring participation has been limited, and as is argued in their closing comment:

> *There is massive unexplored potential that would benefit not only disabled actors but the whole world of drama, allowing it to break barriers and find fresh talent. ... I therefore suggest that the time is right for a concerted employment and training initiative, hosted by a range of relevant bodies, to build on the foundations that have largely been laid by disabled people's own efforts. We need to cut through the negative assumptions and the lack of imaginative casting.* (Debate, 2002)

Following this a fourth presenter reiterates a number of issues, including the concern around access to theatre venues and buildings, and relatedly, raises the issue of training. The fourth presenter makes the point that the Government '*are in a situation to make sure there is training*' adding that '*they can ultimately cause things to happen; they will be the catalyst for change*' (Debate, 2002). Their measure of disability equality in theatre they suggest is:

> *... when it is perfectly normal to find someone in a wheelchair playing a part normally taken by someone who can walk. That is the real test, as it would be with any form of discrimination. ... When it becomes normal to see parts being filled by disabled people, we will have achieved it.* (Debate, 2002)

The fourth presenter also adds to the debate; concerns relating to the benefit system arguing that '*The benefit trap for people with disabilities is well recognised*' (Debate, 2002) and that the transition from benefits to work would create a '*throughput of people*'. In a closing comment, the fourth presenter states that:

> *We are asking for equal rights for the* [*sic*] *disabled; we are not asking for tokenism. ... They must have an equal opportunity. That is what is required. All that we can expect the Government to do is to make sure that the door is open; it will be up to society as a whole to see that people go through that door.* (Debate, 2002)

Finally, a fifth presenter adds to the debate, contributing to emerging issues and concerns. They, like the first presenter, begin with using Eric Sykes as an example of someone who they suggest '... *triumphed over an interesting and difficult disability* ...' (Debate, 2002). Like all previous presenters, the fifth presenter acknowledges the legislative changes with respect to disability equality. In addition the comments relate to duties on post-16 providers, pointing out that:

> *Some £172 million has been allocated for the years 2002–04 to support the implementation of new post-16 educational duties, although no doubt it will take some time for the funding to work its way through.* (Debate, 2002)

Further still the issue of higher education participation is raised and the requirements of the HE sector in terms of increasing opportunities for disabled people, and also participation in courses related to the performing arts. The fifth presenter makes a connection with the way disabled people are portrayed in the media and argues for the promotion of role models and makes reference to a Disability Rights Commission video entitled 'Talk' which depicts a society of non-disabled people who are a minority and disabled people live full and active lives. In terms of a measure to monitor change, the fifth presenter argues that:

> *We want to be in a position to indicate how much progress has been made in the United Kingdom so far as concerns disabled people and their employment in the performing arts.* (Debate, 2002)

With closing comments to the debate, the fifth presenter acknowledges how the performing arts can play a 'significant' role in demonstrating change, and adds:

> *... but, nevertheless, we as a society have a very long road to tread. We may congratulate ourselves—as I believe the noble Lord ... was prepared to concede—on having certain crucial aspects of the legislative programme in place, but that is still some way from the effective discharge of the functions required under the law and the improvements flowing from it. ... Barriers to the employment of disabled people are not acceptable to the Government, in this field or in any other field. We are working to break down barriers and to promote opportunities for everyone in society, including in the arts. I am grateful for the opportunity to engage in the debate on this issue, which was so successfully introduced by the noble Baroness, ... The Government acknowledge the part that they have to play in advancing the issues we have discussed today.* (Debate, 2002)

5.6 Summary

This chapter began with the individual participants associated with the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. It provided an understanding of their various and varied experiences and insights. A common theme was their mutual support for each other, sharing a common interest in theatre. However, these emerging insights and interests did not begin on a level playing field. Individuals entered into a world in which non-disabled people controlled theatre opportunities *for* people labelled as having 'learning difficulties', things were being done to disabled people aspiring to participate in theatre. For a number of the participants their experiences involved working *with* and *for* rather doing things to individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Another related theme which emerged from this experience was an acknowledgement that individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' had been 'locked-out' of higher education participation, and that there is not a coherent pathway into the theatre related industries. Recollections involved being part of theatre productions, developing accredited and non-accredited courses, travelling overseas, and the changing political and economic factors effecting theatre organisations and higher education participation. This chapter also presented the findings from three proposals. What these proposals reveal is reference to two courses; first, a non-accredited two-year course in theatre practice entitled 'Project

Theatre', and the second was an accredited three-year course in the performing arts entitled 'Theatre Arts Course'. For CE, both these experiences became key motivating experiences which prompted the proposed programme to degree level.

Another theme the proposals discuss is the experience of participating in a theatre festival and subtle description of the developing partnership between CE and RBC. Such issues have been recognised in public debates. Barriers such as attitudes, access to venues, and training have been discussed. The invisibility of disabled people; people described as having 'learning difficulties' is being noted. In summary, this is a shared history, in which individuals came to know one another, sharing a common interest in theatre-in-education and which, in this research case study, began with a chance meeting between Iris and Mathew, working with individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' in a range of segregated institutional settings.

CHAPTER 6: Analysis and Discussion

This chapter offers an analysis and discussion of the responses to each of the research questions. It seeks to uncover silenced voices, forgotten accounts, and shows that this requires a considerable amount of unfolding, explanation and attention to detail. It is mindful of the research aims and begins with a focus on the question of 'barriers'.

6.1 What were the barriers encountered by Cutting Edge?

In order to examine the range of views that relate to why and how Cutting Edge (CE) and Red Brick College (RBC) 'failed' in their attempt to create a degree level course, the broad category of 'barriers' is used. Barriers as discussed by Thomas (2001, p.7) were primarily focused around the low participation of students '*from low socio-economic groups*' and related to '*factors that discourage or prevent participation in post-compulsory education*'. These 'factors', four in number, Thomas suggests, are related to the education system, labour market, social and cultural factors, and '*the notion that individual 'deficits' are to blame for non-participation* ...' (Thomas, 2001, pp.7 – 8). This study, similarly using the category of barriers', identified eight different sub-categories, these being: attitudinal, cultural, educational, employment, family, financial, individual and modern higher education. Whilst such sub-categories are identifiable, several comments reappear under different headings; for example, attitudinal coding also appears within the sub-category of education.

6.1.1 Attitudinal

The question of where attitudes reside is an interesting one. Understanding where attitudes reside range from being situated within individuals, the structures of society and its organisations (structural inequalities and exclusion), and/or emerging from the interaction between people (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Burr, 1995). With

respect to the literature related to disability, 'attitudes' have been a theme discussed with reference to understanding disability (Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1991; Oliver 1996), which helped to shift public discourse from a medical to a social and a rights-based model perspective. Within the context of this case study, four of the 13 participants make reference to attitudinal barriers in relation to participation. Mathew, for example, relates attitudes (structural) with the lack of opportunities within modern higher education participation as that equating to the apartheid system in South Africa. Mathew's specific response is:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 127 – 129 [08:15]

```
127   M:    ... As far as I am concerned there is (..) ↑apartheid still (.) in the
128          education system and to some extent the art system (..) regarding
129          an attitude, society's attitudes towards people with [sic] 'learning difficulties', ...
```

It is interesting in Line 127 how the increasing tone of '*apartheid*' is being used as a comparison with the exclusion of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education. What is noteworthy is that it is not the first time comparisons between apartheid in South Africa and the exclusion of disabled people in education has being made. Oliver (1996, pp.92 - 93), for instance, made such a comparison when explaining the notion of integration, drawing upon the work of Steve Biko (1987). Oliver's reference, in that instance, switches 'white society' with 'able bodied society' and 'blacks' with 'disabled people'. Whittaker (1999, p.31), a contributor to the field of inclusive education, addressing the public in a letter to the editor of *The Independent on Sunday*, also drew structural parallels, specifically he wrote of '*"educational apartheid", far from lurking around the corner …*' referring to '*the continued compulsory segregation of disabled children*'. In a later contribution Whittaker and Kenworthy (2002, p.77) reiterated the similarity, stating explicitly that '... *the present system of segregated special schools is a form of apartheid* ...'. Arguably, in these examples, it seems attitudes are firmly embedded and emerge from the structural organisation of society.

In relation to language and power, Fairclough (2001, p.3) also made reference to South Africa, when describing the way power is used '... *through depriving people of their jobs, their homes, and their lives* ...'. Further, it seems, thus, attitudinal barriers are a powerful reminder of the way institutionalised practices of segregating disabled people have often been understood in relation to the segregation of Black individuals in colonised countries. Barnes (1997, p.4), recognising the importance of culture, maps negative social attitudes towards disabled people to their '... *roots in the ancient world* ...', and argues that:

> *... the biggest obstacle to disabled people's meaningful*
> *inclusion into mainstream community life is negative public*
> *attitudes. These range from overt prejudice and hostility,*
> *condescension and pity to ignorance and indifference, and*
> *in these diverse ways they influence how we think about*
> *both ourselves and other people.* (Barnes, 1997, p.4)

For Iris, 'attitudinal' barriers relate to her belief and politics. Iris makes reference to her change in attitude being challenged through working (interaction) with individuals described as having 'learning difficulties'. Iris's comments are:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 444 – 464 [31:39]

```
444  I:                                   ... But then as the years went by
445       particularly working with [Mathew] and (.) working with some of
446       the same ↑individuals again and again (..) I I was ↑excited by the (..)
447       the performances that I was involved in directing with ↑them and the
448       work that we produced (..) and then in the teaching I was excited by
449       the ↑skills that people began developing (.) erm by seeing a student
450       develop and what they'd achieved at the end of the course (.) and
451       then you know what starts to come in is the ↑belief. Well (..) actually these
452       individuals can obviously achieve this and (.) and then, I suppose it's
453       not fair, why why aren't there ↑opportunities …  ⌈
454  N:                                                     ⌊ Sure ...
455  I:   ... and this makes me mad and there should be, and what can we
456       do about that and then the other side of it suppose is my, to a
457       certain ↑extent, my politics, where I come from, erm that this is just,
458       well this is not ↑just. That these opportunities, for these
459       individuals don't exist. So I guess it's, it's that, and then once we'd
460       started on the track of [Cutting Edge] with a really strong ↑belief.
461       that this ↑could exist ↑that this should exist, we could make it ↑exist,
462       (..) this must exist. It's ridiculous that I think you get deeper and
463       deeper into something and do you just, (.) damned [whispers] determined to
464       see it through in the end.
```

In Line 446 there is a sense in which Iris stresses the importance of working (interaction) with individuals '*again and again*' and the emerging familiarity, and the recognition of '*the skills that people began developing ... what they'd achieved*' (Lines: 448 – 450). This, no doubt, is a significant attitudinal (interactional) shift which transforms into a 'belief' through experience that acknowledges that '*these individuals can obviously achieve this*' (Lines: 451 – 452) and which raises the question of opportunities and feeling that '*it's not fair*' (Line: 452), not '*just*' (Line: 458). This emerging recognition of the lack of opportunities also transforms, in a sense, into anger (Line: 455) with a personal/political involvement, yet with a collective '*we*'. What is certain, for Iris, is that another recognition emerges by being *with* the group of individuals (note also the non-use of the descriptor 'learning difficulties'), directing and that there is a '*strong belief*' (Line: 460) that there should be opportunities available at higher education. For Iris, discourse and the terminological descriptor of 'learning difficulties' seems to be wrapped-up with attitudinal problems. It also seems that the use and non-use of the descriptor 'learning difficulties' is understood as an attitudinal barrier. The situational context of this following extract is an example of the way attitudes are influenced by the social context, it refers to a theatre production, a performance which was a debut of their previous work, Iris encapsulates the tension, thus:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 478 – 490 [34:07]

```
478  I:                          ... But, but just ↑seeing that and that was
479       so ↑powerful and then having people, (..) you know whatever you
480       might think of this, people coming up very ↑genuinely and saying
481       for instance at the end of [the production], "I'm I'm I'm I'm just kind of
482       gob smacked, I I have to (.) sit there and I'm having to say to
483       myself (..) I'm watching my son perform this I'm watching people
484       with [sic] 'learning difficulties' perform this, I I can't believe ↑I am".
485       (..) And people saying, "well yeah, I hadn't really thought about
486       them having 'learning difficulties' while they were doing the
487       performance, my ↑God, I'm just seeing these people as
488       performers, I'm just seeing them as people I'm not thinking
489       they're learning disabled". And that was very ↑powerful, yeah that
490       revelation that these are people and they ↑are performers …
```

The audience feedback in relation to identity formation, is arguably, causing tension. One paraphrased attitudinal recollection, earlier performed with an introductory multiple repetition and hesitation of '*I'm*' (Line: 481), is then followed by a parent's continued comment, who observed after a performance, at a theatre venue, that they were watching their son and in particular '*... watching people with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties' perform this, I can't believe I am*' (Lines: 483 – 484). Whilst another observer reported that they '*... hadn't really thought about them having 'learning difficulties' while they were doing the performance, my God, I'm just seeing these people as performers, I'm just seeing them as people I'm not thinking they're 'learning disabled"* (Lines: 484 – 488). The hesitations, pauses, emphasised and pronounced terms are revealing and is clearly not a segregated 'special' school offering (Masefield, 2006).

Whilst such observations about identity could be situated in terms of the dualism of abnormality/normality and identity formation (Goffman, 1971) it could also relate to the issue of multiple identities. Identity, arguably, is a predictor of attitudes. Whilst it may be so that many disabled people do not see themselves as disabled, in terms of either the medical or social model of disability (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002) neither do non-disabled people; at least not from this joint director's perspective. Arguably, this joint director makes it absolutely clear that the group are '*people*' and '*performers*' (Line: 490). Shakespeare and Watson related the issue of identity largely to 'choice' and were making the point that:

> *Any individual disabled person may strategically identify, at different times, as a person with a particular impairment, as a disabled person, or by their particular gender, ethnicity, sexuality, occupation, religion, or football team. Identity cannot be straightforwardly read off any more, it is, within limit, a matter of choice.* (Shakespeare and Watson, 2002, p.22)

It is acknowledged that, with limit, identity can be a matter of choice; however, the label of 'learning difficulties' is not.

For the Chair of CE, Val, she too discusses the issue of attitude. Interestingly, the Chair had previously completed a Community Theatre Education degree and had, like one of the joint directors, been a student at RBC of Higher Education. As a graduate Val had experienced acting for a theatre group raising issues related to the struggle of women and their experiences of discrimination. It was later that Val reflected on her employment experience and now being the Chair of CE and identifying issues relating to individuals described as having 'learning difficulties', she recounts her personal involvement in these terms:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 504 – 514 [36:06]

```
504  N:    What contributed to that change in thinking, (..) saying that ↑it
505        was wrong, saying that it was unfair?
506  V:    (..) erm in ↑me?
507  N:    Yes.
508  V:    Oh, I think that that very first project that I did where (..) I discovered
509        that (..) people, that (..) erm I'd probably had put into some mental pigeon
510        hole along (.) with 99 per cent of the population, (..) had erm as much
511        right to participation in society and the arts (.) and had as ↑much
512        talent and ability within that as other people, ↑although you
513        might, erm (..) how you kind of would assess that talent ↓might
514        well be very well different. ...
```

Val recognises her personal engagement, learning with and learning from individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. The inequality of access to appropriate training and participation within society and the arts is clearly expressed. Interestingly, Val like that of '*99 per cent of population*' (Line: 510) placed such individuals '*into some mental pigeon hole*' (Lines: 510 – 511). Note too that such labelled individuals were first and foremost people (Line: 509). Val also recognises the anticipated difficulties with issues of assessment and what would

constitute a 'fair' assessment; debates that have been discussed by others (Sharpe and Earle, 2000; Konur, 2002; White, 2006; Arora, 2005; Hanafin, 2007).

During a follow-up interview the issue of attitudes was raised again, and on this occasion Val recalls the time when CE were interviewing for the part-time lecturing posts, she elaborates in response to a recollection of a previous comment:

Extract Code: V010304, Lines: 791 – 814 [01:01:20]

```
791   N:   I ↑think I remember you saying about the (..)
792        ↑attitudes and the shock that [RBC] would have, in
793        terms of the realisation of the outcomes of such an initiative ...

...

797   V:   I think with the ↑college (.) I think I said they won't know what hit
798        them, and [4 secs] just simply because people are ↑not used to
799        living in an inclusive ↑world, (...) and particularly not in higher
800        ↑education, (.) although there will be, there will be many people at
801        [RBC] amongst the staff and amongst the students (..) who ↑know
802        people with [sic] learning difficulties very ↑very well and as part of
803        their (.) family as part of their wider ↑life, but erm (..) for example, when
804        we were (..) recruiting the part-time lecturers, the team. (4 secs) One of
805        them wasn't quite sure where he ↑was and and a member of the
806        reception staff came up to ↑us and said one of your students is
807        lost, in a way that she wouldn't of ↑said with someone who
808        didn't ↓have 'learning difficulties' and that's a very day to day
809        domestic ↑level, and there's a hell of lot of ↑learning that needs to
810        come out, and when I say they won't know what hit ↑them. It
811        will be about ↑confronting their own (..) prejudices and ↑assumptions
812        more than ↑anything else, and that (...) people with [sic] 'learning
813        difficulties' aren't any different from ↑anybody else [laughter], I think
814        that's going to be a big surprise. In terms of the wider world …
```

What seems apparent with the identification of the attitudinal barriers is not only the shift required from higher education but also the assumption that individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' do not attend job interviews; and certainly not, it would seem, for a position as a lecturer. Relatedly, the work of Arora (2005) discusses the various discriminations, assumptions about Black and Asian individuals within teaching roles. The work of Law *et al.* (2004) also discusses the

personal experiences of Black and Asian individuals, the double-take, being 'inside' yet 'outside' of higher education. Indeed, a number of authors have remarked on the under-representation in higher education of disabled people and people from ethnic minorities (Fenton, *et al.*, 2000; Konur, 2004) this also includes the lifelong learning sector (Fullick, 2008). In a more recent publication of the 179,035 academic staff in HEIs, 2.4% and 6.7% were disabled and from Black, Asian and ethnic minorities respectively (ECU, 2010).

Returning to Val's comments it is interesting that she suggests that people in higher education are not '*used to living in an inclusive world*' (Lines: 798 – 799) and does acknowledge that there will be staff who will '*know people with* [*sic*] *learning difficulties*' (Lines: 801 – 802) and possibly as part of their own family. This, no doubt, raises a question about the notion of there being an 'inclusive world'. The experience of this applicant, an individual prospective lecturer who was watched and reported to perceived non-disabled members of the CE team is also interesting. No doubt raising questions of power/knowledge (Foucault, 1977) given that the receptionist has become, in this instance, the *reception-judge*.

In discussing the issue of this theatre initiative Jane (Vice Chair) too raised the issue of changing attitudes, on this occasion with respect to the theatre industry and audiences. The issue of attitudes arose after asking about the impact of the proposed theatre initiative, Jane's specific comments are:

Extract Code: J270104, Lines: 458 – 461 [32:55]

```
458   J:                                      ...                What
459         we're trying to ↑do, which is why you know its ↑madness, but you
460         ↓know, you nibble away at your corner, is actually change
461         attitudes in theatre (...), so, and erm with audiences. ...
```

It is interesting how trying to change attitudes in theatre is related to notions of 'madness'. However, it seems that attitudinal factors play a significant part in positioning disabled people, people described as having learning difficulties in excluded roles.

Overall, the various changing attitudes can be mapped to the various venues, understanding the way individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' can also change the attitudes of individuals. Arguably segregated institutions, as discussed in Chapter 2, play a significant part in the way attitudes (individual, structural and interactional) are borne out of the way individuals are institutionalised, more accurately, a process of 'in-situ-tionalisation' occurs.

6.1.2. Cultural

According to Williams (1988, p.10) the term 'culture' is an '*exceptionally complex*' one. Riddell and Watson (2003, p.1) describe culture as that which is central to the politics of disability and suggest that a socially dominant culture tends to shape the way disability and impairment is understood. Thomas (2001, p.101) refers to '*institutional culture*' with reference to higher education. Of the 13 participants 6 discussed the varied aspects of culture as a barrier to participation. From the participants a range of issues arise starting with societal change in terms of values, to the lack of representation of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' in theatre, on television and to the lack of training opportunities at higher education. One of the director's, Mathew, makes this point:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 589 – 594 [39:35]

```
589   M:        ... for me essentially [its] about ↑really having a goal for
590            individual artists with [sic] 'learning difficulties' to be able to ↑reframe
591            themselves, and the ways they can look at themselves and ↑equally,
592            I have to mention that one first, but equally, and you could argue more
593            importantly, but are both two sides of the same coin, were society
```

594   can ↑reframe and value the individuals. ...

Mathew's comment shifts from '*individual artists with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties''* to the

way society '*can reframe*' and '*value the individuals*'. He stresses key terms such as

'equally', 'individual' and 'value', making links with the individual and society. In

Riddell and Watson's (2003) terms, the socially dominant values of society

invariably understand disability and impairment in medical/individual (biophysical)

model terms. In asking about barriers and the on-going issue of culture Mathew

made specific reference to the medium of television, adding:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 694 – 700 [47:08]

```
694   M:      ...      I think, if you're looking at television, as you
695        know it's all about looks (.) regardless of 'learning difficulties' at
696        all, it's ↑about how you look, you're ↑chosen very often by just how
697        you look for the part (.) and ↑so the ↑whole (..) situation at the moment
698        still is on how the part ↑is written for ↑someone with a 'learning
699        difficulty' because I'm saying that ↑purposefully because that is to
700        some extent were we are at (..) largely.
```

The cultural image of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' is

problematic. Principally it is, according to Mathew about 'looks', a repeated term,

because that is '*were we at*' (Line: 700). Mathew later gives the example of

individuals identified as having Down's Syndrome and adds:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 706 – 717 [47:45]

```
706   M:             ...      At the moment, but, but, I say, you know, I'm, erm,
707        particularly on the television because I'm ↑aware that a lot of people
708        with [sic] 'learning difficulties' are really [.] motivated by that [..] and ↑wish
709        to be ↑there. I could see that erm [..] quite often ↑things like, "Well have
710        you got anyone with 'Down's Syndrome'?". "Is there ↓someone?"
711        [.] you know, those individuals may well have. In other words if we
712        can tell in 3 seconds [clicks fingers] a person has a 'learning
713        difficulty' that's the person who's going to get the part, and our
714        experience of people we have been involved with, [..] I ↑think almost
715        ↑exclusively, it has been parts for people with a 'learning
716        difficulty' for a ↑start and viewers have got to see [click fingers]
717        just like that. ...
```

Mathew's response re-enacts what he knows, encapsulated by affirming that this is '*our experience*' (Lines: 713 – 714). The issue of 'looks' and the descriptor 'down's syndrome' is reinforced. It is interesting how Mathew's decreasing tone asks: '*Is there someone?*' referring to somebody, not just anybody, but somebody with the 'look', that is 'Down's syndrome' – '*just like that*' (Line: 717). Mathew dramatises this with the click of his fingers, on two occasions. The issue of 'Down's Syndrome' and 'learning difficulties' was earlier discussed in relation to the Project Theatre and reported in the CE 2002 proposal, which presented a list of bullet points of an individual who had appeared on an episode of *A Touch of Frost*. Incidentally, this contribution had not gone unnoticed, Anya Souza, for example, synopsis of the event was:

> *… in a Touch of Frost, there was a young man who had Down's syndrome. He was getting married to his girlfriend who also had Down's syndrome and they went upstairs to a bedroom. Even the man in Touch of Frost, David Jason, and the other bunch of people were saying, 'Why is this handicapped person doing this?' It was a murder case and they thought it was him doing it, but it wasn't, yet they frame him, the person with Down's syndrome.* (Souza, cited in Goodley, 2000, p.101)

This formulaic plot line: 'learning difficulty' – tragedy – victim or perpetrator – and guilty, is reinforced; and not one that is easily contested with an alternative discourse (Foucault, 1981), even when individuals, it seems, are found to be innocent. Thus, whilst the opportunity for cultural representation of 'learning difficulties' is an important one, the way in which such individuals are represented as either criminals, incapable of being witnesses, and often victimised are just as concerning (Race, 2002; Quarmby, 2011). Indeed, Val (Chair of CE) points out this '*inequity*' in recognising that audiences '*don't recognise the talent they see the 'learning disability' first*', she explains:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 492 – 503 [35:07]

492 V: ...   I've always felt people with [*sic*] 'learning difficulties'
493   should have ↑entitlements to [..] erm the [..] kind <u>of</u> [.] learning
494   ↑opportunities <u>that</u> other people <u>have</u> [..] and and that [..] there's
495   ↑enormous <u>talent</u> [..] that exists throughout all ↑sorts of different
496   communities, [.] you know, specifically about people with [*sic*]
497   ↑'learning difficulties' [..] and people <u>don't</u> recognise the <u>talent</u>. [..] erm,
498   They see the 'learning disability' <u>first</u> and, if you like, the
499   actor <u>second</u> quite frankly [..] <u>and</u> ↑all that needed ↑exploding. Erm [.] <u>and</u>
500   [..] that it was, [..] a <u>real</u> [..] tragedy, inequity. I don't know,
501   <u>wrong</u>, that where there was access to training, it was far <u>less</u>
502   than someone without 'learning difficulties' would have
503   access to it.

What is interesting with Val's account is its association with human rights. Indeed, it

has been noted that theatre, the stage, is:

> *... a place for uncertainty, a place for the struggle of ideas;*
> *it is a space for open discussion concerning an unresolved*
> *issue, in the presence of an alert audience, which is*
> *listening to the different voices and the conflicts between*
> *the characters.* (Rae, 2009, p.xi)

What becomes apparent, it seems, is that the cultural exclusion of individuals with

the label of 'learning difficulties' is causing contention. Val notices this, and exclaims

that '*people don't recognise the talent*' (Line: 497), and that the experiences of

injustices, negative cultural media representation, lack of access to theatre training,

and a lack of learning opportunities experienced by individuals labelled as having

'learning difficulties' is all too apparent.

6.1.3 Educational

Five of the 13 participants discussed education as a barrier. As recorded earlier,

one of the joint directors made specific reference to the exclusion of individuals

labelled as having 'learning difficulties' as that being similar to apartheid in South

Africa. This view was also extended to the Further Education sector. Initially, CE

report their engagement with the FE sector, Mathew specifically recalls having felt

challenged by the participating individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' in terms of being able to pursue formal qualifications, he explains:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 499 – 502 [33:44]

```
499  M:                              ... having actually had
500        initial discussions with ↑FE and looking at how our work might be
501        able to work within that structure we realised, no [.] it wasn't really
502        going to and it was too ↑prescribed ...
```

Mathew's personal experience is clear, not only as an employee, but also his critical insight into the workings of FE institutions. In this case, how the '*structure*' of FE is '*too prescribed*' (Lines: 501 – 502). As was discussed by both Mathew and Iris their own personal employment experiences were starting to inform them of barriers within the FE sector. The two earlier attempts to create training opportunities in the performing arts were beset with the changing social, political, economic and cultural circumstances, sector pressures, and experience of redundancies. The frustration and uncertainty of the Further Education provision is evidenced through Iris's comments:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 213 – 215 [15:07]

```
213:  I:       ... there are all these ↑people who had these ↑endless experiences
214:          of evening workshops and even the 2 year 'Theatre Project' course
215:          and ↑still [.] they're almost back to square one with nowhere, nowhere to go to.
```

Iris's frustrations are apparent. For Iris, there has been '*endless experiences*' (Line: 213), with having been involved in evening arts workshops, '*and*' (Line: 214) a two-year project course, and the feeling that '*they're almost back to square one*', and of course, '*with nowhere to go*' (Line: 215). The feeling of exclusion is clear. Mathew, similarly, comments:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 512 – 519 [34:30]

```
512:  M:     The idea is that obviously at the moment that people are, as I
513:          have said, people with [sic] 'learning difficulties' in the Performing
```

514:     Arts are ↑locked out of BTEC, Firsts and Nationals erm and, [..] not
515:     probably in all cases, but in my ↑experience they are probably are
516:     largely, so let ↑alone being locked out of, [.] a a a journey which will enable
517:     people to ↑be taken seriously, to quote individuals we work with,
518:     and gain work including travelling abroad and this kind of thing.
519:     Experiences in the world that we take for granted, ...

Much of what is evidenced accords with earlier literature relating to disabled people,

people described as having 'learning difficulties' and their segregation from

mainstream society. Mathew, like Iris, expresses a sense of frustration, and

reiterating a point from individuals he works with; namely, '*to be taken seriously*'

(Line: 517). Arguably, the experiences of individuals labelled as having 'learning

difficulties' in segregated special schools are firmly embedded within a

medical/individual (biophysical) model of disability. Notions of 'need', 'care' and

'protection' are central to a discourse of segregation; and where there is segregation

there is fear and confinement, which in turn leads to alienation (Foucault 1967).

Val's experience provides an interesting reflection of this:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 773 – 776 [56:41]

773: V: I can certainly
774:     [..] remember an occasion when [.] one member of staff in a, in a, in a Day
775:     Centre [..] was very [.] erm very resistant and a bit possessive of her [.]
776:     ↓students, her ↓clients and I ↑suspect that was more to do with fear
777:     than ↓anything else.

Val's recollection relates to a member of staff being '*possessive of her* [*sic*]

students' (Lines: 775 – 776). Val's interpretation is that this '*was more to do with*

fear' (Line: 776). Val went on to discuss that schools were generally supportive.

However, as was argued earlier (Section 2.1.1.1, p.44) the idea of pursuing further

or higher education after segregated 'special' schooling was – and is – outside the

mainstream altogether.

6.1.4 Employment

Whilst legislation with respect to employment rights has been steadily emerging, there has often been a view that irrespective of ability to work, disabled people were never expected to work (Alec-Tweedie, 1912). Even the Warnock Report (1978, pp.201 – 202) made clear the issue of disabled people and work, particularly with '*how to accept life without employment and how to prepare for it*' and later stated:

> *We believe that the secret of significant living without work*
> *may lie in handicapped* [*sic*] *people doing far more to*
> *support each other, and also in giving support to people*
> *who are lonely and vulnerable.* (Warnock Report, 1978,
> p.202)

So much for an '*enlightened modernity*' view (Corbett, 1996, p.7); it seems more in-line with eugenics. As Barnes (1991, p.33) had noted the Warnock Committee unequivocally held the view that '*disabled people would be excluded from the workplace*'. More than this, arguably, they were intentionally excluded from employment opportunities (Walker, 1982; Barnes, 1991). Yet it seems interesting and convenient that disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' were 'welcomed' to employment when it involved contributing to the war effort and national need (Humphries and Gordon, 1992).

Interestingly the exclusion of disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' from employment was noted by the Chair of CE, Val. Val recalled her early experiences and recalls that there were:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 130 – 135 [09:02]

```
130  V:              ...       a group of about 15 people [..] with [sic]
131         'learning difficulties' so people [.] who wouldn't, erm [..] wouldn't
132         really expected to get ↑employment [.] and who would now be in
133         a ↓Day Centre, if you like, and who would have been to,
134         [.] probably, would have been to a school for people with [sic] ↓'severe
135         learning difficulties' and ...
```

It seems that the view that individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' would not be in employment is popularly known. Val also made the point that the media professions themselves, more generally, lacked understanding about employing people described as having 'learning difficulties' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 850 – 852). Val later adds:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 859 – 873 [01:03:55]

```
859   V:                                              ... [sigh] [..] I think
860         we have to make the ↑opportunities really. [..] I guess the
861         opportunities are all, [.] some are already there, [..] ↓there is slowly
862         slowly, slowly, ↓slowly more employment of people with [sic]
863         'learning disabilities' [.] in erm in professional theatre and film and
864         television. [..] The first thing that will happen in the ↑mainstream,
865         if you like, if we're given we feed into that, will be that people
866         will [..] cast people with [sic] 'learning disabilities' in 'learning
867         disabled' roles. The next ↑step will be about people with [sic]
868         'learning disabilities' not necessarily being in 'learning
869         disabled' roles [laughter] which of course is exactly the ↑same
870         has happened in other fields. So, erm, erm particularly people from
871         Black and ethnic communities who for a long time only had
872         roles as Black people that has changed to a greater or ↓lesser
873         degree. erm But I think, it's about making those opportunities
874         really because there's going to be a lot of [..] ...
```

It is interesting how Val emphasises the pace of change of employment as moving '*slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly* ...' (Lines: 861 – 862). Moreover, Val makes reference to the struggles of likewise excluded groups, a point that was discussed in a public debate (Debate, 2002). In line with Val's comments it is interesting that in a recent Nordic crime drama named *Detective Downs,* Svein Andre Hofsø has been cast a lead role as a detective. Interestingly the reporter states that Hofsø's preparation included '*weight-training and dance lessons, as well as acting lessons*', the director also added '*Hofsø's performance would challenge assumptions about Down's syndrome*'. (Charter, 2013, p.47). Indeed, it offers an alternative discourse (Foucault, 1981) even though it is difficult to go first. Although, one of course wonders where this training took place?

With regard to the employment of the lecturers labelled as having 'learning difficulties', Mathew recalls the way CE were able to make provisional appointments, he explains:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 651 – 654 [43:42]

651   M: No, [..] this is, what's <u>happened</u> is at the ↑back end of ↓summer <u>when</u>
652   we were <u>given</u> a ↑kind of <u>green</u> ↑light by [Red Brick College], that
653   we <u>could</u> go <u>ahead</u> and [..] provisionally offer employment erm with a
654   <u>view</u> to everything being sorted to <u>start</u> on the 1st September.

This of course caused difficulties, since significant changes were starting to emerge, specifically, with the partnership between CE and RBC. However, Mathew, like Val, also discussed the issue around the employment of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' in the various media forms, particularly television, and made the point about appearances (Interview – M171203, 2003, Lines: 694 – 700). The issue of typecasting is certainly a pertinent point. Indeed, Goffman (1963) introduces the notion of '*passing*' – a process in which individuals can pass in both directions – in which individuals can:

> *... on stage switch parts and play out the role of normal* [*sic*]
> *to someone who is now playing their role to them; and in*
> *fact they can perform this theatre without much prompting*
> *and with reasonable competency. A third source of*
> *evidence that the individual can simultaneously sustain*
> *command over both the normal and stigmatised role comes*
> *to us from behind-scenes joshing. Normals, when among*
> *themselves, 'take off' on a stigmatised type. More to the*
> *point, the stigmatised in similar circumstances takes off on*
> *the normal as well as himself.* (Goffman, 1963, p.159)

On the contrary, individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' serve normative interests and not necessarily 'take off' themselves. This point relates to a comment made earlier by Mathew who recalls that:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 312 – 320 [21:12]

312   M: ... one of the <u>guys</u>,

313	[V], an incredibly <u>talented</u> ↑actor who erm ↑came <u>in</u> halfway
314	through this ↑early history, [.] is a <u>member</u> of the [Cutting Edge]
315	<u>team</u>. Other people <u>came</u> in slightly ↑later but I erm I <u>think</u> they ↑will
316	have <u>done</u> bits and pieces, <u>but</u> to be <u>quite</u> ↑honest not to be
317	immodest about it I don't <u>think</u> on the <u>same</u> ↑level, they may <u>wish</u>
318	<u>to</u>. In one case, erm [..] one guy did Theatre Arts Course … but <u>then</u> we
319	felt [..] at that <u>stage,</u> we couldn't <u>see</u> what <u>else</u> ↑we could <u>do</u> to enable
320	that person to carry on.

The idea that this individual is 'passing' at being '*incredibly talented*' (Line: 313) is certainly thought provoking. Arguably, it is not that this individual is 'passing' but that the social, economic, political and cultural context has previously positioned this individual as having 'learning difficulties'. Interestingly, this is in contrast to the initial comments that Catherine had made (Interview - C150304, 2004, Lines: 204 – 230); indeed, individuals are firmly embedded within a 'special needs' discourse given that it was '*scary*', '*frightening*', of not feeling '*comfortable*', which were all '*prejudices basically*'.

For Val the struggle for employment rights is linked to the self-empowerment, she explains:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 817 – 829 [01:00:20]

817	V:	[Parents] brought ↑up their children with [*sic*] 'learning disabilities' in
818		an <u>era</u> when people were ↑encouraged to <u>accept</u> [..] that <u>their</u>
819		<u>children</u> wouldn't [.] wouldn't develop [laughter], rather than an era now
820		where it's <u>completely</u> the <u>opposite [laughter]</u>, thank God. Erm But [Jill] was
821		<u>just</u> reflecting ↑back on the <u>past</u> 40 years and, [with a
822		whispered tone] bloody hell, the <u>last</u> 15, 20 years has been
823		↑<u>massive</u> changes. [..] Self-<u>advocacy</u> and [..] and <u>empowerment</u> and
824		entitlements for people with [*sic*] ↓'learning disability'. So I <u>think</u>
825		we <u>sit</u> within <u>that</u>, and I don't think, and the Performing Arts
826		is a very <u>visible</u> ↑part of that so [..] I wouldn't <u>claim</u> that ↑our our little
827		<u>bit</u> of <u>work</u> was on its <u>own</u> at ↑<u>all</u>. I mean, hopefully we've
828		<u>contributed</u> to ↑<u>that</u> but we're part of a much wider <u>political</u>
829		↑<u>movement</u>, whether that's with a <u>big P</u> or little p.

It is clear that the political movement of disabled people, the self-advocacy movement of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' has steadily been

creating changes within the realms of employment, the media and also the

performing arts. Val's recollection relates to the shift, the '*massive changes*' (Line:

823) in parenting, the growth of the self-advocacy movement and the '*wider political*

movement' given that the performing arts is '*a very visible part of that*' (Line: 826).

6.1.5 Family

Only one participant, Jane, referred to family as being a barrier, she makes the

comment that:

Extract Code: J270104, Lines: 610 – 612 [43:30]

```
610:  J                                            ... Some
611:      people with [sic] 'learning difficulties' [.] are ↑highly protected by their
612:      families and ↓careers [.] and support ↓workers ...
```

Jane's view relates to individuals being '*protected*' (Line: 611). The term 'protected'

is interesting, given that Jane later relates this to the cultural experience of students,

in terms of moving away from home, working in groups, building confidence with

expressing viewpoints, engaging in debate; experiences that are part and parcel of

higher education study. The point relating to families being protective is a point

made by Souza (2002) who described various degrees of separation. Morris (1991,

p.143) also made the point that personal assistance by family members is common

and that for a disabled person this means dependency, usually, on unpaid 'care'. It

appears that the issue of disabled individuals, individuals labelled as having

'learning difficulties' applying to university away from home is laden with issues

(finding accessible accommodation, using personal assistance, etc.); alternatively,

individuals restricted to applying to local universities, intending to stay at home

(dependence upon family members), is likewise extremely problematic.

6.1.6 Financial

Five of the thirteen participants mentioned finance as a barrier. Val made the point

that '*it's a very comparatively expensive programme ... in comparison to most*

degree programme in the arts' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Lines: 604 – 607).

Mathew expressed his concern given that the programme was more costly than

originally thought, his response:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 533 – 535 [35:46]

```
531   M:    Ok, [laughter]. I'm not too sure were to start. A key ↑first barrier,
532          is inevitable and obvious really [.] but should be said is the, this is
533          very very ↑costly              ...              very very ↑costly in
534          financial terms [..] erm and and it is just been revealed to be er even more
535          costly then we were led to ↑believe ...
```

Mathew's initial response to this question began with laughter, with emphasis on

this being a '*key*' barrier and this being '*obvious*' (Linew: 531 – 532). However, there

is also a sense of CE receiving information or that it had '*just been revealed*' (Line:

534) the proposed degree programme was '*more costly*' than they were '*led to*

believe' (Line 535). In addition, Mathew refers to the cost of employing an individual

to assist potential students, once graduated, with employment, and particularly so

for individuals in receipt of government welfare payments. This involves accounting

for the general pattern of work within the theatre related industries. Indeed

advertised in 2005 three posts appeared; namely, for an administrator, pastoral

Support Co-ordinator and a 'Learning Co-ordinator. In total this amounts to an

additional £74,000 per year. For Mathew this, in part, was to relieve some of the

financial worriers potential students would have been concerned about. Indeed the

systematic exclusion of disabled people from employment has been a major cause

of poverty (Barnes, 1991). What Barnes demonstrates is that:

> ... *the modern welfare benefits system is a major factor in*
> *the disabling process because it fails to provide disabled*
> *people with an adequate income, compounds their*

> *dependence upon professionals and professional organisations and, most important, does not facilitate their integration into mainstream employment.* (Barnes, 1991, p.98)

And as Barnes argued, poverty does not singularly separate disabled people from society, '*it is the disability benefit system itself which does that*' (Barnes, 1991, p.105). Mathew shared the experience of having experienced financial and funding issues with previous projects, and certainly recognised the current difficulties as a recurring theme.

Iris also shared her earlier experiences of financial barriers, her first recollection was with the 'Theatre Project' and the additional financial cuts the college was experiencing, she explains:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 309 – 324 [22:06]

```
309  I:           ... The college couldn't be funded and [.] etc. So erm [..] that
310       ran for 3 years [..] and then there was all kinds of politics going on
311       about the future of the ↑college [.] and it was going to be merged and
312       there were education ↑cuts        ...        there was all that going
313       on and it became very clear from the discussions we had that our
314       course was going to actually receive a cut in ↑funding and
315       [Mathew] and I have been running it [..] basically two handed on
316       visiting tutor contracts, [.] erm with very little extra money for a few
317       visiting people and a bit of production money erm based at ...
318       Young People's Theatre [.] and that space was ↓hired by the
319       community college erm and at the end of that 3 years the ↑money
320       ↑wasn't there to see the course [.] really to proceed ...
321              ... and at that point we ↑made the ↑decision. We just
322       ↑couldn't run another course with resources cut even more [..] that
323       the quality of it was going to be so effected that we couldn't
324       actually ↑do that [.] ↓really, erm [..] and so the course closed at that ↓point.
```

Iris's frustration and disappointment is clear. Repeatedly, Iris stresses '*cuts*' (Line: 312, 314, 322) being made, being employed on restricted contracts, the added personal stress, and having to make the decision to close the course. The political and economic difficulties was also recalled by Adam (Vice Principal) who discusses the changing social, economic, political and cultural context of that time and how

this impacted upon the college and theatre related industries. Similarly, Iris's

comments, in relation to the current degree programme and the issue of financial

barriers, are also likewise frustratingly enunciated:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 639 – 644 [45:32]

```
639   I:                                    ... So we now find ↑ourselves with with
640         nearly £100,000 added to the ↑cost of running it each ↑year [.] on top
641         of which [.] the additional money made available by government
642         'Widening Participation' etc, money [..] erm either hadn't been applied
643         for [.] or had been allocated elsewhere [.] erm and isn't going to continue, I
644         don't think, ↓for ↓much ↓longer, anyway, ...
```

The diminishing tone and the term '*anyway*' in Line 644 is telling of the concern

about the widening participation agenda. Iris highlights the way disabled people are

financially at a disadvantage in comparison to non-disabled students. Iris's

frustration with having become aware of the additional costs is clear; although there

is uncertainty as to funds not being '*applied for or had been allocated elsewhere*'

(Lines: 642 – 643). Iris later expresses her sense of bewilderment and comments:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 685 – 696 [49:21]

```
685   I:                                                        All these
686         people in ↑support all these endorsements from academia from all
687         kinds of ↑people in universities [.] in the theatre ↑world, and ↑yet still [..] all
688         the government policy papers saying, erm you know, the 'Valuing
689         People' paper a right to a decent ↑education and the 'Special
690         ↑Educational Needs and erm Disability Act' saying that there must be
691         ↑reasonable adjustments made, and ↑everyone's to be included and
692         still at the end of the ↑day [.] we're trying to set-up this course [.] and
693         what do we have? This little amount of money from ↑government
694         [.] and this ↑enormous amount being raised by [Cutting Edge] and
695         still not enough ↑money because it's too expensive [.] to, you know,
696         nobody is willing to pay to enable 'learning disabled' students.
```

The endorsement Iris is referring to relates to comments that were recorded in CE's

2002 Proposal which included supporting statements (Cutting Edge Theatre

Initiative, 2002). Lack of external and government funding is clearly causing

frustration. Iris carefully details the various individuals in support of the initiative,

from industry and '*academia*' (Line: 686), the related policy and legislative context,

and asks a rhetorical question: '*what do we have?*' (Line: 693), to respond that:

'*nobody is willing to pay to enable 'learning disabled' students*' (Line: 696). With

regard to funding, Val also makes the point that:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 738 – 740 [54:03]

```
738  V:                                    ... The ↑funding
739       that we, we had thought was available [..] ↑isn't, so there's a huge,
740       you know, much much ↑bigger [..] funding ↑gap than we'd anticipated. ...
```

Val, as Chair of CE, is also taken-aback as to the gap in funding, given that it was

thought that monies would be available. Similarly, the 2003 Proposal also refers to

the inadequacy of the Disabled Students' Allowances, given that it is possible for

disabled students to require additional funds (Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, 2003)

that, arguably, are not currently accounted for. Moreover, when students do breach

the maximum allowance of the DSA, this raises questions as to whether students

will be successful in securing a place within higher education. In relation to such

finances, Val comments that:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 610 – 618 [43:47]

```
610  V:   The staff student ratio is much greater [..] the [.] erm [.] pastoral support
611       and learning support [.] is additional to what we would normally
612       expect to ↓find on a degree programme like that. All the set-up
613       costs likewise, the need for more proactive recruitment
614       process [..] and the [.] ↑employment of the team of of people with
615       'learning difficulties' as as tutors, which is all ↑part of the staff
616       student ratio. So those those are the main ↑things that make it, and, yes,
617       staff student ratio and the ↑set-up time and the additional
618       support needs.
```

Val's insight into the range of financial barriers illustrates the required commitment

and knowledge of specific detailed understanding of the issues involved. What is

apparent is that the financial barriers in relation to DSA, employing staff with the

label of 'learning difficulties', and the staff-student ratio were not known prior, but

were certainly understood during the initiative partnership.

6.1.7 Individual

Whilst the issue of the individual has been identified as a barrier it is also

problematic in terms of social model thinking. For Thomas (2001, p.103) the

individual is related to the issue of '*students who choose whether or not to*

participate' in higher education. As will become apparent, the issues as to whether

disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' choose not to

attend higher education is open to critique. As is argued the exclusion from higher

education participation of individuals so labelled is far more complex than '*personal*

inadequacy' (Thomas, 2001, p.130). Indeed, Mathew (Interview – M171203, 2003,

Lines: 512 – 519) had commented earlier that such individuals are '*locked out*' of

pre-requisite qualifications that would permit access to higher education, and not

necessarily because of 'personal inadequacy'. This issue is also related to Richard's

(appointed lecturer) response related to his aspiration to pursue theatre. Initially the

questions begin:

Extract Code: R071204, Lines: 105 – 115 [07:21]

```
105   N:        ... what drew ↑you to theatre? [.] Why did ↑you choose
106           theatre?
107   R:     [.] Me?
108   N:     Yes
109   R:     Dancing is my [..] ↑past, my ↑world.
110   N:     Dancing is your world?
111   R:     Yes that's it, ↑world. ⌈
112   N:                    ⌊ Dancing is your world? ⌈
113   R:                                    ⌊ I built up a
114           dance. I don't like acting ↑style, acting it's not [..] my ↑skill. ↑My
115           skill, I like dancing, and voice, and workshops and warm-ups
116           and massage - that's better. [.] I don't like acting style. ↑Workshop
117           is very very ↑hard work, is built into the work in theatre.
```

Given that dancing is Richard's '*past*' and that this is his '*world*' (Line: 109), he

shares his previous experiences of being involved in performances, that he

considers this to be his '*skill*' (Line: 112) Notice the conjunction 'and ... and ... and', arguably this is an alliance, '*uniquely alliance*' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004, p.8), which establishes organisations of power and relative to the arts. Richard is clear with his understanding of the demands of theatre. Although, one pertinent question remains: why does higher education exclude him?

Interestingly, Iris's interpretation of the individual as a barrier oscillates between 'within' individual and as an 'interaction' between individuals, for example:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 241 – 253 [17:16]

```
241   I:      I think its [.] its people ↑working with people with [sic] 'learning difficulties'
242           but it's also the 'learning disabled' people ↑themselves. I mean
243           what you've got over the several years is the growth of the self-
244           advocacy movement [.] and I ↑think, [.] as far as I know ↑that wasn't
245           really that much in existence then and ↑people's own expectations
246           of themselves were ↑not necessarily very ↑high and in fact a
247           situation we would see again and again would be a ↑band up on
248           stage and someone with [sic] 'learning difficulties' ↑jumping up to
249           mime the ↑guitar and getting lots of applause [claps hands]
250           because that was seen as the extent to what this ↑individual could
251           do and this individual themselves that was, [..] I think, what they
252           thought they could ↑do, they could ↑pretend to do it and so I think
253           [.] just the ↑expectations all round ↓weren't there.
```

Iris provides an example of the way an individual mimes the guitar and how this is seen as an indicator of expectations by both self and others. Such observations are extremely problematic in terms of understanding barriers. Indeed a number of questions emerge; for example: In what way does the social context play a part in creating this interpretation? Would a different social context render this 'act' as being valued? Does not acting incorporate elements of 'pretending'? For Iris this is not a one-off observation but one that has been witnessed '*again and again*' (Line: 247). Indeed Iris's recollection involves her partaking in this re-enactment with the clapping of her hands, to demonstrate and emphasise that this was '*the extent to what this individual could do*' (Lines: 250 – 251).

Iris connects the self-organisation of individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' with self-determination, she also later describes her own resilience. Certainly the link with equality, access and citizenship and self-determination is an important one. Goodley (2000, p.xiii) referred to this self-advocacy as a '*quite revolution*' which has emerged over the previous 30 years and that:

> *Self-advocacy can be seen as a counter-movement to state paternalism, wherein people with the label of learning difficulties conspicuously support one another to speak out against some of the most appalling examples of discrimination in contemporary British culture. The self-advocacy movement has invited people with [sic] learning difficulties to revolt against disablement in a variety of ways, in a number of contexts, individually and collectively, with and without the support of others. The movement captures resilience in the face of diversity.* (Goodley, 2000, p.3)

It seems that the 'revolt against disablement' within higher education has rarely been addressed. Iris's comments are those which refer to her earlier experiences of developing courses, she describes her own resilience to continue, when asked, in these terms:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 422 – 429 [30:10]

```
422  N:    What kept you ↑going through the ↑years, [.], if you could identify
423        anything at all, the drive to ↑continue [..] having a couple of knock
424        backs in terms [..] of the colleges, the community ↑college, the
425        struggle of getting the course up and running, what what kept you going?
426  I:    [...] Shear blooded mindedness ┌ laughter ...
427  N:                                    └ laughter ...     ┌
428  I:                                                       └ ... or complete
429        ↑madness. [.] I think I don't know, to a certain extent I could well it was just ...
```

Iris's own determination is apparent borne out of '*shear blooded mindedness*' (Line: 426) irrespective of the difficulties and the personal '*knock backs*' (Line: 423). It was, in part, through working with individuals that Iris began to witness their self-determination of the individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'.

An example of working 'with', a comment made on several occasions by Iris, is evidenced through the experience of Catherine, who had been a student of Red Brick College and was previously on the Theatre Project placement. Catherine describes her own individual expectations and experiences of working *with* people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' and reflects on her own prejudices. Catherine's initial impressions of working with individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' is one which was '*scary*' (Line: 206) and consisted of the assumption that people tend to be '*very physical*' wanting to '*shake hands or kiss you or hug you*' (Lines: 209 – 210), she explains:

Extract Code: C150304, Lines: 206 – 230 [14:27]

```
206  C:   It was scary ↑because [.] erm one of the big ↑issues I think when
207        you've never worked with  'special needs' [sic] people is about
208        discipline. When you come across, ↑especially people for the
209        first time, is because they tend to be also very physical, i.e. they
210        want to [..] shake hands or kiss you or hug you or you know.
211        Actually not having had that contact with 'special needs' [sic] people
212        can be quite [laugher] ↑frightening at first and then ↑knowing when to [.] say
213        "it is ↑inappropriate, I don't ↑feel comfortable with your physical
214        contact with me" and also feeling under ↑pressure to be a bit
215        more open a bit more ↑freer [..] and for me as a ↑woman as well some
216        of the guys would be erm [.] quite evasive [.] in how they touched
217        you or how they greeted you. Actually I had to say to
218        myself "hang on would I if if these ↑guys, for want of a better word
219        'straight' wanting to use better language than that, if they were
220        my ↑mates at college, [.] would I allow them to ↓touch me in the
221        same way?" No I wouldn't, I wouldn't feel comfortable with that
222        in a ↑workshop situation. So therefore, it was quite ↑hard to
223        negotiate those boundaries ↑because of also not wanting to
224        seem like you ↑were, you've got the 'eer' ↑factor that "Oh my God
225        I don't want them to touch me" or things like that. But, you
226        know, they were real genuine ↑issues   …   prejudices
227        basically that you were ↑having to go away and say to them
228        "hang on a minute, what's going on why am I feeling like this, is
229        it ↑because people look strange?" They look kind of strange. I'm
230        not use to them I don't feel comfortable you know.
```

It is clear that Catherine is struggling to confront her own prejudices. Interestingly Catherine uses the impersonal catch-all 'you' implicating others. Arguably, Catherine mixes metaphors and also engages in discourses of fear, gender, and

bodily difference. As is noted, the body is not just a medical marvel its boundaries are constantly being negotiated, shifting, fought for and over (Synnott, 1997). For Synnott (1997, p.1) the body is not a given, it is a social category with various meanings and '*highly*' political. Indeed, as stated previously, the body is a battlefield imbued with power relations and competing discourses (Tamboukou and Ball, 2003). Interestingly, Catherine poses her own probing questions, using the transformative potential of theatre arts, to reassess her own individual barrier, reflecting on her own relationship with '*students*' and '*people*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 278 – 279), as they begin to be referred to, rather than individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Interestingly, Catherine is full of praise and self-recognition, of valuing democratic values, embracing the transformative elements of theatre arts and yet puzzlingly returns to the language of 'special needs'. It seems that Catherine is entrapped by a discourse of '*sentimentality and prejudice*' (Corbett, 1996a), and arguably renders individuals *powerless*. Although, Catherine identifies the negative cultural representations of disabled people in her recollection of a 'TV advertisement' which had as its strapline '*See the Person not the Disability*' (Interview – C150304, 2004, Lines: 354 – 389). Catherine seduction may arguably have been complete possibly rendering disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties' as 'wonderful' and seemingly exceptional. Indeed, a critique of this advertisement was noted by Morris (1991) in which she stated:

> *The Spastics Society, for example, thought that they were being progressive by producing advertisements which encouraged people to look beyond the wheelchair and see the real person. But if people are being asked to ignore our disability they are being asked to deny a fundamental part of our identity and our experience.* (Morris, 1991, p.102)

Catherine's resistance, self-examination and understanding is clear:

Extract Code: C150304, Lines: 386 – 389 [27:22]

```
386    C:                                    ... but it's like saying well we have↑ to
387          acknowledge that↑ [...] we have to↑. We must not ignore↓ [prolonged] the
388          disability because it's there [.] and that's what the prejudice↓ [quietly] is [..]
389          actually.
```

Interestingly, Catherine's resistance is reflective; she is critical of her own prejudice

almost completing this task in a prolonged manner and quietly.

With regard to the individual as being a barrier, Richard markedly described this

differently. Richard response relates to him being asked about the types of work he

had been involved in particularly over the last seven months, his response is:

Extract Code: R120504, Lines: 48 – 51 [03:22]

```
48    R:   Like [.] warm-ups, [..] to ↑help others [.] to [.] need some ↑voice, [..] and dance,
49         [..] not easy, it's hard work for me too, erm [..] workshop ↑leaders, to learn
50         about the voice, [.] techniques, to learn about their own voice, to
51         teach other students, to learn your ideas, your interests, the ↑character.
```

Richard whilst describing the types of work, adds '*it's hard work for me too*' (Line:

49), which tends to have a different focus with understanding how barriers relating

to individuals can be interpreted. Indeed, it seems Richard is reflective, honest, and

self-critical of his own experience of the range of work he has been recently

involved in developing. Unlike, Carol, Richard does implicate the listener/reader, he

is arguably, reflective about his own experience and the challenges that this

presents.

6.1.8 Modern Higher Education

With regard to modern higher education, questions have been raised about its

definition, purpose, and function. There is also increasing concern as to its assumed

transformative capacity. Further still there is a growing unease about its relation to

industry and its pursuit of profit (McGettigan, 2013). For the participants higher

education has individual meanings. Iris for example makes a point relating to the legislative inconsistency and exclusion of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties', she opines:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 697 – 701 [50:15]

```
697   I:                                        ... I don't
698         think the SENDA has any any ↑notion of people with [sic] 'learning
699         difficulties' going into HE. [..] I think that they're off the agenda,
700         disabled people, we're talking about physically disabled people
701         or other access problems but not people with [sic] 'learning difficulties'.
```

As was discussed earlier (Section 2.2.1) It is clear that the conceptual framework that encompasses a rights agenda is not sufficient enough, certainly not for people labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Indeed, Iris makes the point succinctly, that '*they're off the agenda*' (Line: 699). Compounding this is the bureaucratic aspect of higher education. Val, for example, describes it thus:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 570 – 572 [40:58]

```
570   V:    I think just generally with Higher Education I think, [.] ↑all the time
571         we're discovering just how ↑bureaucratic and ↑slow to change [.]
572         Higher Education [.] is.
```

Revealingly, this is not just a one off interpretation but '*all the time*' (Line: 570). Val also adds:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 576 – 581 [41:26]

```
576   V:    [Sigh] I don't know, I think Higher Education is very, is very
577         ↓conservative and and slow to change and very institutionalised. I
578         [...] imagine that most people [laughter] probably agree
579         with that and I think it's been a ↑bit of a ↑shock coming from a
580         small voluntary [.] sector organisation [..] to ↑find the way we can
581         work together ...
```

Val's sigh (Line: 576) and laughter (Line: 578) are telling. For Val, higher education is '*conservative*' and '*very institutionalised*' (Line: 577). It can also be '*a very slow moving juggernaut ...*' (Interview – V1201004, 2004, Lines: 762 – 763). For Val a

number of uncertainties emerge about higher education, as she previously states. It is interesting how Val comments that individuals in higher education are '*not used to living in an inclusive world*' (Interview – V010304, 2004, Line: 798) and that aside from the barriers related to employment and the cultural industries '*there's a hell of a lot of learning that needs to come out ... confronting their own prejudices*' and that '*people with* [*sic*] '*learning difficulties' aren't any different from anybody else*' (Interview – V010304, 2004, Lines: 808 – 812). For Val compounding the issue of participation are the changes in relation between the higher education sector and industry, with the introduction of new courses and different modes of delivery, she explains:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 626 – 631 [45:08]

```
626   V:                              ...                         the
627        whole relationship between Higher Education and the
628        Industry [.] within the foundation degree [.] ↑system and then there's
629        a ↑whole masses amount of [.] erm learning around ↑access and
630        inclusion and [.] ↓enabling people who are [.] within the ↑benefits
631        system for instance to be able to access [..] Higher Education. ...
```

Thomas and Quinn (2007) explain that foundation degrees have been introduced as an important approach to widening participation and are usually two-year work-based degrees offered in partnership between HEIs and employers. Ironically, usually, individuals are in some type of related employment. However, as was experienced by CE, this was a significant change from seeking to develop a degree programme to exploring possibilities for pursuing a foundation degree model. Whilst Val initially assumed foundation degrees could enable people within the benefits system, she also adds:

Extract Code: V120104, Lines: 639 – 644 [46:15]

```
639   V:                                    ... another barrier
640        of course is that all the ↑changes that are happening within
641        Higher Education at the moment and the introduction of
642        foundation degrees [.] [sigh] the fact that, you know, they're not fully
```

643   funded and only the <u>first</u> 2 years are funded, and all those
644   things, <u>so</u> ↑we're <u>caught</u> ↑<u>up</u> in a very ↑difficult [..] time in terms of
645   changes in Higher Education.

Val appears inundated with the multiple barriers, not only those associated with the

theatre industry, and those related to the recruitment of staff, but also structural

barriers within higher education.

6.2 What were the views and power/knowledge discourses of the different individual participants?

Discourse is a complex concept, often associated with the organisational property of

dialogue (Fairclough, 1992). For Fairclough (1992, pp.3 – 4), discourses do not

solely focus on social entities and relations, '*they construct or 'constitute' them*', to

reiterate; they '*position people in different ways as social subjects*'. Indeed, it is

interesting, confusing and at the same time puzzling, as to how the term disability is

used. And yet another layer of confusion is with its colloquial use. Three examples

will suffice; the first relates to a biography of Emmeline Pankhurst and focuses on a

theme relating to the equality of women. The second relates to discourse and the

way structures, in this case; interviews, can be culturally excluding. The third relates

to health inequalities and the intersection of social-class and 'race'. The following

three examples illustrate the way discourse positions people and also constitutes

them:

> *She* [*Emmeline Pankhurst*] *shook the women of England
> awake. She gave them a consciousness of their disabilities
> and of their power to remove them that they had never had
> before.* (Bartley, 2002, p.241)

> *Those who cannot, either because of their cultural
> experience or because they belong to generations for
> which access to interviewing was constrained, are likely to
> be socially disabled.* (Fairclough, 2001, p.54)

> *Another important dimension of inequality in contemporary
> Britain is race. Immigrants to this country form the so-called
> New Commonwealth, whose ethnic identity is clearly visible
> in the colour of their skin, are known to experience greater*

difficulty in finding work and adequate housing (Smith, 1976). Given these disabilities it is to be expected that they might also record rather higher than average rates of mortality and morbidity. (Townsend, *et al.*, 1990, p.50)

With reference to the first example by Bartley (2002), she is discussing the issue of women's struggle and particularly the political activism of Emmeline Pankhurst, and suggests that Pankhurst gave women a consciousness of 'their disabilities'. In what way is Bartley using the term 'disabilities'? The second example by Fairclough (2001) is referring to the issue of being unemployed in relation to the experience of ethnic groups unfamiliar with cultural expectations who are therefore 'socially disabled'. In what way is Fairclough using the termed 'disabled' with reference to ethnic groups? Finally, the third example by Townsend *et al.* (1990) is discussing the inequality of health, the Black Report, which identified a number of inequalities that predicate the early death rate of 'New Commonwealth' individuals and infers the relation that ethnic groups equals disability. Interestingly, none of the respective text discuss disabled women, disabled people from various ethnic and 'cultural groups', or disabled people who are unemployed. However what is apparent, it seems, from these examples, are the inferred equations that: women = disability, unemployment = disability and ethnic groups = disability. Incidentally, individuals seeking higher education participation in the nineteenth century older traditional universities in England were disadvantaged by a '*religious disability*' given that 'dissenters' of the Church of England doctrine were excluded from obtaining fellowships (Sanderson, 1975, p.106). In this sense 'disability' as a category is unstable and begins to break down (Davis, 1995). Put succinctly, given these various contexts, what does it mean to say that someone is a disabled person?

Whilst it is possible to speak of a 'discourse of disability', or 'discourse of learning difficulties', Foucault's (1980, 1981, 1988) work argues that different discourses construct social phenomena in different ways, they position people.

Power/knowledge is thus a key element of discourse. As is noted, discourse 'extends beyond the boundaries of the sentence' (Mills, 2004, p.116).

With reference to a discourse of performance, and participation, questions as to who performs are extremely timely. For example Iris describes the general experiences of being a director, devising performances, receiving comments that illustrate the tension, and changing discourses of expectations. Iris explains:

Extract Code: I171203, Lines: 470 – 490 [33:34]

```
470   I:        ... the amazing, [.] just [.] just the fantastic ↑performances that
471            people have delivered and the way [.] the way [sigh] people have
472            committed ↑themselves and ↑worked so incredibly ↑hard and come-
473            up with the goods for the performance and the incredible ↑frill. I
474            mean it's part of being a ↑director as well, ↑incredible frill of
475            seeing something you've all ↑worked together on erm just happening
476            there and of course it's terribly nerve ↓racking because you're out
477            of the picture at that point. You've just got to sit there and ↑bite
478            your nails in the ↑audience. But, but, but seeing that and that was so
479            powerful and then having people, [..] whatever ↑you might think of
480            this, people coming up very genuinely and saying for instance at
481            the end of [the performance], [.] "I'm just kind of gob smacked, I have to sit
482            there and I'm having to say to ↑myself I'm ↓watching my son
483            perform this. I'm watching people with [sic] 'learning difficulties'
484            perform this, I I can't ↑believe I am". And people saying, "well yeah, I
485            hadn't really thought about them [.] having 'learning difficulties'
486            while they were doing the performance, my God, I'm just ↑seeing
487            these people as performers, I'm just ↑seeing them as people I'm
488            not thinking they're learning ↓disabled". And that was very
489            powerful, yeah that revelation that these are people and they are
490            performers …
```

Arguably the discourse of expectation radically shifts from what people are unable to do to one that is enabling. Iris comments that the performance was '*amazing*' and '*fantastic*' (Line: 470) and yet whilst directing is '*terribly nerve racking*' (Line: 476). Iris engages with a power/knowledge discourse.

Val, with regard to higher education, engages in power/knowledge discourse of uncertainty. Lee referred to higher education structures and the various power

relations consisting of '*connections*' and '*wheels in wheels*' (Interview – L081204,

2004, Lines: 250 – 251). Jane alludes to a discourse of resistance in relation to the

number of times individuals and groups experienced set-backs, and frustrations,

even at times when people began to think that the theatre initiative was not going to

happen. Jane makes the point that:

Extract Code: J270104, Lines: 711 – 714 [51:00]

```
711   J:                              ... a horrible voice in your head,
712         you know, and then ↑thinking [.] well it won't ↑happen unless we do
713         it [.] and we've just got to ↑keep on doing, so it's really being
714         blinkered we've just had to be blinkered.
```

Jane's resistance and determination is clear, and as was noted, where there is

power there is also resistance (Burr, 1995) and as Foucault (1980, p.142) had noted

resistance is multiple.

Yet another issue relating to power/knowledge and power relations which became

apparent was the early discussion CE had with a previous senior member of staff at

Red Brick College, who, as Mathew explained had 'suddenly' left the college and

obtained employment elsewhere. This was extremely unsettling for the individuals

involved. In context, Mathew explains:

Extract Code: M171203, Lines: 659 – 664 [44:22]

```
659   M:                            ... we are ↑very unhappy about what
660         has had to happen. Erm [.] Namely that an individual who we'd been
661         working with suddenly got a job somewhere else, which is fine,
662         and we discovered ...
663                  ... he hadn't really been ↑talking with the
664         institution ↑enough in sharing those ideas, to the degree he should
665         have been. ...
```

Mathew's disappointment is apparent. Interestingly this is reflected in Adam's (Vice

Principal) comments as he expresses his surprise as to the way he came to know

about the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, particularly when he took over as a lead

for Red Brick College (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 498 – 507).

6.3 In what way do the experiences of Cutting Edge offer insight in critical disability studies readings of dis/ability and education?

Critical readings of dis/ability are unique not only in relation to compulsory education

but also with respect to further and higher education. A number of analytical insights

emerge in terms of the way disability is understood. Fundamentally, a particularly

pertinent question is 'what is disability?' Understanding disability with reference to

the 'body' and personal experience has been – and is – extremely troubling. In part,

it has involved using explanatory models. For example whilst there is discussion

about the medical/individual (biophysical) model of disability, the model does, it is

argued, uphold the idea of a body which is 'normal' which is often perceived as a

perfectly functioning machine (Shildrick, 1997; Hughes, 2002, 2004). It is also

associated with the image of God, male at that (Eiesland, 1994). Alternatively,

postmodernist perspective identify the body as a site of struggle, questions its

ownership, its form and function, indeed it is leaky (Shildrick, 1997), a body that is

fought over and for; a form of bio-power (Foucault, 1978).

With regard to the labelling of individuals, it is clear that the, charity, medical and

educational discourses have dominated the lives of disabled people. The language

and discourse of 'Special Educational Needs' involves experiences of surveillance,

control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion (and resistance).

Interestingly, a pertinent question arises: which is better 'idiot' or 'SEN'? In

response, neither, but rather a different question: in whose interest does it serve to

have people intentionally labelled as being 'idiots' or having 'learning difficulties'? It

certainly does not serve the interest of individuals themselves. Whilst the social

model of disability begins to problematise disability it nonetheless maintains

'impairment' in individual/medical model (biophysical) terms. It also seems that discussions around the issue of hierarchies of impairment is problematic and in itself produces a divisive discourse. This also raises questions as to parallel experiences that occur with other social groups. For example, are we to assume women do not discriminate against other women or individuals from ethnic or racial groups do not discriminate against each other; or, that there is not a hierarchy of age, religion, class or sexuality? Arguably, the 'hierarchy of impairment' debate is all too reminiscent of the discussion told by Thomas Huxley (1894 – 1963), a member of the Eugenics society, between Lenina and Henry in a *Brave New World*:

> '*I'm glad I'm not an Epsilon,' said Lenina, with conviction.*
> '*And if you were an Epsilon,' said Henry, 'your conditioning*
> *would have made you no less thankful that you weren't a*
> *Beta or an Alpha*'. (Huxley, 2004, p.64)

Alongside critiquing the social model, Shakespeare and Watson (2002) made a pertinent point concerning the view that 'everyone is impaired'. Interestingly, to say that 'everyone is impaired' also makes redundant the descriptor 'able-bodied', that is, it could be concluded that there is no such thing as an 'able-bodied' person – able at what? An interesting reflective point also relates to whether Shakespeare and Watson would argue that anyone and everyone has 'learning difficulties'? In referring to the hierarchy of impairment, and the various degrees of oppression it, arguably, seems an intentional process in which to stratify disabled people into various impairment groups; creating intergroup hostility. Such concerns are all the more complex when factoring in 'race' (Begum, 1992, p.30); indeed, Begum drew criticism as to '*racism within the disability movement*'. It seems one reading of this situation is that critical disability studies offers space to acknowledge the intersections, the cross cultural perspectives of disability.

Another area of insight related to critical dis/ability studies is the often taken-for-granted understanding of 'reasonable adjustments'. Interestingly, it is also 'non-disabled' students who have benefitted from disability equality legislation. Indeed, a critique of the notion of 'reasonable adjustments' can be related to what Goffman (1963, p.148) referred to as a '*phantom acceptance*'. That is, it could be argued that 'reasonable adjustments' only offer a courtesy membership into a non-disabled domain. As Goffman wrote:

> *The stigmatised are tactfully expected to be gentlemanly* [*sic*] *and not to press their luck; they should not test the limits of the acceptance shown them, nor make it the basis for still further demands. Tolerance, of course, is usually part of the bargain.* (Goffman, 1963, p.146, my insertion)

Thus, 'reasonable adjustment' is conditional and based upon non-disabled norms of acceptance, arguably, non-disabled people are un-threatened in their identity beliefs.

Yet other areas of potential work relate to power/knowledge discourses. For example, the circularity of power/knowledge, of discourse, brings a different set of questions. One can ask holders of power where they get their power from. For example, who made you a professor, a researcher, a SENCO, a teacher, a doctor, etc? Only to be affronted with the response: the modern higher education institution. Thus a shifting theoretical landscape and reading of critical disability studies has introduced different perspectives and possibilities. Indeed, the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004) offers possibility with 'lines of flight', 'rhizomes', 'plateaus' 'territorial' spaces, 'nomads' and theoretical spaces where maths and music frequent.

6.4 How might the insights into these questions inform this area of research?

The re-search process is imbued with power/knowledge discourses hierarchically ordered. Research understood as a vehicle of surveillance is an extremely thought

provoking conundrum, indeed, the postmodernist turn to re-search as a process which either coerces or forces individual participation brings a different meaning with the process of doing re-search. Indeed, drawing upon the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2004), the phraseology of 're-re-re-...*ad infinitum*...search' is more accurately summed up as being a tracing, involving multiple duplications, not a mapping, better symbolised as re–∞–search, especially when it is applied to the experience of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Arguably, it is a system of dualistic confinement of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment, and exclusion (and resistance), playing with both the re–∞–search and re–∞–searched. The dualistic poles collide into each other and, no doubt, recycle one another, a contradiction, vehicles of power/knowledge and at the end of every discourse, and perhaps concluded well before it started. With regard to the invention of 'learning difficulties' it serves to justify the, prettily named, existence of 'special' services, segregated institutions, and the like. These have become a form of territorialised segregation. Individuals are, arguably, locked into power/knowledge within a regime of 'truth'; such that territorialised segregated places are 'taken-for-granted', presented as 'good', necessary and considered a necessity, and often the only option. It is no wonder that my own research log recorded insights into my own emersion into this research experience, making reflective and critical notes.

6.5 Summary

This chapter has presented an analysis and discussion of the data in relation to the research aims, themes and research questions. It set out to examine the issue of barriers and highlights eight different sub-categories these being: attitudinal, cultural, educational, employment, family, financial, individual and modern higher education. These, of course, are not exhaustive, and would certainly be at times over-lapping. It then examines the research questions drawing upon the data and

related literature. It also explore power/knowledge, and as has been witnessed discourses are complex, they construct social relations and position people in different ways. Given the previous chapters it is evident that it is not accurate to say that the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative 'failed' in their attempt to set-up a degree in the performing arts. On the contrary, it made transparent the factors, issues and complex understandings into how people described as having 'learning difficulties' are subject to processes of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. However, a comment by Jane suffices to make a concluding point about resistance:

Extract Code: J270104, Lines: 806 – 810 [57:49]

```
806   J:      I think that what a lot of us feel ↑about [Cutting Edge], that if we
807           can just get this ↑going, it won't change the world but it will
808           ↑certainly just have a ↓ripple effect [..] and we'll hit ↑other ripples
809           from other ↓areas and that and we will see then were the ↑frictions
810           are from different peoples ↑viewpoints …
```

Arguably, the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative renders this attempt as problematic, and in this sense it certainly did not 'fail'.

CHAPTER 7: Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative (Act One)

This chapter presents the case study of Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative in the form of a theatre production. It is offered as a postmodernist theatre production of data (Grbich, 2007) with layers of interweaving voices, a juxtaposition of views which present a myriad of directions (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004), hence the addition of the terms 'act one'. It is offered as an alternative postmodernist perspective of the issue of higher education participation and addresses one of the principal aims of this study. This performance chapter could be, in part, also seen to respond to Turner's (2008, p.218) criticism concerning the notion of embodiment and that debates about the body have become '*too theoretical*', and thus this chapter offers a performance, an exploration, of the gap between theoretical text and the body. It is also an alternative response to previous emerging questions relating to power/knowledge discourses of the individual participants, how these offer insight into critical disability studies. Moreover, such questions, individually and collectively, offer a map of the searches into this area of concern. It requires the reader to play with the data, to rotate the comments from left to right, or right to left, from top to bottom, or bottom to top. The reader is encouraged to be rhizomatic, to create a mapping and not a tracing. Alternatively, a reader may choose to fix the page and tilt the head, contort the body, and shift their gaze. Given this reader participation, the reader's role is an active one which will take away an ongoing transformation of the text. This theatre production draws upon the insights of the participants who shared their lived experience as students, employees, lecturers, theatre-in-education practitioners and directors in the field of theatre and the performing arts. In this sense, this theatre production is grounded in their accounts; it gives rise to multiple interpretations and draws upon theatre and its metaphors. This theatre production is situated within a time of concern related to the notion of 'learning difficulties' and higher education participation and employment. Its storyline is an attempt by CE, a theatre company, in partnership with RBC, a college of higher

education offering professional vocational training for the performing arts, to develop

a degree course for individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties.'

7.1 The Characters

The leading characters in this theatre production are Iris and Mathew, who are the

joint directors of the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative. Other cast members include

Adam (Vice Principal of RBC), Val (Chair of CE), Jane (Vice Chair of CE), Richard

(appointed lecturer), David (appointed lecturer) who offers a performance, Catherine

(an ex-student of RBC who completed a placement which was related to theatre

training for individuals described as having 'severe learning difficulties'), Lee (a

Senior evaluator), Heather (Director of Education, representative from one of the

funding bodies) and myself.

7.2 Setting the Scene

The scene is set with a public debate (Debate, 2002) asking government as to

whether they consider cultural attitudes towards the employment of disabled people

in the performing arts are a barrier to their successful employment in this area.

7.2.1 The Prologue

The curtain rises, the prologue begins:

> *My Lords, I thank those noble Lords who have put down their names to speak in this debate. … I want to ask Government what role they believe that they have to play in ensuring that disabled people have an equal opportunity to obtain work and how much action they believe is best left to the world of the performing arts itself and more widely to all of us who go to the theatre, enjoy music, watch films and TV and listen to the radio.*
>
> *I have planned this short debate for some time, but the catalyst was seeing Eric Sykes perform on stage. His star quality was not dimmed by age or his hearing and sight difficulties. Not a bit of it. His sense of comic timing and delivery enchanted the whole audience.*

It is axiomatic that the performing arts should reflect all of society and therefore that they should harness the ability of disabled people to play a full part. It is the right thing to do and it can make good business sense too. Star quality is not confined to performers who have no disability.

Why is it that disabled performers today face a similar situation to that of Black and Asian performers 30 years ago — that is, few are given the opportunity to perform at all and are likely to be confined in the main to stereotypical and limiting roles? …

… Who should take action? What could or should they do to change cultural attitudes which inhibit the employment of disabled people in the performing arts? The Government have a crucial role to play in the way in which they direct employment and social security policy. …

… Much has been done to improve physical access to arts venues. But there is still a severe lack of access to backstage areas. …

It is also vital that disabled people should have access to the same professional training opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues. Most accessible training opportunities are still provided by under-resourced organisations such as Heart 'n Soul. That is an arts organisation which offers creative opportunities to people with [sic] learning disabilities. Though in receipt of some public funding, such organisations are registered charities and rely heavily on support from trusts and foundations.

Can the Minister tell the House whether there are any higher education courses in the performing arts accessible to people with [sic] learning disabilities in particular? I am told that the [Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative], in association with the [Red Brick College], is currently trying to set up such a course but that financial support for it has not yet been confirmed.

I note of course that the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 extends the scope of the DDA to cover education. By 2005 all bodies responsible for the provision of education and other related services will have a legal duty not to discriminate against disabled students and other disabled people. What measures are the Government taking now to assist educational bodies to adjust their recruitment policies, their courses and their buildings so that they can comply with the new Act? …

… Beyond the responsibility of the Minister, I am aware that there are responsibilities vested in the world of the performing arts and in all of us, the audiences, which are just as, if not more, important. I hope that other noble Lords will have time to touch upon them.

… In the arts world, producers, writers and casting directors all need to take a positive approach to the employment of disabled people. Does the Minister agree that they should be aiming at inclusive casting? …

… Perhaps above all else we the audience have the main role to play. We can take a constructive attitude. We can have an open mind and a willingness to engage with

the issues and challenge our own perceptions of what constitutes an entertaining and successful performance. So are we stuck with a vicious circle or can we break free? The vicious circle is that the arts can play a vital role in changing attitudes, but the general invisibility of disabled people, particularly in the performing arts, and to a woeful extent in television, will not change until all the issues I have mentioned today are addressed. The problem is that the issues will not be fully addressed until the arts help to change our attitude towards disabled people.

Next year is the European Year of Disabled People. Let us be ambitious. Let us set that as our deadline for breaking free of the vicious circle. (Debate, 2002)

7.2.2 Enter Stage Left

Enter, stage left, the multiple voices of CE. Discourses to be, of desire, anger,

resistance, echoing and juxtaposed:

"As far as I am concerned there is apartheid still in the education system and to some extent the art system regarding societies attitudes towards people with [*sic*] 'learning difficulties'." (Mathew)

"… this is not just. That these opportunities, for these individuals don't exist." (Iris)

'People don't recognise the talent they see the 'learning disability' first." (Val)

"I was excited by the skills that people began developing by seeing a student develop and what they'd achieved at the end of the course and then what starts to come in is the belief. Well actually, these individuals can obviously achieve this and then, I suppose it's not fair, why aren't there opportunities." (Iris)

"… an individual [] from Red Brick College] who we'd suddenly been working with, got a job somewhere else." (Mathew)

"HE can be a very slow moving juggernaut." (Val)

"…there's a real learning process for students on other courses in an institution to take-on and some of them will find that very difficult to have students with 'learning difficulties' working alongside them or in a course alongside their course a lot of it is out of ignorance not knowing how to relate, so yeah a huge learning curve, I think." (Jane)

"…access and inclusion and enabling people who are within the benefits system for instance to be able to access Higher Education." (Val)

"I don't think the SENDA has any notion of people with 'learning difficulties' going into HE. I think that they're off the agenda, disabled people, we're talking about physically disabled people or other access problems but not people with 'funny brains'." (Iris)

"… who should be the teachers? Who are the teachers? Is a question fundamental to our work I think, who should be the teachers in society?" (Mathew)

"… as I have said people with 'learning difficulties' in the Performing Arts are locked out of BTEC, Firsts and Nationals and, not probably in all cases, but in my experience they are probably are largely. So let alone being locked out of a journey that will enable people to be taken seriously, to quote individuals we work with, and gain work including travelling abroad and this kind of thing, experiences in the world that we take for granted." (Mathew)

"… we now find ourselves nearly £100,000 added to the cost of running it each year on top of which the additional money made available by government 'Widening Participation' etc, money either hadn't been applied for or had been allocated elsewhere and isn't going to continue. (Iris)

"…you need those risk takers to run with new and different ideas but unfortunately risk takers sometimes can miss the mark." (Val)

"I'm just suffering from big fears at the moment about my goodness are we doing the right thing trying to squeeze people into this system, but what the hell else do you do, if you don't become part of it?. (Iris)

"I'm going to be very careful here I think because I could get very angry … I think it's been handled very badly … really awfully badly handled. He was the sort of wheeler dealer that if he'd stayed … he might have made it all work, I think, because he's a clever chappie but things that we were talking to for months and months over a year …" (Jane)

"… I mean, from a college's point of view inclusion is a hot potato and has been for a few years, so here was a chance to grab something that looked interesting and would really show the college up in a very credible light. So I think we were one of many projects that he had his, sort of, finger in." (Jane)

"… having to really look at how students learning will be measured how they will be assessed, its terrifying, and we're really up against, now realising that, although we're talking about a new learning model. … at the end of the day we are are still talking about working within the existing framework … having to show that our students can do a foundation degree … and we're still, things are still measured within those documents, those degrees by existing values …" (Iris)

"Some people with 'learning difficulties' are highly protected by their families and carers and support workers …" (Jane)

7.2.3 Enter Stage Right

Enter, stage right, a range of voices, namely a representative of Red Brick College, an individual from one of the funding bodies, an ex-student from Red Brick College and a senior evaluator, the voices of '*enlightenment*', of reason, of rationalism, of surveillance, of control, of regulation, of punishment, of discipline and of exclusion, of but, but, but ...: This is accompanied with 'The Show Must Go On' (Queen, 1991) (Appendix J).

"... [Cutting Edge] has roots in this college in some respects, this college is part of a real world were some of the roots snipped by some of the ruthless economic factors that have affected us all." (Adam)

"And the one thing I did say to them, I said they ought to get in contact with these people, and I thought that was a very important issues, because I do believe that networking is absolutely crucial in this field, and that the more people can network and get informed and understand what is going on in other areas and learn from that experience and be critical of that, in a constructive way, the better for everybody." (Lee)

"... why the hell shouldn't you feel uncomfortable meeting a new group of people ..." (Catherine)

"I don't think it is a partnership anymore, is it really? … academically they haven't got the credibility to get this through. It doesn't stack up and they're too small to be an awarding body …" (Heather)

"... we're still locked into the university sector in terms of the validation of our degrees ... We are currently with ... which is good because it is one of the Russell Group it's a premier university and one of the leading universities in the country ... But they're, the kind of traditionalists probing of what we're doing ..." (Adam)

"... here [Boxall, et al., (2004)] was people in higher education attempting to see developments take place within higher education with groups of people are essentially marginalised. Secondly, there was an attempt, and again, I'm not going into the quality of the attempt, the fact there was an attempt made to get these voices heard and expressed within this context is important and thirdly, that they had a social model approach to their activities and their concerns and a couple of these people I know quite well and have got a lot of regard for them. (Lee)

"What theatre company is going to take on a person with 'learning difficulties' you know or 'physical disabilities', what theatre company is out there apart from people like Graeae and the obvious companies that are set up particularly to give 'learning disabled' actors that opportunity but what mainstream theatre company, and there are very few of those existing anyway, you know." (Catherine)

"It was scary because, also, one of the big issues I think when you've never worked with special needs people is about discipline. When you come across special needs people for the first time is because they tend to be very physical i.e. they want to shake hands or kiss you or hug you or you know, actually not having had that contact with special needs people can be quite frightening at first ..." (Catherine)

"If the government expects 50% of people to go to university by the year 2010, then 50 years ago only 2% went, the kind of people who went to university were quite different. Courses will be different, will need to be different, because a lot of people going to university don't have basic skills. They can't write …" (Heather)

"…the objective rational arguments in this case are the most important ones in getting things to happen. … The need for profound pragmatism." (Heather)

"I took over at the point when our academic board, my predecessor brought a paper to our academic board ... October last year I think." (Adam)

"... that's the truth of it. That would be the absolute, because the fact that you've got crooked teeth you know your teeth aren't straight, you know, that can be an impairment its. In this profession that is totally false and based on how people look. You go back to that whole thing, let alone that you can do the job or that you're incredibly talented the fact that you look a bit funny is enough of an impairment almost for you not to get the work in the first place having a serious impairment, losing an eye, lose a limb you know end up in a wheelchair or have to spend your whole life there you know that's its huge its massive it's such a huge huge issue." (Catherine)

"What was of interest in the paper [Boxall, et al., (2004)] was the fact that here was a group of people, in higher education, researchers, trying to work closely on issues that I have some empathy with and some concern with, trying to work from their understanding of the social model which is well articulated by them, and it is a rare paper. There are not many papers relating to higher education where these sorts of issues are actually articulated or raised and the implications of the paper, I hoped, would be, and I hope nothing more than this that it would be a basis for them actually to come together to discuss, though I never actually said this to them. I just assumed it would hopefully generate that type of engagement between them and that they would then begin to use that material to strengthen their case in relation to members of the higher education fraternity who have little understanding of disability issues and don't appreciate any significant contribution that have been made by this type of work." (Lee)

"... you really have to face your own demons and I think it's a similar issue with disability ..." (Catherine)

"... the expectation is also of you as an actor that you can just, if somebody. If you walk into a room full of strangers you can run around naked and you don't feel any shame or you don't feel embarrassed but actually that's not true but its one of those very difficult things so then to have the whole 'special needs' issue on top of that, about how do we relate to each other. What is acceptable behaviour for all of us in a group?" (Catherine)

" … there's no movement on students numbers and the only option open to us, work swiftly on, was the foundation degree because the government was funding access through foundation degrees towards widening participation. We hadn't run them and they hadn't run before, so the obvious thing to do was to get a bid in … so we put the bid in for student numbers … and the bid was successful" (Adam)

"[barriers] … I think its academic expectation, lack of clarity, changing rules in the funding system. Perhaps unrealistic expectations as to what [Red Brick College] could offer [Cutting Edge] to start with. And perhaps changing personnel at [Red Brick College], those are the main things." (Heather)

" … they reflect in their own lives the problem of power relations and the problem of inequality of opportunities and access to knowledge and to information and ideas, like anybody else …" (Lee)

" … its also about what agent is going to take you on. And the drama schools and the universities that are running performing arts courses, whilst they might have an equal opportunities policy they are also being asked to truly reflect the industry and it would be false as well to say to those students you can have the same expectations as everybody else because number one there ain't the jobs out there for most young actors anyway let alone what you're, you know." (Catherine)

"…I think, the HE sector needs to face up to the reality that it needs to provide quite a mixture. I mean academic work is not necessarily the most important thing for everybody neither is the label of degree. What matters is that people have access to an appropriate level at HE level. So I think it's a non-debate, I really do." (Heather)

" … my first knowledge of it [Cutting Edge] was actually that, the discussions were taking place with my predecessor. My first knowledge is that I didn't know that there was a company initially based upon the work that grew out of, well I'm thinking right back to [Green Jam] days. But obviously I knew the personnel involved it seemed like a timely and appropriate development to happen …" (Adam)

"Risky. … it's a huge financial risk, its very expensive, not necessarily feasible". (Heather)

So here are a group of people [Boxall, K., Carson, I and Docherty, D.] and of course, one has to bear in mind, that these people are themselves at the lower echelons of higher education as it where. There is nobody here who holds a significant post in terms of the hierarchy of higher education." (Lee)

" … the hoops that people have to jump through have got more difficult …" (Adam)

"[HEFCE funding] … it won't happen, not if 50% of students at universities, top-up fees, who are we trying to kid. I don't think it will happen. It's too small a group of students they won't care." (Heather)

"... it was quite hard to negotiate those boundaries because of also not wanting to be seem like you were, you've got the 'eer' factor that oh my God I don't want them to touch me or things like that. But you know they were real genuine issues that sort of you, prejudices basically that you were having to go away and say to them hang on a minute what's going on why am I feeling like this is it because people look strange, they look slightly strange. I'm not use to them I don't feel comfortable you know." (Catherine)

"... our student numbers are very strictly controlled by the funding council ... ," (Adam)

"... [Response: on being asked to forward a paper (Boxall, et al. (2004) to the Cutting Edge team] ... It was a friend relating to a group of people whose concerns and activities I was particularly interested in. I also had a professional interest because I was involved in the evaluation study but it was an attempt to give them information in the light of the statement they made to me which was 'if you ever come across any interesting material please let us know about it, because we're finding it difficult to find anything to do with this area'. So this was my attempt to give them some information because I think [pause] in particular context access to knowledge is important and not having that information and knowledge is actually a form of exclusion and can legitimate subservient relationships, so they're unhealthy. (Lee)

"I don't know whether to this day whether they have [made contact], and the point is that I left that at their position, and it was also a delicate position because as an evaluator I didn't want to determine what they should do." (Lee)

"How un-PC can you be about your feelings, because its like racism the fact that you have to, if you grow up in a community particular that's outside of [the city] and you come into [the city] to live you have to readdress all those prejudices that you've grown up with and you, and I think that's something that you have to continuously work with throughout your life ..." (Catherine)

"There were lots of promises made that, it's been subsequently quite difficult to honour. That's not [Red Brick College's] fault, I expect it's down to individuals." (Heather)

"... the programme that we took forward as a foundation degree won't fit ..." (Adam)

"The next hurdle … getting a validating partner who would be sympathetic, because [our validating university] wouldn't. We had to keep [our own validating university] out of the frame because they're not interested in foundation degrees and they wouldn't be prepared to help develop this one on a short timescale." (Adam)

"I'm basing my assumption on what I've seen of this group and either one of them could take this forward, because one of them herself is involved in research, so it would be in her own interest to do that, as well as that her supervisor was the external examiner of Kathy's PhD. There are all these connections, wheels in wheels …" (Lee)

"I think it is an important precedent. I think there are problems with it, I really do. Not in the least, whether it was ever possible for this to be a degree course, given that the new foundation degrees have come in.. but our trustees were very worried about that too. Whether the content of the course would be appropriate for a degree level course. That was one of the major concerns." (Heather)

"... that's what theatre is about, its about transformation and its whether or not you are a performer of what your role is in that you transform yourself in that and I believe that for me personally through working with people with 'special needs' that I have transformed on a very personal level, I've also transformed as a performer …" (Catherine)

" … it seemed that this was a much more welcoming pilot in an institution like [another university] to put forward this proposal because it's such a progressive one and frankly I think everyone who reads the document says 'this is great and this should happen'. But how do we get it through the validation processes and from a universities point of view, with its own degree awarding powers they're under scrutiny from QAA as well." (Adam)

"... its made me question the whole nature of performance as well, you know. Right from those early experiences and then from the work that I went on to do from those experiences with people with 'learning difficulties' ... there's a lot of letting go that you have to do about perceptions, learned perceptions about prejudices, about expectations about what performance is." (Catherine)

"…ultimately it doesn't matter what its called whether it was a degree course or not, but would end up with a large proportion of those young people, or youngish people, working in the arts industries, equipped to do so, able to do so, relatively independently without too much support and are paid doing it. That would be the best successful possibility, is the outcome." (Heather)

"... what is immensely disappointing is the fact that there aren't frameworks for training and education that accommodate the work that is being done. Although there are institutions that work across the FE-HE divide the FE funding and quality assurance process and HE like-wise are so locked into procedural factors ..." (Adam)

"The important thing is that it is another way of providing a further degree of insight into the complexity of the issues surrounding the question of inclusion and participation and entitlement. And there are all sorts of complications with regard to this things that weren't adequately discussed with and things that we've got to engage with, and they are complicated. Things like, for example, what does it mean to listen to the voices of disabled people, what about those voices that are objectionable that we don't want to hear, and what about those voices that are not expressed through oracy or language, how do you deal with that, and so forth." (Lee)

"The whole notion of access and inclusion, and the fact that its not been done before is important and it's an important precedent. Whether I actually believe it ought to be a degree course is a different matter at the moment. I feel it's important, access to higher education is very important for young disabled people and in the light of the DDA at the moment it's very important to test the boundaries of that. But I also think that you're realistic about the difficulties that HEFCE and some of the other bureaucratic bodies will have in implementing that and there are also cost implications, its expensive. But in principle its fine in practice it's quite difficult." (Heather)

"... there was issues for all of us. I think we all suffered, the 3 of us that came from [Red Brick], we all suffered, I think we did manage to talk about it. I do remember one of those sort of sessions were we were going 'oh my God, we've got to talk about this because I'm feeling like this, you must be and we need to talk about it, get it out in the open." (Catherine)

"… the HEFCE money isn't there, it raises further questions about how you support it." (Heather)

" … we know as a specialist institution that a lot of things that we are required to do, hoops that we have to jump through are really designed for mass education not for a small specialist education and the kind of attention and care and support these students need doesn't fit within what often seems like a straightjacket of the FE and HE transition …" (Adam)

"So that was my concern and my desire was fulfilling a trustful promise that I made that if I came across anything, and this was one of the things one recommended, that they would get access to it. And I actually sent them a copy of the thing myself as well." (Lee)

" ... but it's true the college is not a single thing it has a multiplicity of faces and some people outside it will only see certain faces because that's what they're looking for, its diversifying a lot of its activities and developing a widening participation profile, so I see that as being part of the dimension of the next 5 years." (Adam)

"I learnt an awful lot from working with ... because they were amazing they were absolutely fantastic and then it meant the more we relaxed the more we were able to build up relationships with the students and it was fantastic and they were an amazing bunch of people and so very talented as well, so very very talented." (Catherine)

"... there are different things one recognises, but at the same time these are complex institutionally contextualised difficulties and when we talk about barriers to participation we are talking about barriers that have multiple forms and we're talking about power relations, we're talking about institutional forms of exclusion that are deeply rooted within the system." (Lee)

"I took this further and I asked one of the guys in my group whose a really good choreographer and who'd been on the entry level course himself I said you can say no but would you come down and do some choreography, because I'm not a dance teacher and I've been given this class and what I can do is very basic and all these students said we want to dance like the first diplomas and I was thinking oh my God how the hell am I going to do street dancing you know Black street dancing I mean come on you know white middle class which is now what I perceive myself to be, I don't come from that, but that what I. But anyway it happened all very casually and now what's happening is that Tuesday afternoon my students come down and do some choreography and offer their services ..." (Catherine)

"I didn't believe that they would get it up and running in the first year, it's a very high risk project." (Heather)

7.2.4 Enter Centre Stage

Entering onto the stage Richard, one of the appointed lecturers and Navin:

N: Richard let's begin then and let's describe your work, what's your position in the team at the moment?
R: I'm here with the team, we do dance, to teach other.
N: So, what's your position?
R: I'm a teacher, we pass our own certificates, now teach students next year …
N: So you're going to teach students next year?
R: Yes.
N: And what are you going to teach them?
R: To learn about dance, drama, singing, about voice, workshops, different places like [Red Brick College] that's no good now, that's changed to [Optimum Theatre] …
N: The [Optimum Theatre]?
R: We've done lots and lots of work.
N: Are you enjoying the work at the moment?
R: Its very good hard work, built into the team.
N: When did you start working as a team?
R: 2004.
N: Can you remember what month that would have been?
R: It was when it was warmer.
N: I believe that you are on a contract at the moment.
R: Yes, contract, signed a contract.
N: When did you sign it?
R: Last year.
N: When did you start the work?
R: I started on 21st [pause] June.
N: So that's when you started?
R: Yes.
      ...
N: And can you describe the types of work you have been doing in the last seven months?
R: Like warm-ups, to help others to need some voice, and dance, not easy, it's hard work for me too, workshop leaders to learn about the voice, techniques, to learn about own voice, to teach other students to learn your ideas, your interests, the character.
      ...
N: How do you feel the work is going?
R: It's really good, I think myself it is going good. The workshop today was fantastic.
      ...
N: What kind of work were you doing then?
R: Dancing, voice, theatre but different …
N: Have you always been in touch with each other.
R: Yes we do, we're friends.
N: So do you meet outside of the work environment?
R: Yes I do.
      ...
N: Why did you choose theatre?
R: Me.
N: Yes.
R: Dancing is my past, my world.

N: Dancing is your world?

R: Yes that's it, world.

N: Dancing is your world?

R: I built up a dance, I don't like acting style, acting it's not my skill. My skill, I like dancing, and voice, and workshops and warm-ups and massage – that's better, I don't like acting style. Workshop is very very hard work, is built into the work in theatre.

...

N: Did you go to [Jamaica]?

R: Yes I did, in 1985.

N: What was that like?

R: It was good there, it was hot weather, food is [pause] don't like.

N: You didn't like the food?

R: No, I didn't join in.

N: What was the work like?

R: Hard.

N: What kinds of things were you doing?

R: Dancing, I played eight nights, playing King Arthur and a baddy, not real just acting. I did acting and a bit …

...

N: That was in 1985, what did you do after that?

R: Then, that's finish, we finished that, and then [South Theatre].

N: [South Theatre].

R: Yes, it's really good. They didn't pay me.

N: So you did some work for [South Theatre]?

R: Yes, me and [V].

N: You and [V] did some work?

R: Yes.

N: And what kind of work were you doing?

R: We did hospital.

N: [Optal]

R: No hospital, like the play,

N: So you did plays in hospital.

R: Yes.

N: You did a play about a hospital

R: Yes.

N: Were these productions?

R: Yes.

N: Where did you perform them?

R: It was a long time ago.

N: At [South Theatre]?

R: Yes. It's very good.

...

N: I have also seen literature from the [a theatre venue] about a production called [production name] …

R: I've done that.

N: It was your picture.

R: That's it.

N: How did that come about?

R: Ahh, that was boxing stuff, [V], [David], one person I know [M], very smart people I know. [production name] is hot like, a dance, bits of dance, running, barrister, high five, it was really really hard work.

N: And was it presented in the evening.

R: It was a performance, my parents came down and [V's] mother came down.

N: And how do you feel that went?

R: It's very good, [choreograph] …
N: [Finding it difficult to hear what is being said, try 'Colin'.
R: No, that's a bloke, choreographed it
N: [Unable to grasp what is being said, try 'Contrast'].
R: No, bits of dance rehearsed, [choreograph]
N: Sorry, I don't …
R: It's like a dance, bits of movements.
N: And you felt that went well?
R: Its very, really really, hard work, built into the work.
N: And how many nights did you perform for?
R: One night.
       ...
N: What do you feel about [Red Brick College] and the things that have happened?
R: It was very good.
N: Do you know what has happened with [Red Brick College]?
R: They're closed to us, not enough money to run.
N: So what do you feel about that?
R: A bit upset about it.
       ...
N: You've started to be paid.
R: I went to a meeting with [Mathew] and [Iris] to [Funding Body] its really good people, we got the money.
N: Money for what?
R: For October for next year to work with their students, now we're here, we're happy now, we've got the money, the students pass the exams now they will be a teacher.
N: What's it feel like being a teacher?
R: Not easy, its hard work.
       ...
N: When the students begin, what do you think will be the hardest bit of the work?
R: In theatre?
N: Yes, for the students, are you looking forward to meeting them?
R: Yes.
N: And what do you think the hardest work will be for you?
R: It won't be easy.
N: Is there any particular thing that you think will be difficult?
R: The dance.
N: Why dance?
R: The bits of, [choreography].
N: 'Contrast', [unable to make out clearly what is being said].
R: No, no, the word.
N: Can you remember how to spell it?
R: No, I don't spell it now, it's a long word. The bits of dance.
N: Choreograph.
R: That's it.
N: Choreograph, sorry [Richard], choreograph it.
R: Ideas about a dance.
N: So that's what you think will be the most difficult bit for the students?
R: Yes, it's not easy for students, and other people will do the music side. ...
       ...
N: OK, [Richard]. Just to say thank you very much.
R: You're welcome.

N: It's been lovely to chat with you.

R: Me too.

N: And I'm sure it's going to be one of many. Are there any questions you would like to ask me?

R: No.

N: Ok, just to say thank you very much.

R: That's alright.

Lights dim, Richard and Navin go into the dark. Enter centre stage David, tribute to

'Val' the scene is set in a theatre venue where friends, family, and, and, and ... have

attended to celebrate the life of the Chair of CE. Notes from research journal read

out:

> *I noted on that day that tributes were being made by various groups, friends and colleagues. I had arrived there not knowing what to expect, but was soon comforted by seeing familiar faces. During the programme Cutting Edge made a performance with* [*David*] *(one of the appointed lecturers) playing synthesiser and* [*Mathew*] *(Joint Director of Cutting Edge) on percussion and accompanied by a bass player, offering an improvisation. The piece of music was made-up of complex beats and rhythms, with chords on the synthesiser, on-beat and off-beat, arpeggio style.* [*David*] *finished the piece fortissimo with an ascending pentatonic scale, finishing with a memorable silence, only to be eclipsed with a deathly and celebratory 'bend' (tremolo). Their performance piece was appreciated with a round of applause, as the trio took centre stage, with* [*David*] *in the middle taking his curtain call (taking a bow). This was not an end of school offering consisting of a lot of bonhomie and group singing (Masefield, 2006, refer to chapter 1). Nor was this people prentending miming their roles. Was this power? Was this performance a form of resistance, a culmination of the processes of struggle and confrontation, an act of control, authority and power? Resistance that was blatantly 'in your face', proud angry and strong, against the previous segregation and exclusion of the often forgotten group of people described as having 'learning difficulties'?*

After the transcript comes to an end Richard leaves the stage, and before he leaves

Navin reads out from his research log:

> *Run* [*Richard*]*, run. No! Dance* [*Richard*]*, dance! Go* [*Richard*] *while their 'gaze' is distracted. Dance, between the text, in the margins and off the page, into the dark and*

between the gaps. Jump and leap from the middle,
[Richard]. [Richard] who give me a welcomed hug, tell you
alliances that I thought it was a ship. No! [Richard] it has
transformed into a modern ship, it is a juggernaut of fools,
wearing doctoral caps with bells. Wheels within wheels, go!
Go, you nomad, go now! Farewell, [Richard], farewell.
(Research Log, 2010)

As Richard disappears into the night, a creative poetic burst of imaginings, a

reading:

Ode to Oppression

You are the statistician, I am the outlier.
I am the bent you're trying to straight.
I am on the left, sometimes on the right, you – of course – take
centre stage.
You are that mythical norm.
I am the genetically inferior whose body you try to rape.
I am the black, you are the white.
I am the washer-upper, cleaner and sex machine.
I am the disabled you are the abled, I am the mind you try to
control.
I am the unknown, you are the known.
I am the anonymous, in the margins and off the page.
You claim to know everything about me but only come know
yourself through me,
You masturbator of words, you chaser of labels, you fool
I am the ... well fuck you!
I am free, alone, just the way I want to be,
my ode to oppression.

Anonymous

7.2.5 The Epilogue

This production closes, as it began, with a government debate about the

employment and training of disabled people. In part it highlighted:

> *As in the field of employment, disabled people face a*
> *number of barriers to participation in education and training.*
> *We heard evidence of improvements in disabled people's*
> *access to education and training but were also given*
> *evidence of a number of barriers which remain. The DfEE*
> *itself recognises that disabled people are more than twice*
> *as likely as non-disabled people to have no formal*
> *qualifications.*
> *Disabled people continue to experience discriminatory*
> *attitudes amongst education and training providers. SKILL,*

*the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities, told us
that they received enquires from students turned down for
higher education or vocational courses, or who are denied
requests for adjustments to the college's usual procedures,
such as extra time in examinations. SKILL is of the opinion
that such discrimination will continue unless the Disability
Discrimination Act is extended to education, a view which is
shared by other organisations representing disabled
people, including RADAR, the RNID, the RNIB and MIND.*

*The Disability Discrimination Act Representation and
Advice Project, which is made up of about 100 lawyers who
provide pro bono services to disabled people wishing to
take action under the Disability Discrimination Act, told us
of specific cases where disabled people have been refused
access to vocational courses. ...*

*The number of disabled students in higher education
more than doubled between 1994-5 and 1998-9: disabled
people now account for around 4·5 per cent of students.
The RNIB gave evidence that not only are increasing
numbers of blind and visually impaired people going into
higher education, but they are studying a wider range of
subjects than previously. However, disabled people are still
under-represented in the HE sector. ...*

*The Higher Education Funding Council is planning a
special funding programme to establish a base-level of
provision for disabled students. It will also introduce a
disability premium into its funding method from the
academic year 2000-01 in recognition of the additional
costs of supporting disabled students. ...*

*The Disabled Student's Allowance has recently been
doubled and this has been welcomed by disabled students.
...*

*The Allowance is not available to part-time students or
to those on postgraduate courses, neither does it cover
work experience placements. ...*

*The number of disabled students in the further
education sector almost doubled between the academic
years1994-95 and 1997-98, from 61,000 to 116,000.
However, the Tomlinson Report found that the following
groups are currently under-represented in further
education: people of all ages with significant and/or multiple
impairments; adults with mental health difficulties; and
young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
Research funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has
found that older adults with [sic] learning difficulties are
missing out on education opportunities, particularly if they
also have sensory impairments, have a "dual label" of
learning difficulties and mental health difficulties, have a
history of institutionalisation, are women or are from an
ethnic minority group.*

*The new Learning and Skills Council will have a
particular duty to address the needs of learners with
disabilities or learning difficulties, including consulting with
voluntary and specialist organisations and representative
and user groups on how best to make suitable provision*

*available and then drawing up appropriate funding and planning arrangements. It will have the power to fund specialist provision, including residential provision, outside the adult and further education sectors for students over compulsory school age with [*sic*] learning difficulties or disabilities. ...*

*Excellence should not be measured solely by examination results but also by how well a college or sixth form does in opening up opportunities for people with physical or sensory impairments, those with [*sic*] learning difficulties and people with mental health difficulties.*

*Education is not just about getting qualifications in order to gain employment, it is also about gaining the basic skills to enable independent living. Many young people and adults with [*sic*] learning difficulties have grown up without these basic skills: courses which enable them to manage their own money, do the shopping or travel on public transport are of tremendous value, even if they do not lead to employment or to an accredited qualification. ...*

*People with [*sic*] learning difficulties often have difficulty accessing education and training beyond basic skills. For example, [Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative] told us that it is difficult to secure funding for two or three year courses which enable people with [*sic*] learning difficulties to train for theatre work. They argued that there was "a tacit assumption in the FE sector that [people with [*sic*] learning difficulties] are unlikely to proceed beyond an entry level of skill", an assumption which they described as "erroneous and prejudicial" and a further block to vocational training and employment. ... Evidence submitted by the Arts Council of England confirmed that disabled people wish to participate in vocational training in the arts but that negative attitudes and limited resources for training and support can prevent them doing so. The Arts Council's apprenticeship scheme has led to disabled people being offered long-term employment and has been positively received by participating employers. ...*

*We recommend that the Government undertake an audit of good practice, with an analysis of what makes it possible and what changes are required to create more opportunities for people with [*sic*] learning difficulties to undertake vocational education.* (Debate, 1999)

This epilogue marks the end of this theatre production.

THE END, THE MIDDLE, THE BEGINNING?

7.3 Summary

What this production offers is a postmodern presentation of the insights, views and experiences of the participating individuals. As a postmodernist theatre production of data, it utilises the metaphor of the 'rhizome' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) and the idea of challenging dualisms of being here rather than there. It involved two principal and nine subsidiary characters; including myself. The performance begins to reveal, on stage, the changing identities, the unfolding web of relationships, the discontinuities, the complexities, the setbacks, the struggles, the enabling outcomes, barriers, challenges, pride, anger and frustrations. It requires the reader's participation.

What is unmasked are the power/knowledge discourses, the historically, politically, socially and culturally conditioned terms used to describe the group of learners, with terms such as 'severe learning disabilities', 'severe learning difficulties', 'learning difficulties', 'learning disabilities', 'special needs' and 'learning disabled'. The plot, so to speak, began with a prologue, a public debate (Debate, 2002) which sets the scene. Entering stage left, were the multiple voices of CE. Entering stage right were a range of voices, these being a representative of RBC, an individual from one of the funding bodies, an ex-student of RBC and a senior evaluator. These are the multiple voices where the competing discourses collide and fragment. The voices of the participating individuals are layered, interweaving and juxtaposed, presenting a myriad of directions and which gives rise to multiple interpretations.

Richard (appointed lecturer) enters onto the stage, a silenced cultural voice, to do dance and to teach others. Richard's presence challenges taken-for-granted assumptions around issues of 'learning difficulties', and is confronted with power/knowledge discourses of higher education participation and issues of resistance. David (appointed lecturer) too enters on stage, a synthesizer player,

accompanied with a reflective narrative of the event 'tribute to Val', again David challenges the discursive terrain. The epilogue of this theatre production ended with a public debate (Debate, 1999), concerned with access to employment and training for disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties'. This issue is not an ending or a beginning, more a power/knowledge discourse of ideas which intentionally has a strong resistance to closure.

This presentation offers possibilities to radically re-think the notion of 'learning difficulties', the rhetoric of widening participation, and the politics of modern higher education participation. Moreover, its alternative perspective is to escape the gaze of modern higher education participation.

CHAPTER 8: Conclusion

This final chapter provides a conclusion to the issue of ''Learning Difficulties' and the Academy'. It provides points for consideration and revisits the research aims and related questions. It includes questions that continue to trouble this neglected area of study. To some degree my own immersion into issues related to disability informed my theoretical position. Initially, as I began this study, I was unaware of the extent to which discrimination occurs in the lives of people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' not only in everyday life but barriers relating to higher education participation. I initially understood higher education as a public good, a place of learning that welcomes diversity. This study, however, has helped me to develop a more nuanced and critical view of the issues experienced by people so labelled. Moreover, this qualitative study, principally involving thirteen participants, has enabled me to engage with critical voices, struggles, resistances and discourses of power/knowledge. This thesis closes with stating that the modern higher education institution intentionally excludes individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', and is a result of a range of barriers which are themselves framed by an enlightenment era in which the label 'learning difficulties' serves normative interests. With respect to the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative this case study approach reveals what is done 'to' individuals; namely, their exclusion from modern higher education is understood to be 'just', 'fair' and 'reasonable'.

Understanding why and how this theatre initiative 'failed', has provided a number of unexpected and important insights. To say that this initiative 'failed' is contentious and, as stated earlier, with respect to discrimination experienced by disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties', needs to be understood within a broader struggle for change. An examination of the notion of disability shifting from traditional to postmodern understandings reveals what has been done to individuals. Indeed, the label of 'learning difficulties' serves normative interests.

'Learning difficulties' is not a natural state but part of a cultural landscape that makes a rational pursuit of 'non-learning difficulties' identities all the more 'real'. As was identified in the second chapter 'understanding disability' is extremely complex and added to this are concerns with the tradition of enlightenment, notions of 'learning difficulties', 'truth', rationalism, arguments of existence, and problems with labelling.

With regard to insights into critical disability studies readings, what is particularly important is understanding disability with reference to the 'body' and personal experience; particularly, how the body is fought over and for. Bodies with impairments are routinely described in terms of what they cannot do. Using the work of Foucault (1967, 1970, 1977, 1980, 1988), and Deleuze and Guattari (1984, 2004), is to recognise the struggle for power over the body. Alongside a critique of systems of 'reason' and 'abnormality' such work also provides opportunities to create mappings, lines of flight, plateaus, rhizomes, and becomings. These offer important re-conceptualisations of the body and challenges notions of 'learning difficulties'. It offers insights into how individual people are made vulnerable, come to be labelled as having 'learning difficulties', are watched through panopticon-like devices. The leper house, the workhouse, the institution, the segregated 'special' school, are an important reminder of the way 'vulnerable' people (people made vulnerable), the poor (people made poor), disabled people (people made disabled), were – and are – under intense scrutiny, surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. Arguably, this was a complex model of a society to come. Moreover, contributions to critical disability studies offer space to acknowledge multiple identities, the intersections, and cross-cultural perspectives of disability.

With respect to emerging possibilities related to the arts, as was noted, disability arts offers a post-tragedy disability culture (Hevey, 1993). Art groups have emerged challenging taken-for-granted assumptions around the impaired body, and raise questions about the ownership of the body. There are different ways to theorise the social and power relations. The findings from this thesis offer insights to contribute to these concerns.

Further, recent personal communication at a disability studies conference with a theatre group consisting of people with the label of 'learning difficulties' were themselves asking questions of higher education participation and the difficulties of pursuing accreditation at degree level (Wicked Fish, 2014). In part, Wicked Fish revealed similar experiences to that of Cutting Edge and echoed concerns relating to the normalising tendencies of modern higher education. As was noted, the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari sees modernity as an historical stage of domination through discourse and institutions that seek to normalise.

In order to address the issues around the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' from higher education participation it is important to understand how disability and higher education intersect. The changing landscape of higher education in England in relation to its roots, policy and legislation, demographic profile, demand for graduates, globalisation, impact of market values and forces, and pressures; that raise questions about its definition, function and purpose, cannot be ignored. Of interest is the way modern higher education categorises 'disability', which raises questions about the exclusion of such individuals from the study and training of theatre at degree level. Whilst there has been a degree of social, economic, political and cultural change; for example, there has been a diversification of higher education, a now fee-paying student population, an expansion of civil liberties to disabled people, and theatre which involves an

exploration of gestures, becomings, challenging inequalities of power, there are questions relating to the extent to which these have contributed to the equalisation of rights. Interestingly, as modern higher education institutions take shape, policy and legislative rhetoric takes hold, questions emerge as to the exclusion of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Namely, questions of discrimination continue. Indeed, in part, the first chapter intentionally includes personal experiences of discrimination that have informed my own understanding. These experiences continue, and students continue to disclose experiences of discrimination and prejudice.

Alongside the political activism of disabled people, legislative irregularities are being increasingly challenged. With regard to the politicisation of disabled people, it seems, as has been asked by Charlton (2000, p.159), that if the goal of the disability movement is human rights, then there is no doubt that some impairment groups have gained. However, if the goal of the disability movement is 'strictly' human rights, then it has failed with respect to people labelled as having 'learning difficulties'. Indeed, individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' is a group omitted from Charlton's (2000) book. Interestingly, with respect to the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative, these differences were commented on by Adam (Vice Principal of Red Brick College), who noted that issues relating to adjustments are usually associated with '*physical disability*' and added '... *the same ground hasn't been covered by people with [sic] learning difficulties* ...' (Interview – A120504, 2004, Lines: 514 – 525).

Arguably, government policy has succeeded in creating a desire for higher education. Structural problems with HE have started to be identified. Attitudinal barriers, issues with support, problems with DSA, tensions with disclosure, scrutiny

of assessment, have been identified (Konor, 2002; Riddell, *et al.*, 2005a). Suggestions for an alternative model informed by the social model of disability have been raised, suggesting that the HE environment should change in order for barriers to be removed. However, modern higher education participation, arguably, entails a process of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. With regard to policy, Iris was of the view that SENDA did not have any notion of '*people with* [*sic*] *'learning difficulties' going into HE. I think they are off the agenda*'. (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 698 – 699). Val found Higher Education '*bureaucratic and slow to change*' (Interview – V120104, 2004, Line: 571). Arguably, the beneficiaries of HE are non-disabled people.

Questions have also emerged as to the function of re-search. It can be used as a tool for surveillance from which its 'subjects', particularly individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' have limited opportunities to escape. Even 'Victor', '*the wild boy of Aveyron*', described as an 'incurable idiot', had little opportunity of escape (Itard, 1962). My personal involvement in research has sensitised me about issues of emancipation and empowerment, and informed me of the pitfalls that can entrap and problematise individuals, making people objects of curiosity, intrigue and further re–∞–search. For me traditional approaches to research are problematic, it has concluded well before it started. Thus, It follows that possibilities emerge with further work relating to exploring postmodernist methods of inquiry.

The potential for future work (Mills, 2004) also resides in issues related to pain and its manifestation through lived experience, and with feelings of being 'no one' a form of anonymity. It seems that the interconnections between pain, loss, loneliness, 'doing something terrible', death, anonymity, darkness and impairment are thus all areas for further inquiry. (Read comments by Maggie Hagger who makes reference to such themes, cited in Humphries and Gordon, 1992, pp.35 – 36).

Returning to the theme of modern higher education, what is evident throughout chapter three 'Disability and Higher Education' is that a detailed search of the literature offers limited association with the work of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Indeed, Gabel and Danforth (2008) omit to include a critique of higher education and any reference to its inherent power relations and discourses. Interestingly in their foreword by Barton (2008) he makes the point that individuals have often neglected the very setting in which they work, suggesting that:

> *We are caught between contradictory and competing factors as the growing pressures to achieve academic status through research and teaching essentially celebrates excessive individualism and personal ambition*. (Barton, 2008, p.xix)

With respect to this, modern higher education is intentionally exclusionary. Drawing upon an insight gained from this thesis, higher education institutions have transformed into a modern juggernaut, wheels within wheels, a ship of fools, in which labels such as 'professor', 'lecturer' and 'researcher' are part of a language game, and are co-dependent on labels such as 'student', and 'learning difficulties' – modern higher education institutions cannot exist without them. Moreover, modern HEIs are frequented by individuals with an excessive desire for individualism, self-gratification, and are discriminatory towards disabled people, people described as having 'learning difficulties'. There are other *isms* too. The Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative has confirmed that modern HEIs exercise and rationalise an individualistic gaze, engrossed in surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion. This is power, and where there is power there is also resistance.

With offering an alternative reading of the politics of modern higher education participation in relation to individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', this thesis identified multiple interpretations, playing with the data, suggesting possibilities for a dramatic performance of the voices (Grbich, 2004, 2007). Case

study research enabled me to immerse myself in understanding the lived experiences of the participants. I broke from traditional methods of representations which started at the end to uncover rhizomatic experiences of the participants. It enabled me to engage with power/knowledge, silenced voices and forgotten events, favouring a polyphonic display, a dramatic performance.

Through the study of Cutting Edge I have gained an understanding of the way individuals came together moving towards a mutual goal of developing an undergraduate degree programme. This earlier journey was of resistance and was an experience beset with funding cuts, redundancies and personal frustrations. I came to understand how individuals worked with, taught and learnt from a group of individuals labelled as having a number of descriptors; one of which is/was 'learning difficulties'. The associated changing label is of contemporary concern. Indeed, the label 'learning difficulties' is altogether, arguably, a modern invention.

Whilst personal recollections of transformation, and attitudinal shifts occur, there is an acknowledgement that participant's understanding of the descriptor 'learning difficulties' is not appropriate and certainly not reflective of the talents and abilities of the individuals who contribute to the performing arts in meaningful ways. This was evidenced by Iris who recited an example of being approached by members of the audience who reported a transformation of their own attitudes towards individuals on stage. Audiences' attitudes transformed identities from people labelled as having 'learning difficulties' to '*people*' and '*performers*' (Interview – I171203, 2003, Lines: 478 – 490). As was argued, this audience feedback was clearly causing tension. Val recalls feelings of apprehension, yet recalls the experience of working abroad with students which became a turning point in her own approach and thinking. Jane, as a tutor at RBC, recalled the moment of learning when students (RBC students and Project Theatre student) wanted to work together. Catherine, ex-student at RBC,

recalled her first impressions as 'scary', and 'terrified' and openly engaged in discourses of gender, 'race' and 'special needs'. Catherine also discussed the issue of 'touch' and recalled that theatre/drama had enabled her to transform herself.

In addition the issue of barriers arose; eight sub-categories were identified, these being: attitudinal, cultural, educational, employment, family, financial, individual, and modern higher education. Attitudinal barriers related to individuals, structural and interactional issues. A number of parallels were drawn with apartheid in South Africa, making connections with a discourse of racism. Iris made personal reflections on her own attitude towards individuals with the label of 'learning difficulties, which was later transformed through working with individuals 'again and again'. As had been noted cultural barriers are central to a politics of disability (Riddell and Watson, 2003) and culture is an exceptionally complex term (Williams, 1988). Mathew argued for a change in society's values and saw theatre as a way for individuals to reframe themselves. Indeed, identity is a key predictor of attitudes.

Val recognised cultural attitudes residing with theatre audiences. For Val, theatre is a place for uncertainty. It is also a place for the struggle of ideas, contention, and conflicts between characters. Educational barriers were identified to reside in earlier schooling systems, further and higher education. Iris shared frustrations and feelings of 'nowhere to go' and needing to be taken seriously. Iris's call for a response is caught in power/knowledge discourses of fear, and inequalities. Arguably, Iris recognises her own role and participation in the entrapment of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', she pleads:

> *I'm just suffering from big fears at the moment about my goodness are we doing the right thing trying to squeeze people into this system, but what the hell else do you do, if you don't become part of it?* (Interview – I020304, 2004, Lines: 495 – 498)

As is argued, power/knowledge discourses do not solely reflect social relations they extend beyond the boundaries. What can be said and thought, who can speak, when and with what authority become crucial questions.

Barriers to employment related to expectations alongside a lack of opportunities. Val saw the struggle for employment linked to issues of self-empowerment – part of a broader political movement. Family barriers related to a tendency towards parents being 'over protective'. Financial barriers related to costs relating to support, cuts in funding, inadequacies with DSA, and shortfalls in funding. Issues also related to barriers within the welfare system, compounding dependency. The view that barriers relate to the individuals who choose not to participate (Thomas, 2001), is extremely suggestive of individual deficit. On the contrary, Mathew argued that individuals with the label of 'learning difficulties' are 'locked out' of HE, and not necessarily related to individuals not choosing to participate. Iris felt that both the individual and individuals working with (interaction) disabled people constituted barriers. Catherine's responses to barriers related to her own self-examination, and disclosed a discourse of bodily difference. As was argued the body is a battlefield (Synnott, 1997; Tamboukou and Ball, 2003). Interestingly, Catherine begins to refer to people as individuals then students, and recognises theatre for its transformative potential, yet is captured in a discourse of 'special needs'. With respect to an appointed lecturer, Richard, his motives are clear, engaging with power, he is reflective and self-critical of his own experiences, his 'world' is 'dancing'. With respect to a re-presentation of the data, this is a space in which Richard is empowered, it is his 'world', and he can escape the gaze of modern higher education. The re-presentation of data becomes part of the message of the text. This is an alternative and challenging outcome making the reader think and re-think about the function and purpose of modern higher education. Iris pointed out legislative inconsistencies. Val called for HE to confront its own prejudices.

Elevating the subject experience of people in a specific context has been key to understanding and, for me, revealed significant insights about notions of 'learning difficulties' and the politics of higher education participation.

In conclusion this thesis makes the argument that individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' within the academy is extremely problematic. The taken-for-granted assumptions around individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' being anathema to higher education participation is being challenged. What is clear is that the label 'learning difficulties' justifies and re-affirms its opposing (binary) descriptors. Modern higher education does little to welcome such individuals, indeed it intentionally does not. To have individuals described as having 'learning difficulties' within the academy is troubling.

As the Cutting Edge Theatre Initiative came to one possible ending, the two joint directors alongside the four individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties' produced a DVD of their experience of pursuing higher education participation. The DVD 'Edge of Inclusion' is accompanied with a question: 'Do people with [*sic*] 'learning difficulties' have a right to Higher Education ...?' It seems that given the insights and understandings from this thesis, the answer to this question is 'no'.

It is argued that higher education opportunities, the exclusion (edge of inclusion) of individuals labelled as having 'learning difficulties', are intentionally secured through territorialised institutions where individual experiences are captured by an individual/medical (biophysical) discourse which is manifested in varying forms of surveillance, control, regulation, discipline, punishment and exclusion.

Like numerous other inventions, I have come to understand through this study that 'learning difficulties', like disability, is not a structure, or a constant, or even a

category. Rather, it is brought into being, constantly changing, multiple, and shaped

and re-shaped by human relationships. Furthermore, with respect to the notion of

'learning difficulties' and the academy, there is no quick short-cut to understanding

these complex concerns and issues.

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[REDACTED]

11 November 2002

[REDACTED] **Theatre Initiative: A Case Study**

[REDACTED] has a history of high quality research and evaluation in relation to Special Education policy and practice and increasingly on Inclusive Education in terms of the well being of all learners. This interest in the development of opportunities for education and learning, including individuals and groups who have been historically excluded, is a major reason for an interest in this innovatory initiative.

The proposed course is the first of its kind in England and provides a unique opportunity for a careful 3-year study of both policy and practice in relation to its development. The study will be [REDACTED]

The researchers have a strong commitment to the social model of disability and thus to questions of rights, equity and citizenship in relation to people with learning difficulties. Whilst it is unwise to specify too rigid a set of research concerns at this point, the following aims will be considered:

- Exploring the perspectives of the Directors [REDACTED] newly appointed lecturers, students and representatives of the group of ten employers with regard to such issues as – how they understand the meaning of the term 'people with severe learning difficulties', the nature of the 'learning model' underpinning the programme and the issue of 'empowerment' as an outcome.

- The position and role of the university sector college during the process of this development.

- The experience of becoming a student and the identification of key aspects of this process.

- The ways in which the programme changes over time, the reasons for this, and the experience it involves for particular participants.

- The nature of the 'partnership' between the programme, students and the group of employers.

- The identification of any barriers to participation and learning that the students may experience and how these are dealt with.

Methods used will include semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations. The outcome of this project will have national and international implications for policy and practice in relation to the position and experience of students with high level of support needs and the nature of the programme offered in Higher Education. Very careful consideration will be given to the form and range of possible ways that the findings of the project will be disseminated, for example, through tape, video, website, mass media outlets, seminar and conference presentations and publications of various forms. All the participants will be centrally involved in these decisions.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

July 2010

Dear Navin Kikabhai,

I am writing to acknowledge your letter dated 19 July 2010 regarding the completion of a PhD study related to the ███████████████.

I formally write in response and hereby give formal consent for you to continue using the data you gathered and for this to be used in conjunction with the completion of your PhD study.

Yours sincerely,

July 2010

Dear Navin Kikabhai,

I am writing to acknowledge your letter dated 19 July 2010 regarding the completion of a PhD study related to the ████████████████████

I formally write in response and hereby give formal consent for you to continue using the data you gathered and for this to be used in conjunction with the completion of your PhD study.

Yours sincerely,

February 2011

Dear Navin Kikabhai,

I am writing to acknowledge your letter dated 21 February 2011 regarding the completion of a PhD study related to the ███████████████████

I formally write in response and hereby give formal consent for you to continue using the data you gathered and for this to be used in conjunction with the completion of your PhD study.

Yours sincerely,

26 July 2005

Dear Navin

Amazingly – after this long, long time – I had a free evening and have revised the text of the interview.

I have been quite free with some of the changes to phrasing in the interests of clarity otherwise I have made no significant changes. I hope this is useful to you.

Good wishes,

Yours sincerely

Vice Principal

Transcript Coding Symbols

(.)	1 second pause
(..)	2 second pause
(...)	3 second pause
(*n* secs)	number of seconds pause

↑	Increasing tone
↓	Decreasing tone
⌐	
	Interruption
L	

Underline   emphasis

[additional information]

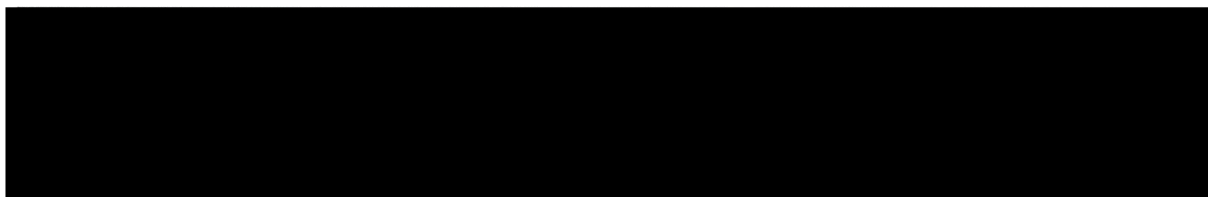**Extract from Transcript with Identified Themes:**

The following transcript is an example of the way themes were identified. Some themes were coded using the terms used by participants, other themes were identified when participants inferred an association with an issue.

In the following transcript the participant uses the term 'apartheid' (Line: 127) this became a coding theme. This was also linked to 'attitudes'. The use of the term 'empowerment' was used in association with the participant's comments about individuals 'being able to express themselves' (Line: 134). The theme 'self-advocacy' is a term used by the participant.

With identifying themes, links were also made with the associated literature. In this example the participant's comment on individuals having the tools 'to create art' (Line: 139), this was referenced to the work of Taylor (2005) who worked with students in an further education college exploring notions of identity.

Each transcript was coded in a similar way, using either terms used by participants or identifying terms associated with participant's comments. This was also repeated using NVivo using coloured coding stripes. In total 138 codes (themes) were identified, some of which overlapped and intersected with each other, others made links with identified barriers relating to attitudes, culture, education, employment, family, financial, individual and modern higher education.

Line		Transcript	Themes
127		work. As far as I am concerned there is apartheid still in the	
128		education system and to some extent the art system regarding	
129		societies attitudes towards people with 'learning difficulties', but	
130		for me, I am as interested. I think it is as important to enable	
131		people to have the tools to create art, it's a difficult area this, art	Apartheid, Attitudes
132		of a high standard, whatever that may be, but I've certainly got	
133		my own prejudices and views about that, as much as its important	Labels,
134		for the individuals to be able to express themselves and the effect	
135		that has on their lives, obviously, how that may move their	Empowerment
136		individual lives on and so on. I'm not happy about situations,	
137		where well, I can see how art can also be, play a wonderful self	Art as self-advocacy, Identity
138		advocacy function but actually I want it all and I want individuals	
139		to have the tools, in their own view to create art, how can we put	[Ref: Taylor, M. (2005), refer to Ch 2]
140		it, a high production value and well thought through, rather than	
141		be patronised and say well this is all very good for you and was a	
142		very good production for people with 'learning difficulties'.	
143	N:	*Just to turn the clock back, what actually drew you to this, kind*	
144		*of, area of work originally?*	
145	M:	Ok, not particular conscious in some ways to start with. I joined	'Accidental', Mi-history,
146		18th April 1977 […] YPT having seen an advert in the 'Stage' on	
147		the bottom of a van on the way back from a tour that I was	YPT, Evening arts workshop,
148		working for a big promoter in London doing tours of Johann	
149		Strauss all over the country doing designing, lighting and doing	[Ref: Masefield, P. (2006), refer to Ch 1]
150		god knows what, very peculiar. I had never really heard of young	
151		people's theatre and theatre in education, got involved as the	Labels
152		theatre in education stage manager, but I also have a background	
153		in drums and percussion particularly jazz. […] YPT,	
154		interestingly, had not only had theatre in education as a key area	
155		of its work but also evening arts workshops. It's a very good	
156		symbiotic relationship between those two, so kids that where met	
157		in different schools would quite often then get to hear about the	
158		workshops and the same groups of actor teachers or technicians	
159		would then meet people in the evening and so on. With a	

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████████████████████

4 November 2002

Dear █████████

Proposed Collaboration between ██████████████████████████

The proposal to establish a three year programme in acting for students with severe learning difficulties is an unambiguous expression of the College's long-term philosophy and current strategic policy.

The project clearly articulates the overarching context of the College Mission and Role.

Our Mission

> *We provide innovative vocational education of the highest standard in the professions of the theatre. We recruit the most highly skilled and talented undergraduate, postgraduate and research students, to programmes that recognise their diverse needs.*

Our Role

> ███████████ *a College of Higher Education funded directly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England offering degrees validated by the University* ████████ *We provide theatre-related education that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of students, employers, sponsors, our local community and other stakeholders. It is also our role to promote reflection and change within the world of theatrical education. We work in partnership with other institutions and organisations to achieve our strategic aims.*

The Strategic Plan, published in December 2001, highlighted the institutional commitment towards access as follows:

Strategic aim (H)   *Ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants*

Strategic aim (K)   *Develop courses which promote non-traditional access routes.*

Strategic aim (M.)   *Make available a range of learning support systems*

While these aims establish consequent objectives that can be applied to all students, they have particular relevance in respect of our responsibilities to candidates and students with disabilities. The commitments set out in the Plan further articulate specific targets directly related to the provision and support offered to students.

The College's recent widening participation initiatives have also addressed issues related to disability. Through the HEFCE funded Arts and the Learning City project, staff and students having been working in collaboration with the ████████████████ Theatre Company to introduce children and young people with a range of physical and learning disabilities to theatre. The proposed ████████ initiative will be a further expression of this commitment.

The aims of the College are therefore to;

- respond to the stated national and institutional objectives of creating a learning and teaching environment that does not discriminate against students with disabilities,
- provide an educational environment that provides effective support for disabled students
- raise the awareness of those with disabilities to the potential for viable careers in the performing industries.
- to promote inclusive and non-discriminatory opportunities for disabled practitioners in performance-based creative industries.

The project will enable the College to achieve the following objectives to;

- increase and improve the learning opportunities for those with disabilities,
- foster and embed best practice in learning and teaching and other strategies for students with disabilities,
- develop subject-specific strategies in performance-based learning and teaching for disabled students and to disseminate outcomes to others, particularly other institutions and employers.

There are particular challenges for institutions whose primary educative mission centres on practice-based, vocationally oriented performance. Providing an appropriate, relevant and safe learning environment for performance-based students is particularly challenging. Moreover, as well a the concern that the College would have in being able to provide a suitable learning environment for a physically disabled student, there are also significant socio-cultural inhibitors to the notion of those with disability pursuing meaningful careers in the performing industries, particularly but not exclusively as performers. The result is that the College has found itself in the position of not only having comparatively few disabled applicants but also being concerned about the conditions within which disabled students would be able to study. Significant developments in funding for students with disabilities and radical improvements to the College estate means that strategic aims outlined above and the specific objectives of the project can now be pursued. The project will place the College at the forefront of an important national debate and, as is clearly evidenced in the ongoing institutional initiatives aimed at providing support to those students with special needs, act as a significant platform for debate, the enhancement of learning strategies across the College as a whole. The funding provided by ██████ to support the tutors specifically involved in the delivery of the programme will be of significant benefit, not only to the training itself, but in and through the enrichment that those concerned will bring to the cultural fabric of the institution.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely

Assistant Principal Academic Affairs

The Show Must Go On

Empty spaces - what are we living for
Abandoned places - I guess we know the score
On and on, does anybody know what we are looking for...
Another hero, another mindless crime
Behind the curtain, in the pantomime
Hold the line, does anybody want to take it anymore
The show must go on,
The show must go on
Inside my heart is breaking
My make-up may be flaking
But my smile still stays on.
Whatever happens, I'll leave it all to chance
Another heartache, another failed romance
On and on, does anybody know what we are living for?
I guess I'm learning, I must be warmer now
I'll soon be turning, round the corner now
Outside the dawn is breaking
But inside in the dark I'm aching to be free
The show must go on
The show must go on
Inside my heart is breaking
My make-up may be flaking
But my smile still stays on
My soul is painted like the wings of butterflies
Fairytales of yesterday will grow but never die
I can fly - my friends
The show must go on
The show must go on
I'll face it with a grin
I'm never giving in
On - with the show –
I'll top the bill, I'll overkill
I have to find the will to carry on
On with the –
On with the show –
The show must go on...

(Queen, 1991)