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**The political construction of social inclusion  
through Further Education policy (1997 – 2007)**

By

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of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores 'social inclusion' as a political construction of the New Labour government between 1997 and 2007. The process of construction is frequently situated within policy from the Further Education (FE) sector. A critical discourse analysis of government documents, and interviews conducted with key policy makers, exposes the underlying ideologies and politics which were involved in the process of constructing social inclusion.

The analysis reveals three dominant constructions of social inclusion that have emerged between 1997 and 2007.

Most significant as a result of its recent emergence and pervasive impact, is the analysis of a psychological construction of social inclusion. This model constructs those labelled socially excluded as psychologically vulnerable; perhaps as a result of learning difficulties; a lack of self-esteem or self-confidence; or low aspirations. FE is presented as bringing about social inclusion through offering young people guidance and support as well as raising the aspirations and self-esteem of students.

A social model constructs inclusion as the development of social capital between individuals and communities, primarily through participation in FE. This thesis does not seek to laud the social model as a more positive alternative to educational instrumentalism but instead examines how a focus upon the act of participation allows for FE to become a process of social modification, which results in subject specific content being replaced with participation in any activity.

An instrumental model equates social exclusion with unemployment and social inclusion with getting people re-engaged with the labour market. FE comes to be concerned with meeting the needs of the economy and providing unemployed people with the skills for employability they need to enter the workplace. This construction continues to dominate FE discourse and practice. Paradoxically, attempts to enhance employability skills, build social capital or to raise levels of self-esteem primarily through "pre-vocational" learning and training may reinforce social exclusion as those attending FE receive little in the way of high level knowledge or technical skills.

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## Abbreviations

ACL	Adult and Community Learning
CCPR	Central Council of Physical Recreation
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DES	Department of Education and Science
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DOH	Department of Health
ECM	Every Child Matters
EU	European Union
FE	Further Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HMIe	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
IFP	Increased Flexibility Programme
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MUD	Moral Underclass Discourse
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
PCE	Post-Compulsory Education
PCET	Post-Compulsory Education and Training
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate of Education
RED	Redistributionist Discourse
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SID	Social Integrationist Discourse
UCET	Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work Based Learning

This thesis considers the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion and their relation to the first decade of the New Labour government, the period of Tony Blair's Premiership. This chapter will introduce the themes of the thesis and focus upon defining the key terms used. Defining social exclusion and social inclusion is not straight forward; definitions have shifted since 1997. This chapter will consider the reasons for the emergence of the rhetoric of social exclusion into the political discourse of New Labour and how the difficulties in arriving at a definition have been exploited by policy makers as they have engaged in a process of actively constructing meanings for the terms. Further Education (FE) has been the location for many policies designed to promote social inclusion; indeed, this has been a stated purpose of the sector since 1998. As definitions of social inclusion have shifted so too has the purpose of the FE sector between a focus upon providing unemployed youngsters and adults with skills for employability to an emphasis upon raising the aspirations and self-esteem of young people for whom attendance is compulsory up to the age of eighteen.

The aim of this thesis is to explore whether concepts of social inclusion are constructed and reconstructed through FE policy and to examine how this process occurs. Government documents declare the promotion of social inclusion to be a key goal for FE; David Blunkett, then Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment, writes in *Further Education for the New Millennium* that 'the government recognises the FE sector as central to its educational policies and wider social agenda' (1998a: 7). This view is reinforced by Charles Clarke writing in *Success for All* four years later: 'Further Education and training is important to the

achievement of the government's twin goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity' (2002: 9). This has implications for the FE sector as its purpose shifts away from the, perhaps more traditional, academic or vocational role.

The key questions to be addressed in this thesis are:

**1. How are social exclusion and social inclusion defined and redefined by the New Labour government?**

- How do groups defined as socially excluded alter with the process of re-definition?

**2. Why is FE used to promote social inclusion?**

- What is it about the FE sector in particular, that lends itself to this political goal?
- Who attends FE colleges?

**3. How is FE being used to promote social inclusion?**

- What is lost from the more traditional purposes of the sector?
- What is the impact of the drive to promote social inclusion upon those attending FE?

This introductory chapter falls into four sections. Section one will consider the terms that are central to the thesis and provide an indication of the parameters of the debate. Defining FE may be relatively straight forward but defining social inclusion and social exclusion is not; the terms are notoriously difficult to locate. The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion are political and social constructions that do not necessarily correspond to specific social reality but refer instead to a number of physical, social or psychological states that, taken singly or together, may come to be



labelled as social exclusion or social inclusion. The political use of the terms can shift from one state to another or emphasise different states at different times. Social exclusion and social inclusion cannot be understood as simple antonyms; both terms may refer to quite distinct areas of discourse.

Section two will consider the significance of the social inclusion discourse to New Labour through an analysis of some of Blair's key speeches. The concept of social exclusion emerged into the political discourse of the UK, with the election of New Labour in 1997. Tackling social exclusion has been a key strand of New Labour policy as indicated by the launch of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in 1997 and the creation of a Minister for Social Exclusion in 2006. Social exclusion and social inclusion, as the terms are applied in the UK, may be very much seen as political constructions of New Labour. Section three will focus upon the relevance of social exclusion to the FE sector and consider why FE has been adopted for the political goal of promoting social inclusion. Section four will provide an indication of some of the major theoretical influences upon the thesis. It concludes with a chapter by chapter summary thus indicating the structure and development of the subsequent analysis.

## **1. Defining Terms**

### **Further Education**

The FE sector is heterogeneous, it encompasses a multitude of different courses and levels of learning and teaching as well as students of different ages and from different social backgrounds (see Universities' Council for the Education of Teachers' Chair's Advisory Group Paper 2, *Post Compulsory Education and Training*). This point is made by Helena Kennedy, member of the House of Lords and New Labour policy

advisor, writing in the introduction to her 1997 report, *Learning Works*:

Defining Further Education would be God's own challenge because it is such a large and fertile section of the education world. Yet, despite the formidable role played by further education, it is the least understood and celebrated part of the learning tapestry. (1997: 1).

The FE sector encompasses the teaching of fourteen year-olds for whom an introduction to vocational courses is considered more appropriate than continuing at school full time; the teaching of seventeen year-olds who may be building upon academic qualifications gained at school or beginning study in new vocational areas; or adults gaining experience of HE in an FE setting. Indeed, much as definitions of social inclusion and social exclusion have altered over the period of the past ten years, the scope of FE has also altered. There are arguably fewer mature learners studying courses for leisure today than in the past as fee subsidies have been removed. Their places have been taken by more youngsters attending vocational courses which will, from 2013, be compulsory for all up until their eighteenth birthday. This has undoubtedly had an impact upon the nature of the sector.

Eight years on from Kennedy, Sir Andrew Foster, a key government policy lead, noted in his report, *Realising the Potential* (2005): 'FE lacks a clearly recognised and shared core purpose' (2005: vi). Robson, Bailey and Mendick (2008) point to the vast range of provision in the sector, including a new focus: Adult Community Learning (ACL) which 'is often related to social inclusion or regeneration policies, and often involves community or voluntary organisations in programmes of outreach to disadvantaged groups in the community' (2008: 310). Indeed, it can be argued that a great deal of the educational and vocational offer available in FE colleges is aimed at those who are socially or educationally disadvantaged: those who have 'grown incurably tired of school' (*The Crowther Report*, 1959, cited in Armitage et al. 2003:

358); adults seeking a second chance or those needing basic skills provision. ACL is a recent but natural extension to a provision which has a legacy of appealing to those excluded from more prestigious educational institutions.

Kennedy notes: 'Further Education suffers because of prevailing British attitudes' (1997: 1) implying a degree of "snobbery" and social division, with more middle class youngsters remaining in school until entering university and more working class youngsters attending an FE college. Evidence suggests this perception is not based upon attitude alone:

social segregation exists at post-16 such that the less well-educated the parents, the more likely their children are to be in FE colleges. School attainment levels amongst entrants to FE are lower than in school sixth forms, for example, and FE and sixth form colleges provide for 57% of black 16 year olds whilst schools provide for only 22%. Further, there are systematic differences in funding which, in general, result in the providers dealing with lower attaining and more disadvantaged learners receiving fewer resources. (Robson, Bailey and Mendick, 2008: 310)

It seems that whilst FE has always dealt to some degree with educationally and socially disadvantaged youngsters the belief has been that such disadvantage could be overcome through the provision of quality educational experiences and high level vocational skills training. There may be a risk that a shift away from educational experiences to a focus upon social inclusion could serve to reinforce disadvantage.

### **Social exclusion/social inclusion**

The defining of social inclusion and social exclusion is a central theme of this thesis. Definitions can often reveal more about the political values of those doing the defining than they reveal "truth" about the term being defined. However, it is worth focusing specifically upon the question of definition in this introductory chapter in order to explore and highlight differences between political, academic and journalistic

concepts of inclusion and exclusion; to define the parameters of my thesis and to explain my usage of the terms throughout the text.

The rhetoric of social exclusion emerges from the E.U. The first recorded use of the term was by Rene Lenoir (1974) in *Les Exclus: Un Francais Sur Dix* in which the term was used to refer to people dislocated from the mainstream of society in France. Ten years later, 'social exclusion' appeared in Article 2 of the Council Decision of December 1984 on specific European Community action to combat poverty. Here, poverty was defined more widely than a lack of money but as, 'material, cultural and social resources which are so limited as to exclude people from a minimally acceptable way of life' (in Duffy, 1998: 20). In 1989, social exclusion was adopted by the European Commission in preference to poverty, (Cousins, 1998). However, it may be argued that social exclusion is a qualitatively different, more ephemeral state than poverty.

In the UK since this time, definitions of social exclusion have emerged from both the traditional "left" and "right" of the political spectrum. Although "left" and "right" are of limited use in today's political landscape they can provide a starting point for locating the political values of those providing definitions. A "left-wing" stance typically tends to associate exclusion with poverty and the material consequences of deprivation. In defining people's experiences of poverty, Townsend (1979) wrote, 'Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities' (1979: 31). Although Townsend does not refer specifically to social exclusion, his definition of poverty is such that it relates material deprivation to the

act of being excluded from engaging with mainstream society. Social inclusion would necessarily be brought about through poverty alleviation; that is, increasing the financial resources available to excluded individuals or families.

Other more “left-wing” commentators, for example, Lister (2004) also define social exclusion in relation to poverty: ‘it is a way of looking at the concept of poverty rather than an alternative to it’ (2004: 74). The alienating impact upon the lives of individuals brought about by the economic and political systems of late capitalist society is also emphasised by Duffy (1998) who argues social exclusion is based upon an ‘inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life, alienation and distance from the mainstream society’ (1998: 241).

A more typically “right-wing” stance tends to focus upon the presumed causes of poverty rather than its effects. It associates exclusion with individual immorality and work-shyness and focuses upon people’s behaviour as the cause of their poverty and consequent exclusion. Phillips (writing with Murray in 2001) defines social exclusion as being about ‘behaviour that has created a lifestyle which is permanently dislocated from the habits and way of life of the majority’ (2001: 19) and places the blame for such behaviour upon single-parent families and the breakdown of the institution of marriage. Young (1999: vi) also places a focus upon social breakdown in his definition of social exclusion.

Most definitions of social exclusion merge complex political ideas and move between “left” and “right” wing discourses often in the same sentence (Levitas, 2005:27). For example, Demos, a think tank which has had much influence upon the Labour Party,

argues, ‘social exclusion is not the same as poverty’ (Perri 6, 1997: 3) and focuses upon dislocation from the mainstream of society which appears to be a “right-wing” stance. However, the definition concludes by conceding, ‘this disconnection tends to coincide with vulnerability to poverty, crime and family breakdown’ (ibid). The “left” “right” spectrum offers only a starting point upon which to locate the definitions of social exclusion provided by New Labour.

The election of New Labour in 1997 heralded the emergence of the rhetoric of social exclusion and social inclusion into the mainstream of British political discourse. The term was adopted by New Labour from the discourse of the E.U. as it underwent a process of conscious reinvention, moving away from “old-left” concerns with, for example, economic redistribution and nationalisation. The lack of rigid definition attached to the term social exclusion was fully exploited by New Labour as they engaged in a process of actively constructing definitions and shifting between one construction and another (Levitas, 1998: 8; 2004: 45). A close analysis of government documents or key speeches reveals the emergence of a number of dominant constructions: at various times social exclusion comes to be equated with poverty (Blair, 1997: 1, all references are to copies of Blair’s speeches contained within the appendix); unemployment (SEU: 1998); low aspirations (Blair, 2006: 16); a lack of basic literacy or numeracy skills (DfEE: 1998); or an “immoral” approach to personal behaviour and responsibilities (Blair, 1997: 9). In general, the past decade has witnessed a shift from social exclusion being constructed in fairly broad terms as unemployment or poverty (Blair, 1997: 11); to more recently, a narrowly focussed concern with the behaviour of small groups such as young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (Blair, 2006:29; DfES, 2007: 39) .

In his speech *Bringing Britain Together* (08/12/1997) Blair claims social exclusion, 'is about income', which appears to place his definition on the political "left" with concerns about material deprivation - we assume he means *lack* of income. However, Blair continues the sentence with 'but it is about more', and then lists all the factors that are more significant in the construction of exclusion than 'material poverty' thus relegating its importance. 'Prospects and networks and life-chances', are described as more important than income. Social exclusion is thus presented as (a lack of) opportunities and networks which places it firmly within the field of social rather than economic capital whilst simultaneously distancing it from any structural political or economic causes. There is no indication here of the national economic problems, inherent racism or sexism that could result in poor social capital. The state of exclusion thus becomes defined as an outcome, not a process; as Fairclough describes, 'it is a condition people are in, not something that is done to them' (2000: 54).

Blair claims social exclusion is a 'very modern problem,' which again distances it from poverty, which is not a modern problem. The use of the phrase 'harmful to the individual' is interesting as it both shifts the focus from social class interests and implies a risk to individual psyche that goes beyond the material conditions of their existence. This is reinforced in the next phrase, 'damaging to self-esteem,' which repositions poverty as a psychological rather than an economic problem. After these highly individualised effects, Blair argues that social exclusion is 'more corrosive to society as a whole' although the focus on outcomes as opposed to processes of exclusion implies that it is the excluded individuals that are corroding society rather than the socio-political economic causes. Blair claims finally that social exclusion is 'more likely to be passed down from generation to generation', although we are left

unsure of what exactly is inherent: we know it is not material poverty (as this is *more* than that) so presumably it is poor networks and a lack of opportunities. Blair's definition of social exclusion begins by expressing a left-wing concern over lack of income but ends with a more right-wing concern over individual behaviour.

When social exclusion is considered to be an outcome of a person's circumstances there is a blurring between the markers of exclusion and the causes of exclusion. Whether exclusion from school, for example, occurs because a child is socially excluded or the school exclusion results in later social exclusion is left unclear. This leads some commentators to argue against the New Labour definition of exclusion; Oppenheim of the influential Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) claims that social exclusion is 'about the *processes* which lead to people being marginalized from the mainstream' (1998: 14) [my emphasis]. Likewise, Room (1995) similarly focuses upon processes, describing social exclusion as 'the process of becoming detached', from the 'sets of mutual rights and obligations which are rooted in some broader moral order' (1995: 105). Perri 6, writing for Demos, argues that indicators of social exclusion need to include measures of *both* processes and conditions (1997: 3) and the New Labour discourse of social exclusion shifts easily between a focus upon outcomes and processes. Indeed, this lack of concrete definition, or 'rhetorical elasticity' (Stewart, 2000: 4) is turned to the political advantage of New Labour.

It is possible to observe shifts that have taken place in the definitions of social exclusion and inclusion that are presented in a range of government documents. In 1999 we are told: 'Social exclusion takes many forms. It can be direct or indirect, and can embrace both groups and individuals. Exclusion also has a geographical



dimension; embracing rural, urban and suburban areas alike' (DCMS, 1999b: 9). This definition is so broad as to encompass virtually anyone. However, the same document argues that social inclusion is brought about through 'community activity', which hints at a construction of exclusion based upon a lack of social engagement rather than a lack of wealth. Three years later, community activity is more specifically defined in *Everybody Wins: Sport and Social Inclusion* (CCPR: 2002). Sport, we are told, can promote social inclusion because it has 'the power to unite people ... it is a key tool in breaking down social barriers and creating a healthy civic society' (2002: 10). This defines exclusion as very much a social problem and removes any connection to poverty. By 2006, in *Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion* there is no longer a specific need to define social exclusion but the issues covered reveal a further shift in thinking. *Reaching Out* argues for a 'lifetime approach' to tackling social exclusion focusing primarily upon 'better identification and early intervention' (2006: 24). In the space of seven years the group defined as socially excluded has shifted from virtually anyone to 'children in care, teenage mothers, and children with the poorest educational attainment' (2006: 59).

It is necessary to establish at this stage my usage of the terms social exclusion and social inclusion. Through the preceding discussion exploring the origins of the terms; their political importance to New Labour; the variety of definitions that are used by academics and politicians; those from the political left and right; definitions that were used in 1997 and those applied ten years later; I have tried to demonstrate that exclusion and inclusion are not naturally occurring states but social and political constructions. This is not intended to deny the reality of the many problems facing people in their lives. Poverty, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol misuse, and

unemployment all exist and cause problems for both the individuals concerned and wider society. Similarly, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination can have real impacts upon people's lives and prevent people from being fully included in society. However, social exclusion and inclusion are relatively fluid concepts. Groups that may have been defined as excluded in 1997 may not be ten years later.

The purpose of my thesis is not to argue the case for one particular definition, or to add another new definition to the plethora that already exists. Instead, I want to examine the process by which New Labour arrives at certain constructions, how FE policy is used to construct concepts of social inclusion and the impact this has upon the FE sector. My aim is to interrogate critically given definitions and their consequent impact. The job of offering solutions to the many social problems cited is one for another thesis.

## **2. New Labour and Social Exclusion**

Tony Blair's first speech as Prime Minister on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1997 marks a crucial first step in the process of constructing social exclusion. Blair begins by making reference to 'the poorest people' (1997: 1 – all numbers refer to copy of speech reprinted in appendix) as the focus for his concern; 'poor' can be understood both in the economic sense of being financially constrained (whilst it lacks the specificity of poverty) but also in a more general sense of being hapless and unfortunate. We assume Blair is making reference to material deprivation and the use of the superlative indicates that this is a minority of people. However, Blair ends this sentence with 'have been forgotten' (1997: 1) making us consider the more general sense of poor. The problem for the poorest then is not solely one of finance but also the psychological trauma of

being ‘forgotten’. This sense is continued in the next sentence when Blair adds: ‘They have been left out ... told they were not needed, ignored ... except for the purpose of blaming them’ (1997: 1). This constructs the excluded as victims of the previous Tory government. The danger is that rather than empowering those labelled socially excluded, the victim label serves only to infantilise.

Blair begins his speech in the first person (1997: 1) which personalises his words and distances him from the faceless collective of government; he then moves on to refer to ‘*our* country’ (1997: 1) [my emphasis] thus neatly including the audience into his vision. However, it is the third person ‘they’ (1997: 1) which is employed when referring to the excluded, ‘the poorest people’ are therefore not included in the potential audience, ‘they’ are constructed as a distinct group. When the next section of the speech begins with: ‘*We* need to act in a new way because fatalism and not just poverty is the problem *we* face’ (1997: 2) [my emphasis], it becomes unclear exactly how inclusive the ‘we’ is intended to be. Blair could be suggesting the more middle-class audience of his speech are facing problems with the excluded; experienced as crime, drug pushing, anti-social behaviour (as expanded upon later in the speech) and so need to act in new ways towards the excluded. The phrase, ‘fatalism and not just poverty’ (1997: 2) returns us to the ‘poorest ... forgotten’ (1997: 1) of the introduction, reminding us that Blair considers himself to be dealing with a double problem: material hardship on the one hand accompanied by psychological weakness on the other.

Blair continues his speech by naming the groups to whom he is referring: ‘people like single mothers’ (1997: 9); ‘five million people of working age live in homes where

nobody works. Over a million have never worked since leaving school ... 150,000 who are now deemed to be homeless and 100,000 children not attending school' (1997: 10). However, despite references to the homeless and truants, it is the unemployed who become Blair's real focus for the remainder of the speech, (1997: 12). Blair's concern with unemployment is interesting because it is clearly not focused upon the poverty that results from being without work. He makes reference to 'three generations that have never had a job' (1997: 13) suggesting a cyclical cause of unemployment - and hence exclusion; the children of non-workers also being more likely to suffer from low levels of self-esteem, lower levels of educational attainment, higher rates of exclusion from school and higher incidences of teenage pregnancy. The problem with unemployment is not financial but psychological – these are people who have 'lost hope, trapped in fatalism' (1997: 13).

Almost ten years on Blair returns again to the themes of social exclusion in his speech of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2006, *Our Sovereign Value: Fairness*. Explicit references are now made to social exclusion as the term is an integral part of current political language. Such repeated references serve to naturalise social exclusion; it now appears as if the excluded as a distinct group have been an ever-present feature of society. However, active construction is still ongoing. Blair's aim is to demarcate two layers of the excluded: those whose problems are solely material, who have been helped by an increase in financial resources such as tax credits; and those whose problems are more deeply entrenched than this (2006: 4, all numbers refer to copy of speech reprinted in appendix). His concern is with the latter, a surprisingly specific '2.5% of every generation' (2006: 15). Blair begins this process of demarcation by claiming, '*some aspects of social exclusion are deeply intractable*' (2006: 2) [my emphasis].

However, it soon becomes clear that what Blair means by ‘aspects’ are, in fact, people. He continues, ‘The most socially excluded are very hard to reach’ (2006: 2) reinforcing the idea that there are degrees of exclusion. The phrase ‘hard to reach’ implies a physical attempt to draw people into the fold of government; and whilst Blair has been successful with some, this has proved harder with others because ‘their problems are multiple, entrenched and often passed down the generations’ (2006: 2). The notion of exclusion as cyclical was hinted at in 1997 but now it is combined with ‘multiple’ and ‘entrenched’, simultaneously reinforcing both the irresolvability of the problems and the permanence of the exclusion.

Blair describes the specific nature of the most socially excluded: ‘material poverty may be acute but it is not necessarily linked to a lack of work or income per se but may well be the result of a multiplicity of lifestyle issues’ (2006: 4). This focus upon “lifestyle issues” constructs this most excluded group on the basis of their behaviour rather than their lack of financial resources. Behaviours such as, ‘drug or alcohol misuse, mental illness’ (2006: 4) are labelled problematic although many may question the crude lumping together of these different and complex issues. To this small minority can be added: ‘people who either may not want to engage with services or do not know how to’ (2006: 16). In effect, part of the behaviour that denotes extreme exclusion is not taking advantage of government services; opting-out of intervention marks the self-excluder out as deviant. The majority of the ‘hard to reach’ may well be those who do not wish to be reached.

The argument that deviant “lifestyle issues” are ‘passed down the generations’,

enables government institutions to ‘detect and predict the children and families likely to go wrong’ (2006: 5). This belief in determinism marks a fundamental shift from the focus upon individual responsibility that prompted the 1997 emphasis upon getting people fully engaged with the labour market. Instead, policies now become focused around the earliest years of a child’s life. Blair is critical of the fact that ‘the welfare state more or less disappeared after childbirth until it was time for school’ (2006: 12) and wants to see more formalised programmes of intervention into the lives (and families) of the youngest children. As part of the proposed *Social Exclusion Plan*, Blair notes that ‘More than anything else, early intervention is crucial’ (2006: 27) and yet he goes on to argue, ‘The protective factors are not surprising – affectionate families, adequate attention from parents’ (2006: 27). This call for affectionate families can appear to stand in contrast to the formalised intervention proposed.

This section has sought to trace the development of New Labour’s social exclusion policy. We can see that New Labour adopted the rhetoric of social exclusion to emerge from the E.U. but fully exploited the flexibility to define the concept in a variety of ways, in part at least, as a means to cohere various factions at a time of internal political transition. Despite being influenced by a number of British commentators, it is arguably the U.S. debates concerning a cyclical underclass that have had greatest impact upon New Labour’s constructions of social exclusion. Initially, social exclusion was considered in relation to poverty and attention focused predominantly upon unemployment as a cause of exclusion. Blair’s final speeches concerning social exclusion have shifted the emphasis away from poverty and onto personal behaviour, not just in terms of unemployment but upon the values held by

individuals, in particular a willingness to participate. We can see that as the concept of social exclusion is being defined away from outcomes such as poverty and onto processes such as participation, concepts of inclusion become focused upon social as opposed to economic capital. This is politically advantageous for the Labour Party as little culpability for exclusion is placed upon political decisions or structural economic factors.

### **3. Further Education**

The goal of promoting social inclusion has been attached to a range of publicly funded services from museums and libraries (*Libraries for All*, DCMS: 1999a; *Museums for the Many*, DCMS: 1999b); sports and leisure facilities (*Everybody Wins: Sport and Social Inclusion*, CCPR: 2002); health services (*Reducing Health Inequalities and Promoting Social Inclusion*, DoH: 2003); to schools and colleges.

FE, in particular, has been placed at the forefront of promoting social inclusion.

There are a number of reasons why FE lends itself to this role. The sector emerged from the Mechanics' Institutes of the nineteenth century and therefore has a vocational tradition which has been successfully maintained. When social inclusion is considered to be brought about through engagement with the labour market, FE can provide people with the necessary skills for employability. Until recently, a student's presence in an FE college has always been based upon a presumption of voluntarism, they have chosen to study because they consider it to be a "good bet" in terms of furthering their own social mobility or there is a subject about which they are sufficiently interested. This voluntarism creates an "adult" environment and, for some lecturers, a perceived radicalism as adult education can challenge the injustices of the compulsory school sector (Walker, 2003: 171). For some working in FE colleges, promoting inclusion is considered to be a way of returning to the more traditional,

student-centered approach associated with widening participation to diverse sections of the community (Hyland, 2003: 86; Kirton, 1999: 192; Jackson, 1997: 458). Many of the reasons why FE has been adopted as a vehicle for promoting social inclusion such as the perceived social radicalism of the sector, based upon its ability to offer second chance learning to those who missed out on educational opportunities whilst at school and the voluntaristic nature of attendance; may risk becoming lost in attempts to formalise programmes and attendance.

As these facets associated with the FE sector are exploited by governmental policy makers, the sector comes to be at the forefront not just for the promotion of social inclusion but also its very construction. FE policy documents define the state of being socially included variously as having skills for employability (human capital) (DfES: 2002, 2003); as having skills for democratic participation (DfES: 2001); as having high levels of self-esteem (DfEE: 1998b; DfES: 2006); or, as having high levels of social capital (DfES: 2006). As these definitions shift, the boundaries between groups demarcated as included and excluded also shift. This can have material consequences for the lives of individuals in terms of their access to welfare benefits, educational provision and other public services.

The decision for the FE sector to promote social inclusion represents the political values of the New Labour government. It marks a shift away from more “laissez-faire” approaches which left the goals of the sector up to individual institutions, lecturers, employers or just to chance. Each of these groups would have brought to the sector their own value base which would, in turn, shape a highly localised sense of purpose.



For the purpose of this thesis, my concern is upon the general offer FE colleges have to make to what would have been their “typical” constituents i.e.: mainly youngsters who have left compulsory school or adults who are seeking to re-enter education. I am not intending to focus specifically upon the fourteen-sixteen age group; students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or adults studying for HE courses within an FE setting, although occasional references may be made to the needs or changing requirements towards these groups. I will consider both the academic and vocational teaching that takes place in FE colleges in general without focusing upon any subject areas in particular.

#### **4. Major theoretical influences**

Four writers provide a major theoretical influence upon this thesis; Pierre Bourdieu (1986, 1988 and 1990) and Paolo Friere (1970, 1974a and 1974b) and more recently Norman Fairclough (1988, 2000 and 2003) and Ruth Levitas (1998, 2004 and 2005).

Bourdieu’s concepts of social, cultural and economic capital will be used to form the basis of an analysis of the different purposes of education offered in the FE sector.

The purpose of FE (as indicated in New Labour’s policy documents relating to the sector) can be to build social, cultural or human capital. Bourdieu stresses the connections between different forms of capital, and indeed, the convertibility of one sort of capital to another. I will draw upon Bourdieu’s work mainly in relation to social capital and primarily in chapter five.

Bourdieu argues that social class position influences levels of social capital, which is concerned with the networks of associates known to individuals. A person with high

levels of social capital will be in a position to draw upon the resources of influential friends, colleagues and family members to enable them to best further their own ambitions. Those investigating social exclusion as a means of explaining the reluctance of individuals and communities to engage in formal learning or employment projects often draw upon the notion of a lack of social capital, (Feinstein and Hammond: 2004; McClenaghan: 2000; Ecclestone and Field: 2003). Social capital can be exploited to increase an individual's levels of cultural capital. Bourdieu links cultural capital to economic capital, that which is 'immediately and directly convertible to money' (Bourdieu, 1986: 243), through its exchange value which converts one form of capital to another. Cultural capital can be exchanged for credentialised forms of academic capital which can in turn be converted into economic capital in the labour market.

The work of Friere is useful in understanding the emphasis New Labour place upon participation, not just in education generally but in engaging with classroom activities in particular. I will draw upon the work of Friere when considering a psychological model for constructing social exclusion and inclusion in chapter six.

Freire has influenced those who argue that the act of participation in education is more important than the dissemination of content. Central to Freire's radical pedagogy is his critique of the 'banking concept' of education, (1970: 53) which he claimed objectified students and in so doing, 'mirrors oppressive society as a whole' (1970: 54). Outside of the context of Freire's Brazil, his humanizing pedagogic techniques result in an emphasis upon engaging in activity rather than "passively" learning or a focus upon the self esteem of individual students. Such a focus is reinforced through Freire's emphasis upon making knowledge relevant to people's

lives. Freire points out that, ‘Almost never do they realise that they, too, “know things” they have learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men’ (Freire, 1970: 28). Again, this needs to be understood in its historical and geographical specificity, Freire is keen to draw out what the oppressed know in relation to their own situation, their experiences of oppression - with a view to enabling their liberation from oppression. Radical educators, who, as Ecclestone points out, see this as, ‘a spring-board for challenging prevailing norms and structures, challenging how people's identities have previously been constructed and confined by power structures and discourses’ (2004: 123), have enthusiastically taken on board the concept of “starting from where the learner is at”. However, in part perhaps because of the application of humanistic pedagogy and its therapeutic concerns; in part perhaps because of a political reluctance to appear to be culturally intruding; there is a risk that educators become reluctant to move learners on beyond this position in case it damages their self-esteem.

Fairclough’s work (1998, 2000, 2003) is significant to this thesis for two reasons: firstly, he explores the impact of language in constructing social exclusion and secondly, he criticises current New Labour policy for assuming that cultural deficiencies, that is, problems with the way people behave, raise their children or even their values form the basis of exclusion. When understood in this way, proposals designed to promote social inclusion could be considered to represent attempts at producing cultural homogeneity or, perhaps, seeking to encourage people to conform to middle class cultural norms. Fairclough recognises that New Labour did not immediately settle upon the concept of social exclusion after their 1997 election victory but employed a number of other terms such as the “underclass” and the

“workless class”. As Fairclough indicates, despite the term “underclass” gradually ceasing to be used, the behavioural and moral connotations of the term remained firmly in place (2000: 52). Work is consequently considered the solution to social exclusion because it corrects behavioural and moral problems through instilling discipline and personal responsibility as well as providing income to alleviate poverty. Ultimately, Fairclough argues, the transition from a discourse of poverty to a discourse of social exclusion results in political goals of greater equality being replaced by demands for greater social inclusion, (2000: 65).

Fairclough explores in some detail the impact of the language of social exclusion. He argues that New Labour frequently define exclusion through listing the problems associated with it. One effect of this is that a wide range of different problems, such as unemployment, single parenthood or poor quality housing, are made equivalent, ‘as just so many aspects of social exclusion’ (2000: 53). This serves to not only reduce the differences between various social problems but also removes any opportunity to consider cause and effect. A further effect, and my interest in Fairclough’s work here, is that the listing changes and with it the people classified as socially excluded.

I draw upon the work of Levitas in forming my framework of analysis and producing “models” for constructing social exclusion and inclusion. Levitas argues that there are three main discourses of social exclusion which she terms the Redistributionist Discourse (RED), Moral Underclass Discourse (MUD) and Social Integrationist Discourse (SID) (Levitas: 1998). Whilst RED focuses upon inequalities of wealth, which could be reduced through encouraging more people to work and simultaneously making employment more attractive, MUD focuses upon the “inherent moral

weaknesses” of the excluded which could be solved by forcing people to take responsibility for their own financial needs through working, and finally SID focuses upon the breakdown of communities which results from exclusion which could be solved through the integrative function of labour market participation.

### **Structure of Thesis**

Since 1997, the various constructions of social inclusion to emerge from FE policy have begun to shape the sector nationally, although each construction carries with it different values. Constructions of social inclusion which focus upon skills for employability carry instrumental values which view education as essentially a means to an end: the ability of the student to enter the labour market. Constructions of social inclusion which focus upon the individual student and their levels of self-esteem or aspiration carry more psychological values: education is for the development of the individual through interventions akin to therapy. Constructions of social inclusion which focus upon the development of social capital require an emphasis upon participation and the promotion of the values through classroom practice: education is about building tolerance of others, respect for difference and diversity or an appreciation of sustainability.

This identification of the dominant constructions of social inclusion and their associated values has led me to develop a framework for the analysis of FE policy. As can be seen below, four models have been identified: instrumental, social, psychological and educational. This framework provides a useful starting point for analysing the processes of constructing social inclusion and will be referred to throughout this thesis:

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS OF FE POLICY

MODEL	Construction of social exclusion	Construction of social inclusion	Perceived purpose of the role of Further Education	Main theorists
Instrumental	Social exclusion is a result of unemployment and disengagement from the labour market. The excluded lack human capital.	Social inclusion is achieved through entry to the labour market.	FE is to provide youngsters and unemployed adults with the skills for employability necessary for them to enter the labour market. FE provides human capital.	Corresponds loosely with Levitas's (1998) RED model, Leitch (2006), Kennedy, H. (1997)
Psychological	Social exclusion is a result of individual psychological weaknesses especially low self-esteem but also incorporating immorality, particularly a dependence upon welfare benefits as opposed to an acceptance of individual financial responsibility.	Social inclusion is achieved through raising the self-esteem of individuals sufficient for them to be able to enter the labour market and take financial responsibility for themselves and their families.	FE is to create a safe environment in which individuals can, through participation in group work exercises and one-to-one tutorials, explore their strengths and weaknesses. Achievement in education raises self-esteem and also enables future participation in the labour market.	Corresponds loosely with Levitas's (1998) MUD model Ecclestone, K. (2004) (critique) Hayes, D. (2004) (critique) hooks, b. (1994) Freire, P. (1970)
Social	Social exclusion is a result of a breakdown in civic engagement and reluctance to participate in democratic processes and community activities. The excluded lack social capital.	Social inclusion is achieved through encouraging greater participation in democratic processes and community projects. Participation in the labour market is often considered as representing engagement.	FE is to encourage participation providing the socially excluded with regular points of contact with a formal institution and other individuals. Participation encourages engagement and promotes social capital	Corresponds loosely with Levitas's (1998) Social Integrationist Discourse (SID) Ranson, S. (1992) Field, J. (2005) Mayo, M. (1997)
Educational	Social exclusion is a construct that brings together disparate social groups to serve an essentially political purpose.	Social inclusion is a political construct designed to solve a range of economic and social problems.	FE is to provide educational opportunities to adults or youngsters seeking a "second-chance" and high level sector specific skills training. FE produces social inequalities through the "pre-vocational" focus of courses designed to promote inclusion.	Young, M. (1999) Pring, R. (1995)

Further discussion as to the development of New Labour's social exclusion policy takes place within chapter two; considering such influences as the debates in the U.S concerning notions of an "underclass", alongside the ideas of the Commission for Social Justice (1994), Hutton (1996) and Giddens (2000). This is accompanied by an examination of the analysis of social exclusion policy offered by the likes of Commins (1993), Silver (1994), Duffy (1995) and Levitas (1998, 2005). Alongside this I offer my critique of both New Labour social exclusion policy and the arguments of the major academic theorists. New Labour's developing construction of social inclusion will then be located more specifically in relation to proposals for education in general and FE in particular. This covers issues including the continuity with and diversity from the policies of the previous Conservative government; the relationship between the political concept of social inclusion and educational inclusion and the development of a "fourteen-nineteen" phase which blurs the boundaries between compulsory and post-compulsory education. From this emerges an overview and critical analysis of the policy documents relating to the FE sector published by New Labour since 1997.

Methodological issues concerning the nature of this research will be covered in chapter three. The particular nature of policy documents is that they have very real consequences for the lives of individuals; their language thus helps to shape and construct reality. It is for this reason I will argue that concepts of social exclusion are social and political constructions. This is not to deny the reality of the issues associated with social exclusion but to recognise the role of language in shaping perceptions of pre-existing social problems in such a way as to produce newly identifiable groups within society. Critical discourse analysis allows for a separation

of intended and received meanings (Scott: 1990) and as such, aids in the examination of the process of the active construction of the concept of social exclusion. To better ascertain intended meaning I will analyse the data gathered from five interviews with some of the key policy makers responsible for influencing, writing or fronting the particular government documents with which I am concerned. A semi-structured approach to such interviews enables me both to make some comparisons between the answers of different respondents and to allow individuals to elaborate upon particular areas of interest to them.

The remainder of the thesis will explore different aspects of the analysis of both the government policy documents and interviews with government ministers and policy leads. This analysis will focus upon different constructions of social inclusion that emerge from within the documents alongside the rationale of the policy makers. A critical account of relevant academic literature will be provided to help the reader locate the emergence of policy trends and assess their reception. The theme of each chapter emerges from the framework for analysis that has been presented in this opening chapter and is also discussed in more detail in the section on methodology.

Chapter four will consider instrumental constructions which equate social exclusion with unemployment: 'Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion' (2001: 19). The focus of the instrumental model is participation in the labour market; social inclusion, consequently, comes to be associated with employment or, at very least, having the skills to participate in the labour market: 'We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor' (2003:



8). The role of FE, in aiming to bring about social inclusion, is thus to promote: 'employability skills for unemployed people' (1998b: 63). In this way the purpose of FE is to meet the demands of the economy. Participation in work is equated with social inclusion because it is argued that the individual financial return lifts people and communities out of poverty: 'People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives' (2001: 1) although broader social benefits of being in work are also alluded to.

Chapter five will consider a social model for constructing exclusion and inclusion. The social model builds upon the instrumental model to argue that increased individual prosperity achieved through enabling more people to enter the labour market is indicative of social justice as it creates a more egalitarian society. Although the emphasis upon individuals achieving skills remains, the purpose of such skills shifts to focus upon 'broader social returns in terms of reduced crime and better health' (2003: 18). It is education that is presented as playing a broader social role, not just employment. This is reinforced by the claim that, 'For individuals, skills are not just about work. They also serve essential social purposes' (2003: 57). Providing skills is also thought to increase levels of social capital necessary for full participation in society and its democratic processes. The result of non-participation is often presented as anti-social behaviour: 'Those who participate are less likely to experience teenage pregnancy, be involved in crime or behave anti-socially' (2007: 12). FE is then considered able to play the role of building social capital directly through the educational offer and not simply as a by-product of increased employment opportunities.

Chapter six will consider a psychological model for constructing social exclusion and

inclusion in which the socially excluded are constructed as suffering some degree of psychological weakness such as low aspirations or low levels of self-esteem. *The Learning Age*, for example, suggests that an inclusive society, 'will offer a way out of dependency and low expectation towards self-reliance and self confidence' (1998: 3). This also corresponds to a construction of the socially excluded as somehow morally deviant: ex-offenders (2003: 29) or teenage mothers (2007: 12). Indeed low expectations and immorality are often linked: 'the potential talent of young people wasted in a vicious circle of underachievement, self-deprecation and petty crime' (1998: 19). The role of FE becomes tackling such psychological weaknesses through initiatives to build the confidence of participants: 'pupils' involvement in enterprise activities was likely to develop the skills and confidence they would need in employment' (2003: 78). The need to offer students support is also emphasised and this indicates the government's construction of youth as a vulnerable state in which no decisions can be made without requiring help and advice. A result of this is that FE comes to be distanced from educational purposes and turned instead into a pastoral system offering services akin to counselling.

Chapter seven will consider what we are in danger of losing when the role of post-compulsory education comes to be concerned with the promotion of social inclusion. Although frequent references are made in the documentation and interviews to the socially excluded having low levels of educational attainment, the emphasis is very much placed upon education as necessary to make people employable or to provide people with social capital. Beyond a few references in the documentation to personal fulfilment and individual development, little credit is given to the notion that education may be important in its own terms or that learning is worth promoting

merely for the intrinsic pleasure it may bring. A decade on from *The Learning Age*, a measure of New Labour's success in promoting instrumental, social and psychological models for the construction of inclusion and the purpose of FE is that there is no longer any need to employ even the rhetoric of education for its own sake in official documentation. However, as a result of intrinsic educational and vocational goals being replaced by 'pre-vocational' (Pring: 1995) training, inequalities are reproduced.

Chapter eight will concludes the thesis with an historical overview of the different emphases placed upon each of the models for constructing social exclusion and inclusion over the period of the New Labour government.

In this chapter I will consider some of the central premises of the thesis: that social exclusion has been constructed by New Labour to serve an essentially political purpose and that FE policy is the location for much of the active construction of social inclusion. As such, this chapter contains sections of literature and policy review.

This chapter falls into two parts.

Section one will explore the political influences that led, in 1997, to the newly elected Labour Party's adoption of policies to tackle social exclusion and promote social inclusion. It considers the significance of the debates emerging from the U.S. at the time, concerning the notion of an underclass and examines the impact of these debates upon the Labour Party's construction of social exclusion. Although the rhetoric of social exclusion may have emerged from the E.U. much of the associated political ideology actually comes from the U.S. Alongside this, the influence of U.K. commentators such as Giddens (1994), Hutton (1996) and the *Commission on Social Justice* (1994) will also be considered. This is followed by a critical review of analyses of social inclusion policy proposed by major academic theorists working in this area. Silver (1994), Room (1995) and Jordan (1996) were writing prior to the election of New Labour and focus primarily upon policy emerging from the EU. Their work is nonetheless relevant to my research both for the methodologies employed and the political insights provided. Jordan's work is of particular significance as he highlights the emerging connections being made by New Labour between social inclusion and social capital and social inclusion and individual morality. Levitas (1998) and Fairclough (2000) provide useful analyses of New

Labour's policy to tackle social exclusion. Levitas's work in particular has been highly influential in this area and Fairclough's approach to critiquing the language of New Labour and the rhetoric of social inclusion more specifically provides a methodological framework upon which I base much of my own work. From this review of the ideas of others emerges my own critique of New Labour's social exclusion policy. I will argue that the construction of a "socially excluded" group becomes self-fulfilling, that it is in the act of defining and labelling that the socially excluded are created. The creation of social exclusion brings with it the political demand for a solution: social inclusion. However, the form of intervention designed to promote inclusion varies with the construction of exclusion employed.

The second section will locate New Labour's education policy regarding FE within the historical context of previous initiatives. Since the inception of the Mechanics' Institutions in the nineteenth century, there has always been a vocational aim to FE. Sector specific skills were taught by accomplished practitioners; students, often on day release from employment, were keen to enhance their skills or develop relevant theoretical knowledge in order to secure career progression. A brief examination of this historical context is necessary in order to establish what is new about New Labour's proposals for the FE sector in terms of promoting social inclusion. From this emerges a review of the major policy documents relating to the FE sector that have been published during New Labour's period of office. Furthermore, I will locate FE policy within a range of other New Labour initiatives designed to promote social inclusion, in particular, *Every Child Matters* (2003) and *Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion* (2006). When the influence of such policies is assessed alongside the historical context of FE policy it becomes possible to ascertain the

nature of the changes that have taken place within the sector.

## 1. **Social Exclusion and New Labour**

The decision by the Labour Party to adopt policy to tackle social exclusion was an entirely conscious move in the process of political reinvention from “old” to “New” Labour. This section will explore more fully the social and political factors that led to social exclusion policy forming a key focus for such a transition. The E.U. proves influential; one of New Labour’s first acts of government was to sign the European Social Chapter and “catch-up” with the rest of Europe in terms of social policy (Byrne, 1999: 96). New Labour welcomed the shift from poverty to social exclusion that had taken place within the discourse of the E.U. and recognised that this was more than mere rhetoric; the focus of policy was now problems such as ‘ill health, poor education or isolation’ (Whelan, 1995: 32). However, in developing policies to tackle social exclusion, New Labour was also influenced by the political agenda of the U.S. and this shall also be explored here. Domestically, New Labour sought to define itself in opposition to the perceived excesses of Thatcherism and was influenced by the writings of Hutton (1996), the *Commission on Social Justice* (1994) and Giddens (1998).

### **The Underclass**

Although the language of social exclusion adopted by New Labour emerges from the E.U. many of the ideas expounded and policies proposed suggest that the U.S. has been a greater source of political influence than Europe. In the absence of a welfare state, the U.S. has traditionally been less likely to turn to financial redistribution as a

solution to poverty and more likely to focus upon individual morality, behaviour and responsibility. The specific history of the U.S. links the issues of poverty and race more firmly than in the U.K. Indeed, this may be one reason why poverty was “re-discovered” by American academics and politicians in the 1960s. Harrington's (1962) *Other America: Poverty in the United States* alerted people to the existence of widespread material deprivation and Lewis' (1961) *Children of Sanchez, Autobiography of a Mexican Family* proposed the idea that poverty was a result of the socialising of children into a culturally deprived environment and was therefore passed from generation to generation. This connection between intergenerational behaviour and poverty became influential in Britain in the 1970s during a period of economic recession which exposed the limits of the welfare state and the continued existence of poverty.

Lewis's arguments for the cyclical nature of poverty influenced the American neo-conservatives with their conceptualisation of a structural underclass: a group removed from the mainstream of society. In this way, poverty is understood as a result of individuals' behaviour; morally irresponsible behaviour is passed on from one generation to the next and is therefore considered inherent. The moral irresponsibility is demonstrated by individuals refusing to take paid employment to support their families or in producing children out of wedlock that they cannot afford to support. According to this argument, the provision of welfare benefits supports and indeed promotes moral irresponsibility. Neo-conservatives argue for a “re-moralisation” which involves the promotion of “civic obligations” such as accepting work, supporting one's family, respecting the rights of others and acquiring, through formal education, the basic skills that are required for employability, (see Mead: 1986).

Work comes to be seen as a moral imperative, if recipients of benefits were made to work, ‘they would function better, bringing closer an integrated society’ (Mead, 1986: ix).

Following the publication of *The Bell Curve* (Murray: 1994) the concept of a structural underclass came, in the U.K. at least, to be discredited even amongst the right wing circles in which it had initially been lauded. Murray made explicit connections between inherent intelligence, class and race which were unpalatable to more liberal British politicians. Still, New Labour employed the term “underclass” prior to and immediately proceeding their 1997 election victory. In a 1997 speech given to The Lord Mayor’s Banquet, Blair claims a central purpose of government is to, ‘tackle crime and its underlying causes of a social underclass set apart from society’s mainstream’ (10/11/1997). New Labour finally settled upon the rhetoric of social exclusion as it was considered to offer, ‘A more neutral alternative to the Anglo-American “underclass”’ (Smith, 2005: 56, see also Levitas, 2005: 20) although many of the associated ideas concerning morality and behaviour have persisted (Fairclough, 2000: 52).

### **British theorists**

New Labour policy makers were also influenced in their decision to adopt a focus upon tackling social exclusion by ideas to emerge from the U.K. immediately prior to their election victory. *The Report of the Commission on Social Justice* (1994) commissioned by the late John Smith proves significant. The main concern of the report is with the, ‘equal worth of all citizens, their equal right to be able to meet their basic needs, the need to spread opportunities and life chances as widely as possible’



(1994: 1). This is soon characterised as an ‘inclusive society, where rights carry responsibilities and individuals have the chance to realise their potential’ (1994: 3). The relationship between state and citizens is thus renegotiated away from a welfare state, which provided financial benefits to those in need through a process of wealth redistribution, towards an emphasis upon “equality of opportunity”. In practice, the state will no longer guarantee to meet people’s needs but it will instead provide people with the opportunities to meet their own needs through education. This again reflects a shift in emphasis away from the traditional values of “old” Labour.

Hutton’s *The State We’re In* (1996) argues for social inclusion as a product of British capitalism becoming co-operative and committed, led by a capitalist class with moral responsibility – a system he terms “stakeholder” capitalism. His aim is to show how the political, economic and social aspects of society are interconnected; he aims for a middle ground between structured Keynesianism and the deregulated market. He focuses upon social inequality, which he claims to be the cause of, ‘family stress, the crisis of parenting and the general communal decay which are at the root of so many of Britain’s social problems’ (1996: 15). His proposed solution is to target inequality and insecurity through a “moral economy” which brings people into a new and committed relationship with a remodelled welfare state. Blair (1997) echoes Hutton’s language when he argues for, ‘Britain rebuilt as one nation, in which each citizen is valued and has a stake’ (*The Will To Win*, speech 08/12/1997). The notion of each citizen being “valued” is crucial to the morality of New Labour, it suggests a tolerance of difference and a respect for diversity, but crucially also implies the pairing of rights with responsibilities and the almost impossibility of *not* owning a stake.

New Labour was further influenced by the writings of Anthony Giddens, (1998, 2000). Political thought labelled as “Third Way” gained popularity amongst Western leaders in the late 1990s. Giddens characterises the Third Way as rejecting both top down socialism and traditional neo-liberalism. The key elements of Third Way politics emphasise community, responsibility, accountability and equality of opportunity. Giddens argues ‘There is no future for egalitarianism at all costs’ and that instead emphasis should be placed upon equality of opportunity, (2000: 85). The distinction between equality of outcome and equality of opportunity is crucial here. Whereas equality of outcome necessitates direct financial redistribution to the poorest people (favoured by “Old” Labour) equality of opportunity does not. A focus upon “equality of opportunity” (although traditionally a more liberal stance) is more in keeping with the drive towards social cohesion and inclusion (providing opportunities for people to enter the labour market, making everyone equally employable) sought by New Labour. The goal of tackling social exclusion provides a practical focus for the Third Way politics of equality of opportunity.

### **The Labour Party in Transition**

The concept of social exclusion has played a useful political role in cohering disparate factions within the Labour Party at a time of political transition from “old” to “New” Labour. Traditionally, Labour’s “left-wing” has argued the case for economic redistribution, considering inequalities of wealth and resources to be caused by inequalities at the heart of society. However, in the transition to New Labour, many on the Left argued that ‘egalitarian goals have been rendered politically unfeasible’ (Gray, 2000: 19). Those retaining sympathy for the egalitarian cause repositioned

their arguments away from economic redistribution for its own sake, towards the view that redistribution creates a better social environment for everyone. For example, Lister declares, 'inequality is bad for national prosperity, health and social cohesion' (2000: 43), echoing the view of the *Commission on Social Justice* that, 'economically, inequality is very inefficient' (1994: 23) and that 'Squalor and crime carry enormous economic as well as social costs' (1994: 20). We must bear in mind, however, that in the shift from economic re-distribution to tackling social exclusion, what is being proposed is merely a different means of dealing with the, perhaps inevitable, negative consequences of the capitalist system.

A breakdown in social cohesion and a consequent increase in individual alienation are seen by many on the political "left" as the legacy of the Thatcher years; Mandelson and Liddle argue, 'the economic and social cost [of social division] has been huge in lost human talent, national wealth foregone and gravely weakened public finances' (1996: 4). There is little evidence to substantiate the perception of social breakdown having resulted from Thatcherism. It is clearly politically advantageous to the carefully constructed image of New Labour for it to be defined in opposition to Thatcherism. Likewise, the decline of the welfare state brought with it consequences; characterised by Offe as 'anarchic, crisis-inducing and which undermine the social tolerance for modernisation processes' (1996: 8) and by *The Report of the Commission on Social Justice* as, 'increasing alienation and disaffection among many people' (1994: 82). For many in the Labour Party, a concern over social breakdown replaced demands for economic redistribution.

The concept of social exclusion was useful for the Labour Party because it could imply a focus upon alleviating either poverty or the consequences of social

breakdown thereby appealing to many political factions during this period of transition. Mandelson (1996) seeks to reassure Labour Party supporters, 'New Labour approaches tough decisions from a bedrock of traditional left-of-centre values and instincts' (1996: 18). This is followed by a precursory attempt at defining social inclusion as central to the New Labour agenda: 'everyone should have a stake in society and no one should be excluded from it' (1996: 19). Given the elusive nature of such political rhetoric it is worth examining the policies which are to bring about such a society which include a focus upon getting the unemployed back into work (1996: 19), challenging the irresponsible who neglect their obligations to their families and communities (1996: 20) and reminding people that 'rights carry with them obligations' (1996: 20). Despite Mandelson's rhetoric, all of these policies are arguably more associated with the political "right" rather than "left".

The establishment of the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) provides further evidence of how the concept of social exclusion appeases all political factions through shifting between a "left" and "right" wing discourse. The SEU employs the nominal form "exclusion" in its definition, which distances the act of excluding from the responsibility of any particular group or political policy (see Fairclough 2000: 54): 'Social exclusion happens when people or places suffer from a series of problems' (SEU: 1997). The word 'suffer' portrays the excluded as victims, albeit in the absence of any perpetrator. Of the problems cited; 'unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, ill health and family breakdown' (SEU: 1997) many are linked to poverty which would appeal to the political "left" and yet focus becomes centred upon the notion of a "vicious cycle" created by 'being born into poverty or to parents with low skills' (SEU: 1997) which perhaps returns us to

something more akin to the concept of the U.S. underclass.

### **Theories of exclusion**

Academic critiques of social exclusion policy pre-date the election of New Labour with, most notably, Silver (1994), Room (1995) and Jordan (1996) commenting on E.U. proposals to tackle exclusion. Silver outlines three paradigms of the social exclusion discourse to emerge from the E.U.: solidarity, specialisation and monopoly (1994: 532) and Room likewise explores 'competing paradigms of analysis' (1995: 103). Jordan comments upon the way, 'the focus has moved to individual pathology' (1996: 3) and morality is used to form the basis of inclusive communities. Since 1997 other writers have focussed more upon the relationship between New Labour and social exclusion in the U.K. Levitas (1998, 2005) has usefully identified three discourses of social exclusion: MUD, RED and SID. Fairclough (2000) uses this analysis provided by Levitas to explore the ways in which New Labour exploit the rhetoric of social exclusion. This section of the chapter will explore the various analyses of social exclusion provided by these academics and develops into my own critique of the concept.

Although Silver's (1994) work is necessarily based upon an analysis of social exclusion to emerge from the political philosophies of Europe rather than the UK it is of particular interest to me as she considers the problems associated with social exclusion being 'a vague term loaded with numerous economic, social, political, and cultural connotations and dimensions' (1994: 536) yet recognises that 'the power to name a social problem has vast implications for the policies considered suitable to address it' (1994: 533). Silver relates the various definitions of exclusion to three

broad paradigms based on different notions of social integration (as opposed to the later, and more UK based, social inclusion): insertion, citizenship or solidarity.

The first paradigm Silver considers is one of (social) solidarity which is dominant in French political philosophy as a description for the bonds that exist between individuals and society. Such bonds are presumed to be based upon shared cultural and moral norms rather than shared economic interests. Exclusion is said to occur when these bonds break down. Moves away from a common culture towards the construction of cultural boundaries define the poor, unemployed and ethnic minorities as 'deviant outsiders' (1994: 570). Processes of integration are presumed to re-establish moral and cultural bonds and reinvigorate social solidarity. Secondly, Silver explores the paradigm of specialisation which is more prevalent in Anglo-American liberal societies. Specialisation in the market creates an economic division of labour and social differentiation. Co-operating and competing individuals create structures which can act as boundaries to 'impede individual freedom to participate in social exchanges' (1994: 542). If such boundaries are legally enforced or do not allow for people to move freely across them, hierarchically ordered social categories result. Exclusion is a result of such discrimination. Notions of citizenship which emphasise individuals' rights and the competitiveness of the liberal free market are presumed to challenge the discriminations leading to such forms of exclusion. Thirdly, Silver considers the monopoly paradigm which 'views the social order as coercive, imposed through a set of hierarchical power relations' (1994: 543). Those within the hierarchy hold a monopoly over (particularly economic) resources and therefore share a bond of common interest which acts to exclude those who lack sufficient financial capital. Social cohesion occurs as a result of such a shared bond of common interest and those

who are excluded threaten social cohesion. Such a perceived threat to social cohesion is thought to be overcome through the provision of a ‘minimum income for social integration’.

The basis of Silver’s theory, that definitions of social exclusion are open to exploitation to suit particular political purposes and that there is a relationship between defining a problem and determining the policies considered suitable to address it, remains convincing despite political and geographical shifts of emphasis since the time of her original writing. Silver’s outline of specific paradigms for constructing exclusion is perhaps less relevant to the current political situation in the UK. In 1994, Silver explored how a competitive free market could challenge discrimination. Fourteen years later such a belief in the workings of the market is rarely held by political elites. New Labour initiatives such as ‘New Deal’ (1998), ‘Welfare to Work’ (1997) and ‘Modern Apprenticeships’ (2004) explicitly recognise the limitations of the market in tackling social exclusion. In the UK, the welfare state and unemployment benefit pre-dated the French minimum income for social integration with an emphasis upon the minimum finances an individual needs for basic survival rather than engagement with society. So, whilst the underlying premises of Silver’s theory remain highly relevant, the specific details of the paradigms she describes are more useful for capturing a snap-shot of the significance of the social exclusion discourse to the EU in the early 1990s.

The writing of Room (especially 1995a, 1995b) is significant to this thesis as his involvement in the EU “Observatory” to explore policies to combat poverty and social exclusion of 1992 led to his analysis of the differences in Anglo-Saxon and

Continental approaches to social and economic problems. Whereas discussion in the UK had focussed upon poverty as an essentially distributional issue, ‘the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or a household’ (1995a: 105); French political thinkers considered the relational issues, ‘inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power’ (1995a: 105), associated with social exclusion. This reflects the historical legacy of a political focus upon social homogenisation in French society. An exploration of the differences between Anglo Saxon and Continental analyses of poverty and social exclusion reveals the changes that have been necessary in British social policy to converge with the emerging EU social exclusion agenda; conversely the adaptations that have been made by New Labour to EU policy are equally revealing of governmental approaches.

Room is one of the first academics to define social exclusion for a UK audience and in so doing provides a point of reference for subsequent definitions. Room defines social exclusion as the process of becoming detached from a nation’s social rights and moral order (1995b: 7). He explores the way in which national and EU legislation can hasten processes of social exclusion, through, for example, a focus upon workers’ rights as opposed to more general rights for citizens to work ‘or earn a decent wage’ (1995b: 5). By emphasising the processes of detachment the exploration of disadvantage shifts away from a snap-shot of an individual’s financial status at any particular moment towards a consideration of more generalised and persistent disadvantage (1995b: 7). This reveals disparities that exist in the distribution of life chances, an idea that has become central to New Labour’s linking of equality of opportunity to social inclusion. A focus upon processes of detachment as opposed to just outcomes helped shift a UK analysis away from distributional towards more



relational concerns and represents a move away from a static towards a more dynamic analysis. Instead of counting the numbers of people considered to be in poverty, Room argues the need to monitor the processes which result in people being in poverty. In this way, deprivation comes to be linked not just to individual lack of income but to the environment whole communities inhabit with issues such as the poor quality of schools, few transport links and limited access to local services serving to reinforce and perpetuate household poverty (1995b: 238).

Jordan's (1996) work, although from the field of social work, is useful for my analysis of social exclusion and inclusion because of his particular focus upon individual morality, social capital and social exclusion. Jordan argues that two assumptions often implicit in New Labour policy; that the socially excluded are morally deviant and that they lack social capital, are both misplaced. Jordan recognises that social exclusion is often considered in terms of individual psychology or moral deviancy: 'the perception of a deviant and dependent "underclass", living on crime, practising various kinds of social deviancy and claiming from the labour and property of the rest of the community' (1996: 35). However, Jordan considers morality to be the 'informal constraints on the actions of individuals into which they are socialised in childhood' (1996: 22). Those labelled as socially excluded are then not lacking 'informal constraints' but have been socialised into a different morality.

Jordan argues that the association of social exclusion with unemployment and the emphasis upon bringing about social inclusion through getting people into work has forced people into taking low paid jobs which may involve working long, anti-social hours in what may be insecure, temporary jobs. This, combined with an inflexible

benefit system means people who attempt to engage with the system in a legitimate manner, “obeying the rules”, may experience periods of financial hardship as a temporary job ends and benefits have yet to start. In such circumstances working illegitimately as part of the “black economy” actually appears, far from immoral, to be a rational economic choice, ‘illegality is often a more secure and rewarding source of income for survival than the new flexible labour market’ (1996: 36). As governments enforce increasingly strict legislation to prevent those who claim benefits working at the same time, people are pushed further away from legitimate employment or surviving off benefits alone. Such legislation therefore serves to enhance the government’s own construction of social exclusion. People are forced into networks with other individuals in similar circumstances in order to avoid detection. Communities begin to develop their own morality based upon illegitimate work and non-compliance with state institutions. In this way, legislation to force people into employment in order to promote social inclusion serves only to enhance their sense of social exclusion as defined by the government.

Jordan also explores the notion that the socially excluded are considered to lack social capital. Policies to encourage participation in the labour market or further education and training are considered to promote social capital amongst individuals and consequently raise the levels of social capital within communities. Jordan however argues that those labelled as socially excluded are not lacking in social capital.

Networks of people working in the black economy provide individuals concerned with high levels of social capital. They may belong to highly developed networks of support that include the provision of informal employment opportunities or childcare. Compulsory social inclusion, Jordan argues, is counter-productive because it destroys

the spontaneous social capital that unemployed people have built up within their communities.

The work of Levitas (1998, 1999, 2004, and 2005) is important to this thesis because she argues that the concept of social exclusion, 'has been subjected to changes in meaning that are closely related to the political arguments encapsulated in Third Way debates' (2004: 43). Levitas's identification of three discourses of social exclusion (MUD, RED and SID) provides a useful methodological tool for discourse analysis. These labels describe political discourses and do not necessarily compete with each other; they can often overlap or be applied interchangeably. Indeed, Levitas recognizes the political advantage of the 'co-existence of these different meanings in a single speech' (1999: 8) in as much as supporters of RED can be mobilized behind a moral agenda.

MUD is most often associated with the political right and focuses upon the perceived (im)morality of the excluded. Levitas claims those employing this discourse focus on 'the behaviour of the poor rather than the structure of the whole of society' (1999: 6) thus ignoring social inequalities. Emphasis is particularly placed upon the role of welfare benefits which are considered to encourage financial irresponsibility, state dependency and children born outside of marriage. RED is most concerned with the causes and characteristics of poverty. Redistributionists consider inequalities of wealth and resources to be caused by inequalities at the heart of society and this results in the structural generation of processes of exclusion. Traditionally, this is the position held by what was the political left or Social Democrats, who argued that the redistribution of wealth was central to a more egalitarian society. Proponents of SID

perceive of exclusion as a problem not primarily of morality or economics but of social disaggregation with people no longer having any sense of belonging to their community resulting in rising crime and anti-social behaviour. SID prioritises economic efficiency and social cohesion through the integrative function of labour market participation. Levitas criticises those employing SID as reducing ‘the social to the economic,’ which ‘simultaneously limits understanding of economic activity to market activity’ (1999: 7).

Levitas argues that these three discourses of social exclusion serve to bring together the views of both the traditional “left” and “right” in their agreement over the importance of paid work, which is seen as a necessary key to economic improvement, inclusion and the fulfilment of moral responsibilities. Levitas explores the problems associated with social exclusion being defined ‘in terms of unemployment rather than poverty, coupled with a view that the primary cause of poverty itself is unemployment caused by unemployability’ (1999: 4). Whilst RED focuses upon inequalities of wealth, which could be reduced through encouraging more people to work and simultaneously making employment more attractive; MUD focuses upon the “inherent moral weaknesses” of the excluded which could be solved by forcing people to take responsibility for their own financial needs through working and finally SID focuses upon the breakdown of communities which results from exclusion which could be solved through the integrative function of labour market participation. So, it seems that whatever the understanding of the causes of exclusion, participation in the labour market is always perceived as a potential solution. Levitas argues that some forms of employment may involve people working long, anti-social hours in isolation (1999: 16) which is hardly conducive to inclusion and by the same token, unpaid

(often women's) work such as caring responsibilities is devalued. Furthermore, Levitas argues that the concepts of exclusion and inclusion serve to obscure those inequalities that exist between those nominally defined as included and 'differences between owners and non-owners of productive property' (1999: 3).

My thesis builds upon Levitas's analysis but also differs from it quite significantly. Levitas's analysis is useful for revealing how current political discourse is changing from what has gone before. The emphasis New Labour place upon the behaviour of the socially excluded, particularly regarding engagement with the labour market for example, is criticised for shifting the focus from economic redistribution through taxing the wealthiest and increasing benefit payments to those without work.

Levitas's traditional left wing stance pushes her to argue for RED as a means of overcoming poverty. However, the problem here, and the cause of my differences with Levitas's work is that although her analysis correctly identifies changes in discourse that have taken place in the past and potential political causes for such changes in discourse, her analysis transfers less well to the political world ten years post-Blair's election. For example, Levitas's main concern with the discourses of MUD and SID is that they detract attention away from RED – which she considers to be the real goal of a Labour government.

Whilst Levitas identifies other problems associated with MUD, for example, that it is a gendered discourse, most recent shifts in attitudes have become so accepting of MUD that it is almost not a separate discourse but the dominant discourse. Poor parenting, for example, is considered to be at the heart of so many problems in society that new forms of intervention into people's lives have been developed, such as

Family Liaison Officers in schools, plans to tackle childhood obesity and plans to raise the age of compulsory participation in education or training. The successful portrayal of the socially excluded as victims in need of support means that such proposals are not challenged for portraying a section of society as immoral but welcomed as radical for finding solutions for vulnerable families.

Fairclough's work (2000) is significant to this thesis for two reasons: firstly, he explores the impact of language in constructing social exclusion and secondly, he criticises current social exclusion policy for assuming that cultural deficiencies form the basis of exclusion. Fairclough recognises that New Labour did not immediately settle upon the concept of social exclusion after their 1997 election victory but employed a number of other terms such as the "underclass" and the "workless class". As Fairclough indicates, despite the term "underclass" gradually ceasing to be used, the behavioural and moral connotations of the term remained firmly in place (2000: 52). Work is consequently considered the solution to social exclusion because it corrects behavioural and moral problems through instilling discipline and personal responsibility as well as providing income to alleviate poverty. Ultimately, Fairclough argues, the transition from a discourse of poverty to a discourse of social exclusion results in political goals of greater equality being replaced by demands for greater social inclusion (2000: 65).

Fairclough explores in some detail the impact of the language of social exclusion. He argues that New Labour frequently define exclusion through listing the problems associated with it. One effect of this is that a wide range of different problems, such as unemployment, single parenthood or poor quality housing, are made equivalent, 'as

just so many aspects of social exclusion' (2000: 53). This serves to not only reduce the differences between various social problems but also removes any opportunity to consider cause and effect. For example, unemployment and poor quality housing are both considered equivalent aspects of social exclusion and there is no room to question whether one may have caused the other. Furthermore, Fairclough explores the impact of New Labour presenting social exclusion as an outcome rather than a process, (2000: 54); exclusion becomes a condition people are in, something from which they passively "suffer". This is reinforced by the grammatical nominalisation of "exclusion" as opposed to the verb form "to exclude" which would necessitate an actor. It therefore appears rational that projects designed to tackle social exclusion involve the socially excluded being acted upon rather than acting as self-determined individuals (2000: 64).

The process of acting upon people's lives in order to tackle social exclusion is termed by Fairclough, 'cultural governance' (2000: 61). This involves a systematic approach to intervening in the perceived cultural deficiencies of individuals labelled as socially excluded. Such cultural deficiencies may include poor parenting skills, anti-social behaviour or financial irresponsibility. The socially excluded are persistently constructed in negative terms, 'suffering' from dependency and a 'poverty' of expectations which needs to be 'tackled' or 'confronted', (2000: 62). Intervention is deemed necessary to instil a moral or behavioural code more appropriate to New Labour's expectations. The impact of such cultural governance upon the lives of individuals is surely questionable; at very least they are distanced from any sense of autonomy in their own lives.

From the work of these writers, I take the points made by Silver, Levitas and Fairclough that definitions of social exclusion are open to exploitation to suit particular political purposes. This has been apparent in two ways; firstly, in helping New Labour ensure internal coherence during a period of political transition (taking Levitas's point about the rhetorical flexibility of being able to move from one discourse to another) and secondly, in shifting political emphasis during New Labour's period of office. This shift in definition that has taken place over roughly a decade has consequence because there is clearly a relationship between the definition of social inclusion and the policies sought to address the problems identified, (Silver, 1994: 133). In placing the promotion of social inclusion as one of the central goals of the FE sector, the purpose of the sector consequently shifts with each change in the definition of social exclusion.

In 1997, New Labour most frequently defined social exclusion in relation to unemployment. Politically, as Levitas notes, this focus upon unemployment was advantageous as it combined economic arguments for increasing individual prosperity with the need for social integration and the need for individuals to accept greater moral responsibility for supporting their families. With inclusion equated to employment, the role of FE was to provide people with the skills necessary to become employable. As Levitas demonstrates (above) and Jordan (1996) also notes, the emphasis upon individual morality has been an important part of the social exclusion discourse since it was initially taken on board by New Labour. Indeed, it is this focus upon morality that makes it seem that although New Labour adopted the rhetoric of the EU the particular policies owed more to the influence of the US underclass debates. Over the period of office the focus upon morality and personal behaviour



has become increasingly significant to New Labour's definitions of social exclusion. In turn, social inclusion comes to be about conforming to certain behavioural norms and the FE sector is consequently concerned with the bringing about of such behavioural and moral norms. Rob Wye, director of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and a key policy lead in relation to *Success for All*, stresses the importance of FE promoting social inclusion which he defines as, 'ensuring that each and every member of society feels that they are a part of that society and then using Further Education as a mechanism for that engagement' (interview with author, 21/09/07). How this shift has been enacted in education policy and the FE sector in particular forms the basis of the remainder of this chapter.

## **FE Policy**

New Labour's policies (courses of action and intent) concerning post-compulsory education can be located within the range of New Labour policies in general and the context of education policy in particular. Much academic discussion concerns the extent to which New Labour's education policy differs from that of the previous Conservative administration (Paterson: 2003; Kendall and Holloway: 2001). Within the first term of the Labour government consensus seemed to emerge around the opinion that there was little difference between Labour and Conservative education policy (Power and Whitty: 1999). This was perhaps hardly surprising as the incoming government had pledged to retain the spending targets of the Conservative administration for the first two years of office, (Kendall and Holloway, 2001: 172); the stated aim of raising standards was retained as was OFSTED and its chief inspector, Chris Woodhead.

However, more recent and more sophisticated analyses do point to some ideological differences in education policy. Paterson (2003) indicates three such differences in his identification of the Labour Party's educational ideology: New Labourism, which he identifies as emerging from the New Right and nineteenth century Liberalism although not reducible to either; developmentalism - a promotion of the competitiveness of the nation and finally, New Social Democracy in which the state is seen as the only way of mitigating the social consequences of the market (Paterson, 2003: 166). The impact of the last two can be seen very clearly in education policies designed to promote skills for employability. 'Achieving economic well-being' is one of the five key outcomes of the ECM (2003) legislation. Similarly, other goals of ECM with which all schools must legally comply, focus upon health and well-being. This intervention is designed to tackle social problems which (if indeed they exist) may be seen by some to stem from the social consequences of the market.

Atkinson and Savage (2001) identify notions such as duty, responsibility and obligation, an emphasis upon equality of opportunity – and a moral responsibility upon individuals to take advantage of such opportunities, as representing the values of New Labour (2001: 10). Such values are also encompassed within policy to tackle social exclusion and this has undoubtedly influenced education policy. Many of these values may have been present in education for some time and certainly before the election of New Labour. In the past education was considered by many to be important for its own sake and values emerged through the "hidden curriculum". Now, education has explicitly extrinsic aims and values are taught and assessed as an explicit outcome of education. Many of these "values" are shaped around the demands and expectations of employers. The purpose for FE here becomes clear, to

provide individuals with the skills needed by employers to ensure their employability and consequent inclusion. Arguments to promote this essentially instrumentalist purpose involve economic justifications: more employable adults not only increases individual prosperity but also help bring about a more productive and competitive nation; and social justice: opportunities are extended to those previously denied them. In order to meet this purpose, three main objectives for FE emerge from the documentation; firstly, to increase the vocational offer available, secondly, to widen participation and thirdly, to engage all adults in lifelong learning. This political contextualisation is important to the process of document analysis as the language of policy documents does not appear in a vacuum but is socially, politically and culturally situated.

The first reference in government policy documents to post-compulsory education fulfilling aims that are now termed “socially inclusive” in addition to its existing educational and training provision comes in 1996. John Tomlinson, in his report *Inclusive Learning*, notes that:

Our proposals would improve existing provision and extend opportunities to many who do not now participate in further education, to their loss and to that of the economy and the wider society. (1996:v)

This statement is a recognisable move towards denoting social inclusion as a goal of FE. The phrase ‘extend opportunities to many who do not now participate in further education’ hints at the burgeoning recognition of non-participation as a problem, not just to the individuals concerned, ‘to their loss,’ but also to ‘the economy and the wider society’ (1996: v). As we will see, this dual formulation of purpose, that FE serves the needs of the economy and wider society, will remain throughout the proceeding decade.

There is however little new in linking educational achievement to the needs of the economy (see for example, Callaghan: 1976). It was argued in the 1985 White Paper, *Education and Training for Young People*:

The results of our lagging so far behind our competitors are serious: British employers have to recruit from a population which at eighteen and over includes a higher proportion of people with no formal qualification or with very limited occupational or academic attainment. (In Pring, 1995: 10)

It is the idea of non-participation being a problem to wider society that is qualitatively new in Tomlinson's report; his claim is that there are broader social benefits to be reaped from widening participation as he emphasises:

The combined effect would be to transform the further education system of this country to the immeasurable benefit of future generations, our economy and the quality of our whole society. (1996: 2).

Despite the repetition, Tomlinson does not elaborate upon the nature of the transformation in quality of our whole society, he does however denote the people considered excluded from FE:

Those now mainly excluded – those with mental ill-health, with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with profound and multiple disabilities. (1996:6.)

It is interesting to note the emerging construction of the socially excluded as having psychological and emotional problems. More than a decade on from Tomlinson this is considered by many to be a fairly narrow definition of exclusion. It reveals Tomlinson's concern with the educationally excluded, groups that would have been labelled as having "special needs" in compulsory schooling and for whom FE was, on the whole, considered irrelevant. With participation being made compulsory to those up to the age of eighteen from 2013 this is something the sector is forced to confront. The intervening period has seen a blurring of the boundaries between the quite specific educational exclusion to which Tomlinson refers and the, essentially more

political concept, social exclusion, with which FE policy comes to exercise concern.

Kennedy's *Learning Works*, published the following year, 1997, moves the debate on from educational inclusion to the broader concept of social inclusion. Her concern is more explicitly with widening participation not just to the educationally excluded but to the socially excluded. Her argument is, 'we have failed to recognise further education's potential as a vital engine not only of economic renewal but of social cohesion' (1997:2). We see again the dual formulation of purpose (economy and society) reminiscent of Tomlinson but this time the nature of the benefits to society are made more specific in the concept of 'social cohesion'. A cohesive society is one which is to some degree united or held together as a unit, the implication is that FE can play an important part in "cohering" society. Kennedy's argument is that FE can do this because, 'It is a weapon against poverty. It is the route to participation and active citizenship' (1997: 4). 'A weapon against poverty' could be seen to eradicate the worst excesses of financial inequalities in society whilst the promotion of active citizenship potentially strives to engage members of the society in a common project; both could be considered as promoting cohesion. Kennedy's aim of promoting social cohesion hinges upon the notion that FE has the 'potential to reach out to many who have previously been excluded or missed out or who want to advance their skills' (1997: 4). When Kennedy uses 'excluded' in this context it becomes apparent that she has in mind a broader social group than the people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to whom Tomlinson refers.

Kennedy's biggest success, I would argue, is in taking the issue of widening participation in FE out of the hands of local authority marketing managers and placing it at the centre of political debate. It is largely as a result of *Learning Works* that the

New Labour government recognises the potential for FE to meet not just educational goals but political and social objectives. Blunkett, in response to *Learning Works* notes that, ‘The Government recognises the FE sector as central to its educational policies and wider social agenda’ (*Further Education for the New Millennium*, 1998a: 7). FE thus emerges from behind its traditional moniker of the ‘Cinderella sector’ (Brooks, 1991: 147) and begins to take centre stage, albeit more for its social than educational credentials.

The importance of the new social and political role for FE is expanded upon by Blunkett in *The Learning Age*, also published in 1998 but written shortly after New Labour was first elected, which forms the government’s official policy response to *Learning Works*:

Learning will be key to a strong economy and an inclusive society. It will offer a way out of dependency and low expectation towards self-reliance and self-confidence. In doing so, it will be at the heart of the government’s welfare reform programme. We must bridge the “learning divide”, which blights so many communities and the widening gap, in terms of employment expectations and income, between those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not. (1998b: 3)

This quotation is worth unpacking as it offers us the first explicit link between FE and the political goal of social inclusion. Blunkett starts with the, now familiar, statement of dual purpose but this time the benefits for society are labelled as inclusive (this is the year following the establishment of the SEU). The conception of FE as a ‘way out of dependency’ differs from Kennedy’s ‘a weapon against poverty’. For Blunkett in 1998 it is the dependency that is more of a problem than poverty. This move away from financial poverty as a cause of problems is reinforced by the notion of a ‘learning divide’ as opposed to a wealth divide - society is no longer to be thought of as divided into the rich and poor but by ‘those who have benefited from education and training and those who have not’. This conceptualisation of the causes of inequality

results in the placing of 'learning' at the centre of welfare reform as opposed to financial redistribution. It is interesting to note the repetition of 'expectation' - low expectations causing problems, high expectations providing the solutions - which is reminiscent of Blair's desire to bring 'hope' (1997, *The Will to Win*). This relies upon an essentially psychological construction of social inclusion and exclusion. It could be argued that the attempt to acknowledge models of constructing social exclusion other than the dominant instrumentalist discourse are a political attempt to appease all within the post-compulsory sector at the start of New Labour's term of office. It may also be the case that many ideas concerning both social exclusion and FE remain to be clearly formulated.

In 1999, Sir Claus Moser produced his report *Improving Literacy and Numeracy: A Fresh Start* which considered solutions to the problem of the low levels of basic skills held by some British adults - presumably those who have not 'benefited from education and training' (Blunkett, 1998: op cit). This report highlighted a number of issues which were central to the government's focus on social inclusion. Firstly, from an economic perspective, Moser argued that 'Both literacy and numeracy have a profound effect on earnings. ... Low earnings are much more likely if one has poor basic skills than if one has good basic skills' (1999: 3.5). This reinforces the government's economic arguments for FE helping to promote social inclusion - increased learning results in qualifications and better job opportunities. Secondly, this also signifies a focus upon particular groups - emphasis is placed upon basic skills and (in Blunkett, 1998b) welfare reform, the target audience for FE is firmly placed upon the lower socio-economic groups. This is reinforced by Moser's claim:

A great deal of information is available about the social characteristics of people with poor basic skills levels. These have significant consequences for the capacity of local communities to regenerate, for democratic participation,

for the criminal justice system, the public health agenda and for issues of social cost and social welfare. (1999: 3.9)

Thirdly, Moser points to the "intergenerational" effect of poor basic skills: 'Put simply, when parents have trouble with reading, writing or numeracy, it is more likely that their children will start with a similar disadvantage at school' (1999: 3.7). This concept of inter-generational exclusion echoes Blair's 1997 argument that 'With each generation aspirations are falling. So that whereas a generation ago even the poorest believed that they had a chance to make it to the top, now children are being brought up on benefits without ambition and without hope' (1997, *The Will To Win*: 16 - see appendix).

Moser's concerns are taken up by Blunkett (2001) in *Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills*, which formed the government's response to Moser's report. *Skills for Life* explores the impact of low-level basic skills upon the lives of adults and the role of FE in helping to raise skills levels. Social exclusion is presented very much in economic terms: poverty is both a cause and an effect of social exclusion; education is to provide people with skills for employability enabling them to work and earn an income. According to the document, achieving basic skills makes people, and the nation, more prosperous and therefore more socially inclusive. Blunkett is quick to stress the economic arguments for promoting social inclusion through FE, 'People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives, are more likely to have health problems or turn to crime' (2001:1) but the economic benefits of gaining basic skills are no longer confined to the individual's earning potential but to the broader economic costs to society of crime or ill health.



This shift in economic benefits means the “mission” then becomes to give ‘all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first century society’ (2001:1). Here we see a subtle shift in emphasis, a focus simply upon basic literacy and numeracy skills could be (perhaps best) achieved through one-to-one tuition or even, conceivably, individual home learning programmes. However, skills for active participation involve coming together into classroom situations - a focus on social as well as human capital. This fits with a desire to tackle crime and improve health through participation in education. Blunkett makes explicit the link between poor basic skills and social exclusion:

As well as losing out financially, *people with literacy and numeracy skills deficiencies* may suffer in other ways. Many have low self-confidence and low motivation. Their children are more likely to struggle at school. And they are more prone to health problems and to suffer social exclusion. (2001: 4) [my emphasis].

This construction of exclusion depends upon concepts of “deficient” individuals with, ‘low self-confidence and low motivation’ and has implications of criminal and deviant behaviour and poor parenting. This relies on education to promote social inclusion through raising levels of self-esteem and motivation and promoting “positive” values such as active citizenship.

*Success for All* (DfES: 2002) complements and develops many of the themes established in *Skills for Life* (DfES: 2001). Published just one year later, *Success for All* establishes the government’s ‘vision of the future’ (frontispiece) in terms of ‘Reforming Further Education and Training’ (frontispiece). Whereas the goals of improving adult literacy and numeracy as developed in *Skills for Life* were focussed upon a wide range of providers in community centres and workplaces as well as colleges, *Success for All* focuses specifically upon the FE sector. Clarke returns us to economic constructions of exclusion, noting ‘our overriding objective to strengthen

Britain on the dual and inextricably linked foundations of social justice and economic success' (2002: 2); which later becomes, 'Further Education and training is important to the achievement of the government's twin goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity' (2002: 9).

The focus upon "economic prosperity" is familiar from *Skills for Life* and tackling social exclusion emerges as the by-product of the focus upon improving skills levels: it was not an explicit focus in 2001. *Success for All* is the first policy document relating to education which makes explicit the goal of promoting social inclusion. Clarke's emphasis upon the goals being 'inextricably linked' is important because it reveals the connection between inclusion and employment, although the government's perception now is that employment serves not just to alleviate a certain amount of financial hardship but it also removes welfare dependency, criminal inclinations and a tendency towards ill-health.

*Success for All* employs three constructions of social exclusion simultaneously: instrumental, social and psychological. For example, although the socially excluded are not explicitly referred to in this document, several references are made to 'the disadvantaged' such as, 'the commitment to widen participation and meet the needs of disadvantaged people' (2002: 4) and a measure of success will be when 'learners, including those who are disadvantaged, receive the support they need to benefit from education and training' (2002: 8). 'Disadvantage' collocates most frequently with the word 'need' in either its noun or verb form. 'Need' in this context can indicate a material, social or psychological deficit: financial deprivation, a lack of basic literacy or numeracy skills or an inability to participate in the life of one's community.

Whichever model is used to construct the socially excluded an instrumental focus upon gaining skills for employability runs through the document as a perceived solution to all “needs”.

Clarke again makes this broader role for employment clear in 2003. As a result of his perceived connection between learning and earning he argues in *14-19 Opportunity and Excellence*, ‘Too many people drop out at 16, disengaged from learning and heading for low-skilled, low-paid employment’ (2003: 1). The problem with being disengaged from learning then, is the lack of employment opportunities available to those with low level skills; in turn, ‘This not only affects their personal health, prosperity and well-being, it also damages the nation's competitiveness’ (2003: 8). So, Clarke’s argument is that youngsters must participate in education in order to become employable, for the sake of their own financial security and also, importantly for the sake of the nation’s economic prosperity. Clarke thus echoes the assumptions similarly made by Kennedy some seven years prior to *Opportunity and Excellence*. Clarke presents no evidence to indicate a more highly skilled nation will lead to increased national economic prosperity - his assumption is that what appears common sense for the individual must also logically apply to the nation as a whole.

Later that same year, in *21st Century Skills Realising Our Potential*, Clarke returns to the idea that a nationally successful economy requires a highly skilled workforce and develops many of the ideas raised in *Success for All*. This document sets out a ‘Skills Strategy’, which emphasises the importance for ‘individuals, employers and nation’ (2003: frontispiece) of a more highly skilled population and outlines ways in which this can be achieved. However we see the construction of social exclusion and the purpose of FE heading into new areas when the case is made for the government

taking on board not just responsibility for individuals' skills levels but also for individual fulfilment. That New Labour should place "personal fulfilment" as a policy focus suggests an attempt to re-negotiate the boundaries between the private lives of citizens and the public responsibilities of the state. At this stage however (2003) I would argue that a focus upon personal fulfilment is a political sop to educationalists arguing for "student-centred" provision and counteracts claims of instrumentalism.

Clarke argues:

Sustaining a competitive, productive economy which delivers prosperity for all requires an ever growing proportion of skilled, qualified people. We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor. (2003: 1)

This quotation is worth examining to reveal the assumptions that underpin Clarke's argument. His use of the word 'sustaining' in relation to a productive economy implies that the country already has a productive and competitive economy - that particular goal has been achieved. All that is required now is for it to be sustained. However, the sentence continues with 'which delivers prosperity for all', a goal which has clearly not yet been achieved, although this is not made clear. An assumption here is that a productive economy will deliver prosperity for all. However, this may not necessarily be the case: arguably a small proportion of people could be gaining through the exploitation of a low-waged group. Such a productive economy, Clarke argues, requires skilled, qualified people. This argument is echoed by Blair (2006) who claims, 'Our economic future depends on our productivity as a nation. That requires a labour force with skills to match the best in the world' (*Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*, 2006: 6). Again, this may not necessarily be the case: the Chinese economy has seen massive increases in productivity without a

pool of highly skilled labour. A 'fairer' society comes to be equated, in the next sentence, with a more inclusive society. A fairer society, as Clarke presents it, is not dependent upon economic redistribution; as Clarke makes clear, the gap is between 'the skills-rich and the skills-poor'. What starts as a statement about the economic productivity of the nation, moves in the space of a very few lines from a consideration of the wealth of individuals to a focus upon individual skills levels. We move from economic constructions of inclusion to educational constructions of inclusion.

This strong focus upon employment and bringing about social inclusion through employment is maintained by Mike Tomlinson (2004) in *14-19 Curriculum and Qualifications Reform*. He considers the purpose of FE:

As well as preparing individual young people for particular training and employments, vocational learning provides both an opportunity to enrich the experience of learners and to develop the skills needed by employers and for national economic success. (2004: 9)

So, vocational education is thought to be important for the employability of individual students, employers and the national economy.

Although perhaps not appearing to be of such immediate concern to FE as the previously discussed documents, it is also important to consider the impact of ECM (2003) which formed the basis of *The Children's Act* (2004). The Children's Act covers young people up to the age of eighteen or beyond if they were considered 'looked after' (in care) on their sixteenth birthday or if they have a learning difficulty. With this remit, the vast majority of tutors in PCET will be directly affected by the demands of the legislation to make child protection a key focus of their role. Those working in FE will have a new remit to co-operate with external agencies, such as Social Services, in reporting any welfare concerns and to place the social, emotional

and economic welfare of students central to their teaching. Teaching will need to meet the five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*; ensuring that young people are healthy, safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well being.

Organisations, such as the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), already see the post-compulsory sector as playing a further role in relation to the ECM agenda. They argue in their response to the green paper that ECM is an holistic approach to fulfilling potential which builds on current adult and family learning initiatives. They claim ‘improving the confidence and abilities of adults/parents will have a lasting impact on children - and on their educational success in particular’ (NIACE: 2003). This formally recognises building students’ confidence as a central objective of lecturers. Increased self-esteem may have previously been an “accidental” outcome of a student’s engagement in learning but it was gained as a result of a focus outside of the self. A formal attempt to build the confidence of students shifts the focus of engagement away from external objectives (the mastering of a particular subject) and onto the personal psychology of the individual student. NIACE are also formalising a demand for lecturers to take responsibility not just for the students in the classroom but for future generations outside of the direct personal contact of the lecturer.

The ECM (2003) legislation acknowledges the role of education in tackling social exclusion through helping students gain skills for employability: ‘achieving economic well being’; however, the overall impact of the Act is to shift the emphasis in post-compulsory education away from instrumental objectives and onto social and psychological concerns such as ensuring students are healthy, safe and making a

positive contribution to their communities. This increases the workload of lecturing staff as additions to the curriculum are made without removing any content. The result is that the transmission of knowledge and skills becomes secondary to both the act of participation and classroom activities akin to care or counseling.

Ruth Kelly, as Secretary of State for Education and Skills, reinforces this economic drive but moves the discussion onto social justice, returning perhaps, to some of the themes initiated by John Tomlinson (1996). She claims,

The reforms I set out here are of vital importance. They are vital to our economy, equipping young people with the skills employers need and the ability to go on learning throughout their lives. They are vital for social justice giving us the chance to break forever the historic link between social background, educational achievement and life chances that have dogged us as a nation. (*14-19 Education and Skills*, 2005: 4)

It is interesting to note the way Kelly considers skills for learning and skills for work to be interchangeable - and both vital for the economy. Kelly's assumption here is that there is a link between social (class) background, educational achievement and life chances; that is to say that the higher the social class of the individual student the more likely they are to be educationally successful and get a good job. Kelly's argument is that more vocational education, 'equipping young people with the skills employers need' will help to break this cycle. This makes little allowance for the fact that the majority of students recruited onto vocational courses will be from lower class social backgrounds and their more affluent peers will continue to opt for the cultural and social capital to be gained from following more traditional academic routes.

November 2005 saw the publication of the report Sir Andrew Foster was commissioned to write, *Realising the Potential* ("The Foster Report"). The title of

The Foster Report is familiar to us from the financial language used in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* and there is indeed a strong instrumental focus to the proposals. He argues that the FE sector as a whole lacks a coherent aim, ‘Above all, FE lacks a clearly recognised and shared core purpose’ (2005: vii) and that this focus should be based around meeting the needs of the economy. Foster’s belief is that in order for FE to ‘realise its potential’ it must ‘deliver the skills the economy, businesses and individuals need’ (2005: 2). In reaching this conclusion, Foster is aware of pre-empting some of the conclusions of the Leitch Review (2006), ‘Lord Leitch has been asked to consider what the Government’s long term ambitions should be for improving the UK’s human capital in order to increase productivity, growth and benefits to society’ (2005: 7).

However, it would be a mistake to see The Foster Report purely as a statement of the need for colleges to provide people with skills to meet the demands of the economy. Significantly, Foster also gives prominence to the role of colleges in promoting social inclusion. He argues one of the achievements of the sector is ‘it is particularly well positioned to facilitate social inclusion’ (2005: vii) and that the best FE colleges have ‘a strong commitment to social integration and inclusive learning’ (2005: 5). Foster argues there is no contradiction between the aims of meeting the needs of the economy and promoting social inclusion, indeed, he writes that the FE college of the future must, ‘Be absolutely clear about its primary purpose: to improve employability and skills in its local area contributing to economic growth and social inclusion’ (2005: 3). However, there is clearly quite a distinct discourse within the document that is hinted at with the mention of ‘inclusive learning’. Foster is clearly concerned with meeting the needs of the ‘400, 000 learners who declare themselves as having a



learning difficulty and/or disability’ (2005: 5) and ameliorating ‘the appalling figures for the number of people who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills’ (2005: 1).

Foster argues these learners come from the most disadvantaged areas and it is for this reason the FE college of the future should ‘Deliver its core purpose in an inclusive way which improves diversity and equality of opportunity’ (2005:3).

In 2006, the DfES published *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* which was the government’s response to The Foster Report and Kelly continues this explicitly instrumental focus on the needs of the economy in *Raising Skills*. Although the connection between raising skills and improving life chances is asserted there is some ambiguity in the exact meaning of ‘improving life chances’. It is only when considered in the context of the document as a whole that life chances are linked firmly to employability. Life chances and employment prospects thus become one and the same. Indeed, the purpose of the document is to provide, ‘a clearer mission for FE than it has had before – centred on developing the skills and attributes required for employment and meeting the demands of the economy’ (2006: 17). As with previous documents, the idea that FE might play a role in relation to education is not considered in this mission statement for the sector. One change worth noting is the addition of the word ‘attributes’ to the concept of ‘skills for employability’ used frequently in previous documents. Although a sense of employers requiring certain attributes in potential employees was touched upon in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, this is the first time it is placed alongside skills as a prime purpose for the sector.

Also published in 2006 and of significance to FE in *Reaching Out: An Action Plan on*

*Social Exclusion* (H.M. Government: 2006) which builds upon policies first proposed in ECM (2003). In it, Blair makes clear the continued importance of tackling social exclusion to government policy, almost ten years on from the establishment of the SEU, with the statement ‘Tackling social exclusion is at the heart of this government’s mission’ (2006: 3). This is followed by the claim, ‘It is our fundamental belief that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve their potential in life’ (2006: 3) which constructs social exclusion as a lack of opportunities or an inability of groups or individuals to take advantage of opportunities offered. Blair calculates these people as ‘About 2.5% of every generation’ who ‘seem to be stuck in a lifetime of disadvantage. Their problems are multiple, entrenched and often passed down through the generations’ (2006: 3). So, this 2.5% of the population described as suffering inherent social exclusion becomes the focus for the policy proposals outlined in the report.

Although most of this report focuses upon ‘early identification and intervention’ (2006: 6) there are also implications for FE as it constitutes a ‘drive against social exclusion throughout the life cycle’ (2006: 6). The focus upon specific groups includes children in care, adults ‘leading chaotic lives’, teenage parents and those with the lowest educational achievement, all of whom may come under the remit of post-compulsory education, explicitly in relation to aspects of the report such as, ‘improved social and relationships education’ (2006: 11). As in ECM, there is clearly an instrumental focus to tackling social exclusion through increasing educational attainment in order to get more people into employment. However, it is the social and psychological agenda for education that stands out more.

Much focus is placed upon those either identified as, or at risk of becoming, NEET

(Not in Education, Employment or Training) and links are made here to the goals of ECM in terms of joining up children's services and helping 'teenagers and young people engage in a range of positive activities' (2006: 62). These include 'improving teenagers' access to advice and information on education, health, social and personal matters and career choices' (2006: 62). A particular focus for education comes to be reducing the teenage pregnancy rate as teenage pregnancy has been linked to 'poor educational attainment, limited aspirations and disengagement from education, employment or training, poor social and emotional skills' (2006: 65). Again, as with ECM, building the self-esteem of individuals deemed to be at risk, 'developing the confidence to resist pressure to engage in early sexual activity' (2006: 66). This shifts the goals of education and whilst some acknowledgement is given to an instrumental focus upon developing skills for employability, most emphasis is upon using education to develop essentially social and psychological aims such as encouraging youngsters to volunteer in their local communities and raising their levels of self-esteem.

The aim of *Raising Expectations* (DfES: 2007) is to 'help young people improve their skills' (2007: 47) which is similar to the aims of many of the previously published documents. *Raising Expectations* differs in its focus upon the 16-19 age group and more specifically, upon that proportion of the age group presently disengaged from formal participation. In this document, Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and Skills, sets out his intention to explore, 'the most effective model for engaging 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)' (2007: 38). The aim is that, 'by 2015, some 90% of 17 year olds will be participating in some form of education or training programme' (2007: 3). Ultimately, what is

proposed is 'a new requirement to participate' (2007: 19) or, compulsory participation for every young person up to the age of eighteen. The justification for such a change in policy is based upon combination of economic and social justice arguments (2007: 11) familiar to us from previous documents.

For those who do not fulfil their 'responsibility' to participate in learning, compulsion becomes a logical next step with, 'a duty on providers to notify the system as soon as a young person drops out so that they can be re-engaged as soon as possible' (2007: 8). This compels those working within FE to play a role in monitoring young people and reporting non-compliance to an accepted behavioural-norm of enforced participation. Persistent non-participation on behalf of the young person may result in an Attendance Order, breach of which could result in sanctions, 'through either a civil or a criminal process' (2007: 8). Despite the threat of legal proceedings for non-participation, compulsory participation, however, appears magnanimous when it is claimed, 'it is those young people who are least well prepared to thrive in the world they are entering who are most likely to leave education and training early' (2007: 10). The role that education can play in helping such young people 'thrive' forms the basis of much of the document.

This need to alter the behaviour of young people hints at the new role for education. In 1997, PCE was to be concerned with providing adults with skills for employability so they could be socially included through entry into the labour market. Now FE has a new role to play in tackling social exclusion. It may be explicitly involved in the provision of 'parenting classes' (2006: 36) but is more likely to be providing 'joint programmes' (2006: 39) for disaffected teenagers 'truanting from school and drifting

into offending' (2006: 42). What is important here is not so much the change in student make-up but the proposed change in purpose; a shift has taken place from a sole concern with skills for employability (which undoubtedly remains firmly in place for a majority of students) to an additional focus upon behaviour modification through a focus upon citizenship and vocational (how to behave in the workplace - punctuality, attendance, dressing appropriately) skills. Blair relates the example of a college programme that 'combined basic skills training with work experience, engaging the boy's interest and getting him out of trouble' (2006: 42) Some may argue that FE has long since served such a purpose but that was an incidental by-product to the education on offer; the difference is that now the socialisation is not just about keeping people busy and therefore out of trouble but about actively changing behaviour.

Blair's plans to tackle teenage pregnancy involve 'improved social and relationships education' (2006: 48) again, education becomes redefined – it is no longer about imparting knowledge, or even skills, which may incidentally involve keeping youngsters off the streets, but a significant part comes to be about behaviour modification. Blair continues by calling for ambition 'on parenting support and training' (2006: 49) and his meaning is ambiguous. The intention could be for education to prepare youngsters for a future role as parents or it could involve bringing current parents into the classroom. Blair then couples together a 'support approach for adults with moderate and severe mental health problems' (2006: 50) with 'the Leitch review that will address the poor prospects for those with few qualifications or skills' (2006: 50). Those with mental health problems have already been highlighted as having poor qualifications, and those with poor qualifications as

being less likely to secure employment. Again, this hints at a shift in purpose for FE – no longer concerned solely with skills it will seek to support those with mental health problems to enable them to succeed in gaining qualifications.

Over the ten year period in which these documents were written, many concerns remain the same. However, each subtle shift in focus alters the construction of the socially excluded and the consequent purpose of the FE sector in its role in bringing about social inclusion. Through examining each model in more detail we can explore how this process of active construction has taken place and its impact upon the FE sector.

## **Conclusions**

This chapter began with an exploration of the influence of the work of various political writers upon New Labour's decision to adopt policy to tackle social exclusion and indeed upon construction of social exclusion employed. The final section which provides an overview of the major policy documents produced in relation to FE serves to illustrate the extent to which New Labour have placed the promotion of social inclusion at the heart of FE policy and the changing nature of social inclusion constructed through FE. Three major themes emerge in relation to the construction of social inclusion from this sweep of political thought and policy documents: they can be termed instrumental, social and psychological.

An instrumental model dominates all six of the policy documents I have chosen to analyse. The focus of the instrumental model is participation in the labour market and a lack of paid employment becomes a key component in the construction of social

exclusion: 'Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion' (2001: 19). Social inclusion, consequently, comes to be associated with employment or, at very least, having the skills to participate in the labour market: 'We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor' (2003: 8). The role of FE, in aiming to bring about social inclusion, is thus to promote 'employability skills for unemployed people' (1998b: 63). Participation in work is equated with social inclusion because it is argued that the individual financial return lifts people and communities out of poverty: 'People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives' (2001: 1) although broader social benefits of being in work are also alluded to.

A social model for constructing social exclusion is again apparent in all of the documents. The social model constructs the socially excluded as lacking in civic engagement and the skills for full participation in society and its democratic processes, the result of which can be some form of anti-social behaviour: 'Those who participate are less likely to experience teenage pregnancy, be involved in crime or behave anti-socially' (2007: 12). In order to bring about social inclusion, the goal of FE becomes the targeting of particular social groups prone to non-participation in formal institutions; *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* lists benefit claimants (2003: 29), ex-offenders (2003: 29), women (2003: 45), minority ethnic groups (2003: 70) and asylum seekers (2003: 72) as a particular focus of a mission 'to give all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first century society' (2001: 1).

Psychological models, in which the socially excluded are constructed as suffering

some degree of psychological weakness such as low aspirations or low levels of self-esteem, are also prevalent. This also corresponds to a construction of the socially excluded as somehow morally deviant; ex-offenders and single mothers. The role of FE becomes tackling such psychological weaknesses through initiatives to build the confidence of participants and also an explicit promotion of moral values. Although reference is made to the socially excluded having low levels of educational attainment, educational models of constructing exclusion do not appear consistently in all six documents beyond a few references to the importance of education for personal fulfilment and individual development.

As is apparent from this brief introduction, there are considerable areas of overlap between social, psychological, instrumental and educational models within the documents and even within individual sentences of the documents. For example, *The Learning Age* declares,

Community, adult and family learning will be essential in the Learning Age. It will help improve skills, encourage economic regeneration and individual prosperity, build active citizenship and inspire self-help and local development. (1998b: 77)

The word 'community' appears to take precedence over 'adult' (and consequently individual) learning; the concept of community learning implies a drawing together of people within a particular locality and their engagement within some common project. This suggests a social model that assumes the excluded lack social capital which can be promoted through education; this correlates with the desire to 'build active citizenship'. However, the necessity to 'improve skills' in order to 'encourage economic regeneration and individual prosperity' shifts the discourse onto a more instrumental model: the excluded lack human capital and FE is to provide the skills for employability. The sentence ends with a listing of three key arguments for



learning: 'building active citizenship' which recalls the social model; 'inspiring self-help' which introduces us to a psychological model, (if self-help needs 'inspiring' it suggests the prospective students are currently unable to help themselves without professional intervention) and finally, 'inspiring local development' which correlates with economic regeneration and returns us to the instrumental model with an emphasis placed upon community, rather than individual, economic development. Whichever construction of social exclusion dominates, it appears that the solution, social inclusion, is to be found in participation in the labour market.

Social inclusion is more than just a stated aim of FE policy; it comes to be actively constructed through the language of such policy documents. The aim of this chapter is to explore methods which can be employed to reveal the processes by which social inclusion is constructed through FE policy. As such, this chapter falls into three parts: The first section will explore the broader theoretical context through which the meanings of the terms social exclusion and social inclusion come to be socially and politically constructed. This process can occur because the division of society into excluded and included groups is not a natural phenomenon but an entirely social creation. Indeed, the concept of society is itself a social creation. Although the realities of material conditions such as poverty, poor-housing and lone parenthood impinge upon people's lives, it is the language of social exclusion that brings together disparate groups to shape our perceptions of society in an entirely new way. Berger and Luckmann (1968) explore the process by which the social world is constructed. The use of language is clearly central to the process of the construction of social exclusion although such a focus upon language is in no way intended to deny the material reality of people's circumstances. Rather it is to indicate that language, particularly language used by governments in the creation of policy, can itself have material repercussions as different groups of people may move in and out of social exclusion and in so doing may attract or lose entitlement to state benefits or support with, for example, child care. The changing language has material repercussions for FE as the purpose of the sector alters. It is because of this significance of language that greater insight into the processes of construction can be arrived at through applying techniques of discourse analysis.

The second section of this chapter considers issues concerned with gathering data in order to answer the three key questions to be addressed in this thesis which are:

1. How are social inclusion and social exclusion defined and re-defined by the New Labour government?
2. Why is FE used to promote social inclusion?
3. How, according to government policy is FE to be used to promote social inclusion?

The data to answer these questions comes from two sources: government documents relating to the FE sector and the transcripts of interviews conducted with key policy makers. This data will provide the basis for exploring the way in which social inclusion is constructed through policy. Question one has been considered in chapter two through an initial exploration of policy documents and some of Blair's key speeches in relation to social inclusion. It will be further investigated through an analysis of policy documents. Question two has again been touched upon briefly in chapter two but will be explored more fully, primarily through the data gathered from interviews with key policy makers. Question three will be answered through an analysis of government policy documents and interview data.

Six policy documents have been selected from some thirteen published between 1997 and 2007. The rationale for this selection will be explored. In addition, I have interviewed David Blunkett and Bill Rammell, Members of Parliament who had responsibility for overseeing legislation in relation to the FE sector. I interviewed Rob Wye and Sir Andrew Foster who influenced the content of the documents *Success for All* and *Raising Skills* respectively and the civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations*. The rationale for having selected these interviewees is

discussed in this section of the methodology alongside the details of the interviewing process.

The third section of this chapter considers the process of analysis. My method for analysing the data gathered will emerge from the discussion of social constructionism and discourse analysis in section one of this methodology. Drawing primarily upon the work of Fairclough (1998, 2003) and Scott (1990) I will develop a process of coding and classification from which emerges three main models for the construction of social inclusion: social, psychological and instrumental. I add to this a fourth, an educational model which, although not dominant within the documents exists implicitly as a legacy of past goals for the FE sector and political aspirations towards meritocracy. Having identified a framework of themes I will then explore theories of discourse analysis to devise a method for interpreting the documents.

### **Broader Theoretical Context**

In its simplest terms, describing social exclusion as a political and social construct implies that the phenomenon is constructed by society and, more specifically, by the political systems and agents within that society. This is to agree with Berger and Luckmann that ‘Men together produce a human environment, with the totality of its socio-cultural and psychological formations’ (1968: 69). Social-constructionism implies that the phenomenon in question belongs to the social world, that its very existence is not only better explained in social rather than biological or psychological terms (Crossley, 2005: 296) but is intrinsically dependent upon the social world. As such, social constructs are specific features of particular societies and those like it;

they are particular to the social, economic and political conditions of that society.

It is my argument that the demarcation of a section of society as “socially excluded” is specific to the social, economic and political conditions of late twentieth/early twenty-first century western societies. The political act of demarcating itself creates groups labelled or perceived of as socially excluded first by policy makers, then by those enacting policy and ultimately by those so-labelled, as applying the label to themselves may reap pecuniary or other advantage. The process of demarcation suggests particular ideas about society are held by the political elite. Such ideas need to be considered in relation to the specific societies and contexts that have produced them, (Furedi, 1998: 17). The implication of this is that knowledge of the world is not simply “out there” but depends upon what we, as a product of our society, bring to the world.

It is not the case that the material circumstances of people’s lives have changed to any great extent since the emergence of the discourse of exclusion. Indeed, it could be argued that certainly unemployment was actually higher twenty years ago than it is today and yet there was no labelling of groups as “socially excluded” then. This has led some to argue that the term social exclusion ‘describes a phenomenon that already existed, but lacked a suitable name’ (Page, 2000: 4). However, it may be the case that although many of the conditions pertaining to the phenomenon of being excluded existed, the act of bringing different groups of people and disparate social problems together, does create new perceptions about the way society is shaped.

It is acknowledged that the process of defining categories relating to the social world

can often reveal more about those doing the defining than the object of definition (Woolgar and Pawluch: 218). It is with this process of examining 'the specific vocabularies that are used to describe and classify a condition' (Spector and Kitsuse: 1987) that I shall begin my analysis. I will explore 'the activities through which definitions of social problems are constructed' (ibid). This is a necessary step in the argument, set out by Woolgar and Pawluch (1985: 215), of declaring and examining a social construction. They identify three necessary steps: identifying a condition or behaviour, identifying definitions or claims made about the condition or behaviour and finally proposing that as the condition or behaviour does not vary, 'variations in the definition of the condition must result from the social circumstances of the definers rather than the condition itself' (1985: 215). This process can be applied to social exclusion. Various conditions or behaviours can be identified such as unemployment, non-participation in education or training, or single parent-hood, which have not altered for many years. These conditions now have the label of social exclusion applied to them: a process of definition which reveals more about the changing concerns of the definers (in this case, mainly the government) than the changing circumstances of the people demarcated in this way.

In arguing that social exclusion is a construct I do not intend to deny the reality of people's circumstances; indeed it is in acknowledging the (continued) existence of poverty that the historical specificity of the concept of exclusion becomes apparent. Social exclusion can be seen, amongst other definitions, as socio-economic inequality and/or unequal access to the labour market and as such become social facts of our late capitalist society. Similar social facts include not only the existence of teenage mothers, children in care or people with disabilities but also importantly, the problems

experienced by them.

Capitalist society has always produced, indeed perhaps depended upon, the existence of a reserve pool of labour who for much of the time will be just that – in reserve from the labour market, not actively participating (for an elaboration of this argument see Byrne: 1999: 20 and also Levitas, 2005: 187). Marx identified the “lumpenproletariat” in *The German Ideology* (1845) and in 1984, Charles Murray popularised the term “underclass” amongst more “right-wing” sections of the population. Whilst the condition of being excluded from the labour market in particular and society more broadly is longstanding, there is a connection between the form the exclusion takes and the particular phase of capitalism. I would go some way towards agreeing with Byrne (1999) in his argument that, ‘Contemporary social exclusion is a product of the phase shift in the character of contemporary capitalism. It is an inherent property of polarised post-industrial capitalism’ (1999: 78). However, this analysis leaves unanswered the question of why such a phase requires a political focus upon social exclusion as a problem and inclusion as a solution. In other historical periods a reserve pool of labour has been dismissed either as a, perhaps regrettable, social fact or as a positive necessity for a productive and dynamic market economy.

It is the defining of social exclusion as a problem for the whole of society that is relatively recent. In the not too distant past exclusion, particularly self-exclusion, may have been seen as a radical political statement or an individual lifestyle choice. As with such activities as bullying or sexual harassment, the fact of social inequality in access to the labour market has a long history, ‘but it is only in the specific

circumstances of the recent period that they are defined as problems' (Furedi, 1997: 59). I will work with the understanding of social exclusion as a problem, agreeing with Spector and Kitsuse that 'What the sociologist should observe is not the condition, but how people react in relation to it' (1987: 34).

This is to consider definitions of social exclusion as being, 'expressed in terms that describe the condition, reflect attitudes towards the condition, and give numerous other hints as to how that condition is considered offensive or problematic' (Spector and Kitsuse, 1987: 8). As a definition, social exclusion both describes a condition: being excluded from the mainstream of society and importantly, reflects attitudes towards the condition. Although the term "social exclusion" is an abstract noun (it also frequently appears as a concrete noun "the socially excluded") it stems from a verb: to exclude. In the verb form a subject would be required to acknowledge "who" is "doing" the excluding. The transition to the nominal grammatical form removes the need for a subject. This neatly reflects the government's attitude to social exclusion as it distances the problem from any cause or any social or political group who may ultimately be responsible for the act of excluding (see Fairclough, 2000 for a broader discussion of this argument). The language of social exclusion portrays an "ever-present" condition as opposed to an actively-perpetrated social, political and economic process. As the definition reveals insights into both the condition and attitudes towards it, the social problem becomes defined as whatever people think it is (Woolgar and Pawluch: 1985: 215). As Silver notes, 'the power to name a social problem has vast implications for the policies considered suitable to address it' (Silver, 1994: 533). It is the definition of social exclusion and, more specifically, the definition of social exclusion as a problem that suggests policy solutions.



Policy solutions emerge in the construction of social inclusion. As language is so central to the political construction of social exclusion, it is also fundamental to the construction of concepts of social inclusion. This takes place mainly through the political rhetoric of speeches, briefings and more significantly, policy documents. Unlike social exclusion which is often constructed explicitly through the process of defining the role of state institutions such as the SEU or the Minister for Social Exclusion, social inclusion is often constructed implicitly through the proposals of policy documents. For example, promoting social inclusion is stated as a purpose of the FE sector in numerous policy documents but with little attempt at defining what is meant by social inclusion. It is only by considering the proposals connected to this stated purpose that readers can begin to gain a sense of how social inclusion is defined. Uncovering the construction therefore necessitates a detailed analysis of policy documents. Policy text analysis can be considered political as it ‘asks questions about what is new and what is absent from the construction of new narratives and ideas’ (Appleby and Bathmaker, 2006: 706).

### **Discourse Analysis**

A useful framework for the analysis of documents has been provided by Scott (1990) who argues that texts are best approached with a view to examining three levels of meaning interpretation: the intended meaning of the author; the received meaning constructed by the audience; and the internal or content meaning inherent within the text itself (1990: 54). This is similar to Fairclough’s (2003) separation of the process of meaning-making into: ‘the production of the text, the text itself, and the reception of the text’ (2003: 10). Such a process of establishing intended, received and content

meanings draws upon techniques of discourse analysis and depends upon situating texts within social context.

To argue that the language of policy documents can express social power and bring about material changes is in keeping with my contention that social exclusion is constructed. Social constructionist theories place emphasis upon the role of language and texts in constructing the social world. However, the danger with this position is idealism; denying the reality of the material circumstances of people's existence (for example, poverty and the effects of oppression) and arguing for changes in language use to construct a better society. I agree with Fairclough that 'although aspects of the social world such as social institutions are ultimately socially constructed, once constructed, they are realities' (2003: 8). This is in-keeping with Sayer's (1997) theory of 'weak social-constructionism'; social reality exists and is more than language alone, however, language plays a part in interpreting reality and constructing social orders.

This is to suggest a particular relationship between language and reality that appears controversial to more post-modern commentators who would deny the role of language in both reflecting (as opposed to constructing) reality and the reality of socially constructed institutions. May argues that 'documents do not simply reflect but also construct social reality and versions of events' (1993: 138). The language of policy documents has material consequences, then, in the changes it can bring about through policies enacted. The language of such publications can reflect the reality of the experience of working or studying in an FE college but, importantly, can also construct interpretations of such experiences and shape the understandings people

have of their situation and the ways in which they act upon their surroundings.

Critical discourse analysis of policy documents is made possible through an acknowledgement of the relationship between language and reality, that language can both reflect and construct reality. Saussure's (1983) separation of language into signifieds and signifiers led to the concept that meaning does not exist within language but rather is produced by language. For structuralists, interpreting the content of a text can only become possible by considering the units it comprises in relation to one another - the nature of the relationships and the areas of slippage between units become all important. Post-structuralists view language as even more elusive; the meaning of the content beyond the confines of those relationships between textual units ceases to exist. As Derrida states: 'il n'y a rien de hors-texte' (1978). This opens up the text to a multitude of potential interpretations but at the same time, implies that there can be no meaning outside of the text. The critical discourse analysis I am employing is in opposition to this approach.

The post-structuralist approach has been criticised as suggesting 'that a text does not refer to anything beyond itself nor to the intentions of its author' (Giddens, 1979 in May, 1993: 140). The reading of policy documents in this way has two main repercussions: firstly, it denies the material consequences of such documentation, with no meaning beyond the text little account can be taken of the potential for such documentation to alter the reality of life in an FE college; secondly, it prevents the taking of a political stance upon the meaning of the content (Eagleton, 1996: 142). Indeed, it could be argued that taking such a post-structuralist approach to the language of policy documents would render any attempt at analysis literally meaning-

less.

My aim in analysis runs counter to this post-structuralist approach. I intend to ascertain the changes policy documents can bring about and to analyse the political purpose underlying the nature of such initiatives. This is very much to assume that policy documents have a purpose (the purpose of action) and that this is ‘the purpose of the author of the text’ (Scott, 1990: 13). It becomes possible then, to establish through empirical research the nature of authorial intent. With government policy documents this is not unproblematic. Questions arise about who exactly is the author of many documents which I shall return to later within this chapter. Scott argues, ‘Texts must be studied as socially situated products’ (1990: 34) and it is within the context of contemporary educational, political and economic discourse that situation can take place and purpose negotiated.

In considering an analysis of government documents and interviews as discourse analysis, I draw extensively upon the work of Scott (1990) and Fairclough (2003, 2000). I take from Scott his focus upon the intended meaning of texts. Authorial intent is important for my purposes because I am interested in the political values of New Labour regarding social inclusion and the implications of this for policy. In order to better gauge authorial intent I consider the nature of “authorship” of government policy documents; although publicly fronted by government ministers, policy documents will have been written by specialist teams of civil servants with ideas initiated by policy entrepreneurs and firmed up by policy leads. This leads to the necessity of conducting interviews with key policy players.

The intended meaning of the author is the purpose the author wishes to convey as an outcome of producing the text. Authors may, of course, have more than one purpose in mind in producing a document. Just as one document may be intended to address a number of audiences; fellow ministers, civil servants, members of the press, those working within FE and the general public; so the purpose of the document may vary in each case. For example, the same document may appear to serve an instructional purpose to those working within the sector, directing future work; it can simultaneously serve a promotional purpose in presenting a particular political message to members of the press.

A concern with intended meanings is important in establishing the social situation and purpose of the policy documents. The questions I am seeking to address are:

- What is the purpose of a particular government policy document?
- What are the specific policies being proposed?
- What are the political values underpinning such policy proposals?
- How does the imposition of such a political purpose alter existing educational provision?
- How does this construct social inclusion?
- How does this impact upon the purpose of FE?

The problem of method now needs to be addressed for as Platt (1981a) indicates, the process of engaging in documentary research cannot be regarded as constituting a method, 'since to say that one will use documents is to say nothing about how one will use them' (1981a: 31). The best way to explore and expose the language used to

construct social exclusion and inclusion is through drawing upon the techniques of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is the most appropriate method to employ for the purposes of this thesis because of its focus upon critically interrogating language use. I have already indicated my intent to exploit some of the techniques more commonly associated with (literary) textual analysis. I would justify this approach on the basis that many essentially literary devices are used in modern policy documents: metaphor, simile, repetition and alliteration abound.

To approach documents in such a way as to expose New Labour's construction of social exclusion and social inclusion and allow for investigation and questioning of the underlying values and assumptions, involves more than a critique of language use but an examination of the rhetoric alongside its implications for material reality. This is a "weak" form of social constructionism which 'merely emphasizes the socially constructed nature of knowledge and institutions and the way in which knowledge often bears the marks of its social origins' (Sayer, 1997: 446) as opposed to a "stronger" form which would likewise argue that the referents of knowledge are also constructions. A distinction between 'brute' and 'institutional' facts is drawn by Searle (1996) to differentiate between 'intrinsic features' and 'observer relative features' (1996: 2). For my purpose of exploring constructions, both brute and institutional facts need to be examined.

## **Gathering Data**

### **Documents**

Tracing the creation of policy, from the original idea to the enactment of legislation

could be helpful for the purposes of my analysis by revealing the genesis of the initial idea, the justification or perceived need for policy and differences between the original conceptualisation of policy and the final legislation. For an analysis of the process of construction it would be useful to determine which came first: a problem seeking a solution or a policy seeking a justification (Kingdon: 1995). Even an investigation into who made the initial proposals for policy could help expose an underlying sense of purpose by revealing whether particular pressure groups or people with specific interests have influence upon government ministers. Hill (2005) points to the existence of, 'a strong education community which is eager to influence policy' (2005: 126) although he acknowledges that in recent years ideologically driven union members, classroom teachers and academics have had considerably less influence upon shaping education policy than they may have had in the past. Hill also notes that education is, 'a policy area in which the actual characteristics of policy are very likely to be considerably influenced at the point of delivery' (2005: 124) and whilst it is undoubtedly true that teachers and college principals retain influence over what happens in their classroom or institution, policies such as changes to funding formulae and re-designed curricular make such autonomy increasingly difficult to exercise. A desire to prevent extensive practitioner autonomy is, perhaps, itself indicative of New Labour's values on education. More influential than practitioners in shaping policy maybe a group identified by Kingdon (1995) as 'policy entrepreneurs'; politicians, civil servants or pressure group leaders with issues they want to put on the public agenda.

Policy can perhaps best be considered as a course of action adopted or to be pursued, (Hill, 2005: 9) or 'the courses of action undertaken by public agencies and institutions

under the authority of government' (Marinetto, 1999: 3), perhaps designed to solve problems (Hill, 2005: 153). These definitions of policy hinge upon notions of intent and action although Marinetto indicates that a policy can involve non-intervention or a decision not to take action, (1999: 3) and Parsons argues, 'a policy may also be something which is not intended, but is nonetheless carried out in the practice or implementation of administration' (1995: 13). Dror (1989) hints at older definitions of policy indicating a choice between different options (in Parsons, 1995: 13). This points to the more recent connection between politics and policy: the fact of having policies is now central to political parties although the range of different options from which to choose is only as wide as the parameters of contemporary political debate. The quantity of policy increases apace: some thirteen policy documents relating specifically to FE have been published in the past decade alone. Although the busyness of government may appear to cover up any lack of broad philosophy for FE, an analysis of courses of action and intent can reveal the political values underpinning policy.

My interest in the technical side of the policy making process is to help in establishing the intended (authorial) purpose of policy documents in order to better analyse meaning. I have shown that although publicly "fronted" by ministers, documents may actually be written by leading civil servants in consultation with a range of policy consultants or advisors. This raises questions about whose purpose is being conveyed. It appears to be politically expedient for Ministers to keep this political process masked and for the general public to assume the purpose expressed in the document is the intent of the proposing Minister. It becomes necessary for my purposes to maintain this fiction and use "author" to indicate either the writer of the document or



the named Minister. To a certain extent then, questions of specific authorship become irrelevant for the purposes of analysis. An investigation of process however does help uncover intended purpose as it can reveal how policies have emerged, subsequently been altered and the various influences that have shaped the final policy document.

Government produced documents 'comprise the single largest class of documents available to the social researcher' (Scott, 1990: 16) and this is certainly the case in the field of education. Of these, a division can be made between documents produced by independent officials who have been commissioned by government ministers to carry out a review into a certain area of policy (such as Kennedy, Moser, John Tomlinson or Mike Tomlinson) and documents based upon the findings of these reviews, which ostensibly have been produced by government ministers, and have implications for legislation, funding or inspection regimes. Other documents concerned more generally with child protection (*Every Child Matters*, 2003) and tackling social exclusion (*Reaching Out: an action plan on social exclusion*, 2006) have also had a significant impact upon the sector.

At its simplest, a document is a piece of writing, described by Scott (1990) as 'an artefact, which has as its central feature inscribed text' (1990: 5). A distinction can be made between public and private documents (May, 1993: 136) and this becomes important in considering the purpose of documents. Sidney and Beatrice Webb considered documents to be, 'exclusively for the purpose of action' (in Scott, 1990: 11) and this connection between a document and the purpose of action is reinforced by Fairclough, (2003), who refers to government documents as 'mediated genres specialized for action at a distance' (2003: 34). This particularly applies to the

government produced public policy documents which are my concern. Describing the documents I am to analyse as written texts containing public statements of action is important for two reasons. Firstly, with the dominance of post-structuralist thought, it becomes possible to consider a wide range of artefacts as text. Secondly, in a political period when much policy is disseminated through media appearances and soundbites, the centrality and importance of the written text can often be overshadowed.

However, I would argue that the permanency of the written document imparts significance into both its creation and reception. Unlike the ephemeral nature of the spontaneous spoken word, a written text, particularly a public text for the purpose of action, implies a greater deal of consideration has gone into its construction.

Unlike other written texts, government policy documents come with an indication that they will have the power of legislative government behind the weight of their words and therefore have more than idealistic or linguistic concerns but can impact upon the reality of the lived experience of working or studying in FE. May argues that documentary research is important because 'documents inform the practical and political decisions which people make on a daily and longer term basis' (1993: 133) and this is especially relevant in relation to government policy documents which have a unique status as social research evidence in the material changes they can bring about. This implies a relationship between language and power that does not exist with all texts, 'documents are now viewed as mediums through which social power is expressed' (May, 1993: 139).

Government commissioned reviews are officially sanctioned, largely welcomed by commissioning ministers and often closely reflected in subsequent legislation.

Government White Papers, (such as *14-19 Opportunity and Excellence* and *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*) are statements of fairly definite legislative intentions. As such, these documents have real consequences for FE, having an impact upon the funding colleges receive, and the content of the curriculum, the target audience for recruitment and even the values to be imparted. This is very much the case with DfES policy documents such as I will be analysing, which will influence day-to-day decision-making and the future direction of FE. Such publications have become increasingly influential in shaping the direction of ostensibly independent FE institutions.

The first issue to be addressed for my analysis, given the volume of government sanctioned documents produced, is that of sampling. As Platt indicates: ‘Sometimes in documentary research, there are large numbers of potentially relevant documents, and the possibility of sampling in the usual sense arises’ (1981a: 37). I have indicated thirteen documents that have been published with specific reference to FE within the past decade. In order to explore the detail as opposed to the generalities, it is necessary to analyse only a proportion of this number. I have decided to focus on documents that have been produced by government ministers as opposed to government sanctioned policy reviews (this rules out documents by Kennedy, Tomlinson and Leitch) as these will be more revealing of the values of government and more indicative of the policies to be enacted in legislation. I have also decided to focus upon documents that apply specifically to FE as opposed to the 14-19 phase which overlaps with compulsory schooling, despite acknowledging the increasing influence of this age group upon the sector. This influence will grow in future years as remaining in education or training becomes compulsory for all up to the age of eighteen. By ruling out 14-19 policy documents and official reviews, I am left with

six DfES published papers which relate specifically to the FE sector:

### **1 *The Learning Age (1998b)***

*The Learning Age* was written shortly after New Labour was first elected; however, it builds upon two highly influential reports commissioned by the previous Conservative government: Tomlinson's *Inclusive Learning* (1996) and Kennedy's *Learning Works* (1997). It could be argued that the attempt to acknowledge models of constructing social exclusion other than the dominant instrumentalist discourse are a political attempt to appease all within the post-compulsory sector at the start of New Labour's term of office. It may also be the case that many ideas concerning both social exclusion and FE remain to be clearly formulated.

### **2 *Skills for Life: The National Strategy for Improving Adult Literacy and Numeracy Skills (2001)***

*Skills for Life* was published in 2001 as a policy response to the report of Sir Claus Moser, *A Fresh Start* (1998), which examined the extent of literacy and numeracy problems amongst adults in England. *Skills for Life* explores the impact of low-level basic skills upon the lives of adults and the role of FE in helping to raise skills levels. Social exclusion is presented very much in economic terms: poverty is both a cause and effect of social exclusion; education is to provide people with skills for employability enabling them to work and earn an income. According to the document, achieving basic skills makes people, and the nation, more prosperous and therefore more socially inclusive. Whereas *The Learning Age* was written shortly after New Labour was elected, *Skills for Life* comes towards the end of their first term in office. Ideas concerning social exclusion and the purpose of FE have been "worked out" in a

little more detail.

### **3 *Success for All* (2002)**

*Success for All* (DfES: 2002) complements and develops many of the themes established in *Skills for Life* (DfES: 2001). Published just one year later, *Success for All* establishes the government's 'vision of the future' (frontispiece) in terms of 'Reforming Further Education and Training' (frontispiece). Whereas the goals of improving adult literacy and numeracy as developed in *Skills for Life* were focused upon a wide range of providers in community centres and workplaces as well as colleges, *Success for All* focuses specifically upon the FE sector. The stated purpose of reform is 'the achievement of the government's twin goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity' (2002: 9). The focus upon 'economic prosperity' is familiar from *Skills for Life* and tackling social exclusion emerges as a "by-product" of the focus upon improving skills levels: it was not an explicit focus in 2001. *Success for All* is the first policy document relating to education which makes explicit the goal of promoting social inclusion.

### **4 *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, Realising our Potential* (2003)**

The White Paper, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: realising our potential*, published in July 2003, seems to develop out of many of the discussions raised in *Success for All*. This document sets out a 'Skills strategy', which emphasises the importance for 'individuals, employers and nation' (2003: frontispiece) of a more highly skilled population and outlines ways in which this can be achieved. However, we see the construction of social exclusion and the purpose of FE heading into new areas when

the case is made for the government taking on board not just responsibility for individuals' skills levels but individual fulfilment also. That New Labour should place 'personal fulfilment' as a policy focus suggests an attempt to re-negotiate the boundaries between the private lives of citizens and the public responsibilities of the state.

### **5 *Raising Skills Improving Life Chances (2006)***

In 2006, the DfES published *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* which was the government's response to The Foster Report, *Realising the Potential* (2005). The title of The Foster Report is familiar to us from the financial language used in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* and Ruth Kelly in *Raising Skills* continues this explicitly instrumental focus on the needs of the economy. The purpose of the document is to provide, 'a clearer mission for FE than it has had before – centred on developing the skills and attributes required for employment and meeting the demands of the economy' (2006: 17). As with previous documents, the idea that FE might play a role in relation to education is not considered in this mission statement for the sector. One change worth noting is the addition of the word 'attributes' to the concept of 'skills for employability' used frequently in previous documents. Although a sense of employers requiring certain attributes in potential employees was touched upon in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, this is the first time it is placed alongside skills as a prime purpose for the sector.

### **6 *Raising Expectations Staying in Education and Training Post-16***

The aim of *Raising Expectations* (DfES, 2007) is to 'help young people improve their

skills' (2007: 47) which is similar to the aims of many of the previously published documents. *Raising Expectations* differs in its focus upon the 16-19 age group and more specifically, upon that proportion of the age group presently disengaged from formal participation. Johnson sets out his intention to explore, 'the most effective model for engaging 16-17 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET)' (2007: 38). The aim is that, 'by 2013, some 90% of 17 year olds will be participating in some form of education or training programme' (2007: 3). Ultimately, what is proposed is 'a new requirement to participate' (2007: 19) or, compulsory participation for every young person up to the age of eighteen. The justification for such a change in policy is based upon combination of economic and social justice arguments (2007: 11) familiar to us from previous documents.

## **Interviews**

In addition to an analysis of these six documents I have conducted five interviews. I interviewed two government ministers responsible for "fronting" FE policy documents and in charge of the relevant ministerial departments: David Blunkett and Bill Rammell. I interviewed two people who have been very closely involved in advising government ministers about the future direction of FE policy under New Labour: Rob Wye and Sir Andrew Foster. I also interviewed the civil servant who was responsible for writing one of the policy documents but who must remain anonymous under the Civil Service Code of Practice.

I selected a list of potential participants in advance of beginning the interview process based upon my impressions of whom the influential people were which had been garnered from my wider reading. However, it soon became apparent, when I began

the process of arranging interviews, that the people I had assumed to be significant players were less so than other names which occurred frequently in conversation. Ultimately, the selection of interviewees emerged organically from the interview process. The people I interviewed were listed below and the date the interview was carried out is in brackets after their name. The dates are significant because they took place over a period of almost a year and obviously political and social changes were occurring over that time period.

### **1. David Blunkett (18/07/07)**

David Blunkett was Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment from 1995 – 1997 and Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1997 - 2001). He oversaw the publication of *The Learning Age* (1998) and *Skills for Life* (2001). It was useful to interview Blunkett as he was responsible for FE policy at the very beginning of the New Labour period of office. He was the first to make explicit the role of FE in promoting social inclusion. Interviewing Blunkett in 2007 was interesting as the distance of ten years and the fact that he was no longer a serving government minister gave him much more freedom to talk openly. He began the interview by declaring: ‘The foreword to *The Learning Age* is the best thing I’ve ever written. It encapsulated what I really believe’ (interview with author, 18/07/07) and this set the tone for the remainder of the interview in which Blunkett reflected upon his successes and “missed opportunities” from his period of office.

### **2. Rob Wye (21/09/07)**

At the time of the interview (21/09/07), Rob Wye was the National Director of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Prior to this, he was the Executive Director of



Northamptonshire LSC. From February to July 2002 he was on secondment as the LSC's National Director of Policy and Development, where he played a key role in working with the DfES, particularly on developing the *Success for All* (2002) document and the subsequent consultation. It is because of this influence over the content of *Success for All* that I was keen to interview Rob Wye.

### **3. Civil Servant (XX)(11/10/07)**

I was very fortunate in being able to interview the civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations* (2007) as this interview allowed me to gain insights into the policy making process and the role of civil servants in advising and briefing ministers. It is interesting to note, for example, the use of pronouns in sentences such as: 'We think, although it's challenging, we can get to 90% and the reason for this [legislation] really is, is that enough?' (Interview with author, 11/10/07). The use of 'we' shows the sense of common purpose between ministers and civil servants. The identity of the civil servant I spoke to must remain anonymous (being referred to throughout this thesis as simply XX) yet this anonymity resulted in a relatively uninhibited conversation.

### **4. Bill Rammell (22/04/08)**

When I interviewed Bill Rammell he was the Minister of State, Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education and has therefore had influence over more recent documents such as *Raising Expectations* and the decision to raise the age of compulsory participation up to eighteen. In many ways the interview with Rammell is most revealing when considered in comparison to the interview with Blunkett. This comparison makes clear the changes that have occurred in the perceived sense of

purpose of the FE sector. Comparing the definitions of social inclusion provided by Blunkett and Rammell enables me to gain insight into the process of active political construction that has taken place over the past decade.

#### **5. Sir Andrew Foster (28/05/08)**

Foster was commissioned by government ministers to write a review of the FE sector and his report, *Realising the Potential* was published in 2005. The government's response to this report formed the basis of the 2006 document *Raising Skills*. The interview with Foster provided a fascinating insight into the policy making process.

He says:

When Andrew Adonis saw me and encouraged me to do this, it was implicitly accepted that the sector needed more focus, it needed more attention. I think he felt it needed someone from outside to look at it and I think he felt that Brown would be supportive of this and there was a window of opportunity that I had to go through. Brown was going to champion this issue and it was linking up his interests and linking up with Sandy Leitch which really allowed us to see some development happening. (Interview with author, 28/05/08).

It is interesting to see who approached Foster to write this report, he later explains: 'I think they probably asked me to do it because I used to be Chairman of the Audit Commission. I was persona grata with the treasury as someone who was rational but hard nosed and it seemed at the time that almost an outsider could make the argument better' (interview with author, 28/05/08). Foster reveals the importance of playing to Brown's agenda (even though this was 2004) 'because at the time it was clear he was going to be the next Prime Minister'. So, Foster (and by implication Ruth Kelly in 2006) was trying to appeal to Brown's values regarding social inclusion and FE as opposed to Blair's. The Foster Report was compiled half-way through the 97-07 decade whilst Clarke was Secretary of State for Education and Skills. His views on

social inclusion and the purpose of the FE sector illustrate the transition that was taking place between different constructions of social inclusion.

The process of conducting the interviews and the data gathered from them has had a significant impact upon this thesis. The interviews have helped provide a greater understanding of the policy making process and the transition from idea to legislation. They have helped clarify authorial intent in revealing the ideas and values that lay behind the publication of the documents. All of the interviewees, for example, agreed that promoting social inclusion should be a key objective of the FE sector. The interviews I conducted were semi-structured, that is, I submitted questions in advance of the actual interview, but in the actual interview I probed beyond the given brief and picked up on anything interesting the interviewee said. In some cases I had more freedom to do this than others. Bill Rammell, the current Minister of State, Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education was much more carefully guarded in his comments, had had answers prepared for him by civil servants and was reluctant for me to venture “off script”. In part at least, this was due to the pressures of time but it was also a result of Rammell having much more at stake if he was misquoted. Foster, on the other hand, had completely finished his work with the government when I interviewed him and was approaching retirement. He was very free with his time allowing me to talk to him for two hours and had little interest in sticking to the submitted questions. Comparability of data was not a significant issue; on the whole I submitted different questions to each interviewee depending upon their particular role or the document they had been responsible for. An exception to this was a question on the definition of social inclusion. Whilst all the interviewees agreed on the importance of social inclusion, they all defined it in a different way. The questions

submitted in advance of the interviews can be found in the appendix.

### **Ethical Procedures**

All the interviews I conducted were digitally recorded with the participants' full knowledge and consent. I transcribed the interview recordings and, as agreed, submitted copies of the transcription to the interviewees for their approval. I allowed participants to make changes or withdraw comments from the transcripts at this stage. Only one person, Foster, asked for certain phrases to be removed from the transcript. This I duly complied with. It was at this stage that the civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations* asked for her interview transcript to be made fully anonymous. Again, this was complied with. After the transcripts had been approved by the interviewees, I asked them to sign consent forms to formally declare their willingness for me to publish extracts from the transcripts in both this thesis and any publications that may arise from it. This they have all done. Having obtained formal consent from all the participants regarding the use of the written transcripts, I then destroyed all of the audio recordings of the original interviews.

### **Process of Analysis**

In section one I outlined my intention to draw upon techniques of discourse analysis in order to investigate the data gathered from documents and interviews. My analysis uses the transcribed interview proceedings as a form of data similar to the documents. As Platt (1981) indicates, my use of documents and interview transcripts in this research says nothing about how I intend to make use of such sources; indeed, there is no generally accepted theory for the use of documents in research, (Scott, 1990: 9). My assertion that the language of documents can contain meaning outside of the

confines of the text indicates nothing of the methods by which such meaning can be measured or interpreted. Scott defines measurement in this context as referring to, 'the processes of coding and classifying source material into the theoretically defined categories required for the researcher's purposes' (1990: 9). This involves drawing upon techniques of discourse analysis; to consider a text or a document as a discourse is, at its simplest, to view it as 'an element of social life which is closely interconnected with other elements' (Fairclough, 2003: 3). To consider policy documents as discourse then is to consider them in relation to other documents and their social and political context. Furthermore, as Appleby and Bathmaker (2006) indicate, 'policy as discourse ... can be analysed for the language and images that are used which aim to define the structures that policy wishes to create' (2006: 706). I would add to this the importance of personifying "policy" in order to open up authorial intent and expose the broader political context of government documents. The process of analysis and investigating context still requires methods of interpreting meaning.

The process of coding and classifying (Scott, 1990: 9) necessitates reading and re-reading the data (the selected documents and interview transcripts) in order to draw out particular ideas that recur as themes throughout the data. After several detailed and critical readings of the documents and interview transcripts three main themes for understanding the construction of social inclusion begin to emerge. These themes are explored as "models" for the construction of social inclusion through FE policy, as discussed in chapter two. The three models are labelled instrumental, social and psychological. By examining the relative dominance of each model over time we can begin to understand the impact upon FE of the changing constructions of social

inclusion.

An instrumental model dominates all of the policy documents. The focus of the instrumental model is participation in the labour market and a lack of paid employment becomes a key component in the construction of social exclusion: 'Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion' (2001: 19). Social inclusion, consequently, comes to be associated with employment or, at very least, having the skills to participate in the labour market: 'We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor' (2003: 8). The role of FE, in aiming to bring about social inclusion, is thus to promote: 'employability skills for unemployed people' (1998b: 63). Participation in work is equated with social inclusion because it is argued that the individual financial return lifts people and communities out of poverty: 'People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives' (2001: 1) although broader social benefits of being in work are also alluded to.

This instrumental model corresponds loosely with Levitas's (2005) RED in that exclusion is considered to have a financial basis. Lister (2004) also argues that exclusion is based upon income. However, Levitas argues that financial redistribution should take place through the tax and benefit systems. Kennedy (1997) and Leitch (2006) help shape the government's view that the perceived purpose of FE should be employability skills, whilst Wolf (2002) is amongst those offering a critique of this approach.

A social model for constructing exclusion is again apparent in all of the documents. The social model constructs the socially excluded as lacking in civic engagement and the skills for full participation in society and its democratic processes, the result of which can be some form of anti-social behaviour: 'Those who participate are less likely to experience teenage pregnancy, be involved in crime or behave anti-socially' (2007: 12). In order to bring about social inclusion, the goal of FE becomes the targeting of particular social groups prone to non-participation in formal institutions; *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* lists benefit claimants (2003: 29), ex-offenders (2003: 29), women (2003: 45), minority ethnic groups (2003: 70) and asylum seekers (2003: 72) as a particular focus of a mission 'to give all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first century society' (2001: 1). This social model corresponds loosely with Levitas's (2005) SID. Field (2005) and Feinstein and Hammond (2004) consider the socially excluded to lack social capital. They consider social inclusion to be brought about through increasing levels of social capital. Participation in the labour market is often considered to represent engagement.

Psychological models, in which the socially excluded are constructed as suffering some degree of psychological weakness such as low aspirations or low levels of self-esteem, are also prevalent. This also corresponds to a construction of the socially excluded as somehow morally deviant; ex-offenders and single mothers. The role of FE becomes tackling such psychological weaknesses through initiatives to build the confidence of participants and also an explicit promotion of moral values. Again, the focus is upon achieving entry to the labour market and the psychological model suggests individuals lack the aspiration or self-esteem sufficient to enter the labour market and take financial responsibility for themselves and their families. This

corresponds loosely to Levitas's (2005) MUD where she argues the socially excluded are demarcated on the basis of their assumed immorality. Hooks (1994) and Freire (1973) consider education to play an important, radical role in engaging with individuals in order to enhance their self-esteem and enable them to find a "voice" in relation to some of the social problems they may face. Ecclestone (2004) and Hayes (2004) critique this approach arguing that such a focus is akin to therapy and detracts from more educational aspirations.

Although reference is made to the socially excluded having low levels of educational attainment, educational models of constructing exclusion do not appear consistently in all six documents beyond a few references to the importance of education for personal fulfilment and individual development. However, it is important to include reference to this here because it is the legacy, the traditional purpose of FE. Under this model, social exclusion is considered to be a construct that brings together disparate social groups to serve an essentially political purpose. Social inclusion is a political construct designed to solve a range of economic and social problems. FE is to provide post-school academic opportunities to adults or youngsters seeking a 'second-chance' and high level sector specific skills training. Young (1998) and Pring (1995) are amongst those representing this approach in relation to the perceived purpose of the FE sector.

Within these broad themes there is a need for further analysis to expose the process of political construction. More detailed coding and classifying is required. Fairclough (1998) outlines a procedure for critical discourse analysis with ten questions to ask of a text, (1998: 10) which focus upon the experiential, relational, expressive and



connective values of the discourse. Questions to consider include: What metaphors are used? (1998: 110). What types of process or participant predominate? (1998: 118). Are nominalisations used? (1998: 124). Which pronouns are used and how are they used? (1998: 127). Such techniques can pick up important areas for analysis through an emphasis upon grammatical and semantic analysis. Such an approach to discourse analysis can be used in the interpretation of Scott's (1990) intended, received and content meanings.

An understanding of (post)structuralist thinking is important however as I intend to exploit some of the techniques of such an approach to textual analysis in my reading of the documents. The division, for example, of language (signs) into the signifier (the *form* which the sign takes) and the signified (the *concept* it represents) (Saussure: 1983) can be revealing; one signifier may have a number of signifieds leading to variations in the understandings and interpretations of the same policy. The signifiers of the language of policy documents, the implied meanings, are not fixed but open to some degree of interpretation by those commenting upon and working within the field. This hints at the significance of Scott's second level of meaning interpretation: the received meaning constructed by the audience. Within the context of a generally agreed received meaning, differences of emphasis and interpretation can emerge with different audiences. For example, those working within FE may interpret the meaning of a policy document in relation to the practical changes that may impact upon their profession whereas fellow ministers may interpret the meaning in relation to the political values espoused.

As a researcher, I also make up an audience for the text and an audience that will

construct a further, different meaning. My stated aim of examining emerging constructions will lead to my emphasising parts of the document above others. Scott argues, 'The most that can be achieved by a researcher is an analysis which shows how the inferred meaning of the text opens up some possibilities for interpretation by its audience and closes off others' (1990: 54). Whilst I would not wish to deny my own frames of reference would lead to my emphasising (indeed perhaps seeking) particular meanings at the expense of others, this process of selecting and emphasising meaning is more worthwhile in the analysis of constructions than merely exploring the potential range of interpretations. My aim is that through keeping closely in mind the author's intentions (as I shall do through conducting interviews with some of the authors of the documents I analyse) and the interpretations of other readers, my interpretation of meaning should emphasise the political values intended by the author and constructed by other readers in order for me to critique.

Irrespective of the legal status of government policy documents, college Principals, inspectors and managers working within the FE sector will study policy documents in order to best satisfy inspection and funding requirements. Similarly some with political aspirations may seek an agreement with their own views. It can be the case that the interpretations of documents come to have greater significance than the intended meanings and the interpretations will therefore influence my analysis. This linguistic slippage between signifier and signified is recognised and exploited by the authors of government policy - as has been demonstrated in the previous chapters terms such as social exclusion and social inclusion can shift through a number of quite distinct political discourses. This slippage is advantageous to a government who can both appeal to and cohere a number of potential audiences.

## **Conclusions**

The concepts of social exclusion and inclusion are social and political constructs. They are constructed by society and more specifically by the political systems and agents within society. Such a process of social and political construction suggests an important role for language in shaping not just the ideas people have about their lives but often the material reality of people's existence too. Groups defined, or re-defined, as socially excluded may gain (or lose) entitlement to particular financial benefits or support with costs such as childcare. The political construction of social inclusion often occurs through the language of policy documents relating to the FE sector. Again, although the construction maybe primarily linguistic, the repercussions are material as changes occur within the sector that shifts FE away from its more traditional educational and training focus. The most appropriate methodology for exploring the process of social construction is one that lends itself to the analysis of language. Critical discourse analysis can help to reveal the intentions of the authors of policy documents and in so doing expose the underlying ideologies and politics which are shaping today's FE system.

Such a methodological approach was adopted in relation to the data gathered from six government documents concerning the FE sector and five interviews conducted with key policy makers. A method for coding and classifying the data gathered for analysis was devised through combining the work of Scott (1990) and Fairclough (1998, 2003). The application of such a method results in an initial classification of the data into four broad themes or 'models' for the construction of social inclusion through FE policy: instrumental, psychological, social and educational. By examining the relative dominance of each model over time we can begin to

understand the impact upon FE of the changing constructions of social inclusion. A process of more detailed coding and classifying draws upon techniques of critical discourse analysis through an examination of semantic, grammatical, lexical and phonological relations (Fairclough, 2003). The results of this more detailed coding form the content of the proceeding four chapters.

New Labour (especially during the first years of government) often constructs social exclusion as directly equivalent to unemployment. The poverty associated with unemployment is also associated with social exclusion and secondly, a presumed lack of formal engagement is connected to both unemployment and social exclusion.

According to this construction of social exclusion, the promotion of social inclusion depends upon getting unemployed people re-engaged with the labour market and into work. In order for the FE sector to meet the political goals of promoting social inclusion a greater emphasis comes to be placed upon meeting the needs of the economy and providing unemployed people with the skills for employability they need to enter the labour market. This, in turn, further constructs the socially excluded as lacking in human capital.

An instrumental model dominates all six of the policy documents I have chosen to analyse. The instrumental model equates social exclusion with unemployment: 'Many of those in the priority groups already listed, such as jobseekers, are at high risk of social exclusion' (DfEE, 2001: 19). Social inclusion, consequently, comes to be associated with participation in the labour market or, at very least, having the skills to participate in the labour market: 'We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor' (DfES, 2003: 8). This is based upon two main assumptions. Firstly, that poverty is a key component of social exclusion and poverty can best be overcome through paid work. The second premise is that the economy is changing and there are few employment opportunities for people with low level basic literacy and numeracy skills or without sector specific skills for employability (see Pring, 1995: 10). It is assumed that

gaining skills enables individuals to participate in the labour market and overcome poverty and social exclusion. Nationally, a more highly skilled nation is considered to be more economically competitive (see Pring, 1995: 21).

In this way, the purpose of FE is considered to be intrinsically linked to meeting the demands of the economy. The role of FE, in aiming to bring about social inclusion, is thus to promote: ‘employability skills for unemployed people’ (DfEE, 1998b: 63). Foster comments on his review of the purpose of the FE sector: ‘The most powerful theme it had to tell was about skills’ (interview with author: 28/05/08). He sees no contradiction between a focus on skills and the goal of promoting social inclusion:

But these two don’t have to be in conflict if you build your skills towards the economy and do that in a way that develops social inclusion. But the skills argument is the way that you make it understandable. (Interview with author: 28/05/08)

The final sentence here is interesting; Foster seems to imply that promoting social inclusion is an important, if somewhat intangible, goal. Foster suggests the focus on skills acts as a rhetorical tool to make the social inclusion agenda both comprehensible and politically palatable to government ministers. The emphasis on skills for employability that runs through all the policy documents published in relation to the FE sector in the past ten years suggests that this is more than mere gloss.

This chapter falls into three sections. Section one explores the equation of social exclusion with poverty. Constructions of social inclusion that correlate to this definition of exclusion do not depend upon financial redistribution to the least well off but getting the unemployed into paid employment. Encouraging groups labelled as socially excluded to engage with the labour market is considered important to New

Labour because the wages earned lift individuals out of poverty in a way that suggests the excluded accept moral responsibility towards providing for themselves and their families. The role of the FE sector comes to be focussed upon the provision of skills for employability; that is, training students to meet the needs of potential employers. This construction of social inclusion assumes a direct correlation between learning, or gaining qualifications and earning more money. However, most recent evidence suggests this link may not always exist, especially not with low level qualifications.

Section two investigates the notion that the national economy is changing requiring a shift from a need for workers with low level skills to high level skills. It is assumed that in order to maintain international competitiveness the UK must have a more highly trained work force. The changing economy is linked to social inclusion; in order to prevent unemployment and social exclusion in the future FE must provide more vocational training in the skills employers need. Furthermore, New Labour suggest that national prosperity can promote social inclusion as the country can afford to include more people and be more socially just. This section examines the arguments linking social exclusion to the changing economy and questions the role of FE in meeting these ever changing demands. The reality of a fast changing, demanding economy is somewhat belied by the argument put forward in more recent policy documents that FE should actually be driving the economy as opposed to just responding to changes.

Section three considers definitions of human capital and explores some of the consequences of constructing the socially excluded as lacking in human capital. Human capital theory has risen in popularity at times of economic recession when an

intensification of the processes of production has been necessary for industry to maintain profitability. Exponents of human capital theory (humans as capital capable of yielding a return on investments; see page 143 for a fuller discussion) shift the blame for unemployment away from national economic systems and onto individuals. The unemployed and low-skilled become blamed for their unemployment. The proscribed role for the FE sector comes to be concerned with building human capital. The theme of education as human capital development is returned to in a number of the documents published in relation to FE. This section considers some of the implications of building the FE sector around such a goal.

## **1. Individual Prosperity**

Ever since the term social exclusion first appeared on the political landscape it has been linked to poverty. The idea proposed by the likes of Townsend (1979) and Lister (2004) was that the socially excluded lacked the financial resources to enable them to participate in society as fully as the majority of people. This has previously been discussed more fully in chapter two. However, social inclusion is rarely linked to increased wealth alone; if that construction was applied, social inclusion could be brought about simply through financial redistribution. Instead, increased prosperity is linked to participation in the labour market suggesting exclusion is not so much an economic state as a moral state. Participation in paid work is equated with social inclusion because it is argued that the individual financial return lifts people and communities out of poverty and also indicates such people have accepted moral responsibility for their own welfare. It also suggests exclusion and inclusion are not simple antonyms: definitions of exclusion can correlate to poverty but inclusion does



not correlate straight forwardly to wealth.

Often definitions of social inclusion begin with a focus upon finance and end with a focus upon behaviour. Wye argues,

RW: ... that the best route to inclusion for those who are excluded from society for whatever reason is through being economically engaged ideally by getting a job but that might be through FE or it might be through social enterprise but for people who are currently economically inactive, you can give them a lot of engagement in terms of activity but actually the best thing to do is to give them the skills and competencies they need to get and keep a job. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Here we see that Wye begins by defining social inclusion in terms of *economic* engagement but ends with considering 'skills and competencies'. He does stress that the 'job' (i.e. paid employment) is more significant than the activity in and of itself. Indeed, social inclusion is most frequently linked to paid work and/or formal participation in education for the purposes of developing skills as opposed to voluntary work or informal learning. Levitas (2005) criticises the emphasis upon paid employment as devaluing a lot of the voluntary or community participation that takes place, especially by women. The focus upon economic engagement means that voluntarily running a mother and toddler group, for example, an activity which may place someone at the centre of their community is not considered to be socially inclusive. However, paid employment which may involve the employee working long or anti-social hours in what may be isolated occupations, would be deemed inclusive. Similarly, the successful autodidact is not considered to be socially included whereas the active participant in the local FE College, who may well learn little from his engagement, is according to government definitions, socially included.

Rammell emphasises this focus upon employment and formal learning:

BR: I think, and I make no apologies for saying this, it's got a big skills and economic focus. Whilst I don't think having a job is the solution to all problems, I actually think that if you have the skills that equip you to get a job, you are much less likely to be socially excluded than if that was not the case. So, a whole raft of policies, whether it's *Skills for Life*, whether it's the level two commitment, whether it's *Train to Gain*, are all targeted at equipping people within the workplace to get the kind of skills that they need to be able to compete. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Labour market participation is considered to bring about social inclusion, at least in part, through its role in sustaining financial independence and promoting the prosperity of individuals, families and communities. *The Learning Age* informs us that 'Learning is the key to prosperity' (DfEE, 1998b: 1) as if an instrumental purpose were the sole reason for engaging in learning. The metaphor 'key' implies a logical relationship of simple cause and effect (turn the key and open the door; acquire the skills and succeed) which suggests a direct relationship between learning and increased income, an idea which is frequently reinforced: 'Learning will increase our earning power' (DfEE, 1998b: 13). Waugh notes the use of the word 'key' in relation to Dearing's concept of 'Key Skills' as being 'no more than a device for unlocking access to the other elements [of vocational skills] the things people really want to get to' (1996: 10). This implies general educational skills are only considered necessary as a route to learning that will have direct use in terms of the labour market.

The connection between learning and earning runs through all the documents. In *Skills for Life*, Blunkett estimates 'People with low basic skills earn an average £50,000 less over their working lives' (2001: 1). We may however consider that this figure of £50,000, when divided by an average forty year working life, even when disregarding debts accrued or earnings forsaken during periods of study, is not such a huge sum. 'Low basic skills', to use Blunkett's phrase, are considered as having

‘disastrous consequences for the individuals concerned, weakens the country's ability to compete in the global economy and places a huge burden on society’ (DfEE, 2001:

3). Most recently, *Raising Expectations* considers lengthening compulsory participation on the basis that a further two years in education or training, ‘will be valuable to them financially because they will be more likely to be employed and to get jobs paying higher salaries’ (DfES, 2007: 5). The civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations* argues:

XX: I just think that overall the evidence suggests that getting qualifications does lead to increased earnings over your lifetime and there are economic returns. Obviously they vary between qualifications; between levels of qualifications and between the different subject areas and whether you do it in a work based way or in a college based way. (Interview with author: 11/10/07)

and Rammell contends:

BR: I think it’s very clear if you look at any range of qualifications, the proportion of young people who get better and higher paid jobs as a result of gaining these qualifications is very significant. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

The logic of this is an increased role for giving advice to young people so they can specifically choose courses relating to their future earnings potential:

XX: We want to be giving better information about the returns to different qualifications and the labour market in their area which they don’t have at the moment. (Interview with author, 11/10/07).

and

XX: Connexions and Careers Advisors should be having really up to date information about what’s available in the area because there’s a lot of evidence sort of anecdotally, that we hear on visits that young people when they actually get good information about the trades, that they can earn this much, or that this might seem like a lot of money to be earning now but in that industry you don’t really progress and you might not want to still be earning that in twenty years time or whatever. And they do really respond to that kind of information but they don’t always get it and so that will be really important. (Interview with author, 11/10/07).

This relationship between learning and earning may well hold true for some individuals. Indeed, for many students long-term financial gain may be a motivating

factor in encouraging them to participate in post-compulsory education (see Jary and Thomas, 1999: 1). There is some evidence to show that on an individual level, more highly educated people do tend to have better paid and more secure jobs, see for example Dearden et al. *The Returns to Academic and Vocational Qualifications in Britain* (2000). However, this publication also demonstrates the negative returns to low-level NVQ qualifications: ‘low level vocational qualifications seem to be associated with low paying jobs’ (2000: 20). A view reinforced by Wolf (2007): ‘Most of the non-A level qualifications offered to young people will not increase their future earnings’ (2007: 15) and ‘Low level vocational qualifications notably NVQs have, on average, absolutely no significant economic value to their holders’ (2007: 30). It is when a link between education and prosperity is assumed that education comes to be understood as “self-investment” or ‘human capital formation’ (Husen, 1974: 66).

However, what holds true for some individuals may not necessarily hold true if all individuals take this path. (Wolf, 2002: 35). Wolf’s claim is that education is used as a legitimate means of “ranking” individuals and as more people attain higher level qualifications employers merely raise the entry threshold. The people suffering most from such a process of grade inflation are the people with the lowest levels of education to begin with. This is similar to Bourdieu’s (1990) argument that academic devaluation increases the significance of social and cultural capital whilst simultaneously devaluing human capital. Those who suffer most are those without any formal, certified educational qualifications, who find they are struggling to find employment of any kind, (see especially Field, 2000 and Hammer, 2003: 218). This is all in marked contrast to the aim of bringing about social inclusion for the most

disadvantaged through FE which will ultimately focus upon the promotion of low level vocational qualifications.

The assumption of a direct correlation between an individual gaining qualifications and having a corresponding potential to earn a higher income has been called into question (Dearden et al. 2000: 20; Wolf, 2007: 15). Rammell and Foster recognise this inconsistency:

- JW Do all qualifications necessarily translate into increased earnings potential?  
BR: Not optimally, and that's part of the reason we are trying to transform vocational qualifications. There are too many and they do not carry enough portability in terms of purchasing power because other employers don't recognise them as much as they should.  
(Interview with author, 22/04/08)

- JW What will be the connection between that qualification and social mobility, increased income if you like? ... Is that link always there?  
AF No, it may not be. But I suppose I was trying to take a read of where the government was at.  
(Interview with author, 28/05/08)

Although recognising that such a correlation between, especially vocational qualifications and increased earnings potential may not always exist, there seems to be a sense that this is the fault of employers not "recognising" vocational qualifications 'as much as they should' due to weaknesses with the current qualifications, namely, a lack of portability. However, most recent plans to enshrine commercial companies such as McDonald's and British Airways as vocational educational providers could perhaps be expected to further limit the portability of such qualifications. 'Will you be able to get a job at Burger King?' asks Polly Curtis, *The Guardian's* Education Editor in her podcast of January 2008. Foster demonstrates that acknowledging the absence of a correlation between all vocational qualifications and social mobility does not prevent one from wanting such a

correlation to exist: ‘they went to FE, they did a hairdressing course and there they were doing a PhD or being lecturers’ (interview with author, 28/05/08). There appears to be a desire amongst policy makers to consider the UK a meritocracy even though evidence might suggest that this is not the case.

In contrast, Wolf (2007) argues: ‘employment breeds employment’ (2007: 7). This echoes the common sense view of Macdonald (1997, 1994: 525) whose study of young people and social exclusion revealed that the best way for people to get a job was for them to have a job. If we accept this logic then it appears that youngsters with low level basic skills are making rational economic choices by rejecting low level vocational courses in favour of gaining an early entry into employment.

## **2. National Competitiveness**

Increasing skills for employability is considered to bring about social inclusion not just through raising levels of individual prosperity but also through boosting the national economy. In *Raising Expectations* (2007) it is claimed, ‘More young people staying on will also bring broader economic and social benefits’ (DfES, 2007: 9) and, ‘the needs of the economy and our ambitions for social justice demand that we go further’ (DfES, 2007: 15). The theory seems to be that a more prosperous national economy can afford to include more people and be more socially just. The linking of social inclusion to national economic prosperity through FE draws upon a number of assumptions. It implies that Britain is falling behind international economic competitors. This point is made succinctly by Foster:

AF: If you just look around the world at what’s happening about skills, if you look at how disastrous, relatively, our skills performance is against our economic performance, I suppose setting the bar higher for what skills people need to have is something I do think we need to do economically. (Interview

with author, 28/05/08)

and Rammell:

BR: I don't apologise for the fact that when we look at the adult workforce and we look at our level of performance compared with many other countries that we have to do better.

The fear (irrespective of its basis in reality) of losing international competitiveness through a shortage of skilled labour, is so real that it seems to prevent discussion as to the meaning of skills and the exact nature of the relationship between 'skills performance' and 'economic performance'. Foster and Rammell also assume that the British economy either is already, or needs to become, a high skills economy and that there won't be any need for unskilled labour in the economy of the future:

BR: The number of skilled jobs has increased from 9 million to 13 million and the number of unskilled jobs has fallen from about three and a half million to 600 000. If we can't equip people to get skilled jobs we are going to be less able to keep up the level of economic growth that we aspire towards. If you look at the evidence internationally, those nations that have focused on higher skills levels do tend to have higher productivity and growth rates. Some say it's accidental but I find that very difficult to believe. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Rammell provides no definition of a 'skilled job'. His rhetorical counter-argument about the relationship between high-skills and high-economic productivity being an 'accident' is a (mis)caricature of Wolf's (2002) questioning of cause and effect regarding national wealth. Wolf argues that economically productive and successful countries can afford to educate their citizens for longer rather than prosperity being a cause of educational attainment.

Finally, there is the argument that FE needs not only to serve the needs of the economy, but to actually drive forward the economy, to provide the pool of skilled labour the country needs to compete:

BR: if you want to take hair and beauty as an example, those kinds of industries have grown significantly over the last 10 – 15 years. There are many more jobs and wage opportunities within those industries, so it makes sense, if we want those industries to be successful, to train people to take up those jobs. I think that does, in and of itself, lead to economic prosperity. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Here, Rammell argues that the role of the FE sector in “training people up” can drive the economy and lead to economic prosperity. That education should meet the needs of employers suggests a direct link between education and economic development. This is not new. At least as far back as Callaghan’s *Ruskin College Speech* (1976) there have been arguments for education meeting the needs of industry and since this time, the view that education should serve economic need has become increasingly firmly entrenched, (see Shilling, 1989: 180) often resulting in what Hyland has criticized as ‘a direct and one-dimensional link between education and the economy’ (1994: 77). Shilling has commented on the shift from educational to work goals ‘to enhance the potential of young people for work in a capitalist society’ (1989: 159). In the documents relating to FE published in the past decade there has been an escalation in the extent to which economic drivers dominate post-compulsory education.

FE has come to be modelled on a “supply and demand” system which suggests that market forces be used to regulate education and training in which business interests can make demands as to the types of workers they require and FE is expected to supply such a pre-prepared product. *Success for All* draws extensively upon the language of production in discussing the “supply” and “demand” of skills. The document refers to the question of ‘how employer demand for skills can be increased’ (2002: 22) and the importance of improving the responsiveness of the supply side,’ (2002: 4). *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* makes similar use of the language of the market. The subheading of *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* is ‘Realising our Potential’ (frontispiece). The use



of ‘potential’ is ambiguous, it can signify either inherent ability or a capacity for growth, which in terms of education can be taken to indicate the ability of students, or the capacity for intellectual growth. However, when linked to ‘realising’ which can signify bringing in a profit, a further implication of ‘potential’ is revealed: the growth of capital investment. In this way, education becomes seen as a financial transaction. This notion is reinforced by the use of the signifier ‘invest’. In *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* we are told first, ‘we do not invest as much in skills as we should’ (2003: 9) and then ‘No individual should be denied the chance to realise their potential for want of opportunities to invest in their own skills’ (2003: 18). If people are told to invest then the expectation is set up for financial return. Education is thus presented as a form of investment in one’s personal stocks of human capital.

A fundamental premise of the instrumental model and the major argument propounded for developing “stocks” of human capital is that the economy is changing and people need to be more highly skilled to maintain their employability. This is stated at the beginning of *The Learning Age*:

Jobs are changing and with them the skills needed for the world of tomorrow ... the key to success will be the education, knowledge and skills of our people. (1998b: 1)

This sentence asserts that changes are taking place within the labour market. ‘Jobs’ has been placed as the subject in the phrase ‘jobs are changing’ and this serves to portray the labour market as somehow autonomous and beyond the control of governmental decision-making. It is then assumed that because ‘jobs are changing’ the ‘skills needed’ are also changing. ‘Skills’ is placed as the subject of the passive verb ‘needed’; in this way, skills become separated from people, almost as if skills are a material resource. As the ‘key to success’ in the future will be ‘education,

knowledge and skills' it can be assumed that the change is from jobs requiring few skills to employability necessitating high-level skills. As a result of this stated change in the labour market, it is considered necessary for education to provide people with the skills needed to succeed in the future. In fact, 'people' appears as the final word of the sentence, as the object of the verb phrase 'the key to success will be'.

'Education, knowledge and skills' are all placed prior to 'people'. The idea that the economy and the labour market is in a state of change is made by Rob Wye:

RW: We are recognising the way society is changing and jobs are changing, the labour market's changed, that won't do any more will it? We've got to equip people with the skills they need to develop further skills and move sideways, move differently over their lifetimes. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Although there is little indication as to what this means in practice.

Blunkett argues *The Learning Age* was needed as a response to economic changes that had, in turn, had an impact upon the FE sector:

Apprenticeships were dying because traditional industry was closing and there were mass redundancies. Further Education was responding, not by reaching out and trying to develop equivalent release courses with more modern enterprise, but by actually retrenching into a more cosy environment. The two together led, to a demise of the more traditional, historic role of Further Education. (Interview with author, 18/07/07)

This quotation is discussed more fully in chapter seven, but here it is worth noting a number of implications of Blunkett's argument. Firstly, the economic role of FE is seen as traditional and *The Learning Age* is consequently considered to be returning FE to these traditional goals. Secondly, there is some sense that FE can overturn economic problems, that is, if FE had only responded in the "right" way then the country's past economic problems would not have been so severe. There is obviously no way of telling whether this would indeed have been the case.

Subsequent documents have been similarly emphatic about the change that is taking place from a low to high skills economy. Blunkett argues in *Skills for Life*,

The growth of the knowledge economy and the spread of information technology are having a more profound and more rapid effect on our work and home lives than any other social change since the Industrial Revolution. (DfEE, 2001: 2)

Most recently, *Raising Expectations* considers the need to raise the age of compulsory participation in education as a result of ‘the sharp decline in unskilled jobs’ (DfES, 2007: 3) which necessitates a more highly skilled youth labour force: ‘increasing post-16 participation is a crucial part of increasing the skill levels of the workforce,’ (DfES, 2007: 11). The presumption is that youngsters who have completed a further two years of schooling ‘will also become more productive economically’ (DfES, 2007: 11). This construction of the excluded as financially impoverished as a result of unemployment or low-skilled work due to their lack of human capital suggests a labour market dependent upon highly skilled employees.

However, a profound sense of economic and social change, partly as a result of technological developments, has been considered for well over three decades. In *Beyond the Stable State*, Schön recognises that, ‘Currents of change roll through every domain of society, shaking the stable state’ (1971: 17) and Husen argues, ‘a conspicuous feature of today's changing society is the rapid transformation of economic life - and indeed of our daily living habits - being wrought by science and technology’ (1974: 81). More recently Bynner and Parsons argue ‘The pace of technological change threatens past securities residing in predictable careers and lasting occupational identities ... while at the same time the overall volume of employment is decreasing’ (2001: 279). The continual repetition of such predictions

over a forty year period perhaps in and of itself casts doubt upon the veracity of such claims.

Schön's conclusion is that the only way for people to deal with such change and instability is for society to engage in learning (1971: 30), a view clearly shared by the New Labour government thirty years later: 'In communities affected by rapid economic change and industrial restructuring, learning builds local capacity to respond to this change' (DfEE, 1998b: 18). However, others have questioned the assumption that economic change necessitates learning to develop higher skills. Braverman (1974) points out that, 'work has become increasingly subdivided into petty operations ... [which] demand ever less skill and training' (1974: 4). More recently, Winch argues technological advance may actually reduce the need for skilled labour (2000: 86) as technological development has "dehumanised" the manufacturing process, reducing work for many to 'one simple, repetitive, process requiring little or no skill' (2000: 85). Shilling likewise notes that technological advance does not always require a more highly skilled workforce, 'Not only does the rising technical composition of capital tend to displace workers, it also deskills the labour process for many others' (1989: 172). Most recently, Wolf has noted: 'Predictions that low skilled jobs will vanish are also wide of the mark' (2007: 18) perhaps contradicting Rammell's claim that 'the number of unskilled jobs has fallen' (interview with author, 22/04/08). However, despite the reality of today's labour market, it is the assumption that workers will need to be more highly skilled to sustain employability that constructs the socially excluded as lacking in sufficient human capital. It is this assumption that demands FE works towards the goal of promoting social inclusion through the provision of employability skills. This further reinforces

the notion that social exclusion/inclusion is a political construction rather than a “natural” state.

The argument that employment can bring about increased prosperity and consequently social inclusion is transferred in the documents from individuals to the nation. In *Raising Skills* it is stated: ‘Our economic future depends on our productivity as a nation’ (2006: 1) which is surely a truism but this then leads on to productivity being presented as dependent upon ‘a labour force with skills to match the best in the world’ (DfES, 2006: 1). The document is written with a fear that Britain does not have such a labour force due to ‘deep-seated and long-standing weaknesses in our national skills’ (DfES, 2006: 1) particularly in comparison to ‘the rate at which other nations such as China and India are improving their skills base’ (DfES, 2006: 4). It is argued that British workers need to improve their skills levels to maintain international competitiveness with other countries: ‘The UK has no choice but to outperform and out-innovate our competitors’ (Gordon Brown, Pre-Budget Report, quoted in *The Leitch Review*, 2006: 2) in order to create, ‘A Britain that instead of sheltering against global competition, champions the most open competition policy in the world’ (Gordon Brown’s *Mansion House Speech*, 22/10/06). Thus FE is to provide skills for individual employability which are needed for international economic growth in the face of international competition.

In announcing plans to allow McDonald’s and other private companies to award ‘A’ level equivalent qualifications, Brown declared ‘We’ve got to win the skills race of the future ... Every young person needs a skill and to think about going to college, doing an apprenticeship or university’ (quoted in Lipsett, 28/01/08). The metaphor of

the 'skills race' which Brown employs correlates with the notion of 'competitors' used in the Pre-Budget Report. It is not simply the case that skills are worth developing for their own sake; most important is to develop skills levels in comparison to other countries. Other (particularly Asian) economies are pointed to as examples of where the skills of the population have increased beyond those of British workers whilst economic productivity has similarly outstripped that of Britain: 'China and India are turning out 4 million graduates a year. The UK turns out 250, 000' (*The Leitch Review*, 2006: 4). The assumption made by the authors of the documents is that a nation comprising more highly skilled individuals will be more economically competitive and therefore more prosperous, resulting, in turn, in a greater degree of social inclusion.

That FE is to provide skills for individual employability which are needed for international economic growth in the face of international competition, calls into question the role of FE in providing courses of study which have no specific vocational orientation. Accepting this argument makes financially subsidising education for "leisure", more difficult. Wye argues,

Certainly not only under this Labour government but under the Tories before them, the general view was that we are going to earn the money in the global economy to enable people to have money in their pockets to pay for the Shakespeare courses. That's what we need to do. If we take the state's money and direct it immediately into Shakespeare courses than we are not helping the economy compete globally. (Interview with author, 21/09/07)

Wye presents his somewhat short-sighted and culturally philistine argument against teaching Shakespeare as economically rational. This echoes Rammell's reluctance to fund recreational Spanish classes. An irony here is that whilst economic purposes of education are justified on the basis of social inclusion, it may well be the "leisure" provision which actually encourages more people to want to participate.

This relationship between education and economic growth is considered by many commentators to be at best tenuous, potentially contradictory and most likely wrong: ‘The links between education and growth are far less direct than our politicians suppose’ (Wolf, 2002: 15 and see also Mullan, 2004: 1). Bryan notes, ‘It is the ability to make a profit that determines the creation of employment opportunities, not the skill levels of the workforce’ (2004: 145). It is certainly the case that international competitiveness depends upon many things as well as human capital; the quality and availability of natural resources, the amount of investment in the country’s infrastructure, for example, transport networks and communications technology and the amount of money reinvested in production line technology.

Furthermore, the argument that higher individual skills levels can lead to both increased individual income levels and increased national prosperity assumes there is no conflict between the goal of individuals and the goals of employers and the state and that there is no contradiction between workers earning increased wages and a more competitive, prosperous national economy. However, there clearly are some tensions to explore here. It is not at all clear that individuals, employers and the state share priorities. Foster makes this clear:

AF: Because what the employers will say is that we’re paying very substantial taxes and the overall skills base is something that is a shared need of the overall economy. It’s ours because we’re going to make a profit from it, it’s the country’s whole future as well, so there is a tension and I don’t think that tension has been very well managed and I think there has not been coherence within education about these things. (Interview with author, 28/05/08)

Foster argues that as education is funded largely from taxes on business and employers use the “products” of education, they expect to have a say in the running of

education. This may well be in contradiction to the government's more "social" agenda.

Further tensions emerge as individuals may view education as helping them to gain advantage in the labour market; they may wish to achieve this edge at minimal cost and they seek skills which are both certified and transferable. Employers in contrast, are likely to want to draw upon a large pool of skilled labour, want individuals or the state to carry the cost of vocational education and training (VET) and want their staff to have company specific, non-transferable skills. Blunkett makes explicit reference to this contradiction: 'employers have seen the expansion of the budget of the Learning and Skills Council as a very good reason for not investing in the skills of their workforce. I find that very difficult and we should have made much more use of compacts and quid pro-quos' (interview with author, 18/07/07). The state wants employers and individuals to help contribute towards the funding of post-compulsory education and training (for a more detailed account of these arguments see Gleeson and Keep, 2004). So, despite the government's intention being an FE sector that helps bring about both individual and national prosperity and social inclusion, these three goals may not be compatible. Gleeson and Keep comment on the nature of the relationship between employers and education as 'characterised by unequal power... with education allotted a subordinate role as supplicant' (2004: 44).

In what could be seen as a move to resolve the tensions between employers and education, FE comes to be concerned with 'meeting the demands of the economy' (2006: 17) which serves to both personify the economy (a demanding, changeable individual) and present it as beyond governmental control. In reality, this means



institutions liaising with employers to ensure ‘the supply of skills in the labour market matches the skills that are in demand from employers’ (DfEE, 2003: 8) through the development of the Sector Skills Councils. In terms of education this means, ‘Ensuring the qualification system meets employer needs’ (DfEE, 2002: 24).

Although previous policy documents relating to the FE sector have considered the needs of the national economy and employers, *Success for All* is unprecedented in the extent to which needs of employers are placed centre-stage. Statements such as ‘*Success for All* is about everyone in the sector – providers, learners and employers’ (DfEE, 2002: 2) place employers *within* the sector, on an equal footing to students and lecturers. This is reinforced in the aim of the proposals to meet ‘learner, employer and community needs’ (2002: 5). Wye elaborates,

If you can get employers to think that they are part of the system, that they have got a responsibility to work with schools, colleges and others in developing young people, they’ve got a responsibility to take on and develop apprentices, they’ve got a responsibility to their workforce because the pay back for them is that they get a more productive workforce now and in the future if they do that. (Interview with author, 21/09/07)

Yet despite employers being placed at the centre of FE, the persuasion Wye outlines as needed to get them to act upon this role, indeed, even to offer work placements to those being trained in FE at the government’s expense, suggests they are in this position somewhat reluctantly. Yet it often appears to be the case that meeting the needs of employers comes above the needs of students. For example, *Success for All* states, ‘Employers tell us that frequently their employees only require units of qualifications to be able to carry out their role successfully’ (2002: 24). This clearly places the needs of employers above the needs of students who may want to complete a whole course and not just units, and above educational priorities: it may make more sense to complete the whole course within context rather than random units. This also

suggests an NVQ model of qualification with students being expected to demonstrate certain behavioural competences.

In 2006, this is taken further, the purpose of *Raising Skills* is to provide, ‘a clearer mission for FE than it has had before – centred on developing the skills and attributes required for employment and meeting the demands of the economy’ (DfES, 2006: 17).

One change worth noting is the addition of the word ‘attributes’ to the concept of ‘skills for employability’ used frequently in previous documents. Although a sense of employers requiring certain attributes in potential employees was touched upon in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, this is the first time it is placed alongside skills as a prime purpose for the sector. Rikowski argues that what is being indicated is actually ‘labour power attributes’ or ‘itemised constituents of labour-power’ (2005: 7).

The logical conclusion of this is the highly sector specific qualifications in topics such as ‘shift management’ offered by companies such as McDonald’s. John Denham, the Skills Secretary, promotes such qualifications as, ‘An important step towards ending the “old divisions” between company training schemes and national qualifications’ (quoted in Lipsett, 28/01/08). However, national qualifications could be assumed to carry a degree of transferability that may not be the case with the work-place based training offered by specific companies. As Smithers notes, ‘Employees may find that they are locked into that business because these awards don’t have credibility outside the company, like GCSEs, A levels and NVQs do’ (quoted in Borland, 29/01/08).

This move appears to be somewhat in opposition to the government’s claim to offer ‘the general education that employers value’ (DfES, 2006: 20). A danger, O’Hagan argues in *The Telegraph* (29/01/08) is that ‘Mcqualifications will make awardees

suitable only for jobs within the companies where they gained their award.’

This view of education serving the needs of the economy is not uncontroversial. Doubt has been cast over the ability of industry to take on an explicitly educational role in terms of dictating curriculum content. Shilling notes ‘the possibility of capital assuming a large-scale “educational” role is highly problematic. In our mode of production, capital operates through the necessity of making a surplus’ (Shilling, 1989: 184) which is often contradictory with more educational purposes. Shilling’s analysis of current trends in education as being a result of ‘interaction between a state in the process of being restructured and a mode of production in crisis’ (1989: 182) is highly perceptive. That this has taken place against the background of a weakened labour movement and ‘a conspicuous lack of alternative conceptions of education’ (ibid) has enabled employers to have such a free hand in determining educational policy. Hyland questions the assumption that economic decline is a result solely of low educational standards. To suggest it does denies other factors in economic development and it relies on “quick-fix” educational solutions which do not tackle structural weaknesses in the education and economic spheres, (Hyland, 1994: 76). There is also scope for questioning whether employers really do know best about what is to be taught and how it should be taught (see for example, Gleeson and Keep, 2004: 37): whilst employers may want education to inculcate values of discipline and compliance, the government may seek active citizens and individuals may still consider education to be of value for purely for personal enjoyment. Indeed, education geared towards driving economic development often results in ‘valuable theoretical or propositional knowledge [being] removed from programmes in the interests of utilitarian or work-related efficiency and relevance’ (Hyland, 1994: 66) or

even training which ‘could often amount to little more than conditioning’ (Winch, 2000: 86). What remains is ‘an impoverished knowledge framework’ (Hyland, 1994: 74).

### **FE driving economy**

The orthodoxy of the view that FE should meet the demands of the economy is, most recently, reinforced by the notion that FE should go further than this and actually be the driving force of economic development; that is, not just responding to economic change but prompting such change. For example, we are told: ‘the FE system will realise its potential to be a key driver of economic growth and competitiveness’ (DfES, 2006: 13). This is a move away from a direct correlation between education and industrial performance (Hyland, 1994: 76). Eight years on from *The Learning Age*, the role of FE as “driving” forward Britain’s economy remains a potential to be realised. Yet, instead of time tempering the perceived connection between FE and the economy, the DfES appears more emphatic than ever in declaring not just the existence of such a relationship but in FE driving economic growth. The use of the metaphor “driving” correlates with a second metaphor ‘engine’. Both metaphors portray the sector as dynamic, powerful and in control of the direction in which the economy is heading. The concept of the FE sector “driving” forward the economy is returned to frequently in *Raising Skills*. Images such as ‘power house’ (DfES, 2006: 1) and ‘engine room’ (DfES, 2006: 5) recur as it is made clear that ‘we will put the economic mission of the sector at the heart of its role’ (DfES, 2006: 6).

That FE can drive economic development is called into question. Field notes as far back as 1993 that a ‘quite extraordinary proportion of the NVQs awarded are in areas

where labour supply has been perfectly adequate for some years' (1993a: 6) and Hyland similarly points to the proliferation of vocational training 'in areas such as fast food, hairdressing and basic business administration, not the sort of sectors likely to lead to the "World Class Britain"' (1994: 11). One way in which policy to drive forward economic development is explored in *Raising Skills* is with the proposal that FE institutions should take on particular specialisms: 'All FE colleges will have a clear economic mission, specialising in areas of distinctive excellence' (DfES, 2006: 12). Such specialisms are expected 'to become central to the mission and ethos of the institution' (DfES, 2006: 20). Areas of specialism are expected to be worked out in conjunction with local employers and to be in response to the skills needs of the locality as 'employers throughout the country will be benefiting from training delivered in the workplace, by a provider of their choosing, delivered to suit their operational needs' (DfES, 2006: 12). This demonstrates how employers' needs are placed at the heart of FE and in so doing exposes some degree of confusion: FE is expected to 'drive forward' the economy and yet employers are to dictate the direction. For individual students their options as to which courses to study are necessarily restricted according to the specialisms of their local institution. Choice and aspiration are limited to the immediate needs of regional employers.

### 3. **Human Capital**

Shaping FE so directly around the needs of employers and the economy suggests a belief in the concept of human capital and the notion that FE can play a significant role in building individual levels of human capital. Human capital theory is referred to explicitly first in *The Learning Age* where it is noted that: 'Learning throughout life

can build human capital by encouraging creativity, skill and imagination' (DfEE, 1998b: 1). This remains a preoccupation of New Labour five years later. *21st Century Skills*, states: 'An independent task force, sponsored by the DTI, is looking at how companies measure and report on their human capital management including the investment they make in their employees' knowledge and skills' (DfES, 2003: 40). The theme of education as human capital development is then returned to again in *Raising Expectations*: 'There is compelling evidence that increasing the stock of human capital raises productivity at the macro-economic level' (DfES, 2007: 16).

As learning becomes linked to human capital, the socially excluded become constructed as lacking in human capital. In terms of the purpose of the FE sector, promoting social inclusion and human capital become interchangeable goals: 'Learning throughout life can build human capital by encouraging creativity, skill and imagination' (DfEE, 1998b: 1). The verb 'build' used in this quotation is revealing of the instrumental model: 'build' implies that learning is akin to merely tapping into (or unlocking) a pre-existing source of material capital. Outcomes such as 'creativity' and 'imagination' appear to be in contradiction to this formulaic approach to learning but the objective 'skill' is still firmly placed in between the two suggesting perhaps a particular approach or type of creativity and imagination is to be encouraged. Creativity and imagination that is firmly linked to the needs of the labour market is to be welcomed: creativity and imagination without a particular purpose is not.

Human capital thus takes the form of 'Employability skills for unemployed people' (DfEE, 1998b: 63), which leaves little room for learning other than that linked most directly to the needs of the labour market: 'study above NVQ level 2 will also be

possible *where it is linked to getting a job*' (DfEE, 1998b: 63) [my emphasis]. This instrumentalism is justified with the argument that human capital is not just for individual benefit but for communities and the nation: 'human and intellectual capital which is now at the centre of a nation's competitive strength' (DfEE, 1998b: 13) and 'Investment in human capital will be foundation of success in the knowledge based economy of the twenty-first century' (DfEE, 1998b: 13).

Human capital theory first became popular in the US in the early 1970s. Schultz describes 'the role of the acquired abilities of human agents as a major source of the unexplained gains in productivity' (1971: v). Schultz identifies investment in human capital as taking many forms but including 'schooling and higher education, on the job training, migration, health and economic information' (1971: 8). It is probably no coincidence that economically this was a period of emerging recession with the 1973 oil crisis looming. The era of cheap energy and cheap industrialisation was coming to an end and efforts to intensify the production process in order to increase profitability led to a focus upon people and the potential to increase the rate of production through human rather than economic capital. As Schultz noted (above) education, both schooling and higher education, were seen as key ways of enhancing human capital.

Although most critiques of human capital theory have focused upon the emotional abhorrence of considering people as crude economic investments, little attention has been placed upon the effect that human capital theory has had upon education. It was just three years after the oil crisis that Callaghan spoke at Ruskin College (1976) of the need for education to equip children 'to do a job of work' (18/10/1976). Berg (1971) is notable for being a lone voice of criticism of the effect of such suggestions

upon education at this time. In *The Great Training Robbery* he highlights some of the dangers of accepting ‘a mechanistic interpretation of the relationship between education and employment’ (1971: 6). The concept of human capital was of most interest to “right-wing” economists because it was based upon the idea that each individual had the freedom to invest in themselves: ‘It is one way free men can enhance their welfare’ (Schultz, 1971: 26). Education thus comes to be ‘an investment activity undertaken for the purpose of acquiring capabilities that enhance future earnings of the person as a productive agent’ (Schultz, 1971: 8).

These ideas have retained popularity in the intervening forty years. Becker introduces his third edition of *Human Capital* with the argument that, ‘Education and training are the most important investments in human capital ... high school and college education in the U.S. greatly raise a person’s income’ (1993: 17). These arguments are repeated frequently in the government documentation analysed for this thesis. Most recently, Wolf comments, ‘The terms in which the government recommend raising the leaving age will be familiar to anyone who has followed education policy in England for the last ten, or indeed, twenty years. They are overwhelmingly economic’ (2007: 11). However, the focus on education developing human capital has moved away from being the preoccupation of a section of right-wing libertarian economists to take a broader hold upon the educational establishment through the linking of job prospects and social inclusion. In this way, government documents proclaim that developing human capital, particularly amongst disadvantaged social groups, leads to a more equitable and inclusive society.

By 2006, in *Raising Expectations*, the government has become sensitive to the charge



of 'narrow vocationalism' (DfES, 2006: 20) which it refutes with the claim that an economic mission also includes, 'the general education that employers value' (DfES, 2006: 20). However, this raises questions as to how general an education employers really do value especially as this is what will be delivered to '14-16 year olds, often in colleges' (DfES, 2006: 15). The proposal is for a focus upon 'functional skills which are so crucial for later success' (DfES, 2006: 42) such as 'functional skills qualifications in English, maths and ICT' (DfES, 2006: 42). The choice of the word 'functional' is revealing; these are skills that will enable youngsters to function, to carry out a particular role. Whereas some youngsters will have a full range of academic and vocational options available to them, others (those labelled, or deemed to be at risk of becoming, socially excluded) will be limited to what is considered 'functional'. Illich indicates the danger that we 'share in the delusion that we can distinguish between what is necessary education for others and what is not' (1970: 30).

As the case has been made for 'the benefits that higher attainment and longer participation bring to the individual young person, to the economy and to society' (DfES, 2007: 11) in terms of increased prosperity and social inclusion; compulsory participation for those lacking in human capital becomes a logical next step. Compulsion necessitates those working within FE to play a role in monitoring young people and reporting non-compliance to an accepted behavioural-norm of enforced participation. Persistent non-participation on behalf of the young person would result in an Attendance Order, breach of which would result in sanctions, 'through either a civil or a criminal process' (DfES, 2007: 8). Despite the threat of legal proceedings for non-participation, compulsory participation, however, appears magnanimous when it is claimed, 'it is those young people who are least well prepared to thrive in the

world they are entering who are most likely to leave education and training early' (DfES, 2007: 10).

It is clear from the discussion so far that the term 'skills' has come to take on an increasingly wide range of meanings which is often unhelpful, (see Winch, 2002: 137). When skills are considered a component of "human capital" to be invested in by individuals and the government in order to secure financial return, they become commodities with an appropriate exchange value (see Williams, 2005: 186). This is recognised by Hyland who notes the development of 'education and training as a pre-packaged commodity which is (theoretically) on sale to all those with purchasing power' (1994: 143). This commodification of skills and consequently education is apparent in the government documents and is echoed by Wye:

RW: If you ... just regard employers as recipients of the product of education and there's no sort of engagement you get the complaints you get at the moment which are that employers say that schools and colleges are producing the wrong product in the first place and moaning about the standards of what they get but with no engagement back from employers in helping with the curriculum and the delivery and so on. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Note Wye's use of the word 'product'. His complaint with employers is that they argue colleges are producing the wrong product; Wye is not arguing it is in anyway inappropriate to consider education to be producing a product.

It is when skills are considered in this way that they become seen as commodities. *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* states: 'The skills of our people are a vital national asset' (DfES, 2003: 8). An 'asset' has monetary value and is owned by a group or individual, skills in this sense become a product to be traded. This notion of trading a product is reinforced in the "supply and demand" model proposed for regulating skills, in which 'the supply

of skills in the labour market matches the skills that are in demand from employers' (DfES, 2003: 8). The suggestion is that market forces, the financial value given to the skills "product", be used to regulate education and training and the role of government is in overseeing the management of those market forces. An extended metaphor of construction (using images such as 'foundations', 'building blocks' and 'tools') serves to cohere the rhetoric of the document and reinforce the notion of skills as a material asset. For example, we are told that adults, 'without a good foundation of employability skills' (DfES, 2003: 13) will get free tuition and similarly, 'We must put in place a framework that gives every young person a firm foundation' (DfES, 2003: 59). Constructed on top of these foundations we have, 'Skills development as a fundamental building block of high performance' (DfES, 2003: 39).

There are two significant repercussions to this construction metaphor. Firstly, as with the use of the metaphor 'key' in *Success for All*, the logical assumption of the use of construction imagery for education is that all teachers need are 'the tools to make it happen' (DfES, 2003: 3). This suggests a more mechanistic, competence-based notion of education and training where following such a model as NVQs, students are assessed on their accomplishment of particular competencies. A second consequence is the rationalisation of economic inequality. When skills are seen as a material resource, differences in wealth (for the communities and individuals) can be explained away by (lack of) access to these resources; for example, we are told that, 'Variations in the skills base of different regions are a major factor in explaining regional variations in productivity' (DfES, 2003: 9). The logic of this is that the poor and disadvantaged are themselves blamed for being poor and disadvantaged. Regional economic variations are no longer considered to be a product of government policies.

The construction of the socially excluded as lacking the material asset of human capital and as a consequence being either unemployed or in low-skilled, low-waged employment, is pervasive throughout all the documents concerning FE published in the past decade. The focus of *Skills for Life* is the ‘shocking 7 million adults in England who cannot read and write at the level of an 11-year-old’ (DfEE, 2001: 1) although doubt as to the veracity of this ‘shocking’ statistic has been raised by Alan Wells, director of the Basic Skills Agency and advisor to the Moser Committee, (in Cassidy, 25/01/05). Illich, in 1970, criticised the role of the state in ascertaining the ‘educational deficiencies of its citizens’ (1970: 30) and then proscribing the necessary education such citizens required. Blunkett, however, is confident enough to use the figure of 7 million adults lacking basic skills to calculate that alongside an individual cost of some £50, 000 over a working life, ‘The cost to the country as a whole could be as high as £10 billion a year’ (DfEE, 2001: 1). This assumed cost to the nation of social exclusion justifies the state’s position in intervening in education to raise levels of human capital.

## **Conclusions**

The instrumental model assumes an economy dependent upon individuals possessing high-level skills in order to sustain both their own financial prosperity and national economic competitiveness. This constructs social exclusion not simply as resulting from the poverty associated with unemployment but as individuals (and communities) lacking the skills essential to become employable. The success of policy proposals (presumably the achievement of economic prosperity and social inclusion) is accomplished when ‘the workforce is equipped with higher level skills and skill

shortages are significantly reduced' (DfES, 2002: 7). This construction of social inclusion in terms of employability skills has a number of consequences: it shifts the focus away from structural economic concerns with industrial development and places it upon individuals. Individuals are held responsible for their own employability and consequently their own social inclusion. The role of the state is no longer to provide benefits to those in poverty (for example, through the Welfare State) but to provide learning opportunities for those lacking skills.

In this way, low-skills come to replace low-income (or poverty) as the key marker of social exclusion. For instance, a key statement from *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* is, 'We will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor' (DfES, 2003: 8). It is interesting to see the way the word 'skills' has been placed directly in front of the words rich and poor - words more directly associated with financial status. The stated aim is the achievement of 'a fairer, more inclusive society', thus equating fairness and inclusivity although they are not necessarily the same. Fairness replaces more traditional left-wing aims of egalitarianism - the resources of society can, arguably, be shared fairly without being shared equally. Again, traditional left-wing aims may have concerned narrowing gaps in income differentials or some degree of financial re-distribution. By shifting the focus towards the 'skills-rich and the skills-poor' in the creation of an inclusive society, political emphasis is removed from economic inequalities and placed instead upon those lacking basic skills. In terms of education, what results is a culture of credentialism where qualifications come to be seen as necessary preparation for life.

When education is linked so firmly to individual and national wealth, people lacking

skills are considered purely in terms of the cost they place upon the nation. The lost revenue of unproductive workers is added to national financial expenditure upon welfare benefits and health services to calculate the exact cost to the economy of people lacking basic skills. As the government provides opportunities for individuals to gain skills (and reduce their cost to the economy) it becomes presented as a responsibility upon people to take advantage of these opportunities. Learning thus becomes a moral obligation; a duty to oneself, one's family and one's country. However, as presented in the document, learning is clearly an obligation upon some more than others. *Skills for Life* targets particular social groups under the label of the socially excluded. Amongst those particularly duty bound to learn are ex-offenders, the homeless, the unemployed, those in low-skilled occupations and single mothers. Plans to target these individuals begin to hint at a more intrusive probing into people's lives which will become the hallmark of the proceeding six years of New Labour policy.

A social model for constructing exclusion and inclusion is evident in all of the documents I have analysed and emerges as a key theme from the interview transcripts. It follows on from the instrumentalist assumptions that education leads to increased skills levels which in turn lead to increased individual and national prosperity. It is argued by New Labour ministers and policy advisors that increased prosperity can bring about greater equity and social justice. However, participation in FE is also thought to have broader social returns for the participants and for society, irrespective of financial return to qualifications. These broader social returns form the main focus of this chapter which analyses government documents and interviews in order to investigate the construction of a social purpose for the FE sector. This chapter contains four sections:

The first section explores issues concerned with social justice. The model of FE providing social justice is often seen in terms of providing individuals and communities with skills for employability. Increased skills are considered vital for enhancing earnings potential and creating opportunities for social mobility. The combination of increased income and enhanced social mobility is assumed to create greater social justice. Social justice and economic prosperity are considered as twin goals and as being 'inextricably linked'. This section considers the role of FE in relation to social justice and social mobility.

Section two is concerned with participation. Alongside social justice and social mobility, FE is considered to have broader social benefits for example, in terms of

encouraging students to actively participate in their local communities, making people more aware of healthy lifestyles, making people more tolerant of others and less likely to engage in anti-social behaviour. These broader social benefits, if indeed they exist, may be perceived as arising from higher levels of educational attainment, as a by-product of the act of participating in a communal learning environment or as a formal process of taught citizenship skills. Many of the broader social benefits considered to be gained from FE arise from the act of participation. There is a great deal of emphasis within New Labour's FE policy, upon encouraging participation, to the extent that the act of participation may at times, be seen as more important than the content the student may be engaging with. Developments in pedagogy place activity within the classroom as paramount and lecturers are encouraged to ensure all students demonstrate active participation in the learning process. This section considers the emphasis upon participation, in particular, the role of participation as a socialising agent and as a form of personal development.

Section three focuses upon social capital. One of the benefits of participation in FE is presumed by New Labour policy makers to be increased levels of social capital both for individuals and communities. Social capital refers to networks between people. Such networks may connect people to their local communities and to society more broadly. However, they may also act to cohere people to sub-sections of society that are counter-posed to the mainstream, for example, youngsters who belong to gangs or adults who seek informal paid work through networks of friends. This section explores the importance of social capital to New Labour and why the promotion of social capital is considered an important goal for the FE sector. One conclusion is that although social capital comes in many different forms some types of social



capital are valued by government more than others.

The fourth section considers the moral values associated with social inclusion.

Participation in FE comes to be considered a moral value with people facing political and moral pressure to participate within FE generally (lifelong learning) but also, significantly, to participate within classroom activities. Other values, more specifically linked to social inclusion, include tolerance of difference, respect for diversity, healthy lifestyles, care for the environment and active citizenship. These values are either taught explicitly as part of the curriculum or under the guise of advice and guidance and occasionally even formally assessed or are assumed to be promoted as a by-product of the act of participation.

## **1. Social Justice**

The instrumental model considered in the previous chapter, places an emphasis upon overcoming social exclusion through encouraging engagement with the labour market.

Social justice and economic prosperity are considered to be twin, interlinked goals:

‘our overriding objective [is] to strengthen Britain on the dual and inextricably linked foundations of social justice and economic success’ (DfES, 2002: 4) and again in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*,

‘Since 1997, the Government has developed policies based on the interdependence of social justice and economic success’ (DfES, 2003: 8). One way in

which they are considered to be interlinked is through the assumed connection

between individuals gaining skills and correspondingly increasing their prosperity:

‘By increasing the skills levels of all under-represented groups, we will develop an inclusive society that promotes employability for all’ (DfES, 2003: 18). Bill

Rammell makes the connection between economics and social justice explicit:

BR: I think economics is a fundamental element of it. I think if you are without adequate income you are excluded from society and a whole series of other things. But it's wider than just finance; there are links with ill health, there are links with poor education, there are links with poor housing and I think those associated factors put you in a very marginalised and very poor situation. That's what a whole raft of policies, certainly amongst this department and amongst other departments too, is targeted at tackling. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Here, Rammell defines exclusion as about more than just 'finance' (presumably he means a lack of finance) and links it to 'ill health', 'poor education' and 'poor housing'. Rammell neatly elides causes and effects of social exclusion. Poor education, for example, may cause exclusion but may also be an effect of exclusion, or, indeed, poverty. The elision arguably makes it easier for New Labour to "pick and choose" the political issues they address. Whereas increasing the levels of benefit payments may be costly and politically unattractive; public health campaigns to tackle smoking or obesity can shift responsibility for the causes/effects of exclusion onto individuals. Similarly, by linking 'inadequate income' to skills gained in FE, blame for poverty is shifted onto individuals who lack qualifications.

That increasing the skills levels of individuals through qualifications gained at an FE college will bring about social justice and enhance social mobility relies upon two assumptions. Firstly, it assumes a direct correlation between qualifications and earnings (as discussed in chapter four). Secondly, it assumes a degree of permeability in the social class system and that social mobility can occur as a direct result of increased education. Through gaining skills it is argued, employment opportunities are opened up to those who would have previously been denied entry to the labour market. Justice is considered, in part, to arise out of the increased incomes available to people which are 'partially restorative of losses suffered through rights violations

during the process of industrialisation' (Winch, 2000: 143) but also stops dependence upon the state and financial reliance upon welfare benefits. This linking of social mobility and education assumes British society operates as a meritocracy and success in the labour market is directly linked to educational success measured in formal qualifications.

This focus upon social mobility through meritocracy gives vocational education and training a perceived radicalism which many working within post-compulsory education are keen to explore, (Hyland: 2002, 2003; Hyland and Merrill, 2003, Thomas, 2001). FE is associated with the promotion of society as a meritocracy because it caters for so many students (many of them adults) who would otherwise have little, or no, contact with the education system. This was first noted in 1998: 'the FE sector has the will and the ability to play a major part ... It has demonstrated this in the breadth of its provision: catering for 4 million students, 80% of them adults, studying for a total of 17,000 qualifications in 1995/96' (*Further Education for the New Millennium*, 1998a: 6), (see also Parry and Fry, 1999: 101).

It is similarly recognised that the FE sector is 'uniquely well- placed to provide opportunities for second chance learning and personal development' (DfES, 2006: 29). 'Second chance learning' indicates the long-recognised role of the sector in attracting people disillusioned with education from their school days. Foster talks of the powerful emotional impact, 'spine tingling moments' of witnessing people take advantage of second chance opportunities:

AF Very often, let's say, working class women denied educational opportunity who took an incremental step, they went to FE, they did a hairdressing course and here they were doing their PhD or being lecturers. We are not a bad country in many ways, but educational

opportunity is still denied people and therefore seeing, primarily women but not only women, having that opportunity seemed to me that was a tremendously valuable thing for an equal and open society. (Interview with author, 28/05/08)

Although the powerful emotional impact of witnessing people have a positive experience of education for the first time is surely familiar to many who have worked in Adult Education, the transition from a hairdressing course to a PhD is perhaps a little less usual. However, Foster's point about the importance for 'an equal and open society' of FE offering learners previously disillusioned with school a second chance, is an important one.

A reason for the unique ability of the sector to attract second chance learners is offered in *Raising Skills*: 'It is effective in reflecting and responding to the diversity of local communities and has a strong track record in tackling inequalities and reducing achievement gaps' (DfES, 2006: 14). Reflecting and responding to the diversity of local communities, including attracting learners from disadvantaged groups, has long been the remit of the sector. However, 'tackling inequalities and reducing achievement gaps' is surely less straight-forward and either returns us to arguments concerning the returns to qualifications or indicates a broader social role in terms of promoting particular values. 'Tackling inequalities' can invoke the instrumental process of making more people employable, but it also indicates a purpose for the sector in challenging students' attitudes towards others and promoting equality and respect for diversity. This political goal is acknowledged in the processes of recruiting teachers and managers within the sector which will 'be centred on a powerful commitment to equality and diversity' (DfES, 2006: 8).

Despite Foster's belief in the opportunities FE provides for "second chance" learning,

this may be diminished as a result of recent government policy. The decision to fund everyone in England for their first level two qualification (The Level Two Entitlement) was taken in 2006. In 2007, *Raising Expectations* heralded the introduction of compulsory participation for all youngsters up to the age of eighteen. If youngsters use up their entitlement to a funded level two qualification before they are eighteen, on a course they may well have little interest in and have only attended under duress, only to discover some years later the direction they really wish their life to take, they are not able to use FE as a second chance – they have already had it, a point recognised by Rammell. They will only be able to complete a further level two qualification if they pay for it themselves.

BR: You do have to give people later opportunities and one of the changes that I'm proudest that I've personally instigated in my three years doing this job was extending the level 3 entitlement for those aged 19 – 25. I was very convinced that, particularly if you came from a less advantaged background and you ducked out of the system but you came back at the age of 21 or 22 you hit a funding brick wall and therefore we extended provision to twenty-five year olds. Now, given time, I'd like to go further, but as with all of these things you can only do it as quickly as you've got resources available. (Interview with author, 22/04/08)

This was a positive move made by Rammell and to be welcomed by those with an interest in extending educational opportunities. However, problems emerge with this as you often cannot complete a level three qualification without already having obtained a level two qualification in a relevant subject.

Enacting social goals and bringing about social justice can appear to stand in contradiction to the more instrumentalist “skills for employability” agenda. In the construction of social inclusion, tensions inevitably emerge between the emphasis placed upon labour market preparation and broader social issues. Whilst there appears to be a general recognition that more instrumentalist aims dominate the FE

and particularly the Vocational Education and Training (VET) curriculum (Hyland, 2003: 252) there are some attempts to argue against this subordination: ‘We should not be captured by the discourse of the market; instead we should critically assess the value of education and concomitantly, what is taught’ (Thomas, 2001: 42). Hyland is keen to point out that he considers progress towards the creation of a more liberal approach to VET has been made, ‘the social purposes of education and training have an integral place in TW [Third Way] politics in a way that makes them distinctively different from earlier forms of neo-liberalism’ (2002: 246) and he reinforces this view the following year: ‘even though the social purposes are usually placed second, the fact that the links are always made is more than symbolic’ (2003: 252).

Foster explains the links between instrumentalism and social purpose by describing the social purpose as what really matters but the skills agenda as the vehicle for getting FE the budget it needs and for it to be taken suitably seriously by government ministers.

AF: I became clear that the social mission of FE was incredibly important and very valuable and I was quite convinced of that. But it also became clear that whilst it continued to tell its story in the way that it did, the chance of it getting the breakthrough that it wanted was almost non-existent. It was almost going to be a Cinderella that kept on having a Renaissance and being a Cinderella again. I was actually concerned with what to do about this and in my mind the most powerful theme it had to tell was about skills. But these two don’t have to be in conflict if you build your skills towards the economy and do that in a way that develops social inclusion. But the skills argument is the way you make it understandable. (Interview with author, 28/05/08)

Foster’s use of the word ‘mission’ is revealing, associated as it is with religious endeavours and the work of missionaries. That FE should have a ‘social mission’ reveals the view of policy makers of the FE sector and those who work in it as middle class missionaries, reaching out to the socially excluded to draw them into the mainstream of society. Here, Foster expands upon his view (touched upon in the

previous chapter) that although the ‘social mission’ of the sector is ‘incredibly important’, it does not constitute an attractive story to tell to government or business funders of the sector. However, when the ‘social mission’ is seen in terms of developing skills ‘towards the economy’; it becomes more politically acceptable. One repercussion of constructing social inclusion through the parameters of social justice achieved through qualifications for entry to the labour market is that the converse also comes to be accepted: the socially excluded are constructed as those who lack skills for employability. When a connection is made explicit between social exclusion and low-level basic skills and this is linked to the idea that the excluded ‘may well exclude themselves’, it appears logical to suggest that the socially excluded are to be held responsible for their poor educational achievement and have a duty to improve their skills. *Skills for Life* successfully establishes this duty upon individuals with:

a *requirement* that those unemployed people with literacy and numeracy deficiencies *must* address their needs. If they fail to do so they risk losing benefits. ... they have *a responsibility* to improve their employability and to take advantage of opportunities offered to them. (DfEE, 2001: 11) [my emphasis]

A division is created between two groups, the literate and the illiterate, with phrases such as ‘those unemployed people’, ‘their needs’ and ‘they risk’. The concrete noun ‘requirement’ adds emphasis to the imperative auxiliary verb ‘must’ emphasising the government’s view that people must rectify their ‘deficiencies’. The policy formulation that ‘they’ ‘must address their needs’ is interesting, particularly from a Labour government. Firstly, it labels and instructs a particular group of people that they have ‘needs’ even if they have been unaware of this themselves; secondly, it places all responsibility for both possessing and rectifying these needs upon what are perhaps some of the most disadvantaged people. Some may well have expected a Labour government to show more empathy towards people who have poor basic skills,

perhaps looking to structural reasons in the educational or social class systems to explain and resolve literacy problems. New Labour opts instead for a draconian approach, punishing those who fail to tackle their deficiencies with the threat of lost benefits. This message is reinforced in the final sentence of the quotation which calls for ‘responsibility’ – but again, it is the responsibility of the people who lack basic skills to solve their own problems and make themselves employable. The message here seems to be that unemployment is the fault of those lacking basic skills and it is their responsibility to gain skills and become employable. With this message, all responsibility for unemployment, poverty and social exclusion is shifted from the economy, from politics and from government. Finally we are told that unemployed people must take ‘advantage of opportunities offered to them,’ thus placing them in an almost entirely passive role, having to wait for opportunities to be offered, and yet compelled to participate in whatever is given.

In order to bring about social inclusion, the goal of FE becomes the targeting of particular social groups prone to non-participation in formal institutions; *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* lists benefit claimants (DfES, 2003: 29), ex-offenders (DfES, 2003: 29), women (DfES, 2003: 45), minority ethnic groups (DfES, 2003: 70) and asylum seekers (2003: 72) as a particular focus of a mission ‘to give all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first century society’ (DfEE, 2001: 1). However, the focus for educational reform is very clearly upon the most disadvantaged. When education is thought to provide social and economic benefits not just to the individuals but also to their communities and the nation as a whole, participation in FE comes to be seen as a moral duty and as a logical next step, as compulsory for targeted social groups.



## 2. Participation

When the role of FE becomes ‘to give all adults in England the opportunity to acquire the skills for active participation in twenty-first century society’ (DfEE, 2001: 1) we can see the elision that has been made between work and society. Whereas previously skills have been mentioned as a necessity for employment, now they are noted as fundamental for participation in society. What such skills may be is never precisely defined. We are told in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, ‘There is strong evidence to suggest that improving skill levels can reduce the risk of unemployment’ but the sentence continues, ‘and bring broader social returns in terms of reduced crime and better health’ (DfES, 2003: 18) thus linking reduced crime and better health not to employment or increased prosperity *per se*, but also to the act of improving skills levels. Note the present participle ‘improving’ is employed instead of the past participle “improved”. It is the act of engaging and participating that has the positive social effect, not necessarily the possession of skills in and of itself. It is education that is presented as playing a broader social role, not just employment. This is reinforced by the claim that, ‘For individuals, skills are not just about work. They also serve essential social purposes’ (DfES, 2003: 57).

The point about skills serving social purposes is also made by David Blunkett:

DB: It’s a combination of giving people the skills, the leadership skills, the confidence to build self-esteem and in some cases the training tools to know what they are doing and to encourage them to learn not only about where decisions are made and power is used but how they can actively get engaged in the community as community leaders in regeneration as secretaries and leaders of residents associations. ... So there’s a whole range of things in which people can get involved but they find it very difficult to do that if they are not given the tools and adult education is a key to achieving that.

(Interview with author: 18/07/07)

Blunkett uses the language of skills which is familiar to us but moves quickly to consider the impact of building skills upon individuals' levels of self-esteem and their consequent ability to develop communities. Yet it is worth noting that the skills people develop are expected to be put to a very formal use 'as secretaries and leaders of residents' associations'. The implication is that these are not skills for people to put to their own, private, use or merely to be developed for an intrinsic pleasure. Furthermore, Blunkett goes on to name the specific projects he wishes to see people engaged in: 'nurture and develop a child in positive ways ... change the nature of the environment in which they live, whether it's greening their community or whether it's renewal of housing' (interview with author: 18/07/07). It could be argued that these are quite stereo-typically New Labour projects.

Learning comes to be about promoting the values of participation and community cohesion, for example, *The Learning Age* states,

Learning enables people to play a full part in their community and strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation. (DfEE, 1998b: 1)

The implication of the verb 'enables' supposes that people are not capable of actively participating in the lives of their communities without some formal engagement in learning and that as an outcome of the learning process people will want to be more involved with their local communities. This statement relies upon assertion rather than proof, as does the second part of the sentence which claims that learning 'strengthens the family'. The rhetorical triple of family, neighbourhood and nation aims to convince even the most reluctant learners of the importance of participation and this is an idea which is returned to frequently, 'strengthen families and the wider

community' (DfEE, 1998b: 3) and 'We want to encourage families to learn together' (DfEE, 1998b: 77).

Further on in the document two possible explanations are offered for the notion that learning strengthens communities. Firstly, we are told that,

Learning contributes to social cohesion and fosters a sense of belonging, responsibility and identity. In communities affected by rapid economic change and industrial restructuring, learning builds local capacity to respond to this change. (DfEE, 1998b: 18)

References to 'a sense of belonging, responsibility and identity' indicate psychological benefits to learning which will be discussed further in the next chapter. Such psychological changes are of more than just individual benefit but of broader advantage to the whole community. The notion of communities as affected by 'rapid economic change and industrial restructuring' may be intended as a reminder to us of the legacy of Thatcherism but it may also refer to the changes in the labour market examined under the instrumental model of exclusion. Whichever of these is implied, the significant point is that the passive use of the verb 'affected' distances economic change and industrial restructuring from any agent. The state of 'change' is merely to be accepted. Learning enables people to 'respond' to the change but not to challenge or question the necessity or direction of the change. This notion of responding to rather than questioning change corresponds to the idea of learning fostering 'a sense of belonging, responsibility and identity'.

If learners are encouraged to take on board a sense of belonging to their local community and responsibility for that community then the identity they can create is only one of identification with their local area. This could be considered restrictive as learners are not then encouraged to raise their aspirations beyond the confines of their

local community and strive for an identity that socially and geographically may take them elsewhere.

When education is considered in this way, as essential to building communities and processes of democracy, the act of participation in education is considered in and of itself to be an inclusive act. Kennedy (1997) draws this out explicitly: ‘the very process involves interaction between people; it is the means by which the values and wisdom of society are shared and transmitted across the generations’ (1997: 6). This point is also made by Rob Wye:

Well, there’s quite a lot of evidence that if people at whatever age engage in Further Education of any kind that can then bring social interaction in itself but that can also give people additional skills, competencies, confidence, attitudes which enable them to undertake wider, not just what they’ve been taught, not learning in an instrumental sense but in terms of broadening their ability to engage. (Interview with author, 21/09/07)

Wye’s comments are interesting as he reinforces Kennedy’s view that participation in and of itself brings about social interaction. Whilst this is a truism it raises questions as to the specific role of the FE sector. Arguably, encouraging diverse groups of people to participate in any project will result in social interaction. This is brought home to us with Wye’s final phrase: ‘broadening their ability to engage’. This is tantamount to saying that participation is important because it provides the skills necessary for more participation. Thomas further reflects this view in her claim, ‘there is currently a new opportunity to ensure that education and lifelong learning is inclusive and progressive’ (2001: 41). The inclusion, here, comes from the act of participation in education as opposed to any specifically academic or vocational outcomes which may be gained by the student. Young (1990) goes a step further in placing participation in education alongside food and shelter as a basic human right

(1990: 91); if the conception of an inclusive society is, at least in part, based upon an acknowledgment and fulfilment of human rights then the logic of this argument is that widening participation is essential for social inclusion. The focus of education is then shifted away from the acquisition of skills or knowledge (or indeed any outcome) onto the act of participation, (see Williams: 2005: 189). This is noted by Rammell: 'If you engage in any form of educational opportunity you have your horizons broadened' (interview with author: 22/04/08). The process of participating in a communal activity becomes privileged above the act of learning any particular academic or vocational content.

It is argued that understanding oneself and others can only be achieved through the collaborative endeavour to create the communities in which we are to live (Mills, 1959). In this way, the task of education is to help adults as well as the young to develop the attitudes of mind – for example, reflection, tolerance, imagination, sympathy and respect – as well as the capabilities to take part in the democratic process, (Ranson, 1998: 9). It is the interaction between people that is presumed to break down barriers, challenge assumptions and tackle prejudices. Preston et al., for example, claim 'adult education leads to a moderation of racist or authoritarian attitudes amongst the general population' (2005: 28). Mayo argues, 'In the globalised economy of the late twentieth century, combating racial discrimination and oppression is more vitally important than ever' (1997: 11). This hints at an implicit "values agenda" for adult education (already acknowledged by Kennedy, *op. cit.*) and that one benefit of widening participation may be a wider audience for liberal values. Mayo considers the content of education to be concerned with: 'questions of unity and diversity, solidarity and respect for difference ... issues of culture, changing

consciousness and identity' (1997: 12). This clearly overlaps with the view that widening participation helps bring about social justice – not through the increased opportunities, or individual emancipation; but through replacing “extremist attitudes” with ‘generally more tolerant views’ (Preston et al., 2005: 303) which may serve ‘as the basis for building alliances for transformation’ (Mayo, 1997: 12). As Wye explains:

FE is a place where young people grow up. They learn to socialise in a large community, they learn to deal with a wide variety of people from different ethnic and social backgrounds. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

The question that arises is not so much whether this process of growing up, as described by Wye, is positive or negative; indeed this is what happens when a range of young people mix together in any environment. Rather, the question is whether this is all we should expect from FE. Is it enough just to provide a meeting point for youngsters and to encourage their interaction?

The expectation of ministers and policy advisors is that an individual’s act of participation in a communal activity can lead to them fostering values such as tolerance of difference and respect for diversity. Education, however, is chosen above other communal activities because it can lead to the inculcation of particular values, either directly through the content that is covered as part of the curriculum; or indirectly through higher levels of educational attainment leading to greater awareness of social and moral concerns.

This point is made by Rammell:

By and large, the more educated people are, the broader the range of information out there that they have access to and therefore the better informed they are about the way decisions are taken and about things they do that will impact upon their lives. If you do have that broader perspective,

again, there are all sorts of exceptions to this, but you are more likely to make decisions that are in your interests than would otherwise have been the case. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Rammell is referring here to people having information regarding such matters as their legal rights and their opportunities for career and educational development. When understood in this way, it can be argued that such an approach to education provides people not just with the information to make decisions that are in their own interests but in the interests of the whole of society.

The importance of participation becomes a value to be promoted through education. When participation in learning is considered important for the broader social benefits it brings, participation comes to be seen as an individual moral duty. In the foreword to *Success for All*, Clarke refers to ‘our aspiration to enshrine lifelong learning into the daily lives of our citizens and the culture of our country’ (DfES, 2002: 2). The first pronoun ‘our’ indicates this is a collective goal of the government, the use of the abstract noun ‘aspiration’ presents the aim as worthy but not easily attainable, the verb ‘enshrine’ provides the sentence with an almost religious fervour – it also serves to place ‘our citizens’ as object within the sentence: the government will do the enshrining, the citizens are passive recipients. The ideas of lifelong learning as part of our ‘daily lives’ and ‘culture’ again makes the necessity to participate seem almost religious. The government wants participation in lifelong learning to be habitual and a duty of citizenship. The civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations*, explains that the policy to make participation in education or training compulsory up to the age of eighteen, ‘comes from the aim, to start with, of just increasing rates of participation, being absolutely convinced that it is generally a good thing, getting young people to stay on in some form of education and training post-16,’ (interview

with author, 11/10/07).

As part of helping individuals to ‘acquire and keep developing’ skills, the government seeks to make, ‘high quality life long learning a reality from the cradle to the grave’ (DfES, 2003: 20) although there is little indication of any demand for such an all-encompassing approach to learning at every stage of a person’s life. An example of how such a ‘cradle to grave’ approach may operate is provided:

The difficulties of balancing family and work commitments can cause people to drop out of the labour market. New measures for working parents are aimed at helping them balance those responsibilities. (DfES, 2003: 45)

This places pressure upon all people, but especially individuals with low-level skills, to engage in learning. Learning takes on the status of a moral imperative: ‘Learning new skills, at work and for pleasure *must* become a rewarding part of everyday life’ (DfES, 2003: 10) [my emphasis]. This is a moral imperative which is all encompassing: ‘We need to build a new Skills Alliance, where every employer, every employee and every citizen plays their part’ (DfES, 2003: 18). Not only ‘must’ people learn, they must learn ‘for pleasure’ and as a ‘rewarding part of everyday life.’ The point that education is to encompass every member of society is made by Wye:

RW: It’s aiming for the 100%, so whether that’s with young people, sort of Every Child Matters stuff or post-sixteen making sure there’s an opportunity for every young person to engage so they can progress as far as they possibly can. And then at the other end of the spectrum you’ve got making sure people don’t fall by the wayside if they lose their jobs or when they become older. They feel that they are part of society, they are not marginalised. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

However, the notion of the *whole* of society participating in FE is clearly illogical. We can see from the groups Wye makes particular reference to that the traditional image of FE (as discussed in chapter two) as being for the socially disadvantaged denied places in schools or universities, not only remains but is reinforced by the



addition of young people below the school leaving age. Wye explains this inclusion in FE is important so 'they are not marginalised' but the danger is of turning FE into an enclave for those labelled as socially excluded.

With learning thus portrayed as a personal moral duty, but also a threat, a raft of officials and agencies can be drafted in to inform upon people not fulfilling their responsibilities. The metaphor of the 'frontline' (used in *Skills for Life*, 2001: 24, 25) implies that there is a 'battle' against illiteracy with troops lined up on opposing sides. The frontline comprises those working in benefits agencies who are asked to spot job-seekers with literacy problems but added to this group are a range of school teachers, community workers and health professionals; for example, it is suggested: 'we will look to train health visitors so that, as part of their work with new mothers, they can be aware of potential literacy and numeracy needs' (DfEE, 2001: 21). Individuals with little or no contact with state agencies are not able to escape their duty to learn however as *Skills for Life* informs us:

We cannot underestimate the power of word of mouth to get adults back into learning. So our publicity campaign will also aim to encourage the wider public - family, friends and work colleagues - to be the biggest positive influence on changing the behaviour of those who may need to improve their reading, writing or number skills. (DfEE, 2001: 27).

The result of this is that, in effect, family, friends and colleagues are recruited to 'change the behaviour' of those with poor basic skills and ensure their compliance with their responsibilities. Whilst the benefits of participating in learning are a moral duty for adults, for youngsters they can become compulsory. When participation becomes compulsory up to the age of eighteen, a whole new raft of officials will have responsibility for monitoring the attendance of students, 'the college will just have to tell the Connexions, or whatever its replacement may be in a particular college, that

this person's not coming' (interview with civil servant, 11/10/07). Here we can see how Connexions, a careers and advice service for young people will take on a potentially more draconian and intrusive role of monitoring behaviour.

Compulsory participation is justified on the basis that it provides youngsters with opportunities to gain qualifications and, as a result, earn more money. It is claimed, for example, 'The undeniable truth is that if a young person continues their education post-16 they are more likely to achieve valuable qualifications, earn more, and lead happier, healthier lives' (DfES, 2007: 3). Here, we can see how a connection is drawn between qualifications and employability, employability and income and income and happiness. Illich (1970) questions whether learning automatically occurs as a result of attendance. He challenges the notion that: 'the value of learning increases with the amount of input; and, finally, that this value can be measured and documented by grades and certificates' (1970: 44). This assumption is further challenged by Husen (1974) whose investigations of international impacts into the raising of the school leaving age and increased learning 'show that neither the assumption of high correlation nor the one of linearity comes anywhere close to being correct' (1974: 20/21).

The stages in the argument from DfES 2007: 3 (above) are soon omitted so that participation in and of itself brings about health and happiness: 'There are also much broader benefits: they are more likely to be healthy and to have good social skills' (DfES, 2007: 5). The reference to 'good social skills' moves us away from benefits to the individual student of prolonged participation in education; and, instead, indicates broader benefits to society. This is reinforced by Wye who extols the virtues of FE

being ‘a transition from school to work in a very positive way in terms of active citizenship’ (Interview with author: 21/09/07).

The assumption put forward here is that education can play a role in modifying the behaviour of the students. This is made explicit with statements such as ‘young people who remain in education and training are less likely to commit crime or behave anti-socially’ (DfES, 2007: 5) and ‘Those who participate are less likely to experience teenage pregnancy, be involved in crime or behave anti-socially’ (DfES, 2007: 12). The role of teachers and the goal of participation shifts away from the instrumental focus upon individual skills for employability onto a focus upon behaviour modification for the social benefit of society.

This suggests a role for FE; in acting as a “socialising agent” in relation to ‘greater complexities of citizenship’ (Husen, 1974: 12); whereby participation in learning is considered to promote community engagement and reduce incidences of anti-social behaviour: ‘Those who participate are less likely to experience teenage pregnancy, be involved in crime or behave anti-socially’ (DfES, 2007: 12). It is the act of participation in and of itself rather than anything that is specifically taught, which is thought to reduce such anti-social behaviour, in particular, teenage pregnancy. The civil servant responsible for writing *Raising Expectations* explains,

It’s interesting that the rates of teenage conception increase massively during the summer holidays ... that’s more of the rationale generally, that participation is linked to those things [reducing anti-social behaviour] so, I guess it’s just a question of engaging young people. (Interview with author, 11/10/07).

Here we can see how the very act of keeping teenage girls in college is seen to bring about social benefits desirable to New Labour. Education comes to be seen more as

preparation for life rather than the world of work. Youngsters leaving the education system ‘before they have prepared themselves for life’ (DfES, 2007: 6) are deemed to be at a disadvantage. We are told that,

The time has come to consider whether society is letting these young people down by allowing them to leave education and training for good at 16, knowing that they are not adequately prepared for life. (DfES, 2007: 5)

It is assumed that those currently leaving at the age of sixteen are the most vulnerable young people and the least ‘prepared for life’. However, it is not made clear the role education plays in preparing youngsters for life or how exactly two more years of compulsory education will make youngsters more prepared. It could be argued that the only thing to prepare people for life is experience of living and making mistakes in the real world; if this is the case then prolonging the time spent in education serves only to postpone the time when young people gain experience of life in the real world.

In many ways, attempts to prepare youngsters for the ‘life they will have to lead’ (DfEs, 2007: 10) can serve only to limit their aspirations. No teacher or government initiative can assume knowledge of the lives students will lead in the future and any attempts to do so risk categorising students according to their current circumstances. One example of this is with the development of ‘functional skills’ qualifications in English, maths and ICT. Functional skills focus upon ‘the elements of these subjects that people need to participate effectively in everyday life, including the workplace,’ (DfES, 2007: 29) and in so doing, remove everything that may be considered merely interesting or inspirational and replace it with the most mundane knowledge people need just to “function” in society.

### **3. Social Capital**

If social exclusion is considered to be not just about income poverty but about non-participation and dislocation from the local community and society more broadly, social inclusion involves a focus not just upon financial capital or human capital, but, most importantly upon social capital. Social capital is connected to inclusion in that a socially inclusive community will be one that has strong connections between citizens and high levels of social capital. The products of social capital such as civic engagement in the forms of volunteering and voting in elections are also the markers of an inclusive community (Putnam, 2000: 333). Those who are lacking in social capital are also considered by New Labour Ministers and policy makers to be at greater risk of social exclusion. Whilst the nature of the relationship between social inclusion and social capital remains relatively ambiguous, at very least, the rise in discussing social exclusion and social capital have occurred simultaneously with both being concerned with a fall in the rates of civic participation. FE is considered by some to play a role in building social capital (See Feinstein and Hammond, 2004; McClenaghan, 2000; Ecclestone and Field, 2003).

Three main writers have helped define the concept of social capital; Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1998, 1990) and Putnam (2000). Bourdieu contrasted social capital to human and cultural capital, defining it as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (1986: 248). Bourdieu is the first then to term the immaterial product of relationships as a 'resource', thus objectifying essentially elusive human interactions. Although Bourdieu never argues that social capital can be directly transferred into an economic form (unlike human or cultural capital) he does emphasise that social capital is

‘fundamentally rooted in’ economic capital, (McClenaghan, 2000: 568). Social capital can be used, for example, to build social mobility. For Bourdieu, the value of the concept of social capital lies not in its prescription of communitarianism but as a tool for analysing the processes of social reproduction, (see Gerwitz et al. 2005: 653).

Coleman (1998, 1990) also defines social capital as a resource: ‘If we begin with a theory of rational action, in which each actor has control over certain resources and interests in certain resources and events, then social capital constitutes a particular kind of resource available to an actor’ (1988: 98). Whereas Bourdieu comments generally on the transferability of different forms of capital, Coleman explicitly links high levels of social capital with, in particular, rates of staying-on at school, (1988: 118). He argues the networks of parents within the school community ensure the collective educational participation of the children. However, it could be the case that the levels of social capital in the community are high because education is valued by a significant number of the parents; that is, the parents share similar values and therefore have a network of relationships between each other. This network of relationships can result in pressure to conform to particular types of behaviour through the ‘moral, cognitive and social supervision that the group exercises over its members’ (Winch, 2000: 5). This in turn has led to speculation about the negative impact of social capital as it can act as a mechanism by which to exclude those who do not conform to particular values or follow a certain behavioural code (Bentley, 2003; McClenaghan, 2000; Gerwitz, 2005).

Putnam (2000) also makes some reference to the negative effect of social capital which he defines as ‘social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness

that arise from them' (2000: 18) but his prime concern is with the declining levels of social capital. He argues that this decline in social capital has led to a population that is more isolated and less trusting of fellow members of the community and as a result levels of civic engagement have dropped to the detriment of communities and the nation. Putnam draws a distinction between 'bridging' capital which is inclusive and acts to ease relations between different sections of the community and 'bonding capital' which is exclusive and coheres members of the same social group whilst simultaneously isolating those who do not belong. Putnam argues, it is possible for bridging capital to be in decline whilst bonding capital is static or actually increased, (2000: 210); however, the opposite seems actually to be the case and 'the greater the social homogeneity of a community, the lower the level of political involvement' (ibid). So, it seems from this that all varieties of social capital are currently in decline, which has been interpreted as problematic by a Labour Party conscious of losing traditional points of connection to working class communities through declining links with trade unions and church groups, for example.

### **Inclusive Social Capital**

Most recently, commentators such as Field (2003, 2005) and Bentley (2003) have brought the discussion on social capital to British society and Bentley especially has been influential in promoting social capital policies within the current Labour government. There has been concern shared with Putnam that all forms of social capital are in decline and this has a negative impact upon the likelihood of citizens participating in society. Where the views of Field and Bentley differ from those of Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam is in the emphasis placed upon the negative aspects

of spontaneously arising social capital (see also Portes, 1996: *The Downside of Social Capital*). Bourdieu, Coleman and Putnam all see social capital as a 'natural' product of human relationships, of the spontaneous networks that develop when people come together in communities. Whilst there may have been negative elements of such social capital (defining communities necessitates some people falling outside of the community) it was essentially of benefit to individuals and nations and the strengths to the community outweighed the negative impact towards those excluded.

More recently certain types of social capital have come to be viewed as a potential cause of social exclusion as opposed to inclusion, as networks of people with similar social backgrounds act to exclude others, (Portes, 1996: 2). The defining of community involves labelling groups of people who are considered to be outside of the community, (Smith, 2001: 4). This point is also made by Blunkett:

Sometimes exclusion of course can be because society or a community has excluded people, not necessarily deliberately but by default because there's not been a reach-out to them; there's not been the ability to actually engage them. That's certainly been true of young single mums in the past, it's certainly true still of South Asian women and therefore you have to make a conscious effort. (Interview with author: 18/07/07).

Smith goes on to argue that the oppressiveness of networks should be counteracted by the promotion of a 'celebration of difference' (2001: 8). Bentley (2003) and Field (2005: 69) believe communities cannot be left alone to develop their own social capital, but that government policies should be directed towards its development.

Bentley argues the need for 'investing in the human and social capital of marginalized individuals and groups' (2003: 3). The use of the financial term 'investing' is revealing, as, in correlating with the economic connotations of 'capital' it implies that there will be a material "return" on the initial outlay - that an investment in social capital today will reap economic rewards in the future. The question of who will



receive the “return” remains ambiguous - are the benefits of investing in social inclusion to be reaped by the ‘marginalized individuals’ the wider communities, by society more broadly or by the government?

Field argues social capital is a ‘differentiated resource’ (Ecclestone and Field, 2003: 269) and that not everyone has equal access to social capital of a similar “value”. He stresses that some social networks can reinforce exclusion and underachievement and that, ‘Certain types of ties inhibit innovation, promote nepotism and suppress tolerance of diversity’ (Ecclestone and Field, 2003: 269). This takes the ‘capital’ part of social capital literally and assumes that networks are a tangible (and finite) resource: the more some people possess the less there will be available for other sections of the community. There is also an assumption that some ties will suppress tolerance of diversity. However, social isolation may be more a cause of bigotry and well developed social networks may lead to greater degrees of tolerance of others.

McClenaghan (2000) and Gerwitz (2005) express concern with the moral authoritarianism of social capital, ‘and by implication, social control’ (McClenaghan 2000: 580) as individuals have their behaviour policed by members of the community. With declining levels of social capital, such moral pressure upon individuals to conform to behavioural norms is no longer felt, replaced instead by, ‘a culture of atomised isolation, self-restraint and moral minimalism’ (Putnam, 2000: 210). This leaves a moral vacuum. There is demand for the government to fill this vacuum with the promotion of a certain kind of social capital to replace that which is on the wane (Bentley, 2001). This demand is in response to claims that, ‘levels of social capital in Britain have hitherto failed to reach those who, by virtue of their age or class position,

remain at the margins of society' (Hall, 1999: 37). And herein lies the cause for concern: whilst the evidence suggests that the middle classes maintain relatively high levels of social capital it is the lower classes (more specifically - the socially excluded) who are considered to lack such networks of reciprocity that bind them into society. Although, as Gerwitz indicates, working class parents, 'clearly possess strong forms of 'bonding' capital as opposed to the kinds of 'weaker' social ties' (2005: 667).

It is not the case that the lower classes are lacking in social capital then, but more that they are lacking in what is considered to be the "correct" sort of social capital. Whilst the networks that bind people may exist just as strongly within communities of the excluded - mothers coming to informal agreements over child minding, workers learning of jobs in the informal economy - these are not networks that promote conformity to values of civic participation, for example, voluntary work or voting in elections. Gerwitz notes that, 'one reason for the low levels of take up of social capital building initiatives of all kinds ... is that those defined as the most socially excluded are largely satisfied with their social bonds and the networks within which they are already located' (2005: 668).

### **Social Capital and FE**

Formal projects have been initiated by New Labour to build social capital amongst the socially excluded, 'We want to promote social capital through mentoring and volunteering, especially in engaging with the hard to reach and drawing them back into the mainstream' (DfES, 2007: 10). FE, working alongside third sector organizations and on occasions as a third sector organization (state-funded, community-led group), is expected to play such a role, institutions 'are frequently

communities of interest which can act as hubs and contribute directly to building social capital' (DfES, 2007: 12). Field (2005) explores how high levels of social capital within a community can have a beneficial effect upon the standards of educational achievement of the youngsters within that community: 'The highest level of positive attitudes towards an active approach to learning is found among those who are actively engaged, whatever the activity' (2005: 36). The collective pressure of the adults in the neighbourhood is said to ensure (amongst other possible benefits) less tolerance of truancy, greater staying-on rates and higher expectations of educational success.

A direct correlation has been drawn between social capital and educational attainment. Bentley argues, 'social networks are vital determinants of an individual's life chances' (1997: 44). However, this is not unproblematic, it may be that the correlation works the other way, that educational achievement is itself the cause of high levels of social capital, with more educated people being the most likely to participate in the life of their local communities, vote in elections, volunteer or serve on committees. For instance, Hall (1997) claims that, 'It is well established that each additional year of education increases the propensity of an individual to become involved in community affairs' (1997: 35) and Feinstein and Hammond that 'the effects of participation in learning on health and social capital are extremely pervasive' (2004: 216). However, it is also noticeable that despite concern with declining levels of social capital in the post-war period (Putnam, 2000) most formal means of recording educational attainment (qualifications) record an increase in the corresponding period, (see McClenaghan, 2000: 568).

It is understood by government policy makers that social capital results in higher levels of educational achievement resulting in higher levels of employability and ultimately social inclusion. As a result of this it has become the aim of educational policies to raise levels of achievement through building social capital. This is particularly apparent in the field of adult education and vocational training where the goal of participation becomes the building of social capital or the act of participation itself. This idea has been welcomed by radical adult educators, who consider the goal of building social capital as a counter to the individualism of building human capital, (see especially Ecclestone and Field: 2003: 270). As Field professes: 'It appeals to me because it represents a way of promoting approaches to education and training that are more emancipatory and empowering than instrumental approaches based on human capital thinking' (Ecclestone and Field, 2003: 270). McClenaghan likewise explores the positive role of adult education in building social capital, 'with its emphasis on personal and community responsibility and empowerment, on democratic participation, on communal identity, social cohesion and solidarity, on flexible and particularistic responses to human need' (2000: 567). There is surely a danger that the aims of promoting social capital replace more traditional curriculum goals. Hyland (2003) argues explicitly for the rejection of 'outcomes based programmes' as they are 'not well suited to achieving the knowledge, attitudes and qualities associated with citizenship and social capital notions' (2003: 55).

#### **4. Inclusive Values**

The development of social capital is one of the ways in which social inclusion is constructed through the FE sector. When policy makers privilege certain types of

social capital over others, it suggests judgments are being made as to the values that FE should promote. It is possible to identify a body of inclusive values from the documents relating to the FE sector. The promotion of socially inclusive values through vocational education and training is thought to arise from the coming together of disparate individuals. This purpose for education was noted by Kennedy, ‘the very process involves interaction between people; it is the means by which the values and wisdom of society are shared and transmitted across the generations’ (1997: 6). The idea that the socially inclusive is to be found in bringing people together and encouraging students to work in groups helps ease the tensions between vocational training and the promotion of values. Hyland notes: ‘Since all learning is “inescapably a social creation” (Ranson, 1998: 20) it could be argued that learning and the fostering of that social capital required for both working life and the promotion of social cohesion and citizenship can be complementary and mutually supporting activities’ (2003: 53).

The idea that formal participation in education fosters particular values is, in some ways nothing new. In the past people have commented on the role of education in reinforcing particular gender roles or teaching obedience to authority and subservience in the workplace. However, this inculcation of particular values was as a by-product of either the school system or the content of the curriculum. It was “the hidden curriculum” of the education system. This suggests the promotion of a particular political agenda which:

includes fostering an enterprise culture, and, for young people in particular, it must extend to *inculcating the values, attitudes and knowledge* that society seeks from its citizens. (DfES, 2006: 22) [my emphasis]

‘Fostering an enterprise culture’ is arguably in-keeping with the instrumentalist

approach already elaborated upon. However, ‘inculcating the values, attitudes and knowledge that society seeks from its citizens’ is different. It suggests that there is a consensus of opinion as to the attitudes and values everyone in society seeks. This is far from the case. In referring to ‘inculcating values’ the document makes explicit what may well have been previously construed as part of the “hidden curriculum”. As part of the hidden curriculum there was recognition that inculcating values was a covert process which took place under the guise of imparting knowledge. Now, it seems that inculcating values and attitudes is of explicit and equal importance to imparting knowledge. What is new now is that the fostering of particular moral values is explicit; it has become in many ways the point of education. An individual’s adoption of particular values may even be assessed in certain subjects. Husen (1974) comments that the Swedish curriculum has moved away from teaching knowledge and skills: ‘But the key word in all the curricular that have been drawn up in Sweden during the past two decades is “fostering”: fostering personality, fostering responsibility, independence and co-operation’ (1974: 13). Winch similarly comments on the ‘all-encompassing’ nature of moral education which consists of: ‘developing the ability to choose a worthwhile mode of life and appropriate and acceptable ways of achieving it’ (2000: 70).

Two main processes for inculcating inclusive values are presented within *Raising Skills*. Firstly, there is the previously mentioned focus upon ‘a broad education’ (DfES, 2006: 66) which is to move beyond the narrowly vocational to give youngsters, ‘the right foundations for their adult lives - as individuals, in the family and in the community as well as at work’ (DfES, 2006: 66). When understood in the context of inculcating values, education for family and community is necessarily going to

promote a particular view of those two institutions. Secondly, students are to be encouraged to participate in volunteering projects which will enable them to, 'develop the soft skills required by employers, strengthen providers' engagement with their local communities and help foster an inclusive ethos' (DfES, 2006: 37). The aim of fostering 'an inclusive ethos' presents the adoption of such values as compulsory: students cannot opt out of inclusivity, their embodiment of this ethos will be an integral part of the learning experience. Diplomas include an element of voluntary work, 'schools will work with the Children's Trust, voluntary groups etc. to provide breadth of learning' (*Action on Access, A Summary Guide to 14-19 Reform*, University of Bradford).

However, when expanding upon the 'social purposes' of vocational education it is interesting to note that Hyland himself ends up returning to the essentially economic needs of employers. He argues, 'WBL [work based learning] serves as an ideal vehicle for the personal and social development of learners that helps to foster those broader skills, values and attitudes required for employment' (2003: 53). In the absence of broader (liberal) educational goals, the transmission of values through vocational education cannot, it appears, be separated from the needs of employers. Foster highlights the contradictions between focussing on skills and social inclusion:

The best end of FE actually does go into that engagement quite well but there is a part of FE that feels like it is stuck in a time-warp and can get fixated about its own local, social need; which has merit but if it's not seen within a bigger context then it's a journey that doesn't go anywhere. You have to see the bigger picture. (Interview with author, 28/05/08)

Foster's language is revealing here. Despite having previously praised the FE sector for being able to respond to local need and fulfilling an important social mission, the

phrases 'stuck in a time-warp' and 'fixated' suggest a more sceptical attitude. The 'bigger context' is presumably linked to meeting the needs of employers. According to Foster, a community driven approach is to be welcomed, but only if it involves working with local employers. Arguing that the needs of the local community may be best served through means other than serving employers is not reflected in New Labour's thinking.

As has already been discussed, the values required for employment may be a degree of subservience and compliance. Pring (1995) highlights this concern, 'The distinction between education and social engineering becomes very fine, indeed - the use of schools, under the guise of education, to promote specific moral values and to train future citizens in social skills which people in power think appropriate' (Pring, 1995: 14). This also suggests that education is to be used to inculcate values but there is little actual agreement as to what those values should be. By turning to employers, the government avoids the responsibility of having to claim certain values as superior to others.

This focus upon training in social skills, particularly on vocational courses, blurs the boundaries between skills and values and between those values (and skills) sought by the state, employers and radical adult educators. Citizenship programmes and parenting classes are all considered to be part of social skills training and carry a distinct moral agenda. Pring likewise notes that 'There are values, too, which as a society we have undertaken to promote: respect for all people irrespective of race, religion or gender' (1995 13). In the context of liberal education such a promotion of values could lead to the student questioning their prejudices, reflecting upon the



nature of their beliefs and ultimately, deciding to reject the values proposed. The potential danger is that in the context of vocational education with its more rigid learning outcomes and assessment methods requiring the demonstration of competencies, such a promotion of values becomes little more than state indoctrination. This redefines the socially included as those people who share the state's values and the socially excluded as those who do not. Brine considers social exclusion to be concerned with exclusion from the state in her consideration of training schemes which require attendance or see participants lose welfare benefits. She argues, 'the relation between training and state benefit suggests another reason for the increased emphasis on training provision - the compulsory occupation of people's time through their involvement in state activities ... this compulsion towards training programmes can, in part be explained through a second interpretation of social exclusion, that is, exclusion from the state' (Brine, 1999: 102).

### **Guidance and support**

Whereas *Success for All* argued the case for low-skilled individuals being held responsible for their own failings and duty-bound to make themselves more employable, this argument shifts slightly in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* as the government takes on board more responsibility for perceived skills deficits and the quality of people's lives. The government's stated aim now is to: 'Help individuals acquire and keep developing the skills to support sustained employability, more rewarding lives and a greater contribution to their communities' (2003: 17). The idea that the government should help people to acquire skills to enable them to achieve 'more rewarding lives', is not unproblematic. Individuals will necessarily have unique notions of what constitutes a "rewarding life", which may or may not coincide with

government plans.

This also suggests an important role for FE in terms of offering personalised guidance and support to individuals in how they should best run their lives. This point is made by Rammell and is worth quoting at length:

I certainly think FE fits in with the general emphasis placed upon a more personalised system of education and you do have to focus upon the needs of the individual student who may need support to achieve and yes, that's partly about financial support. One of the really strong areas we're working on at the moment is improving the advice and guidance we give to young people. Too often people go, through no fault of their own, down the wrong path or fail to take a path at all because they weren't actually given the right information and the right encouragement at the right time. I think we've made huge progress over the past ten or eleven years educationally and I actually think advice and guidance is one of the areas where we've made least progress and we've got to get much better at it. (Interview with author, 22/04/08)

There is an assumption here that if people were just given the 'right information and encouragement' they could make the 'right' decisions about their lives. This is somewhat simplistic. Most students in FE are probably well aware that they can earn more from studying medicine than childcare or from applying to one university rather than another. Unfortunately people's lives do not always work out in this straightforward way and the decision to 'take the wrong path' or indeed, 'no path at all' may be an entirely rational response to the circumstances someone finds themselves in at any particular time. The role of offering students advice, guidance and support suggests a psychological model for constructing the socially excluded as somehow vulnerable and infantilized. This will form the topic of the next chapter.

## **Conclusions**

Participation in education and training is, considered to be, by its nature, an inclusive act. Through education, the time of participants is accounted for; they have structure

in their lives, routines and informal points of contact with the state. Informal learning opportunities, perhaps carried out by individuals in their own homes, have few requirements for formal participation and consequently may not result in the creation of the correct sense of belonging, responsibility and identity. It is formal learning that is promoted, the aim being, 'to encourage every community to develop its education potential, involving all types of learning institutions' (DfEE, 1998b: 83). This shows that the emphasis is not simply upon the gaining of particular skills, but the act of participation irrespective of the educational content. The emphasis upon 'institutions', albeit a variety of institutions, suggests the need for a formal coming together of people and regulated participation. This is reinforced over the concern about a 'current lack of formal arrangements for community involvement' (DfEE, 1998b: 91). Whilst there may be a plethora of informal community networks involving mother and toddler groups, allotment societies etc. they are discounted in the need to monitor formal institutional participation and promote the social capital necessary to bind people to their neighbourhoods.

The psychological model for constructing social exclusion and social inclusion focuses primarily upon the psychology, or mental state, of individuals or collectively of communities. Under this model, the socially excluded are constructed as somehow psychologically damaged, or deficient. This is often presented as a result of people being dependent upon welfare benefits, having a tendency towards moral deviancy (young single mothers and young men caught up in crime) or a lack of self-esteem. Conversely, FE constructs social inclusion in terms of ambition and aspiration and through skills for employability; financial responsibility and independence. FE is also used to promote values associated with good citizenship and raise the self-esteem of participants. This chapter contains four sections:

Section one examines the construction of the socially excluded as vulnerable, or victims of circumstance. The language used in the documents and by interviewees defines (and thereby constructs) a group of people as disadvantaged in comparison to mainstream society either through their individual biology, 'learners with learning difficulties' (Foster, 2005: 5) or through their family circumstances, 'intergenerational disadvantage' (Blunkett, interview with author: 18/07/07) or through social break down, 'society has fragmented'. Many of the descriptions of the 'disadvantaged' come close to passing moral judgements on people's lives, classing them as leading 'chronically chaotic lives' (XX, interview with author: 11/10/07) or being 'led down the path of criminality' (Blunkett, interview with author: 18/07/07). When the socially excluded are constructed on the basis of their (im)morality it becomes the case that non-engagement with state institutions and non-participation in FE is enough in and of itself to leave one defined as alienated and disadvantaged.

Section two examines the construction of the socially excluded as suffering from psychological weaknesses of low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence and low-aspirations. These three psychological weaknesses are either considered connected: low-aspirations results from low self-esteem; or they are used interchangeably. Again, they are states which can refer to individuals or to communities. When used to refer to individuals, low self-esteem and low-aspiration are often considered to be passed from one generation to the next. In all cases, FE is presented as the solution: engagement in learning is considered sufficient to raise the aspirations of individuals and communities.

Section three examines how the FE sector is being used to promote social inclusion through offering students guidance and support. This often takes place through an emphasis upon personalised learning or a personalised curriculum. However, the focus upon guidance and support suggests that this approach to FE is aimed at particular groups of previously determined 'disadvantaged' students. That the most disadvantaged students are thought to be most in need of guidance and support suggests a certain construction of the socially included: those who accept and act upon such sources of help. Similarly, only certain types of support are offered: support to stay in education or to participate in the labour market; in short, support to make the choices that have already been determined as the 'right' choices. This constructs the socially excluded as those unable or unwilling to accept and act upon the advice and support offered.

Section four considers recent approaches to teaching, developed initially in response

to the teaching of adults, or andragogy (Knowles 1984:12), which have been heavily influenced by the writings of Paulo Friere (1974a and 1974b) and Carl Rogers (1970 and 1980). The political focus upon raising the aspirations and self-esteem of students who may be victims of inter-generational disadvantage and poor-parenting finds an educational outlet in the therapeutic ethos propounded by Rogers and the ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’ associated with Freire. This section examines the rapid take up of such approaches to teaching by FE lecturers attempting to meet political goals of promoting social inclusion and the effect that such teaching might have upon the traditional educational aims of the sector.

### **Victims of Exclusion**

Throughout the documents and interviews, social exclusion is frequently equated to disadvantage and the socially excluded to the disadvantaged. *The Learning Age* indicates, ‘The sector also has an excellent track record in reaching disadvantaged people, helping to reduce social exclusion and promoting employability’ (DfEE, 1998: 75). This is reinforced a few years later in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*: ‘In many disadvantaged areas, low community expectation and aspirations are a significant factor in holding back the prospects for economic and social development’ (DfES, 2003: 105) and in *Raising Expectations*: ‘FE is particularly effective in providing HE for learners from more disadvantaged groups, backgrounds and communities’ (DfES, 2006: 30). As this final quotation demonstrates, the role of FE comes to be focused upon meeting the needs of the ‘disadvantaged’ individuals and communities. FE is considered important in bringing about social inclusion because of its role in ‘reaching disadvantaged people’.

The choice of the term ‘disadvantaged’ is interesting because it suggests a comparison, a group of people who are in some way “advantaged”. This portrays (constructs) society as divided; a division that is not necessarily based upon wealth or social class but upon other factors which are less tangible. It is this lack of substantial cause of disadvantage that, I would argue, makes the term politically attractive. The socially excluded may be disadvantaged as a result of society, government policy or economic factors, or, they could just as easily be disadvantaged as a result of their own decisions. As it is never made clear which cause of disadvantage is referred to any particular point in the discourse there is inevitably room for potential slippage between one cause of disadvantage and another, much as exists between one cause of exclusion and another.

The composition of the ‘disadvantaged’ is rarely made explicit although numerous groups are mentioned. There is a particular focus upon describing the disadvantaged as those lacking educational achievement such as, ‘those who do not have a qualification at level 2 ... are more likely to suffer disadvantage and exclusion’ (DfES, 2003: 24); and ‘for many young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, their early twenties is the time when they wish to gain Level 3 qualifications’ (DfES, 2006: 7). In a somewhat circular argument, disadvantaged people are presented as lacking educational qualifications yet they have not achieved because they are disadvantaged. Other groups mentioned include: ‘women are over-represented in a number of these disadvantaged groups’ (DfES, 2003: 70); ‘people with handicaps’ and ‘people from different ethnic minority backgrounds’ (Foster: interview with author); and ‘older people’ (David Blunkett: interview with author). References to the ‘disadvantaged’ come to be avoided by the use of euphemism; ‘those who are

most at risk of losing their way' (DfEE, 1998b: 73) being one example of this. This curious metaphor presumably refers to some sense of people 'losing their way' through life or not following a traditional route of education and employment. The authors of *Raising Expectations* prefer 'the hardest to reach' (XX: interview with author). In both of these euphemisms, the marker of disadvantage is not having taken the given advice and guidance offered (losing one's way through being hard to reach).

Although *Skills for Life* (2001) draws less heavily upon a psychological model than *The Learning Age* (1998b), we have already seen examples of the portrayal of individuals lacking skills as somehow "deficient" and "morally irresponsible", not taking their duties to become employable seriously enough and thereby creating a financial burden upon the nation. Two points are worth noting however, specifically in relation to the psychological model of understanding social exclusion. Firstly, we have the formulation familiar from *The Learning Age*, that 'Too many adults were left by the way side' (DfEE, 2001: 1). Once again, this returns us to the political fallout of the previous Conservative government and places the blame with them for the state of the nation's poor literacy and numeracy skills. However, it also portrays a group of adults as passive victims, 'left-behind' by a fast-changing world. Secondly, the documents explain that the 'enemies' (note the return to battle imagery) are no longer political but the psychological character traits of those who do not participate in learning: 'Inertia and fatalism - not least among low-skilled individuals - are our chief enemies' (DfEE, 2001: 3). Again, this returns us to the concept of blaming low-skilled individuals for their educational weaknesses, the implication is that the 'inertia and fatalism' of the unemployed or socially excluded prevents them from becoming employed or included.



One cause of disadvantage which is frequently alluded to is the family. Disadvantage is considered inter-generational:

It's good to get the youngsters engaged because you've got to but actually, many of them are in families of intergenerational disadvantage and the atmosphere, the culture, is counterproductive to education. So, we've got to involve all those families. (David Blunkett: interview with author, 18/07/07).

Here, we can see how Blunkett considers families are to blame for turning youngsters off education and how this adverse "culture" causes disadvantage. This view is reinforced in *The Learning Age*:

The results are seen in the second and third generation of the same family being unemployed, and in the potential talent of young people wasted in a vicious circle of underachievement, self-deprecation and petty-crime. Learning can overcome this by building self-confidence and independence. (1998b: 19)

Here Blunkett illustrates some of the effects he considers to emerge from intergenerational disadvantage with the use of highly emotive language such as 'lives ... wasted' and 'petty crime' which portrays the socially excluded as immoral. Blunkett repeats this sentiment in interview:

DB: I was also thinking of the fact that the culture and the family was often completely counter to learning and education so what would happen is that people would say you don't want to be bothered with that you know, it didn't do us any good and that is very difficult to overcome especially as it looks to the young person as though next year and five years hence will be no different from what it is now so there is a hopelessness to that and that leaves some of the sparkier ones to get into real trouble; they get involved with drugs and they think there's an easy way of earning money and that leads them down the path of criminality. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

This quotation is revealing of New Labour's thinking about social exclusion at the time of writing *The Learning Age* and is worth unpicking in some detail. Firstly, we have the idea that the family is a cause of exclusion as it promotes attitudes which run counter to the government's belief in education. Secondly, we have the idea that

social exclusion is linked to the psychological cause of low expectations or 'hopelessness'. Finally, there is a clear moral discourse here which links social exclusion to criminal deviancy. All of these factors combine to "problematise" the socially excluded.

This problematising of the socially excluded constructs a group as outside of the mainstream of society:

DB: Well, I think it's people who feel completely outside the norm and don't feel the same incentives, the same aspirations or expectations of themselves or others around them as we would expect of ourselves and that therefore exclusion and alienation go hand in hand. (Interview with author: 18/07/07).

This creates oppositions between 'the norm' and those 'outside the norm'; 'themselves' and 'ourselves'; the excluded and the included. Blunkett claims that 'exclusion and alienation go hand in hand' but his view of excluded people as not having the same aspirations and expectations is firstly, not backed up by any evidence and secondly in and of itself deeply alienating. Far from a celebration of common humanity, the construction of a group with different aspirations and expectations is deeply divisive.

This problematising is continued by others:

AF: ... the number of young people having problems in their own lives with authority who, when they started being treated in a different cultural way by their teachers, in an adult way, that brought about more of an acceptance of authority within themselves. (Interview with author: 28/05/08)

Here, Foster constructs the excluded as those having problems, primarily with authority. In order to become included they need to learn how to accept authority. The authors of *Raising Expectations*, in their efforts to avoid labelling those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) as having problems, end up by labelling

some as ‘chronically chaotic’:

XX: So I think sometimes we often have too much of a tendency to characterise NEETs, non-participants, as having all these problems. Not to say that they don’t and I know some have really chronically chaotic lives with multiple barriers but that’s not all of that group. (Interview with author, 11/10/07)

Despite reminders to us that those with problems do not constitute ‘all of that group’, the emphasis is very much upon those who do. The phrase ‘chronically chaotic lives with multiple barriers’ illustrates the extent to which the presumed scope of problems facing this group are so severe and so numerous as to be individually inseparable.

An analysis of the documents and interviews does reveal one problem more than others to be connected to social exclusion: the experience of learning difficulties.

Foster notes:

FE is the main provider of post-sixteen learning for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are nearly 400, 000 learners who declare themselves as having a learning difficulty and/or a disability. (2005: 5).

The role for FE, in bringing about social inclusion, comes to be the offering of opportunities, help and support to those with learning difficulties. Again, this point is made explicit by Foster:

The overall experience of FE colleges by learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is extremely positive, with learners enjoying greater social inclusion than previously experienced in other learning environments. (2005: 29)

Indeed, since Tomlinson’s (1996) *Inclusive Learning*, the creation of an inclusive learning environment has been a key aim of the sector. Tomlinson investigated the provision available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities after leaving compulsory schooling. He moved away from a “medical model” of viewing special educational need as a defect within the individual to a socially constructed

model of disability which placed the defect within the institution. The role of lecturers, he argued, was to find the “best match” between the needs of the learners and the provision on offer, which was to be considered “best practice” for all learners and resulted in a trend towards individual learning programmes, (Williams, 2007: 45).

The logic of this approach has been continued as this quotation from *Raising Skills* shows:

It will allow units and qualifications to be combined in ways that suit the needs and aspirations of the range of learners at this level, including supporting those with learning difficulties to develop the skills to live independently. (DfES, 2006: 44)

What students get to study are not subjects, or even skills, but units and qualifications in a sector that although geared towards the “range of learners”, in order to create an inclusive learning environment is designed to meet the needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities first. Although the Tomlinson Report’s concern was with providing students with the skills they need in order for them to ‘contribute both to the economy and the community’ (FEFC, 1996:7) (by 2006 this ambition has been revised down to ‘the skills to live independently,’) there is little discussion within his report about the content of the curriculum or the skills students should be expected to acquire. The content of the curriculum is secondary to the act of participation by the students, (Williams, 2007: 42). This becomes the case for all students, not just those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This emphasis upon including students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has remained in all the documents relating to the sector published since Tomlinson. In *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* it is stated:

We recognise the importance of ensuring that students with learning difficulties or disabilities have an equal opportunity to participate and achieve in learning. (2003: 71)

The focus upon participation is made clear in this quotation.

Providing learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with an equal opportunity to participate may necessitate some significant changes being made to the curriculum for all students. This is a point made by Foster in interview:

AF: If you then take another example which would be of a relatively open system towards people with handicaps. I've met learners with different handicaps and their carers, really feeling able to be treated in an equal way – very powerful stuff. ... There's a counter story to be given that sometimes the special educational needs of these people slow down other learning but the inclusive element of it was I thought, great. (Interview with author: 28/05/08).

This quotation is revealing: not only does Foster move away from the more politically correct terminology of 'learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities' with his use of the term 'handicap'; in doing so, he removes any distinction between what may be a vast array of impairments. In acknowledging that 'sometimes the special educational needs of these people slow down other learning', Foster is suggesting that the special educational needs model of "best match" may not be most conducive to learning. However, Foster's view seems to be that even if the learning of all students is slowed down, this is a small sacrifice if the inclusive element is 'great'. What we have here is a construction of the socially excluded ('these people') as those with learning difficulties and as a result of this construction the purpose of the FE sector, in promoting social inclusion, is to meet the needs of those with learning difficulties through offering support and individualised interventions.

In interview, both Rob Wye and David Blunkett illustrate the importance of engaging people with learning difficulties:

RW: But there are a lot of learners with learning difficulties who can engage very effectively through employment, through economic engagement and actually that then gives them a huge confidence in themselves which actually then broadens their outlook on life so they are not institutionalised. They don't go, "well, I'm outside society," and that's the end of the story, they get engaged.

(Interview with author: 21/09/07)

DB: Adult education now under the new direction, is still seen as very much an occupational side show. It's seen as expendable whereas generally including for families, including for second chance, but also including for older people, the vast majority of people are going to live much longer in retirement, it's a lifeline, it's a cultural lifeline, it's an inspiration to keep them mentally alert and alive, it's socially valuable because they meet and discuss and come together. Society has fragmented into households where there is a lot of loneliness. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

The language used to describe the importance of participation is revealing of the psychological deficit that constructs the socially excluded. Wye explains the significance for participants: 'they are not institutionalised' and Blunkett: 'it's an inspiration to keep them mentally alert'. This constructs the socially excluded as mentally weak and vulnerable.

Alongside the construction of the socially excluded as mentally weak and vulnerable comes the sense of this group as being somehow not quite adult: dependent as opposed to independent. The introduction to the *Learning Age* states:

Learning will be the key to a strong economy and an inclusive society. It will offer a way out of dependency and low-expectation towards self-reliance and self-confidence. (DfEE, 1998b: 3).

Although no explicit connections are drawn between an inclusive society and 'a way out of dependency and low-expectation', their juxtaposition is enough to suggest a link. The implication is that the socially excluded are "dependent" (presumably upon state benefits, although "dependency" can also be understood as a mental state) and suffer from the psychological weakness of low-expectations – both of which *The Learning Age* claims can be overcome through learning. The idea of learning as providing a way out of dependence and promoting independence is returned to frequently: 'The development of a culture of learning will ... assist in the creation of personal independence' (DfEE, 1998b: 18). The construction of the socially excluded

as dependents, serves to infantilise this section of society. They are portrayed as needing help to “grow-up” and attain full independence. The popularity of this idea perhaps lies in its bringing together the psychological and instrumental models: dependence is both a state of mind and a financial position. The concept of dependence also has clear moral overtones, not being able to financially support oneself or one’s family being considered immoral by the political “right”.

Constructing the socially excluded as lacking independence indicates a perceived psychological flaw which is implicit in the notion of welfare dependence: a moral irresponsibility in not being able to financially support oneself and one’s family. This implicit distinction between the moral and the immoral, the advantaged and the disadvantaged is used to demarcate, ‘who is currently involved in learning and, more importantly, who needs to be drawn into learning in the future’ (DfEE, 1998b: 20). In this context, an involvement with learning marks an individual out as morally correct and psychologically capable. Those who do not share these characteristics need somehow to be distinguished and then ‘drawn into’ learning. This constructs learning as maternalistic, drawing people into its embrace to raise their confidence and set them off on the road towards independence. The language used by the author of *Raising Expectations* illustrates this approach:

XX: ... a belief that as we get towards 90% it’s the hardest to reach who are the ones we won’t convert on the way to 90% and we risk kind of leaving behind the ones who have got the biggest barriers, the greatest disadvantage and potentially the most to gain if we could succeed in keeping them on.  
(Interview with author, 11/10/07)

Phrases such as ‘hardest to reach’ and ‘risk leaving behind’ demonstrate the way participation in learning is presented as a maternal imperative. It is interesting to note the use of the word ‘convert’ and all its religious connotations. The aim of conversion

in this instance is not religious enlightenment but ‘keeping them on’ participating in education.

It is for this reason that *The Learning Age* talks of learning as being, ‘At the heart of the government’s welfare reform programme’ (1998b: 3). Whereas in the past, welfare reform would have indicated large-scale redistribution of wealth through restructuring social benefits or schemes to enforce participation in the labour market; learning as welfare reform suggests not only a new approach to welfare but also, significantly, an entirely new concept of learning. With learning presented as welfare and participation in learning as a moral step towards independence, logically, it becomes imperative that all must be encouraged (or coerced) into participating. This lies behind New Labour’s plans to raise the age of compulsory participation to eighteen. The author explains why this is so important:

XX: I would have thought that for almost every young person it is better to [participate in education], I mean, we are talking about people who are doing nothing, and it is better to stay on in some form of training which might well be through work or part-time alongside some form of work. (Interview with author, 11/10/07)

A huge assumption is made about the lives of young people: ‘people who are doing nothing’. This is entirely unsubstantiated. Not participating in the activities the government sanctions does not necessarily equate to ‘doing nothing’. The logical conclusion here is that participation in education is not a good thing in and of itself but simply better than ‘doing nothing’.

Constructing the socially excluded as dependent and FE as welfare leads to the demand for other for other forms of intervention in people’s lives, as Rob Wye indicates:



RW: ... educational intervention for most people who are disadvantaged is rarely sufficient on its own. So, you need your childcare, you need your transport, you may need health support. You may need care to get you through the door of even being in learning in the first place. (Interview with author, 21/09/07)

There is surely an irony here in that proposals designed to counteract dependency upon financial benefit payments are so all embracing, covering every aspect of a person's life, as to run the risk of promoting another form of dependency upon the support offered around education.

### **Raising Aspirations**

The main focus of this maternalistic approach to education in seeking to counter psychological disadvantage seems to be raising people's aspirations and expectations. The socially excluded are constructed as suffering from low expectations and low aspirations for the future. *The Learning Age* implies that the biggest psychological problem faced by individuals in engaging either with the labour market or with learning is low expectations. The document declares: 'Meeting this challenge will require a quiet and sustained revolution in aspiration' (DfEE, 1998b: 22) and that 'We need to understand better the obstacles people face. ... Encouraging people to have higher expectations of themselves and of others' (DfEE, 1998b: 28). This construction of the socially excluded as suffering from low expectations continues in other documents. In *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*, training is considered to be most needed in 'areas of long-term systemic low aspirations' (DfES, 2003: 106). By 2007 and *Raising Expectations*, the issue of youngsters with low aspirations was considered the biggest problem facing the education system and society, as the title of the document suggests. The document portrays typologies of non-participants with phrases

including ‘disengaged with low-aspirations’ and ‘have unrealistic aspirations’ (DfES, 2007: 14, 15). Again, we see the family is pin-pointed as the cause of low-aspiration:

Without compulsion, there is a risk that young people with lower aspirations, who may come from families and communities which have a poor experience of schooling, are missed as participation increases. (DfES, 2007: 18)

This point about the importance of the family is also made by the author of *Raising Expectations*:

JW: It’s almost a shift in culture isn’t it, raising aspirations?

XX: Yes, that’s key to the whole thing, starting early and raising their aspirations and those of their parents and also completely changing the way that these decisions [about participating in education] are made.

(Interview with author, 11/10/07)

It is interesting to consider the construction of social exclusion as a question of low aspirations because it distances the discussion from a material focus upon financial poverty that was retained, at least in part, through the instrumental focus upon skills for employability. There is little discussion as to whether this may actually be the case: Are students heading for low-paid service sector jobs not right to have low expectations? Could a refusal to participate in low-level vocational courses or take on jobs with few prospects for promotion actually be an indication of high expectations?

A couple of reasons are put forward in the documents to explain why low-aspirations have become such a problem. Firstly, the political failings of the previous administration are pointed to (it is worth remembering that this document was written in the first year after New Labour’s election victory):

It forms part of the government’s wider strategy to restore hope, motivation and the opportunity for sustained employment to a generation of young people who have lost them. (DfEE, 1998b: 74)

The ‘lost generation’ refers to youngsters who have grown up under the Thatcher government and in a period of economic downturn. In pitching themselves in

opposition to Thatcherism, New Labour seeks to restore the ‘hope’ and ‘motivation’ to those from whom it has been taken. This does of course suggest that the worst impacts of the Conservative government were experienced as psychological “blows” rather than material changes upon the structure of industry. This sense of the Labour Party’s mission as being to correct a collective national psychological malaise is reinforced with:

No-one should be written off as a failure at the age of 16. This will take time, entail significant changes in attitudes and expectations, and require a major collective effort. (DfEE, 1998b: 73)

This suggests that at present people are “written off” at the age of 16 but that New Labour is prepared to put in the considerable time and effort, through the education system, to make sure that this situation stops. Again, a risk here is over-simplification. The assumption is that if tutors within FE institutions can raise the expectations of their students they can go on to get secure employment. No evidence is presented to indicate that this is actually the case. In fact, it could be argued that more time spent offering general psychological guidance reduces the time for teaching the specific skills necessary to compete in the labour market.

FE is considered able to play a part in promoting social inclusion through raising expectations. In documents from the first half of the New Labour decade, the psychological goal of raising expectations is not in opposition to the dominant instrumental focus, ‘Our overriding goal is to ensure that everyone has the skills they need to become more employable and adaptable’ (DfES, 2003: 12), but does alter it slightly, we are here told that skills should make people adaptable as well as employable. A psychological model offers an explanation as to why some individuals lack skills for employability. For instance, we are told that, ‘In many disadvantaged

areas, low community expectations and aspirations are a significant factor holding back the prospects for economic and social development' (DfES, 2003: 105). Learning (and skills training) thus comes to be centred upon challenging low expectations and promoting the 'attitudes and attributes' (DfES, 2003: xx) the government considers employers seek. The one 'attitude and attribute' that is specifically named is confidence. We are told that, 'self-confidence and willingness to learn ... are of growing importance across a range of jobs' (DfES, 2003: 78) and that, 'pupils' involvement in enterprise activities was likely to develop the skills and confidence they would need in employment' (DfES, 2003: 78). What begins as an instrumental focus upon skills for employability changes into a psychological focus upon raising students' levels of self-confidence.

By 2006, FE was to play a part in raising aspirations primarily through 'Learning programmes [which] are tailored to each individual's needs and aspirations' (DfES, 2006: 89). This would take the form of allowing 'units and qualifications to be combined in ways that suit the needs and aspirations of the range of learners at this level' (DfES, 2006: 44). There is surely a danger here in pre-empting aspirations or sanctioning certain aspirations above others: the idea that people must have aspirations appropriate to their "level". Aspiration management is referred to explicitly in *Raising Expectations*: 'Mentoring can also help to realign their aspirations' (DfES, 2007: 15). There is surely a contradiction here between "realigning" aspirations and the constant pressure to raise aspirations, 'We need every school and college in England to be working with all young people to raise their aspirations, to show them that they can succeed' (DfES, 2007:17). It seems that aspirations need to be raised but firmly within the parameters of what is considered

realistic for each individual.

Alongside low aspirations, the socially excluded are further constructed as suffering from the psychological problem of a lack of confidence or low self-esteem. Low self-esteem is most frequently considered as developing from experiences of educational failure. This point is made clearly in The Foster Report:

The appalling figures for the number of people who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills suggest great reservoirs of disappointment and poor self-esteem. (2005: 1)

It is interesting to see that low level basic skills are not being blamed for individuals being able to enter the labour market and earn sufficient income or contribute to the success of the UK economy as they were in *Success for All* four years previously.

Now, the focus is more psychological than economic and the impact of low level basic skills is 'great reservoirs of disappointment and poor self-esteem'. The emotion in the language here belies the absence of actual statistics. This link between self-esteem and educational failure however, is maintained and reinforced by the author of

*Raising Expectations*:

XX: Most of them [caricatures of NEETs] are more about people who have struggled in the traditional school system and therefore have very low self-esteem from a constant sense of failure. People who are kind of hedging their bets don't want to make a decision until it is too late and have then missed all the opportunities to sign up and end up doing nothing, that kind of thing. (Interview with author, 11/10/07)

It is interesting to unpick this quotation in some detail. 'Struggling' is presented as negative and potentially damaging to self-esteem, when it may be the case that 'struggling' with a particular concept can result in genuine learning taking place. Furthermore, it is assumed that people who have struggled at school experience a 'constant sense of failure'; this disregards other activities or other areas of people's lives from which they may take confidence. There is also an assumption that a lack of

self-esteem results in people ‘hedging their bets’ as if this was a problem, whereas it may actually be a rational reaction to the issue of uncertain exam results.

In a somewhat circular argument, low self-esteem is considered to arise from educational failure but it also prevents people entering education in the first place. In *Realising the Potential*, Foster considers the importance of ‘... addressing emotional barriers to entry to the learning community, such as lack of social confidence’ (2005: 30). Here, we can see that by presenting learning as a social activity (entering a learning community as opposed to private study) issues such as psychological attributes such as confidence become greater pre-requisites than prior learning. The idea that confidence is needed to engage in learning in the first place is reinforced in *Raising Skills*:

The young people it supports [Fairbridge – a charity] often have low self-esteem and chaotic lifestyles which mean that they find it difficult to engage in learning programmes and sustain commitment. (DfES, 2006: 54)

The College [Preston College] recognises that some students lead chaotic lives, and can sometimes find it difficult to attend courses due to issues such as financial problems, fragile mental health, lack of confidence, disrupted previous education or behavioural difficulties. (DfES, 2006: 52)

Lack of confidence is presented here as one barrier to learning amongst the many barriers that a young person leading a “chaotic life” may experience. A problem with this is that the perception of students as leading chaotic lives and lacking self-confidence gets transferred from a minority of students facing particular problems, to all students. For example, alongside those who have struggled at school, women are also singled out as lacking self-confidence:

AF: When you listen to women tell their story for themselves of their own journey where they didn’t have any self-belief, where no one in their family had had that sort of education and they never thought they could get there and almost they’re having to pinch themselves that they had abilities and qualities that they didn’t know and actually the drive it then gives them to learn and

know and understand; also the capacity and commitment it gives them to the learning they will have with others. (Interview with author: 28/05/08)

Foster considers women who ‘didn’t have any self-belief’ and again links this to a lack of educational achievement but this time not to the individual but to the family – it is the family’s lack of attainment that affects women’s self-confidence. The importance for women in boosting their self-esteem through raising their skills levels had previously been linked to their role in the community, within their family, and particularly in relation to the education of their children, ‘By raising skills and encouraging learning; parents, grandparents, carers and wider family are better placed to help their children succeed at school’ (DfES, 2003: 106). This perception of education serves to bind women more firmly to their local community and family, rather than acting as a potential source of liberation. The particular point about women is also made in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*:

We especially want to provide better support for women returning to the labour market after a period bringing up children or caring for dependants. Many of them have a valuable range of skills to offer. But they lack confidence in knowing how best to move back into employment, and feel that they need to update their previous skills and knowledge. (2003: 111)

Again, a lack of self-confidence is linked to the family, ‘bringing up children’ or ‘caring for dependants’. Whilst there is obviously some truth in the fact that failing at school or spending long periods of time engaged only in caring for family members may have an impact upon an individual’s self-confidence, the notion that this can be counteracted through ‘support’ is surely questionable. Engaging with learning, struggling and ultimately proving oneself successful surely provides a firmer foundation for confidence.

It is also interesting to note from this quotation that ‘they lack confidence to move

back into employment' which shifts the purpose of the FE sector away from providing skills for employability to providing confidence for employability. This point is also made in *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*:

Employers have consistently said that too many young people are not properly prepared for the world of work. ... In particular, they may lack skills such as communication and team work, and attributes such as self-confidence and willingness to learn that are of growing importance across a range of jobs. (2003: 77)

The review by Sir Howard Davies found that pupils' involvement in enterprise activities was likely to develop the skills and confidence they would need in employment. (2003: 78)

The idea of self-confidence being an "attribute" for employability is interesting as in the not too distant past it was assumed that employers were looking for a degree of obedience, even perhaps subservience in new recruits.

In seeking to fulfil the instrumentalist goal of bringing about social inclusion through increased employability, the FE sector comes to be focused upon the psychological goal of raising self-esteem. Blunkett makes this point succinctly: 'It's a combination of giving people the skills, the leadership skills, the confidence to build self-esteem' (interview with author, 18/07/07). In *Realising the Potential*, Foster makes clear his perception of the link between raising self-esteem and increased employability for the socially excluded:

... it is absolutely clear that an emphasis on skills development will itself turn out to be a huge driver for social inclusion and improved personal self-esteem, achieving a vital synergy between societal and personal needs. (2005: 15)

For other learners, achievement is measured by the outcomes they expect to achieve (skills, knowledge, experience, self-confidence) and the steps these outcomes make possible is of much greater significance (new employment, education and life opportunities). (2005: 30)

It is interesting to explore the 'vital synergy between societal and personal needs'.



The idea here seems to be that using the FE sector to raise the self-esteem of individuals benefits not just the people directly concerned but, in turn, whole communities and society as a whole. This point is made by Rob Wye:

Well, there's quite a lot of evidence that if people at whatever age engage in Further Education of any kind that that can then bring social interaction in itself but that can also give people additional skills, competencies, confidence, attitudes which enable them to undertake wider, not just what they've been taught, not learning in an instrumental sense but in terms of broadening their ability to engage. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Here FE is presented as giving people the confidence to play an active role in the lives of their communities and become more engaged citizens. This constructs the socially included in terms of their confidence and levels of engagement irrespective of their employment or financial status.

### **Personalisation, Guidance and Support**

Raising the confidence and self-esteem of individuals necessitates a shift away from directly educational goals towards a focus upon offering students guidance and support in a personalised FE sector. As a lack of confidence is linked firmly to educational failure, educational success is considered necessary for high levels of self-esteem. Measuring individuals against each other, or against some objective standard, would put people at risk of failure. The need to remove the experience of failure from education is emphasised in *Raising Expectations*:

The modular structure will mean that young people will be able to follow personalised learning programmes which enable them to achieve as soon as they are ready. (2007: 25)

Here, the focus is placed firmly upon achievement. A personalised approach to education measures the progress people have made rather than how they compare to others.

Programmes have to be flexible and teaching personalised in order to cater for a range of different ability levels. (DfES, 2007: 42)

Achievement is to be relative to your ability level rather than considered in relation to objective standards. In order to ensure young people achieve, teaching and learning are to be focussed upon the perceived needs of the individual students:

Learning will be more personalised. We therefore need to support providers to give every learner an experience that really meets their needs: to make sure that teaching on that course responds to their needs and to support them to overcome any barriers to successful completion. (2006: 47)

The concept of 'needs' is very broad; meeting students' needs may involve assessing and seeking to respond to a range of educational, social, emotional or financial requirements. A focus upon personalised learning also helps to resolve the contradictions between an instrumental approach to providing students with skills for employability and the more psychological goal of raising self-esteem. A personalised approach to learning and teaching, it is argued, should be able to do both.

As has already been noted in the first section of this chapter, the idea of a personalised approach to FE was first raised by Tomlinson in *Inclusive Learning* (1996).

Tomlinson's prime concern was students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but in the intervening ten years ever-broader definitions of special educational need have been taken on board by institutions, encompassing obstacles to inclusion such as poverty, race, gender, religion or disability. Personalised learning is considered to be a suitable tool for meeting these 'needs'. That students should be experiencing personalised learning is repeated frequently throughout *Raising Skills*, we are told, 'Learning will be more personalised' (2006: 47) and attending college, 'a more personalised experience' (2006: 47).

As inclusive learning has become socially inclusive learning, a personalised approach to pedagogy which takes account of a student's educational and social needs, has become accepted as best practice within the FE sector; it is claimed, for example, in *Raising Skills* that, 'Every effective teacher, lecturer or trainer sets out as far as possible to meet the needs of all their students' (DfES, 2006: 48) through 'Learning programmes [which] are tailored to each individual's needs and aspirations' (DfES, 2006: 89). When need is defined as encompassing more than just educational concerns but social problems and future aspirations, meeting all the needs of each student is an ambitious goal but one which colleges are expected to meet and will be supported to achieve:

Central to ensuring a high quality, personalised experience for all learners will be support for colleges and providers to develop better teaching and learning practice. (DfES, 2006: 46)

*Raising Skills* suggests three possible ways in which this goal can be realised all of which draw out some of the potential consequences of such a personalised approach to education. Firstly, it is suggested that colleges focus upon, 'Linking together teaching and pastoral systems to identify problems and intervene fast' (2006: 48). This necessitates a formalised tutorial system and lecturers' time to be spent upon dealing with students' essentially personal problems. More than this, such an approach seeks to combine counselling and teaching. This is based upon an apparent assumption that students cannot learn if they have "problems", that students should share these problems with their lecturer through the pastoral system and that the lecturer then has the right to intervene. This fundamentally alters the role of the FE lecturer, away from that of subject specialist with knowledge to impart, to that of counsellor whose main role is to listen and 'intervene fast' in relation to students'

personal problems.

Secondly, it is suggested that students' needs be met through students being given guidance specifically related to the correct course choices for them, they should be:

... supported and encouraged to choose a combination of programmes best able to prepare them for success in life; adults to get the skills they need for employment and progression. (2006: 89)

Particular emphasis is placed upon the initial choices made by students being appropriate to their presumed pathway to 'success in life', a pathway which lecturers are to determine and counsel them to follow.

If learners are to receive truly personalised education and training, then we need to be confident that the system supports them initially to make choices of course and provider which work for them. (DfES, 2006: 47)

This point is reinforced by the author of *Raising Expectations*:

XX: Actually, there's a lot that we need to do that's about pre-sixteen, preparing people for the changes in the curriculum we are making so people don't have that experience which leaves them feeling like they have failed and everything and also to prepare all the better for decision making. I think the need for that comes out all the better with people who have failed to do something. (Interview with author, 11/10/07)

There are several causes for concern here: 'supporting and encouraging' calls into question the freedom of young people to choose courses and for individuals to determine their own futures. It suggests guidance counsellors should play a role in managing the life choices of young people and negotiating future ambitions towards what is considered to be "appropriate". This could have the effect of limiting students' aspirations and preventing them from running the risk of making mistakes in their desire to follow a route dictated by passion and interest rather than pre-determined success. Rammell is very keen on such guidance being offered to students:

BR: Well, I certainly think FE fits in with the general emphasis placed upon a more personalised system of education and you do have to focus upon the needs of the individual student who may need support to achieve and yes,

that's partly about financial support. One of the really strong areas we're working on at the moment is improving the advice and guidance we give to young people. Too often people go, through no fault of their own, down the wrong path or fail to take a path at all because they weren't actually given the right information and the right encouragement at the right time. I think we've made huge progress over the past ten or eleven years educationally and I actually think advice and guidance is one of the areas where we've made least progress and we've got to get much better at it. (Interview with author, 22/04/08)

It is interesting to note how Rammell connects the provision of advice and guidance to a more personalised curriculum. This suggests that perhaps the reasons for personalisation are not so much educational as concerned with student welfare. The need for advice and guidance is sustained beyond the initial course selection and allows for college tutors and local authorities to have unprecedented control over the lives of young people:

The personalised nature of the local information system will allow the local authority to offer targeted advice and support, which is sensitive to an individual's circumstances. (DfES, 2007: 52)

Of concern to the authors of *Raising Expectations* is the danger that without the correct guidance and support, some students may make the wrong decisions about their lives. This sets in place the concept of there being "right" and "wrong" decisions, "good" or "bad" choices: the purpose of offering support becomes to 'help them to make good choices at 16, and to remain in education and training until the age of 18' (DfES, 2007: 37). The correct decision for a young person to make, according to the document, is not what happens to be best for their individual circumstances but the decision the government wants young people to make: to continue participation in education for as long as possible. The document states the importance of young people being offered 'the right personal support to participate' (2007: 39). The main function of support it appears is to keep people within the system, students who

‘encounter personal problems that interfere with their learning, or are at risk of dropping out of education’ require ‘the provider to attempt to resolve the issues through learning support and pastoral systems’ (2007: 51).

Thirdly, personalised learning, if it is to be conducted outside of a one-to-one mentoring relationship, requires new approach to pedagogy in which, ‘learners will take responsibility for their learning’ (DfES, 2006: 17). The reality of personalised learning is that after learning outcomes have been pre-determined, learners are left to engage in “self-directed study” as lecturers “manage the learning environment”.

There could be a danger that a personalised approach to education which may seek to boost confidence through the elimination of educational failure, could remove objective standards and didactic pedagogy, leaving students with little to learn or to compare their performance against. Instead of increased self-esteem being successfully built upon genuine achievements, students may be left to accept advice and reflect upon their own performance.

The most recent proposals suggest that such an approach to offering advice and guidance will not stop when youngsters leave the confines of the FE college but will continue throughout life. Rammell reveals:

BR: We’re talking about establishing a new skills advancement and careers service right the way throughout life, which, for example, would enable an adult within the workplace to have an adult skills health check examining where they are at in terms of their plans for future careers, what barriers they are encountering for example. (Interview with author, 22/04/08)

As well as teaching dependency to a section of young people, that they can not make choices about their own lives or complete a college course without a personalised curriculum offering them tailor made advice and guidance, alongside appropriate

support at every turn; more recent proposals also serve to turn a group of young people into counsellors and have them offering support and advice to their peers:

BR: We've recently announced the Aim Higher Associate Scheme; five and a half thousand undergraduates going into schools and colleges to take young people through their UCAS applications process and we're also looking at a whole series of other ways we can get better advice and guidance to young people and adults. (Interview with author, 22/04/08).

After advice and guidance has been offered, students constructed along this deficit model of "need" and "disadvantage" are considered unable to participate without appropriate support to help them through the choices they have made. Rob Wye makes the point that:

RW: it's got to be about how do we enable laying on the range of opportunities to young people which is going to switch them on to learning and make them want to engage and also which gives them the multiple support that they need in order to engage. (Interview with author, 21/09/07)

This is similar to the point made in *21st Century Skills* (2003) that, "We must motivate and support many more learners to re-engage in learning," (2003: 10). *21st Century Skills* (2003) is the first document that makes frequent reference to the need to support students. Previous documents use the word support in terms of the government supporting institutions to deliver particular skills or meet the needs of employers. The change from supporting institutions to supporting students occurs in *21st Century Skills*. However, there is still a focus upon support to develop skills for employability: '... with a stronger push to support skills and training for benefit claimants' (DfES, 2003: 15) although the support is offered to individuals directly as opposed to institutions. The support is targeted to specific groups, in this case, benefit claimants. There is just one quotation in *21st Century Skills* which hints that in the future more general support will be offered to all students:

Help individuals acquire and keep developing the skills to support sustained

employability, more rewarding lives, and a greater contribution to their communities, (2003: 17)

By 2006 and *Raising Skills*, support is used much more frequently in relation to all groups of students; ‘We need to support people to develop skills in the broadest sense’ (2006: 3) and, ‘... all adults having the support they need to up-skill and re-skill throughout life’ (DfES, 2006: 4). However, there is still a focus upon two groups of people in particular; benefit claimants: ‘Welfare recipients need better support to gain skills for sustainable employment’ (DfES, 2006: 15) and young people: ‘... support for young people to make the best choices for them’ (DfES, 2006: 9).

In *Raising Expectations*, it is assumed that young people ‘require the necessary guidance and support’ (DfES, 2007: 7) to help them through their years in education and particularly at the points in life when decisions need to be made. The document describes the need for FE to offer, ‘The right support for every young person’ (DfES, 2007: 6) and the importance of students getting ‘the financial support they need’ (DfES, 2007: 7). The word support appears 160 times in the sixty-four pages of *Raising Expectations*, financial, emotional and practical support are all terms used in the document. This indicates the government’s construction of youth as a vulnerable state in which no decisions can be made without requiring help and advice. A result of this is that FE comes to be distanced from educational purposes and turned instead into a pastoral system offering services akin to counselling.

The frequent repetition of the word ‘support’ and the idea that all young people and especially those most at risk of social exclusion are in need of help and guidance to keep them within the education system contributes to a process of prolonged



infantilisation of young people. The document presents young people up to the age of eighteen as being in a vulnerable child-like state and support services within institutions are then portrayed as playing almost a parental role, meeting out guidance and advice. One role for support services within educational institutions is: ‘to address young people's needs, develop their social and emotional skills and help them make positive choices’ (DfES, 2007: 41). The idea of educational institutions taking on board responsibility for developing the social and emotional skills of youngsters is something new; previously this would have been left to youngsters themselves to develop these skills through the process of interacting in society and in the workplace. The process of infantilisation of (especially socially excluded) youth is also apparent in concerns over students’ behaviour. It becomes the role of the institution and the system more broadly to reward good behaviour and regular attendance: ‘EMA is strongly linked to attendance. We will now strengthen the link to behaviour and attainment, to provide an added incentive to improve and achieve’ (DfES, 2007: 38). This is matched with a punishment system: ‘some provinces in Canada have withheld driving licenses from young people not participating in education or training’ (DfES, 2007: 39). The assumption being that without a system of punishments and rewards students would not participate in learning. This point is made by the author of

*Raising Expectations:*

XX: You can’t justify taking any kind of enforcement action against people who aren’t participating whilst there are reasons why they are not and needs that aren’t being addressed. So we need to do everything we can to ensure they’ve got the support they need and it’s got to a point where they are literally refusing to so I think that’s important. (Interview with author, 11/10/07)

Although *Raising Expectations* indicates that all young people need to receive support, it is made clear that some students are considered to be more in need of support than

others. It is stated that ‘*some* young people will need extra guidance and support’ (DfES, 2007: 7) [my emphasis] and that institutions must ensure that ‘those facing the biggest barriers receive the most support’ (DfES, 2007: 38). This support is considered particularly important as ‘there is a risk that it will only be the more vulnerable and lower achieving who drop out at 16’ (DfES, 2007: 5). This concept of some students being more in need of support than others helps to construct socially excluded youngsters as those who are most psychologically vulnerable and those who are most likely to make the “wrong” choices.

### **1. Psychological Pedagogy**

Using FE to build the self-esteem of students, to raise their expectations and aspirations and to create opportunities to offer students support, advice and guidance is generally welcomed by many working within the FE sector. This psychological approach to education, termed ‘therapeutic’ by Ecclestone and Hayes (2008) is considered by some to be a positive move away from purely instrumental pedagogies that aim to fill “empty vessels” with the skills demanded by employers.

Psychological or therapeutic approaches to teaching are thought radical in the scope they allow for working with students in a highly personalised way and for challenging previously assumed classroom hierarchies. Such educators are inspired by the likes of Freire (1974a, 1974b) and Rogers (1970, 1980). In this section I will be exploring whether therapeutic education can offer all students, but particularly those labelled as socially excluded a truly radical, genuinely liberating alternative to both traditional pedagogies and more contemporary instrumentalist doctrines.

Many working in Further and Adult Education have been influenced by the writings

of Paulo Freire. Central to Freire's radical pedagogy is his critique of the 'banking concept' of education. As described by Freire, educational "banking" involves teachers making "deposits" of knowledge for entirely passive students to mechanically memorize: 'the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits' (Freire, 1970: 53). Freire was critical of the banking system because of the way it objectified students and in so doing, 'mirrors oppressive society as a whole' (1970: 54). Freire assumes many students will find this objectification to be an alienating experience; he criticises established literacy teaching programmes: 'As object his [the student's] task is to 'study' the so-called reading lessons, which in fact are almost completely alienating and alienated, having so little, if anything, to do with the student's socio-cultural reality' (1974a: 24). This has been interpreted by many working within PCE as a demand for the content of education to be relevant to the lives of their students and that anything not relevant could be potentially alienating.

Alongside Freire, the work of Carl Rogers has also become highly influential amongst FE lecturers and is proscribed reading on many PGCE (post-compulsory) courses. Rogers began his professional career not as an educator but as a psychologist; he propounded "client centred" or "non-directive" therapies that worked with the "whole person" and not just the particular problem. The central tenet of his therapeutic approach was that the client is better placed to determine the treatment than the therapist. The role of the therapist is to establish a relationship (involving trust and empathy) whereby the client can disclose the required treatment. In applying these principles to education, Rogers was influenced by the writings of Dewey. Rogers' belief was that the teacher-student relationship was the most important element of

teaching to the extent that the role of the teacher is facilitator rather than transmitter. His book *Encounter Groups* (1970) explores the importance of creating conditions where individuals can “open-up” their true selves to others.

Many educators have welcomed such psychological approaches to pedagogy. Foley defines radical adult educators as, ‘those who work for emancipatory social change and those whose work engages with the learning dimension of social life’ (2001: 12). What is important here is the definition of ‘emancipatory social change’; Foley continues, ‘Emancipatory education ... aims to free people from some oppression, to free them to take control of their lives’ (2001: 72). Working with the oppressed to overcome their oppression may indeed be radical; however, it can be argued that many of those considered to be socially excluded are not politically or legally oppressed. The groups the government labels as socially excluded are not prevented from participating in the procedures of democracy or formally barred from entry to the labour market. Oppression is not the same as social disadvantage. Indeed, as it has been argued thus far, the processes involved in tackling social exclusion can actually serve to construct excluded groups within society, and the replacement of educational goals from the FE sector with those of promoting social inclusion can deny targeted groups opportunities enjoyed by their more fortunate peers.

Ideas such as those of Welch who suggests a feminist pedagogy should be based upon egalitarian relationships in the classroom with all students feeling valued and the experience of the students used as a learning resource, (1994: 156, in Jackson, 1997: 458) build upon the work of Freire. He argued that traditional pedagogies place too much emphasis upon the dominant and authoritarian voice of the teacher, (see

Jackson, 1997: 458). For Freire, libertarian education ‘must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and students’ (1970: 53). This challenges the assumption that the teacher has superior knowledge to the students by casting both into the same roles; the teachers are to be perceived of as learners alongside their students, indeed, as learning *from* their students. This has fundamental implications for pedagogy, Freire writes that; ‘teaching cannot be done from the top down but only from the inside out, by the illiterate himself, with the collaboration of the educator’ (1974b: 48). The danger here is that, at best, the authority of the teacher is called into question and at worst; the teacher practising the banking system becomes equated with the oppressor, (Freire, 1970: 55).

Furthermore, this shifts the position of the teacher from a source of knowledge and authority to a facilitator in the learning process with two significant consequences; what it means *to know* is challenged: ‘Instead of mechanically memorizing 4x4 the pupil ought to discover its relation to something in human life’ (Freire, 1974b: 122) and the very concept of knowledge is called into question: ‘a search for knowledge which is reduced to the simple relationship knowing subject-knowable object (thus destroying the dialogical structure of knowledge) is a mistaken one, however much it may be a tradition’ (Freire, 1974b: 137). The concept that knowledge cannot be reduced to a subject-knowable object may be unproblematic at higher levels of theoretical engagement but remains contested at the initial stages of mastering a topic.

Radical educators have interpreted Freire's critique of the banking concept as an attack upon the lecture format in particular and other forms of directed knowledge

transmission in general. Freire's later writings point out that, 'disregard for subject matter [does not] liberate a student. We cannot neglect the task of helping students become literate, choosing instead to spend most of the teaching time on political analysis' (1987: 212). However, this has been interpreted as meaning that knowledge transfer is a suitable goal as long as it is achieved using humanistic methods. Darder points to a study demonstrating that, 'teachers who use traditional methods coupled with a humanizing pedagogy are actually more effective than teachers who use progressive methods but fail to truly respect the values of their students' (2002: 110). Outside of the context of Freire's Brazil, such humanizing pedagogic techniques result in two possible consequences; either there is an emphasis upon engaging in activity rather than "passively" learning or (and often simultaneously) the focus is upon the narrowly psychological.

As Hayes indicates, such humanistic teaching methods are applied to competence-based education to make the process palatable, resulting in a therapeutic curriculum that is concerned with, 'personal development and the growth of self-awareness and understanding (reflective practice)' (2003: 35). The result of such an approach is far removed from Freire's original intention: rather than a focus upon critical engagement with subject knowledge, teaching becomes a process of encouraging engagement only with the self; rather than reflecting upon the socio-economic conditions of existence, reflection is upon the individual's feelings and self-esteem. Whilst engaged in such psychological self-absorption, students are kept very busy demonstrating their competencies. However, Freire's aim was to ensure a genuine critical engagement with the externally oriented subject matter; he argues that what is needed in bringing about a new society is: 'a critical education which could help to form critical attitudes,

for the naïve consciousness with which the people had emerged into the historical process left them an easy prey to irrationality' (1974b: 32), critical attitudes are surely more readily brought about through intellectual struggle than inane activity - no matter how active.

### **Self-esteem and Relevance**

The focus upon the self-esteem of students is reinforced through Freire's emphasis upon making knowledge relevant to people's lives. Freire points out that, 'Almost never do they realise that they, too, "know things" they have learned in their relations with the world and with other women and men' (Freire, 1970: 28). Again, this needs to be understood in its historical and geographical specificity, Freire is keen to draw out what the oppressed know in relation to their own situation, their experiences of oppression - with a view to enabling their liberation from oppression. Radical educators, who, as Ecclestone points out, see this as, 'a spring-board for challenging prevailing norms and structures, challenging how people's identities have previously been constructed and confined by power structures and discourses' (2004: 123), have enthusiastically taken on board the concept of "starting from where the learner is at". The risk, because of the application of humanistic pedagogy and its therapeutic concerns, is that educators become reluctant to move learners on beyond this position in case it damages their self-esteem.

Freire sees 'culture circles' as a crucial part of an egalitarian, non-oppressive pedagogic process; 'Instead of a teacher, we had a co-ordinator; instead of lectures, dialogue; instead of pupils, group participants; instead of alienating syllabi, compact programmes that were "broken down" and "codified" into learning units' (Freire,

1974b: 42). Culture circles were designed to complement the teaching of literacy; specifically the promotion of conscientization, through which people move from the position of object (being acted upon) to subject (acting upon the world), gaining greater awareness of the social, political and economic circumstances that shape their lives and the action that can be taken to transform the oppressive elements of that reality. It is obvious how much of this concept has been directly applied to adult education in the UK. Lecturers are encouraged to see themselves as 'facilitators of learning' and relevance replaces alienating syllabi, which have indeed been modularised into increasingly smaller units. In terms of bringing about conscientization and political awareness, Freire emphasises the radical potential of the classroom and power of the teacher. So, a teacher who may no longer be confident about transmitting knowledge, can perhaps create a new role: raising consciousness and encouraging reflection. The irony here is that at the same time as the authority of the teacher is being called into question in relation to the transmission of knowledge and setting the syllabus, the teacher's role becomes more prominent and powerful in terms of setting a moral climate that promotes participation in sharing personal reflections.

Western radical educators have readily taken the principles of the culture circle, consciousness-raising through self-reflection, on-board. The culture-circle becomes interpreted as a 'safe-space', defined by Ecclestone as a place 'where students and teachers could go to explore the "lived experience" of individuals and the group' (2004: 117). hooks writes of entering the classroom with the 'assumption that we must build "community"' (1994: 40). Safe-spaces most frequently emerge as a place for people to share their feelings and become focused around the need to build the



self-esteem of the individuals and the group. Rogers (1973) claims his intention in the classroom is to make the climate psychologically safe for group members, (in Foley, 2001: 74). The danger, as indicated by Hayes, is that 'classes more and more resemble circle-time in the primary school' (2003: 41). Taken out of the context of a commitment to engaging with a project to transform reality, the development of 'safe-spaces' can easily emerge as an exercise in psychological self-absorption. The purpose of the space becomes not engagement with external reality but an attempt to apply therapy to individuals or construct social capital between and within the excluded.

## **Conclusions**

The psychological model is the most interesting of the three models for constructing social exclusion explored so far because of its pervasiveness. People either demonstrate labour market participation or they do not. Policies designed to promote social inclusion tend to be specifically targeted at those who do not demonstrate active participation. With the psychological model, exclusion is constructed in terms of mental deficiencies. This allows for much greater intrusion into people's lives, focussing not on what they do but on what they think about. Whilst only a small group of students have learning difficulties, personalised approaches result in a special needs model of education being applied to all students. Similarly, a focus upon raising the aspirations and self-esteem of students treats all students as if they lack ambition and confidence.

This approach sets up a deficit model in which all students are constructed in terms of

what they cannot do or what they lack mentally. This deficit model infantilises groups labelled as socially excluded as they are not considered capable of exercising adult freedom and making independent choices about their futures. Instead, a role is created for colleges in providing guidance and advice, but more specifically, support for students. Colleges are expected to provide educational, financial, emotional and practical support to all students. This raises questions about the freedom people, especially young people, are able to exercise over their own lives. Opting out of education and training is not an option. Aspirations will be “managed” to a level that is high yet “appropriate”. Most significantly, students will not be left to make their own (perhaps “wrong”) choices and learn from their own experiences and mistakes but will be counselled through advice and guidance to make the “correct” choices after which they will be supported through the consequences of their decisions. There is a further danger that this process of infantilisation is self-fulfilling and students come to be dependent upon state institutions for guidance and support throughout life.

So far, this thesis has focused upon instrumental, social and psychological models for analysing the government's construction of the socially excluded as people lacking human or social capital or suffering from emotional or psychological vulnerabilities. In turn, these constructions of the socially excluded offer corresponding constructions of social inclusion. FE, charged by government ministers with the role of promoting social inclusion, comes to be variously focused around providing unemployed adults and young NEETs with skills for employability, encouraging participation to promote citizenship and adopting pedagogical approaches to enhance the self-esteem and raise the expectations of participants. This raises the question as to whether there remains a specifically educational role for the FE sector.

When I began this research, FE colleges came under the remit of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Education was clearly a priority to the New Labour government elected with Blair's mantra of "education, education and education." Ten years on from the election of New Labour and one of Gordon Brown's first acts in office as Prime Minister was to abolish the DfES. Most of what had been the remit of the DfES now falls under the umbrella of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). FE is primarily the responsibility of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). Education has quite literally been written out of government priorities. The aim of this chapter is to explore what has happened to education in the drive to promote social inclusion.

My argument throughout this chapter is that by viewing education as a worthwhile activity only if it has an extrinsic purpose, such as the promotion of general

employability skills or the promotion of social inclusion, the government appears to have given up on education for education's sake. Ironically, the promotion of social inclusion through social and psychological models of FE also calls into question the teaching of high level sector specific vocational skills that could lead to direct entry to the labour market.

Pring (1995) describes education as a 'conversation between the generations of mankind' and asks whether 'government or employers, each with their partisan interests [should] be allowed to dominate that conversation?' (1995: 41). For a government to have an educational project (as opposed to a social project delivered through education) suggests it considers a body of knowledge, however politically objectionable it may appear to others, worthy of transfer to the next generation. It suggests there is a desire to dominate the conversation between this generation and the next. Such a project indicates that a majority of government ministers, teachers, lecturers and college principals share some core beliefs about what is fundamentally important knowledge to be disseminated and skills to be taught. Today, the government does attempt to dominate this conversation between the generations but it is no longer a conversation about education or knowledge at all. Rather than passing on a body of knowledge to the next generation, the government instead seeks to use the vehicles of education to ameliorate social problems.

This chapter falls into three sections. Section one explores the disappearance of education for its own sake from the FE sector and argues that although the linguistic signifier 'education' may remain in use, the term is being redefined away from its traditional meanings. I consider what society and individuals lose from an absence of

education for its own sake. Section two explores the demise of education for leisure, for example, conversational Spanish classes, that dominated evening classes at FE colleges. However, a strong focus upon “personal fulfilment” does emerge from some documents and interviews. This sections questions whether personal fulfilment is a suitable alternative to education for its own sake. Finally, section three considers what has replaced education for its own sake and asks what education for social inclusion consists of in the classroom.

### **1. Redefining Education**

This section considers the absence of education from the FE sector. In the government documents I have analysed, the word education is all but absent appearing only in the titles of government departments, ministerial offices and in relation to proper nouns such as ‘Further Education College’ etc. Instead, education is replaced by a range of other signifiers, all of which have subtly different meanings. This stands in contrast to the emphasis placed upon education in the discussions I had with interviewees all of whom had been responsible for writing or influencing the direction of government policy documents and who were keen to appear to be defending education. Yet what emerges from the interview transcripts is that the rhetoric belies views that education is good only if used for a particular purpose, that is, to build communities or promote employability. Education is also acknowledged as being important for its own sake by some respondents but only if there is private finance to pay for the “luxury” and only then for certain people – presumably those who can afford it. This section falls into two parts – part one considers why there is an absence of education for its own sake from government policy. The second part of this section investigates the notion that education (as opposed to vocational skills

training) is appropriate only when it is not paid for by the state.

### **The absence of education**

Despite the rhetoric, between 1997 and 2007, the concept of education does not achieve a prominent position in the documents produced by New Labour in relation to the FE Sector. As an example, although the word (signifier) ‘education’ appears 113 times in the 59 pages of *Success for All*, this statistic belies the intention of the document. Of the 113 references, twenty-eight are in the sub-title of the document – ‘*Reforming Further Education and Training*’ and a further seventy uses can be classified as “technical” in that ‘education’ appears as a proper noun in phrases such as ‘Further Education colleges’, ‘the Further Education sector’, ‘Adult Education’, ‘Higher Education’, ‘Educational Maintenance Allowance’, ‘Secretary of State for Education’ and ‘Department for Education and Skills’. In fact, only eight references are intended to indicate education as it might be understood to involve interaction between people with the intention of bringing about learning, creating or transferring knowledge. This comprises five references to ‘education and training’; one to ‘enterprise education’; one to ‘skills and education’ and one to ‘educational and economic success’. These accompanying words reveal much about the government’s thinking. Education is collocated with skills, training and enterprise – it is to be considered in an entirely functional way as making the unemployed employable and producing workers better suited to meeting the demands of the twenty-first century labour market.

That there is no specifically educational “project” today but instead an economic and social goal, represents not just the political stance of New Labour but also, if we

consider education as intrinsically connected to the dissemination of knowledge, tells us something about the nature of knowledge, or subject content, at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The assertion of subject knowledge has been called into question more broadly than by New Labour politicians alone and is challenged by the post-modern turn in society as a whole. Rarely nowadays do subject specialists confidently stake claim to a body of relevant knowledge that is intrinsically of worth. Sfard notes this change when she reviews contemporary definitions of learning and points out that:

None of them mentions either “concept” or “knowledge”. The terms that imply the existence of some permanent entities have been replaced with the noun “knowing” which indicates action. (Sfard, 1998: 6)

Specific bodies of knowledge to be mastered associated with particular subjects have been replaced by activities to participate in, skills to acquire, learning how to learn about a subject and how to become a member of a subject “community”. The danger is that without a particular body of knowledge, ‘the whole process of learning and teaching is in danger of becoming amorphous and losing direction’ (Sfard, 1998: 10).

It is interesting to consider what is taking the place of education. The word closest in meaning to education that is used in *Success for All* is ‘learning’. The word learning appears 234 times, more than double the number of times education appears. In comparison, the words ‘skills’ and ‘training’ appear 122 and 121 times respectively. As ‘learning’ does not appear in the title of the document; the title of the relevant government minister or government department or other such titles; the uses are more “genuine”, that is, when the word ‘learning’ appears it is in the context of the text and most occurrences are “unique”.

There are differences in education and learning that are worth considering. Learning

is less formal than education; it can take place at any time. Learning can take place unintentionally. We may have many learning experiences in our lives and yet not be involved in education. Education suggests a more formal plan perhaps with a curriculum or syllabus; whereas learning can occur on one's own in a more random and serendipitous manner. Education can be defined as the process of learning or teaching and the knowledge one gains from this. It implies conscious interaction with a teacher. Learning, on the other hand, is a much more general activity and it does not require a teacher (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008: 143). As Sfard notes, learning is increasingly associated with participation: 'the permanence of having [knowledge] gives way to the constant flux of doing' as learning comes to be associated with the 'process of becoming a member of a certain community' (1998: 6).

This emphasis upon participation fits in with the social model as described in chapter five. If education is learning and learning is participation in activity, then there is little rationale for seeking to possess a distinct body of subject knowledge. Instead, possession of knowledge is replaced by the process of becoming a member of a community. This concept of education makes some sense at higher levels, when the fundamentals of a subject discipline have been mastered and the student is moving into a more "practitioner" role, discovering and developing new forms of knowledge relevant to the discipline. However, when this model of education is applied to lower levels of learning and when learning is about social inclusion, the social model as described in chapter five suggests that the process of becoming a member of a community is not discipline specific but related instead to the student's own community. Learning therefore moves from something which takes one out of oneself and involves joining a disciplinary community to something which is about reinforcing links to where one comes from.



Little reference is made in the documents published in relation to the FE sector to the notion that education may be important in its own terms or that learning is worth promoting merely for the intrinsic pleasure it may bring. Two references begin to come close to arguing the case for education for education's sake. Firstly we are told that learning,

Will help older people to stay healthy and active, and encourage independence ... develop our potential as rounded human beings. (1998b: 3)

The references to 'health' and 'independence' remind us of the new role for learning as welfare, however, the suggestion that learning can 'develop our potential as rounded human beings' is interesting because it is not attached to any particular purpose. It is not argued (at least explicitly) that we become 'rounded' in order to secure employment or become better citizens although, arguably, the word 'potential' could be said to connote a financial return upon our investment in human and social capital.

Secondly, *The Learning Age* claims,

Learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. (1998b: 13)

Although references to civilisation and spirituality suggest learning is important for its own sake, the addition of promoting active citizenship calls into question the purpose of developing a 'spiritual side of our lives'. The conclusion seems to be that whilst learning for its own sake may be important (or at least it was of rhetorical importance at the beginning of the New Labour decade), it is even more important if it is for a particular purpose.

That the liberal view of education for its own sake has gone from FE is not new and has been recognised by others (Hyland, 1994: 116; Ainley: 2000; Rikowski: 2005).

In the past, colleges had more of a connection with the abstract, intellectual reasoning of academic education as they strove to meet the demand amongst adults to study academic subjects either at a higher level or because they missed out at school. The tradition for academic studies departments within FE colleges emerged from the evening institutes of the 1920s and was consolidated with the 1973 Russell Report, which allowed for the expansion of non-vocational academic education. The academic year 1975/76 saw numbers of adults participating in locally available general education courses reach a peak (Stock, 1996: 10). Adult education classes responded to a need from adults for self-expression, cultivation of personal interests and self-improvement.

An informal team of (often radical) educators were there to meet this demand for education, many of whom had their roots in the ethics of the Workers' Educational Association, founded to provide higher education for the working classes, and were enthusiastic about the transformative potential of education as well as promoting their own subject specialisms, (See Williams, J., 2007, in Hayes, Marshall, Turner eds. 2007). The demise of this once important role of FE has been recognised by Blunkett:

Under the Conservatives, Adult Education was feared as a breeding ground for revolution and Sir Keith Joseph called them hotbeds of guerrilla warfare. I used to joke about which way the guerrilla was being spelt. Traditional adult education had its budget substantially cut, not least because local authorities were screwed in a big way and adult education was an easy option to cut. We're still in that spiral.  
(Interview with author: 18/07/07)

Blunkett's statement here is interesting least of all for the candid way in which he acknowledges that the motivations for cutting the budget of Adult Education were, at least in part, quite explicitly political. The idea that Adult Education was once 'feared as a breeding ground for revolution' demonstrates exactly how much the post-

compulsory education sector has changed in little under a generation. There is little for the government to fear in today's basic literacy and numeracy provision, parenting classes or vocational skills training. The instrumental arguments for education have been made so frequently and so convincingly that the concept of adults engaging in learning for a purpose other than the enhancement of employment opportunities can seem at times to be quite far fetched. Blunkett's joke about 'which way the guerrilla was being spelt' is perhaps revealing of some of the contempt the Labour Party had for such classes (and more so the people attending them) or at very least shows a lack of political will to make a true defence of Adult Education. This is reflected in Blunkett's comment about budget cuts: 'We're still in that spiral,' some ten years after Labour first took office. Adult education is the location for most education for leisure or education for its own sake and as Blunkett correctly indicates this is the most easily done away with whenever budgets are considered to need tightening

DB: Adult education is still seen as very much an occupational side-show. It's seen as expendable... (Interview with author: 18/07/07).

Despite the dominant traditional role of the FE sector: 'namely provision of a non-academic route into skilled jobs' (Colin Waugh, 1996 cited in Ainley, 2000: 3) there was nonetheless also a distinctively "liberal ideal" to vocational education, the disappearance of which 'has produced an utterly impoverished and dehumanised approach to vocational education' (Hyland, 1994: 116). Ainley writes:

Traditional technical further education, which was the backbone of the old FE, appears more than ever a relic of the country's ancient industrial past and its steady decline has necessitated an expansion of FE into new areas and its repeated rejuvenation as a "new FE". (Ainley, 2000: 3)

This shows that the attack on knowledge and education more broadly has not been restricted to academic subjects but has had an impact upon the sector specific skills which were once taught to a high level.

Despite demonstrating the absence of education from government policy it remains the case that the people I interviewed, leading politicians and policy makers, all argue that education remains important for its own sake. It is often the case that the rhetoric serves only to highlight what is missing from reality. Rammel here suggests that he considers education for its own sake to be important:

Do I think there's an intrinsic case for education? Yes, of course I do. There is absolutely a case for the pure personal benefit from education but that's not the only gain you get from education and of course, in addition to that we do want skills for employability. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Despite Rammel's confident assertion of his support for an intrinsic purpose for education his language perhaps exposes some uncertainty. The phrase 'pure personal benefit' and the use of the word 'gain' suggest Rammel struggles to conceive of education in terms other than financial values. When questioned about this he comments:

Oh sure, it's not purely instrumental. ... Being in the educational environment enables you to broaden your thinking and increase your engagement within society and I think that happens very successfully. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

Here, Rammell is arguing against education being considered instrumental to entry and advancement in the labour market. However, the use of the word 'purely' is interesting; the implication is that it is acceptable for education to be largely about instrumental purposes or indeed almost wholly about instrumental purposes. It is also useful to note that Rammell clearly interprets instrumentalism specifically in relation to the labour market. He does not interpret education to promote broader engagement in society as being an instrumental purpose and a move away from education for education's sake.

Blunkett similarly considers himself to be a defender of education for education's sake. He decries the fact that New Labour has not done more to establish learning as something people should be able to 'celebrate' and 'enjoy':

I'm not so proud of the fact that we didn't engrain the concept of lifelong learning into the system. If you don't do that, people revert back to the artificial distinctions between Further and Adult Education, between skills and access, between liberating people to fulfil their potential and enabling them to enjoy and celebrate learning and to gain a baseline of qualifications. I think that's an artificial barrier we set up. The funding regimes, sadly including the Leitch agenda, are really forcing that. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

Again, there are some very confusing messages in this statement. 'Engraining the concept of lifelong learning' could be a reference to making the moral focus upon participation (as discussed in previous chapters) even more entrenched which stands in contrast to 'liberating people'. Blunkett is trying to match inspiring rhetoric about 'liberating people to fulfil their potential' with the more mundane 'baseline of qualifications'. The reality of what is on offer to many adults unable to fund courses privately is basic literacy and numeracy programmes which may be far from inspiring. Blunkett's final comment here in relation to funding regimes once again seems to deny the reality that the Labour Party had, at the point of interview, been in charge of FE and its national budget for over a decade. Blunkett was himself Secretary of State for Education for a substantial amount of that time and a genuine desire to redistribute budgets in favour of 'enjoying and celebrating learning' could surely have been enacted had the political will been there. Blunkett develops this idea of education for its own sake being a good idea in theory but develops this to suggest it is good only if and when society can afford it. Blunkett further comments:

DB: In brief, young people have really got to be engaged in a way that clearly wasn't the case in the classroom. That way we might get people back in. This is really what my concept of adult learning is all about. We've got to touch people, bump them up against the joy of learning and an enquiring mind before disillusion takes hold. Then they can start climbing the ladder. If you don't do that, you're not off square one. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

Here Blunkett draws together the ‘joy of learning’ and ‘climbing the ladder’. This demonstrates Blunkett’s belief in education for social mobility which is not the same as education for its own sake or even education for personal fulfilment but returns us once again to a more instrumental approach.

Rob Wye is another apparent critic of educational instrumentalism who has nonetheless had a major say in shaping the instrumental FE policies we have today. He comments with irony on the narrow range of skills taught and expectations of students on vocational courses.

Again, referring to Germany, if you go to BMW, go to their apprentice engineers class, they’ll be reading Goethe, they’ll be reading Schiller and they don’t understand why we don’t do that. Somehow that development of the whole person is an accepted part of life and what we’ve got is a very instrumental attitude I think, haven’t we? People who are doing the academic route, that’s absolutely fine, we want broad people there but if you are going to be in the vocational side you just need to learn what you need to learn and that’s enough for you and it is a class thing probably. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Whilst Wye’s comments here suggest some desire to see people studying for vocational qualifications able to learn other subjects in depth and for pleasure, this stands in sharp contrast to the proposals Wye developed which encourage employers to fund and students to apply themselves to only those specific parts of all courses deemed most relevant to the immediate instrumental needs demanded by their engagement in the labour market. I questioned Wye on this particular issue.

JW: But don’t you think proposals such as people only sitting the parts of courses which are relevant to them and their employer’s needs, don’t you think that encourages this instrumental approach?

RW: Well, it does in terms of employer funded activity and in a way you can’t force employers to pay for the rest... (Interview with author: 21/09/07).

Wye's response is to draw a distinction between educational provision funded by employers and that funded by the state and private individuals. His argument is that if employers are paying for their workers to learn they do, in effect, call the shots and are then able to dictate the specifics of what people will learn. This may seem fair enough but problems emerge when government policy dictates that an increasing proportion of education will be funded in this way.

RW: I think there seems to be an expectation in this country that the state will fund the total qualification but employers should fund bits then the state will fund the top up as it were and that's one model. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Here, Wye makes reference to the perceived need amongst politicians and policy makers to shift the expectation that funding for particularly Adult Education will come from the state and put it onto individuals and employers. He reinforces this view:

RW: Yes, well I suppose it comes back to what you can afford. We still put £210 million a year into personal and community development learning so it's not excluded completely but I think that certainly not only under this Labour government but also under the Tories before them the general view was that we are going to earn the money in the global economy to enable people to have money in their pocket to enable them to pay to go on to Shakespeare courses. That's what we need to do. If we take the state's money and direct it immediately into Shakespeare courses then we are not helping the economy compete globally. So that's the argument. It's anyone's guess whether the balance is right. (Interview with author: 21/09/07)

Wye expounds the views shared by many of the people I interviewed, that education for its own sake is a fine ideal but ultimately a luxury that the state cannot afford to pay for. The danger is that this becomes akin to saying that wealthy people can enjoy education for its own sake but poorer people, the socially excluded, must make do with skills training to enhance their marketability with employers. His argument is that education for extrinsic purposes must be logically prior to education for intrinsic purposes. Rammell concurs:

We do have to prioritise and if that means we put greater incentive within the system for someone who hasn't got the equivalent of five good GCSEs to actually get them, if that means someone who, for example, is studying recreational Spanish may have to pay a little bit more, I have to say I think that's the right priority. I think most people sitting in my seat would actually reach the same conclusion. (Interview with author: 22/04/08)

It is easy to win this argument with 'recreational' Spanish, but the very use of the word 'recreational' implies a something that is considered trivial and frivolous.

Rammel is unable to make a case for learning Spanish as a modern foreign language, not because it might enhance employment prospects but purely for the mental discipline. It is easy to get swept along with the logic of this argument – why indeed should the state fund something that is purely for individual pleasure? However there is logic also in arguing the converse: why should the government fund education which is purely about an individual enhancing their own employability prospects and future earnings potential?

Of all the people I interviewed, it is Foster who comes closest to defending education for its own sake yet, even here, there is still a slight sense that it is more acceptable for some rather than others.

JW: But where do you think this leaves education just purely for its own sake? Do you think there's a role for that within the FE system?

AF: Yes, I think there is and I think I was trying to give some conceptual clarity to what I thought was going on and I definitely don't come from the argument that all 350 FE colleges need to be the same everywhere, I tried to give some conceptual clarity to allow FE to take up a bigger, stronger role in the world basically so it could get more money as historically it's always lost out to schools. (Interview with author: 28/05/08)

Foster appears to argue here that there is a place for education for its own sake in a diverse system where different colleges may have different specialisms; whereas one college may focus upon catering another could conceivably focus upon the study of literature or foreign languages. However, this denies the reality that most students attend the FE college which is geographically nearest to their own home. A student's



capacity to study such non-vocational subjects would depend upon where they lived. A further reality indicated by Foster is that colleges are competing for money and arguments for funding education without an extrinsic purpose are not financially attractive to the current government.

## **2. Personal Fulfilment**

An interesting argument to emerge from some of the documents and one that appears at first glance to be similar to the notion that education is important for its own sake is the concept of education for personal fulfilment. One way in which *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* differs from the previous documents analysed is in the acceptance and promotion of an educational model that considers learning for ‘personal fulfilment’ (2003: 9, 24, 27, 59 etc.). This appears to stand in contrast to the dominance of the instrumental model. We are told that education should provide people with, ‘the skills they need to be both employable and personally fulfilled’ (DfES, 2003: 9). The use of the pre-determiner ‘both’, along with the conjunction ‘and’, serves to emphasise the separateness of the goals of employability and fulfilment, as if education can not provide both simultaneously. This notion is reinforced in powerful statements such as:

But learning and skills are not just about work or economic goals. They are also about the pleasure of learning for its own sake, the dignity of self improvement, the achievement of personal potential and fulfilment and the creation of a better society. (DfES, 2003: 59)

Words such as ‘pleasure’ and ‘dignity’ indicate a problem faced by the government in taking on board such personal and individual concerns. In stark contrast to the use of the word ‘achievement’, pleasure and dignity cannot be measured or provided for someone: they are deeply personal and unique. That a government should even attempt to take on board such concerns is unprecedented – previously it would have

been an entirely personal matter whether or not an individual was fulfilled.

It could be argued that references to personal fulfilment are mere tokenism and that employability is still a priority. Although the aim may be to provide people with, ‘the skills they need for employment and personal fulfilment’ the sentence continues with ‘*but* in making decisions about public funds we have to prioritise...’ (DfES, 2003: 59) [my emphasis]. Alternatively, it may be thought that the goal of ‘personal fulfilment’ is a way for the government to encourage active citizenship and stronger communities:

For many people learning enriches their lives. They may enjoy learning for its own sake. Or it may make them better placed to give something back to their community, to help family and friends, to manage the family finances better, or help their children achieve more throughout their school careers. (DfES, 2003: 60)

There is reference here to learning for its own sake, again, not quite the same as education for its own sake but as close as we are likely to come. However, what begins to emerge from *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* is that the government considers the act of engaging in learning to be so important for a whole range of social and economic reasons that the act of engagement and participation takes precedence above any sense of purpose. New Labour may not wish to fund, or even understand the point of education for its own sake yet nevertheless considers the gains in terms of social inclusion of getting more people formally participating in education of any kind and for any purpose to be so important it is prepared to support any such plans.

Documents published since *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* expose this position more successfully.

The word participation is used 140 times in *Raising Expectations*. Whilst the government may talk of the importance of learning for its own sake what is really meant by learning is the process, the participative act of engagement, not necessarily

sitting alone reading a book. The enthusiastic participant (who may perhaps learn little) is welcomed by New Labour whilst the successful autodidact is not. In expanding upon 'learning for its own sake' the document *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* continues by specifying,

The budget will be able to cover, for example, family learning, learning for older people, active citizenship, community development, learning through cultural activities and work with libraries, museums and art galleries. (DfES, 2003: 69)

In other words, learning that is social inclusive. What we have is not education for its own sake but participation for its own sake.

Blunkett also reinforces this need for socially inclusive learning:

So it can only work with imaginative community based projects in which you can actually engage the youngster with something. Something inside them might spark an interest and then education can build on that, as apprenticeships used to do. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

The implication behind 'imaginative community based projects' is that the content, the subject knowledge or the sense of educational purpose is all considered irrelevant to the act of participation. It is interesting to note that education when seen in this way is expected to fill the role that apprenticeships once did. The apprenticeship model of learning is celebrated by New Labour not so much for the sector specific skills it allows apprentices to develop but more for the mentoring role that emerges between craftsman and apprentice. The apprenticeship model is welcomed by Ainley and Rainbird (1999, 1 in Marchand, 2008: 247) as 'a new paradigm for learning about learning' a point previously noted by Coy who comments, 'Apprenticeships across time and space appear to share a core of qualities and characteristics that indeed render it an ideal model for "learning about learning"' (1989: xv, also in Marchand, 2008: 247). One focus of learning for personal fulfilment is the increasing emphasis

placed upon students 'learning to learn'. Learning to learn was first cited as a specific skill by Schön who linked the need for learning to learn to social, political and economic change: 'The task which the loss of the stable state makes imperative, for the person, for our institutions, for our society as a whole, is to learn about learning' (Schön, 1971: 30). The early years of the twenty-first century may appear to many to be equally as "unstable" but this does not compensate for the fact that 'learning to learn' is essentially content-less. Generic skills in reading and research are little substitute for the mastering of a body of knowledge and suggest only a lack of belief in individuals to actually engage with such theoretical content. Ecclestone and Hayes comment: 'From education to learning, from learning to learning to learn, and from learning to learn to learning to feel and respond "appropriately" the collapse of belief in human potential is palpable' (2008: 143) and draw a connection between the focus upon learning to learn and the therapeutic "turn" in FE.

New Labour's interest in 'personal fulfilment' must however be seen as more than just a drive to encourage participation. Personal fulfilment is considered to be a goal, like happiness, that a government increasingly confident of making therapeutic interventions into people's lives can begin to argue is truly a duty of government. Whereas previous administrations may have concerned themselves with industry and the economy, New Labour considers well-being and happiness legitimate political concerns.

### **3. What now for education?**

With the almost complete absence of education for its own sake from the FE sector it is worth considering what is now taking its place. In many ways, this follows on from

the previous discussion on learning to learn and participation for the sake of participating. However, neither of these concepts shed light on what students are actually doing in today's FE classroom. It is important to consider what education for social inclusion involves in practice.

One thing that dominates FE today and has been discussed at length elsewhere in this thesis, especially in chapter four, is the focus upon skills. The "skills agenda" is the most frequent replacement for education. *Skills for Life* contains fifty-eight references to 'education' (again, mainly titular) with, as the title suggests, 365 references to 'skills'. Similarly, *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* contains 166 references to education compared to 1014 to skills. As with learning, 'skill' is very different to education. Skill suggests mastery of a particular, usually practical, competence that a person can physically demonstrate. This is usually a technical accomplishment. It may be associated with a talent that cannot be taught but is innate; people can be described as being naturally gifted at something. Skills may require committed intellectual engagement but there is a demonstrable product to acquiring the skill. The outcome of education on the other hand may be entirely abstract. One focus for the FE sector is upon promoting social inclusion through the provision of skills for employability to unemployed people and youngsters classified as NEET.

The teaching of sector-specific skills, particularly those in demand by employers and industry, does not in any way represent a change for the FE sector. FE has its roots in the technical colleges of the twentieth century and, before that, in the Mechanics' Institutes of the nineteenth century which would have provided informal opportunities for youngsters with minimal schooling to learn new skills as and when deemed necessary by their employers. The Technical Instruction Act of 1889 permitted local

authorities to provide technical schools which would enable youngsters to pursue training for specific skilled professions away from the workplace. Technical Colleges offered young adults opportunities on vocational courses which were “day release”. This model became increasingly popular from the mid-twentieth century with the gradual decline in apprenticeships. Under day-release programmes students would spend three or four days a week in the workplace and a day or two at college. Close formal and informal links between individuals in the various industrial sectors and the colleges meant that pay would be cut for non-attendance or poor performance at college.

Today’s form of vocational skills training represents a distinct break from what has gone on in the past. Arrangements for day-release from the workplace are now more rarely found. Instead, the concept of day-release is today most frequently associated with school students on the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP) who attend college a day or two each week on “release” from school. The introduction of the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) and more particularly the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) saw the emphasis for vocational training shift from the workplace to the classroom. This meant that youngsters often had little experience of the workplace until actually seeking employment. Some GNVQ courses attempt to replicate employment conditions in the classroom but this can only ever be achieved with minimal success. The adult environment of the workplace and the very real fear of having wages docked are missing from the classroom.

The formal and informal relationships that existed between college lecturers teaching vocational disciplines and colleagues in industry have been reduced as GNVQs are

taught increasingly in schools by teachers with an educational as opposed to an industrial background. Such teachers and lecturers are expected to complete PGCE or Certificate of Education courses and identify with the professional values of the educationalists rather than the industry they may be teaching about. The impact of these changes is that it becomes very difficult to teach youngsters up-to-date, high-level, sector specific skills. Students studying for GNVQs (or the Diplomas which have recently replaced them) are expected to demonstrate competencies which can be ticked off by assessors and progress recorded in portfolios. As a substitute for the high level sector specific skills students would have gained through work experience and being taught by skilled practitioners, students are expected to work through more general vocational skills that can be transferred from one sector to another. This is particularly the case with lower level qualifications (levels one and two; pre-GCSE and GCSE equivalent). For example, students studying for a GNVQ level one in courses such as beauty therapy or social care may be asked to demonstrate skills of punctuality, attendance, competence in basic literacy and numeracy and knowledge of what constitutes a “healthy” diet. The idea is that these “skills” will provide a general basis for employability.

The problem is that whilst providing a general basis for employability such qualifications equip individuals to actually do very little. The skills taught are too general to be of any particular use. In fact, as Wolf (2007) suggests, the very possession of these qualifications may well mark individuals out as having failed to either succeed at higher level, more academic courses or to have gained experience in the labour market. Hyland argues NVQs will provide an essentially low level training for ‘those who will occupy an uncertain future being assigned to the periphery of the

labour market' (Hyland, 1996: 172). The original aim of NVQs was for them to be 'independent of any specific course, programme or mode of learning' (NCVQ, 1988: v in Hyland, 1996: 170). The question Hyland poses is 'How can such a strategy contribute at all to the enhancement of any specifically educational endeavour or to the promotion of the all-embracing learning society?' (Hyland, 1996: 170). The GNVQ "model" of assessing competencies has now become a part of not just vocational but academic education, including higher education.

That such general behavioural characteristics as punctuality and attendance are actually skills is open to serious contestation. Spilsbury and Lane (2000) surveyed employers as to the specific skills sought in new recruits. Flexibility was cited by many as a crucial skill and 'for more than half of these employers (56%) this meant working long and unsociable hours' (Spilsbury and Lane, 2000: 85; cited in Gleeson and Keep, 2004: 52). Describing flexibility as a skill is not unproblematic: it is surely questionable whether such an attribute can be taught and demonstrated within the confines of a classroom. From the employers' perspective, the demand for flexibility is indicative of the need for workers who can demonstrate compliance and loyalty as opposed to particular sector specific practical skills. Many might argue that such attributes are not skills that can be taught 'but are rather measures of commitment that one chooses to give or withhold based on the conditions of work offered' (Lafer, 2002: 75 in Gleeson, and Keep, 2004: 52). This raises questions about the nature of work people are being recruited to where it is necessary for loyalty to be a taught pre-requisite of employees rather than something that is earned through commitment to the industry. It also demands reflection upon the role employers can play in dictating education prepares potential recruits with particular attributes.



Only two documents refer most frequently to words other than ‘skills’. *Success for All* to ‘learning’, as already discussed; and *Raising Expectations* which makes most references to ‘training’. The term ‘training’ is closely correlated to skill, but it is far removed from education. Training is involved in preparing or being prepared for a job, activity or sport, the process of learning to do a particular skill. *Raising Expectations* makes 140 references to ‘training’. The emphasis placed upon training and participation further represents a shift in New Labour’s thinking from the ‘learning’ of eight years previously. Whereas learning can take place informally and on one’s own, training depends very much upon participation. It suggests a rigid and pre-determined programme of instruction which does ‘not acknowledge the extent to which professional knowledge, skills and values are a product of joint social action developed through engagement in a complex set of interwoven transactions’ (Hyland, 1996: 172). Training and skills development are firmly associated with the world of work. However, as Gleeson and Keep point out,

There is little evidence of support from employers for these reforms, as witnessed by their failure to provide or promote sufficient work placements or experience for initiatives that they called for in the 1990s. (Gleeson and Keep, 2004: 57)

As discussed in chapter four this results in a much narrower, more utilitarian view of education which is in a continual state of flux depending upon the whims of employers. Confident bodies of subject knowledge and a firm belief in education for education’s sake would help to situate employer demands. In the absence of these factors, responsibility for education has been distanced from teachers and lecturers and given instead to the managers of business.

In the past, such specific training in the skills and attributes demanded by employers

would have occurred through apprenticeships. However, work-based apprenticeship schemes have been ‘in protracted demise since the advent of industrialisation’ (Marchand, 2008: 249). This demise has come about because generally apprenticeships did not adapt to a new ‘technologically based’ economy or apply to ‘new areas of industrial development’ (Pring, 1995: 35). Blunkett points out:

Apprenticeships were dying because traditional industry was closing and there were mass redundancies and Further Education was responding not by reaching out and trying to develop equivalent release courses with modern enterprise but actually retrenching into a more cosy environment. (Interview with author: 18/07/07)

Here, Blunkett’s language is interesting for a number of reasons. By personifying apprenticeships (‘dying’) and FE (‘retrenching’) they are successfully distanced from the specific responsibility of any particular individuals. FE is ultimately blamed for unemployment because it sought refuge in the ‘cosy environment’. Blunkett’s assumption is that FE was perfectly able to replace apprenticeships but chose not to. FE chose to opt for the ‘cosy environment’. What is important here is the assumption that FE can replace apprenticeships. New Labour saw their role as pushing FE out of this cosy environment, ‘tuition was partially or entirely dislocated from the workplace and transferred to the newly established colleges’ (Marchand, 2008: 259) although there is criticism about the quality of such courses and whether they can really replace all the skills that were gained from the workplace.

A consequence of putting vocational training in colleges rather than the workplace is that vocational education loses its distinctive nature ‘as education becomes more vocationalised and as training requires the broader educational base’ (Pring, 1995: 23). This could be seen as an entirely positive move to allow people to develop a range of talents and avoid being narrowly labelled at a young age. Unfortunately, the blurring

of the boundaries between the academic and vocational offer emerged at the same time as the introduction of GNVQs and the trend for competence based education. Although academic 'A' levels were, at the time, little affected by this; vocational options took on board, not high level academic aspirations, but a low-level basic skills agenda. In practice, this served only to widen the gap between education and training, 'thus making it more difficult to broaden and to "liberalise" vocational preparation' (Pring, 1995: 37). This gap between vocational and academic education widens social inequalities as youngsters are divided at ever-younger ages into those who will engage in higher level learning contributing 'to a knowledge economy, and lower level skills training for others, to ensure social stability in a knowledge society, but who will continue to do low-paid, lower-skilled work' (Appleby and Bathmaker, 2006: 714).

One way of resolving this problem of the gap between liberal and vocational education, and one employed frequently by New Labour, is the assertion of equivalence. This is a tactic described by Foster:

AF: I think it's important that vocational qualifications and training and development being a similar level should be equal to the highest levels of academic achievement. Therefore the picture in my mind was that you needed academic achievement and you needed high level vocational achievement too. But in a sense, the way this country views vocational achievement is at a depressed level in certain professions. We needed to make more of an even playing field so that the fact that someone's got a top class degree from a good university is not everything. You would also expect them as a matter of course to get the appropriate vocational qualifications and we needed to push up the standards and the discipline around vocational qualifications ...  
(Interview with author: 28/05/08)

Foster's view that vocational qualifications and training should be equal to the highest levels of academic achievement is laudable but raises the question of whether training can ever be equal to the highest levels of academic achievement? Training suggests something entirely different from liberal academic thought and it may be the case that

two completely different things cannot necessarily be equal. Foster echoes the views of many when he argues ‘the way this country views vocational achievement is at a depressed level,’ but who is meant by ‘this country’? Foster is presumably referring to the general public. This blames the general public for the lack of acceptance of vocational education and whilst this may well be true is possibly indicative of the low regard such qualifications hold amongst employers and the unchallenging nature of many such courses. Furthermore, Foster demonstrates here a fetishisation with formal qualifications and skills acquisition at both ends of the labour market.

Foster reflects the political desire for equivalence between academic and vocational routes but whilst it remains at the level of declaring equality rather than reflecting reality attitudes will not be easily changed. What is needed is real educational (academic) input into vocational courses. Foster continues:

I suppose that the vision I had was one in which ultimately, vocational ambitions are equal to other sorts of educational goals and that wasn't what we had at the time. There's been decades of talk about this and nothing has ever happened. I don't think that the government's response to this sadly has been transformational. I wanted it to be transformational but I think it has moved on. (Interview with author: 28/05/08)

Yet this vision is only achievable with intellectually rigorous and technically ambitious vocational skills training. Unfortunately the skills being offered to combat social exclusion are basic skills that have participation as their main goal; they are therefore more aptly described as “pre-vocational” rather than vocational. Such pre-vocational education is based substantially on simulation, ‘thereby ever in danger of providing yesterday's skills for the unemployed of the future’ (Gleeson and Keep, 2004: 57).

## **Conclusions**

The FE sector always has been considered to a certain extent second class, offering vocational training to those from working class backgrounds rather than the academic offer available in school sixth forms or universities. By using FE as a vehicle for the promotion of social inclusion this divide has been reinforced rather than negated. Vocational training offered some opportunity for youngsters to obtain skilled employment and potential social mobility whereas pre-vocational training for social inclusion serves only to prepare people for further participation. This creates new sites of inequality and in so doing, reinforces social exclusion rather than promoting social inclusion. Students are labelled by their training which is removed from the labour market and their lack of liberal education. Some groups are likely to be more affected by these new educational inequalities than others; Appleby and Bathmaker identify older women, ESOL learners, refugees and asylum seekers as particularly ill served by new divisions within FE (2006: 715). It may well be the case that those with high levels of social capital, well-connected family and friends, are able to negotiate the language of equivalence and discern qualifications and courses that maintain some genuine academic or vocational content. Those lacking such social capital or knowledge of the system will be unable to do this so effectively.

This conclusion draws together some of the various themes that have arisen in this thesis. This chapter falls into two main sections. The first section returns us to the research questions originally posed in chapter one and considers progress that has been made, through the research, in answering these questions. The second section focuses upon correlating the changing nature of constructions of social exclusion and inclusion that occurred in the ten year period from 1997 – 2007 with the developments that took place in the FE sector. Throughout this work, the political process of constructing social exclusion and inclusion has been presented as active and on-going. Similarly, frequent changes have occurred in FE, reflected in the fact that some thirteen policy documents have been published relating to the FE sector in the ten year period of this study. This section correlates changing definitions of exclusion with developments in FE. This will identify shifts in the construction of social exclusion and potential political explanations for such shifts.

### **1. Research Questions**

The three key questions this thesis sought to answer through an analysis of government policy documents and interviews with key policy makers were:

1. How are social inclusion and social exclusion defined and re-defined by the New Labour government?
2. Why is FE used to promote social inclusion?
3. How, according to government policy is FE to be used to promote social inclusion?

I will work through each of these three questions in order to bring together my findings from throughout the thesis. My argument in relation to all three questions is

that attempts by government to promote social inclusion through FE are sometimes detrimental to the lives of people labelled as socially excluded and can possibly have an outcome which is opposite to that desired. Policies designed to tackle social exclusion can actually result in the construction of such a socially excluded group. In the process of promoting social inclusion, FE risks losing its more traditional educational and vocational purpose and instead can perhaps create students who may be dependent upon the FE sector for financial and emotional guidance and support. Such students may well have fewer skills necessary for direct entry to the labour market than their peers who left FE prior to the election of New Labour in 1997.

### **How are social inclusion and social exclusion defined and re-defined by the New Labour government?**

Throughout the ten year period of this study, social inclusion and social exclusion are defined and re-defined several times. With each shift in the language, the definition of social exclusion can apply to slightly different social groups. An individual's position in society as excluded or included depends less upon the material and social conditions of their existence as it does upon current government definitions. This demonstrates the fairly arbitrary nature of social exclusion as it is used by New Labour and also how the process of defining disparate individuals in this way can result in the construction of identifiably new social groups.

Applying a label to a disparate group of people with a variety of social and material problems runs the risk of constructing an identifiably new social group. The socially excluded can be, in effect, created by the process of definition. The creation of this group serves little benefit to the people involved as unlike self-identification with others who share a common political interest (e.g. identifying oneself as working class

in a previous political era) there are no independent mechanisms such as unions for members of the group to champion their own interests. Instead, the attachment of the label of “socially excluded” runs the risk of identifying individuals as victims in need of state intervention into their lives. In this way, measures taken by government to tackle social exclusion can potentially make the lives of people already suffering material or social disadvantage worse. The creation of a group labelled as socially excluded perhaps serves the political interests of New Labour as it provides the party with a campaigning focus and, in tackling social exclusion, a sense of purpose. It enables New Labour to shift the blame for social problems away from structural political or economic causes and onto what are often, the poorest, most vulnerable people in society.

The socially excluded are defined variously as amongst others: the unemployed; young people who are considered NEET; those lacking basic literacy and numeracy skills; those suffering mental health problems; single mothers; people with disabilities; asylum seekers; ex-offenders or those living in particular geographical areas. The fluidity of definition allows the label of socially excluded to be attached to some of these groups more frequently than others and at different times than others. Social exclusion is defined variously as the state of being excluded or the processes involved in becoming excluded. Social inclusion is at times considered the direct opposite of exclusion; for example, if exclusion is equated to unemployment then inclusion is equated to being in work. However, on other occasions exclusion and inclusion are not treated as simple antonyms; whilst the definition of exclusion may focus upon unemployment, the plans to promote inclusion may involve more of an emphasis upon behaviour modification through parenting classes or teaching about healthy lifestyles.



From the first days of New Labour social exclusion has been defined as more than poverty and social inclusion as more than the relief of poverty. Instead, employment has consistently been the key focus of policy over the ten year period discussed in this thesis. This is for a number of reasons; firstly, the wages gained from employment are thought to lift people out of poverty and bring about material improvement to people's lives. Secondly, and just as importantly to New Labour, the act of engaging with the labour market is considered by policy makers to mean that people are forced to accept moral (perhaps as opposed to actual) responsibility for providing financially for themselves and their families and socially, people are forced to engage with others in a formal setting. Although getting people into paid employment has been a central strand of policies to tackle social exclusion, the attention of policy makers has not focussed, throughout the ten years of this study, upon bringing about structural economic changes in order to create more employment opportunities for the nation. Instead, attention has focused upon the skills levels of the nation as a whole and the unemployed or potentially unemployed in particular. In reality, many people will either remain on training courses working towards entry to employment or will be forced to accept low paid jobs which are heavily subsidised through tax credits. The importance to New Labour appears to be not so much that people earn a living wage through productive employment but that individuals alter their behaviour.

Whilst it is arguably easier and cheaper for the government to bring about changes in behaviour and improve individuals' skills levels rather than structural economic changes, the focus on skills also marks a clear shift in responsibility. Whereas in the past, reasons for unemployment may have been explained by political or economic causes, a focus upon skills shifts the causes of unemployment onto unemployed

people. Equating social exclusion with unemployment, serves to blame those labelled as socially excluded for their own social exclusion. The focus upon responsibility however, suggests that social exclusion is about more than just unemployment and promoting social inclusion is about more than just getting people into work. From Tony Blair's first speech on social exclusion and the establishment of the social exclusion unit in 1997, there has also been a focus upon people's behaviour.

### **Why is FE used to promote social inclusion?**

In using FE to promote social inclusion the government is drawing upon three trends associated with FE colleges: the idea that they can give adults or those disillusioned with school a second chance at learning; the vocational offer and the connection between this and social mobility; and the perceived radicalism of the sector amongst some sections of the population. The connection with promoting social inclusion serves to undermine the reputation of FE on each of these three accounts. FE was traditionally considered as being a more adult environment than school. This was largely predicated upon the voluntaristic nature of students' presence. This is undermined by moves to make participation compulsory up to the age of 18 and by having youngsters from the age of fourteen in FE colleges as part of the Increased Flexibility Programme (IFP). Having school age youngsters and some of those up the age of eighteen present under duress robs FE of its more adult environment and some of its perceived radicalism. This radicalism was also connected to the fact that adults who had been let down by the school system could gain more knowledge of the society they inhabited, perhaps through the study of subjects such as sociology, history, literature or politics. Much of this has been written off by government over the past ten years as "leisure" provision and the expectation is that people will pay for

these courses themselves. This has led many institutions to stop offering such courses. FE is associated with the promotion of society as a meritocracy because it caters for so many students (many of them adults) who would otherwise have little, or no, contact with the education system. This was first noted in 1998: 'the FE sector has the will and the ability to play a major part ... It has demonstrated this in the breadth of its provision: catering for 4 million students, 80% of them adults, studying for a total of 17,000 qualifications in 1995/96' (*Further Education for the New Millennium*, 1998a: 6), (see also Parry and Fry, 1999: 101).

The social mobility associated with gaining vocational qualifications depended upon the vocational options being of a high level and specific to the requirements of particular industrial sectors. The demand to offer pre-vocational courses which do little more than teach life skills alongside basic literacy and numeracy removes the credibility from FE offering such specific training which could lead to genuine enhancement of social mobility. The focus upon participation for its own sake which is encouraged by the demand to promote social inclusion further undermines the claims of the sector to be offering sector specific vocational skills training. People can become skilled participants without necessarily possessing any great interest in community affairs.

### **How is FE used to promote social inclusion?**

FE is used to promote social inclusion in a variety of ways. The vocational history of the sector and the perceived link between gaining qualifications and social mobility are successfully exploited by government ministers. FE is considered able to promote social inclusion by making the unemployed, or those deemed to be at risk of unemployment, increasingly employable. Participation in FE is proposed as a way of

tackling exclusion in and of itself as it provides participants with a sense of purpose and points of contact with a formal state-funded institution. The Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) offers financial support to keep youngsters in FE for longer. This has been followed by more draconian proposals to make participation in education or training effectively compulsory for all youngsters up to the age of eighteen. The FE sector is considered able to play a role in transmitting inclusive values and in providing a corrective to anti-social behaviour. The act of participating, irrespective of content, is claimed to reduce the conception rate amongst teenage-girls, for example.

The government points to two key improvements in FE since coming to office in 1997. In a letter from the DCFS and DIUS to College Principals, Ed Balls and John Denham cite the substantial increase in investment to the sector, 'by 53% in real terms between 1997 and 2008 (Letter to College Principals from John Denham and Ed Balls, 17/09/08) and the fact that more young people than ever before continue their education beyond the age of post-compulsory schooling, '79% of 16-18 year olds in education and training at the end of 2007' (Letter to College Principals from John Denham and Ed Balls, 17/09/08). However, it is worth asking what youngsters gain from remaining in FE and what the government gains in return for such increases in investment.

In attempting to answer the three research questions listed at the start of this section, I grouped constructions of social exclusion and policies to promote social inclusion according to four main models. What becomes apparent from the analysis is that each model for defining exclusion and promoting inclusion serves either to create new social problems or to exacerbate pre-existing problems.

## **Instrumental Model**

The instrumental model constructs the socially excluded as those without employment and seeks to promote inclusion through re-engagement with the labour market.

However, it may often be the case that those labelled as excluded on this basis may not feel themselves to be so, perhaps being actively involved in the lives of their communities. Policies designed to tackle social exclusion may force people into taking employment which may involve them working long and unsociable hours and may serve to enhance rather than ameliorate social isolation. By being forced to take any job people may find themselves little better off financially as a result of working.

New Labour has focussed particular attention upon youngsters considered to be NEET. Problems emerge with this model as much emphasis is placed upon those who are potentially to become unemployed as opposed to those who are actually unemployed. Much evidence (HMIe: 2006; Wolf: 2007) suggests that groups labelled NEET, whilst a very small proportion of the age cohort, are actually quite fluid with many individuals moving in and out of periods of employment and education, essentially out of personal choice. Making this group the target of policy can serve to consolidate what would have been a transient state as targeted youngsters are recruited into FE to develop skills for employability. Tying youngsters into education and training prevents them gaining experience of employment which is how, in practice, they may be most likely to gain a job. The grouping together of the socially excluded into FE colleges deprives people of social contact with those in employment who are aware of emerging employment opportunities. The instrumental model constructs the socially excluded as lacking in human capital; this blames the socially excluded for their lack of engagement with the labour market and in so doing shifts

the blame from more structural economic and political problems that may cause unemployment.

### **Social Model**

The social model constructs the socially excluded as lacking in social capital and places most emphasis upon the act of participation in either employment, or more usually, education, as opposed to any particular content individuals may be participating in. Attending FE is considered to have broader social benefits for participants in terms of encouraging involvement in their local communities; promoting awareness of healthy lifestyles; promoting tolerance of others and discouraging anti-social behaviour. These broader social benefits, if indeed they exist, may be perceived as arising from higher levels of educational attainment, as a by-product of the act of participating in a communal learning environment or as a formal process of taught citizenship skills. Participation in FE comes to be considered a moral value with people facing political and moral pressure to participate within FE generally (lifelong learning) but also, significantly, to participate within classroom activities, where values are either taught explicitly as part of the curriculum or under the guise of advice and guidance or are assumed to be promoted as a by-product of the act of participation.

The problem with the social model is the privileging of participation over subject specific knowledge or skills. Students may join with others in a communal experience but this is done through replacing challenging subject content with a more general focus upon inclusive values including tolerance of difference, respect for diversity, healthy lifestyles, care for the environment and active citizenship. This can

work to create and exacerbate problems of social exclusion in two ways. Firstly, in denying students access to challenging, subject-specific content they are denied the educational knowledge and vocational skills which may lead to employability and social mobility; students are kept in the social and intellectual spheres from which they initially entered FE. Secondly, this also reinforces the stereotypical notion that FE is for the socially disadvantaged and that bright, middle class youngsters stay on at school until entering university. This runs the risk of turning FE colleges into ghettos of disadvantage.

### **Psychological Model**

The psychological model constructs the socially excluded as vulnerable, or victims of circumstance. The language used in the documents and by interviewees defines (and thereby constructs) a group of people as disadvantaged in comparison to mainstream society either through their individual biology, 'learners with learning difficulties' (Foster, 2005: 5) or through their family circumstances, 'intergenerational disadvantage' (Blunkett, interview with author: 18/07/07) or through social breakdown, 'society has fragmented' (ibid). As a result, those labelled as socially excluded are presented as suffering from psychological weaknesses of low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence and low-aspirations. The role of FE comes to be focused upon providing a corrective for such psychological weaknesses through therapeutic pedagogy with its emphasis upon personalised learning or a personalised curriculum and the provision of guidance and support.

This psychological model does little to promote social inclusion and arguably creates and perpetuates social exclusion in a number of ways. The construction of students as

vulnerable and in need of support can become self-fulfilling. If students are told often enough that they need emotional support, advice and guidance to complete a college course they may well come to believe it and perceive of themselves as somehow vulnerable. In practice, only certain types of support are offered: support to stay in education or to participate in the labour market; in short, support to make the choices that have already been determined as the “right” choices. This constructs the socially excluded as those unable or unwilling to accept and act upon the advice and support offered. The emphasis upon support offered to youngsters labelled socially excluded or considered to be at risk of social exclusion prevents them growing up and making and learning from their own mistakes. Putting youngsters labelled as NEET into FE colleges risks infantilising a generation of youngsters and creating a culture of dependency. In seeking to end a dependence upon welfare benefits the government risks creating a generation dependent upon the emotional and financial support associated with continuing in education.

### **Educational Model**

The absence of an educational model from the FE sector and the virtual disappearance of Adult Education and education for leisure through lack of funding promotes the idea that education for its own sake is a luxury and only available to those who can afford to pay for it themselves. What has replaced education is low level pre-vocational qualifications that teach basic skills and place most emphasis upon participation. This constructs and promotes social exclusion as the qualifications, most often low level, pre-vocational qualifications, gained by this group can become almost worthless as employers simply raise the bar and demand higher level qualifications from all entrants. In fact, worse than this, the very possession of these



qualifications may label some students as unemployable as they mark people out as not having achieved academic success at school nor experience in the workplace.

## **2. The Impact of Changing Constructions of Inclusion**

In this section I want to draw together changes that have taken place in the political construction of social inclusion and corresponding changes that have occurred in policy relating to the FE sector. Three distinct phases in the construction of social inclusion and the presumed purpose of FE can be identified in the decade covered by the scope of this thesis. Phase one covers the period from 1997 – 1999, the years immediately following the election of New Labour. Blunkett was responsible for the DfES over this period and policy relating to FE was defined by *The Learning Age*. Phase two covers the middle period of New Labour, from 1999 – 2004. Charles Clarke became Minister for Education and Skills during this period and FE policy was defined by *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*. The final phase, covers the end of the Blair era, from 2004 – 2007. During this period the DfES was led by Ruth Kelly and Alan Johnson; FE policy was dominated by *Raising Expectations*.

### **Phase One, 1997 – 1999**

This first phase of constructing social inclusion through FE can be characterised, looking back, as one of relative optimism. New Labour had been elected with an overwhelming majority and there was a genuine belief that change was possible, that the inequalities and social problems associated with the Tories and their disregard for society could be swept away. There was also a sense in this period that the New Labour project was, to some extent, still open to discussion and that the direction of future policy had still to be worked out.

Blair first placed tackling social exclusion at the heart of the New Labour project with his *Bringing Britain Together* (1997) speech as discussed in chapter two. Here, social exclusion was defined very broadly, perhaps reflecting the fact that political space was needed to include the views of all members of the Labour Party. This was followed by the establishment of the SEU (1997). Blunkett was Secretary of State for Education and *The Learning Age* dominated FE policy. The key thing about *The Learning Age* (DfEE, 1998b) which changed most notably with subsequent documents is that it put the emphasis for engaging in learning on everyone in society. Learning became interpreted as a moral responsibility for every citizen to undertake for the sake of the nation's future. This focus on including everyone in society reflects the influence of Kennedy's *Learning Works* and Tomlinson's *Inclusive Learning* both of which were published immediately prior to the election of New Labour. There was an emphasis on widening participation in FE and an awareness of the social benefits that widening participation could bring. This emphasis on including everyone is reflective of the broad definitions of social inclusion. Whilst there was some equation of exclusion with unemployment which was reflected in *The Learning Age's* emphasis upon securing participation for a more productive economy and competitive nation, this was balanced out by the strong social focus and the ability of participation in education to 'develop our potential as rounded human beings' (DfEE, 1998b, 3).

### **Phase Two, 1999 – 2004**

From 1999 onwards, New Labour policy makers began to firm up their definitions of social inclusion and exclusion. No longer were definitions so broad and all encompassing. Instead, there was a much stronger move to equate exclusion with

unemployment and as a consequence, to see the purpose of FE as providing individuals with the skills necessary for employability. As such the target for policies to tackle social exclusion and the potential audience for FE became much more tightly focused around unemployed adults and youngsters deemed to be “at risk” of unemployment. Charles Clarke was Secretary of State for Education and the two documents that shaped policies most significantly were *Success for All* and *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills*. These two documents are most dominated by an instrumental focus.

In practice two significant changes occurred in FE colleges to reflect the shifting focus of policy. Funding had previously been given to colleges based upon the number of students, with some weighting given to various “disadvantages” students may have had, for example; being homeless, an ex-offender, a former drug-addict or living in a postcode area that had been designated as an area of disadvantage. Funding shifted to place most financial reward upon colleges recruiting people to study for their first level two qualification (GCSE equivalent). A consequence of this was that people (above the age of eighteen) wanting to study for qualifications higher than level two or a second level two qualification had to fund a much larger proportion of the cost themselves. This shifted the focus of the sector away from high-level sector-specific skills training and onto more general lower-level, pre-vocational courses. The second major change that occurred in 2004 was the introduction of EMA payments to youngsters below the age of 18 studying full time at an FE college. This was a weekly payment available to youngsters after the salary of their parents had been means tested. A consequence of this policy was that attendance in FE was no longer predicated upon a desire to learn a particular subject or skill but instead to gain attendance marks in a return for payment.

### **Phase Three, 2004 – 2007**

The final phase of constructing social inclusion and exclusion that I am concerned with in this thesis coheres around Blair's final years in office when there seemed to be a renewed emphasis upon tackling social exclusion. September 2006 saw the publication of Blair's proposals in *Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion* which was launched with a speech by Blair, *Our Sovereign Value: Fairness*. At the same time a Minister for Social Exclusion was appointed to the Cabinet. All of these proposals reflected a shift in the thinking about social exclusion from the first constructions in 1997. Blair was much more specific in the particular groups that plans to promote inclusion were to target: '2.5% of every generation' (speech). The focus was much more upon the "lifestyle issues" and the behaviour of these particular groups than had been evident ten years previously. No longer is social exclusion equated simply to unemployment but rather to the deviant behaviour of a section of society that is far smaller than simply the number of people who are unemployed. One particular group that is targeted in this way are youngsters labelled as NEET.

These political changes are reflected in FE in a number of ways. Once more, there are shifts in funding, this time towards youngsters aged 16-19. Again, this has the consequence of making second chance participation in education as an adult more difficult as such people will be expected to fund a much larger proportion of the course fees themselves. However, the most fundamental change, although not yet enacted, involves plans as outlined in the document *Raising Expectations* to make participation in some form of education or training compulsory up to the age of eighteen. This will have a fundamental impact upon the nature of the FE sector, undermining the presumption of voluntarism that has underpinned much of the

distinctive offer of the sector. This combined with the previously mentioned funding changes mean youngsters under the age of eighteen will complete a fully-funded level two qualification because they are legally obliged to do so, irrespective of whether they have any desire or commitment to engage with such a course. Those seeking to use FE as a “second chance” when, later in life, they have discovered a subject or vocation that truly interests them, will find they have used their funding entitlement. The main theme of *Raising Expectations* reflects the political emphasis upon the personal behaviour of the socially excluded, in particular, psychological problems of low aspirations and low self-esteem. Considerable focus is placed upon offering advice and guidance to young people and this reflects the concern with changing behaviour and “lifestyle issues”.

In 2009, promoting social inclusion continues to be a stated priority for the FE sector: ‘FE is at the heart of our actions to unlock the talent of individuals; build strong and inclusive communities; and develop the skills and innovation employers need to compete successfully’ (Letter to College Principals from John Denham and Ed Balls, 17/09/08). The letter continues: ‘Colleges are therefore essential to delivering this government’s commitment to engaging and helping those who are most excluded from education, the labour market and society’. This stresses the continuity with past developments; despite the change from Blair to Brown, the New Labour project remains strong.

## **Appendix 1**

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, Aylesbury Estate, 2 June 1997  
(Taken from <http://www.socialexclusion.gov.uk/news.asp?id=400>)

### **The Will to Win**

1. I have chosen this housing estate to deliver my first speech as Prime Minister for a very simple reason. For 18 years, the poorest people in our country have been forgotten by government. They have been left out of growing prosperity, told that they were not needed, ignored by the Government except for the purpose of blaming them. I want that to change. There will be no forgotten people in the Britain I want to build.
2. We need to act in a new way because fatalism, and not just poverty, is the problem we face, the dead weight of low expectations, the crushing belief that things cannot get better. I want to give people back the will to win again. This will to win is what drives a country, the belief that expectations can be fulfilled and ambitions realised.
3. But that cannot be done without a radical shift in our values and attitudes. When the electorate gave the Conservatives their marching orders after 18 years of government, they did so for more than reasons of political fatigue and "time for a change". They did so also because they thought that the values underpinning the Conservative government were wrong.
4. The 1960s were the decade of "anything goes". The 1980s were a time of "who cares?". The next decade will be defined by a simple idea; "we are all in this together." It will be about how to recreate the bonds of civic society and community in a way compatible with the far more individualistic nature of modern, economic, social and cultural life.
5. In political terms, the choice used to be posed throughout the 80s as: vote for yourself or vote for helping the disadvantaged.
6. Today there is a possibility of an alliance between the haves and the have-nots. Comfortable Britain now knows not just its own forms of insecurity and difficulty following the recession and industrial restructuring. It also knows the price it pays for economic and social breakdown in the poorest parts of Britain.
7. There is a case not just in moral terms but in enlightened self interest to act, to tackle what we all know exists - an underclass of people cut off from society's mainstream, without any sense of shared purpose. Just as there are no no-go areas for new Labour so there will be no no-hope areas in new Labours Britain. To be a citizen of Britain is not just to hold its passport it is to share its aspirations, to be part of the British family. But this new alliance of interests to build on "one nation Britain" can only be done on the basis of a new bargain between us all as members of society.
8. We should reject the rootless morality whose symptom is a false choice between bleeding hearts and couldn't care less, when what we need is one grounded

in the core of British values, the sense of fairness and a balance between rights and duties. The basis of this modern civic society is an ethic of mutual responsibility or duty. It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take out if you put in. That's the bargain. In concrete terms that means:

9. Reforming welfare so that government helps people to help themselves and provides for those who cant, rather than trying to do it all through government. Where opportunities are given, for example to young people, for real jobs and skills, there should be a reciprocal duty on them to take them up. We should encourage people like single mothers who are anxious to work but unable to, to get back into the labour market. This is empowerment not punishment. We should root out educational failure, because it is the greatest inhibition to correcting poverty. We should enforce a new code of laws that crack down on crime and other antisocial behaviour. We should attack discrimination in all its forms. We should engage the interest and commitment of the whole of the community to tackle the desperate need for urban regeneration Government should commit itself to using whatever means is the best to play its part without outdated dogma of left or right to hold it back.

10. We must begin by being clear about the legacy we have inherited. Some people are doing well, but too many are left behind and falling down. It is a legacy that previous generations of Conservatives would have felt ashamed of. After several years of economic growth, five million people of working age live in homes where nobody works. Over a million have never worked since leaving school.

11. For a generation of young men, little has come to replace the third of all manufacturing jobs that have been lost. For part of a generation of young women early pregnancies and the absence of a reliable father almost guarantee a life of poverty, and today Britain has a higher proportion of single parent families than anywhere else in Europe.

12. These are the raw statistics. You can add to them the 150,000 people who are now deemed to be homeless; what may be as many as 100,000 children not attending school in England and Wales; the fact that nearly a half of all crimes take place in only a tenth of the neighbourhoods in a country that has the worst crime record of any in the western world; the dozens of failing schools that threaten another generation with unemployment and failure; the housing estates cut off by failing bus services and where only a third of homes have a phone.

13. Behind the statistics lie households where three generations have never had a job. There are estates where the biggest employer is the drugs industry, where all that is left of the high hopes of the post-war planners is derelict concrete. Behind the statistics are people who have lost hope, trapped in fatalism.

14. If we are to act effectively it is vital that we understand how we got here. The industrial revolution of the 19th century created a new working class. Millions of people became key players in the economy - but lacked the basic rights to vote, rights of association at work, rights to security in old age. Then it fell to the Labour party - and similar parties around the world - to bring that new class into the mainstream of society, through new rights and a comprehensive welfare state.

15. Now at the close of the 20th century, the decline of old industries and the shift to an economy based on knowledge and skills has given rise to a new class: a workless class. In many countries - not just Britain - a large minority is playing no role in the formal economy, dependent on benefits and the black economy. In 1979, only one in twelve non-pensioner households had no-one bringing in a wage, today one in five are in that position.

16. Without skills and opportunities people become detached not just from work, but also from citizenship in its wider sense. With each generation aspirations are falling. So that whereas a generation ago even the poorest believed that they had a chance to make it to the top, now children are being brought up on benefits without ambition and without hope.

17. Earlier this century leaders faced the challenge of creating a welfare state that could provide security for the new working class. Today the greatest challenge of any democratic government is to refashion our institutions to bring this new workless class back into society and into useful work, and to bring back the will to win.

18. The previous government failed that challenge because it believed that a divided Britain was sustainable. That we could afford to forget about a workless minority. That it might even be the price to be paid for competitiveness. But they were proven wrong.

19. First because there was no way of avoiding the cost of a workless class falling on businesses and people in work. The Tories never guessed that social security spending would double since 1979, that it would rise from 9% of GDP to 13%, nearly £100 billion, that crime would more than double or that benefits for lone parents would now cost £10 billion each year. Yet these were the predictable consequences of their policies, since while they talked of cutting crime and social security costs, their policies were in fact fuelling them - and loading extra costs onto everyone from taxpayers to hospitals and insurance companies.

20. Everyone who has had their house burgled, their car radio stolen, their child offered drugs in the playground, their neighbours teenage son out of work and in trouble, knows what a mother said to me during the campaign: "what goes around comes around." The second reason the Tories were proven wrong is that the people of Britain found it morally unacceptable that so many should have no stake. They saw it as an offence against decency that work should be allowed to disappear from so many areas of the country, work, to be replaced by an economy built on benefits, crime, petty thieving and drugs.

21. For a country famous for its sense of fair play it was a source of national shame that visitors should see beggars on the streets and that Britain should have shot up the international league tables for inequality.

### **Early actions**

22. The changes we seek will take many years and will involve many difficult choices. There are no quick fixes. But since the election we have made a quick start in dealing with this legacy. There have been no excuses, and no prevarication's. And in



every area, we have given substance to the claim that we will govern for the majority, on the basis that everyone has the opportunity to succeed and everyone has the responsibility to contribute.

23. In education we have shown that we will have zero tolerance of failure. We have shown that we will not hesitate to close the worst schools, and provide something better. We have published ambitious targets for literacy and numeracy. We are moving to abolish the Assisted Places Scheme and cut class sizes. Good teachers will be supported, bad ones removed more quickly. And parents will have to play their part too: home-school contracts will be made compulsory in all schools.

24. Why are we so keen to raise standards in our schools? Because the quickest route to the workless class is to fail your English and maths class. In today's world, the more you learn, the more you earn. We have committed to releasing on a phased basis the capital receipts held by councils from the sale of council houses, so that we can begin building and renovating homes to attack chronic homelessness. There will be houses but there will be jobs too, part of a process of regeneration.

25. We are cutting £100 million from NHS bureaucracy and getting additional money into patient care. We have created the first Minister for Public Health, whose job it will be to tackle the growing inequalities in life expectancy. That will include a crackdown on teenage smoking.

26. We have committed to making the lottery serve the many not the few, introducing a new Lotteries Bill to bring opportunities for those without them, by using the proceeds of the midweek lottery to fund specific education and health projects that otherwise would not be funded at all. It is the peoples money, and it must be their priorities that come first. The scourge of many communities is that young people with nothing to do are sucked into a life of vandalism and drugs, and make life hell for other citizens. Our Youth Offender Teams are going to nip young offending in the bud. Young children wandering the streets at night, getting into trouble, growing into a life of criminality, will be subject to Child Protection Orders. The people suffering most from youth crime are the poor not the rich, and I want to help them.

27. In the absence of a clear philosophy of rights and duties the welfare system can discourage hard work and honesty. The benefits system penalises the husband or wife of an unemployed person who takes up a job. It makes couples better off when they live apart. It locks people into dependence on benefits like housing benefit and income support when it should be helping them to get clear of benefits. It offers little incentive to work part-time, or for irregular earnings. 30% of people live in a household dependent on a means tested benefit, which discourages work and encourages people to hide any money that is earned.

28. The task of reshaping welfare to reward hard work is daunting. But we must be absolutely clear that our challenge is to help all those people who want to work but are not working with the jobs, the training and the support that they need. That is why I am asking social security Ministers to look at all the key benefits and apply a simple test - do they give people a chance to work or do they trap them on benefits for the most productive years of their lives.

29. We are already making progress. This afternoon Gordon Brown is announcing the date of the budget. It will be the Welfare to Work Budget. This will be the Welfare to Work government.

30. At the heart of the budget will be a windfall tax on the excess profits of the privatised utilities. We said in opposition that we would get 250,000 young people off benefit and into work. And we will.

31. This will be a budget to give hope to our young and in so doing to give back strength to our country.

32. For under 25s, we will provide new chances to take up a quality job in the private sector, backed up by a £60 a week subsidy for employers, and our aim is to help as many young people as possible into proper jobs in the private sector.

33. We will provide opportunities to join our Environmental Task Force, working on projects across the country in improving the local environment, and in everything from crime prevention to insulating homes and recycling. We will provide chances to work with a voluntary organisation. And for those without adequate skills we will also provide an option of full-time education and training, to provide the foundation for getting a job in the future. We will also provide new chances for adults who have been out of work for more than two years, backing their search for work with a £75 a week subsidy.

There will be and should be no fifth option of an inactive life on benefit.

34. There are also the half million lone parents, all of whose children are at school. They range from the 40 year old divorcee who gained qualifications before having children, to the teenage mother who has never had a job. But what they share in common is a desire to work, a desire to be economically self-sufficient. In the past they have been ignored by government. Harriet Harman is developing a programme whereby, over time, single parents with children of school age will be invited to obtain the help of the Employment Service. They will come into the Jobcentre, be given advice, directed as to where they might get upgrading of skills, and insofar as is possible, shown what child-care packages may be on offer. Of course, looking after the children comes first. But much more can be done to make work and family life compatible.

35. Other reforms will obviously help: a guarantee of nursery education for four year olds, and the piloting of early excellence centres for under-fives as part of the development of a coherent programme for the education and care of young children. And, as we have already said, one of the first four new projects to be funded from the midweek lottery will be after-school clubs at which children can do their homework, which will make the juggling of work and family life that much easier for parents who want to work. What we are talking about is empowerment not punishment, so that as many children as possible can grow up in working households with the expectation of a job themselves.

36. What unites these policies is the idea that work is the best form of welfare - the best way of funding peoples needs, and the best way of giving them a stake in society. They will help the under 25s who are the first generation since the war to

expect their standard of living to be worse than their parents. The ethic of responsibility

37. To reverse the slide towards a divided nation, we also need to tap a wider ethic of responsibility. The making of one nation is not just a job for government. It is a task for everyone, a responsibility that applies as much at the top of society as at the bottom.

We have already drawn in new blood to help us. And in the next few months we will be looking to companies - both large and small - to take on the young unemployed, to give them a job and training - and hope. Already we see signs of an immensely encouraging response. We will be looking to the voluntary sector to provide mentors and helpers, as well as jobs for young people. We will be looking to schools to open through the evening to make it easier for lone parents to go out to work, and to older people to do their bit to help out in schools. And we will be aiming to emulate the example of Americas NetDay, when thousands of computer professionals give their time to help wire up schools and community centres so that everyone can benefit from access to the technologies of the future. For the same reason we will be backing the thousands of "social entrepreneurs" - those people who bring to social problems the same enterprise and imagination that business entrepreneurs bring to wealth creation. There are people on every housing estate who have it in themselves to be community leaders - the policeman who turns young people away from crime, the person who sets up a leisure centre, the local church leaders who galvanise the community to improve schools and build health centres.

38. And because the British are a generous and decent people, to back up our welfare to work programme we will be looking at ways to encourage people from all backgrounds to act as volunteer mentors for young people coming off unemployment - giving them advice, helping them through difficulties and providing a bridge to the world of jobs and careers.

### **Transforming the structures of government**

39. We also need to change how government governs. Governments can all too easily institutionalise poverty rather than solving it. They can give out money not because it is the right thing to do but because it is the easy thing to do. Before embarking on new policies it is salutary to remember that the equivalent of all the revenues from North Sea Oil has been spent on poverty over the last 25 years - yet poverty got worse. If we are to succeed - and to avoid the pernicious combination of profligacy and neglect - it is incumbent on us to learn from the mistakes from the past. There are three lessons in particular that I want to emphasise today.

40. Lesson number one is that government must not fall into the trap of short-termism. Huge sums are spent dealing with this years problems, but very little on preventing the problems that will arise in five years time. So we spend more on social security to pay for people out of work than we do on training and education to help them into work. We spend less than half of one percent of the criminal justice budget on crime prevention, while we spend billions on courts and prisons to deal with people after they have committed crimes. And whereas 18 years ago we spent £7 billion on housing investment, today we spend £11.5 billion on housing benefit. Yet we know that many problems in later life stem from problems in the family, from

poor parenting and lack of support. We know that if a child is aggressive and out of control, it is better to help them when they are 6 than when they have become a criminal at 16. We know that if a young teenage is dropping out of school it is better to bring them back into education now, than to wait for them to be unemployable in five years time.

41. None of these measures is easy. But early action can save money later on - as well as being morally right. That is why we are already putting this principle into action - turning around failing schools, supporting crime prevention to keep young people out of trouble, and investing in jobs and skills for the future rather than idleness today.

42. But we need to go further if we are to avoid the double jeopardy of worsening social problems and escalating tax bills. We will be calling on departments to draw up plans for shifting energy and resources from cure to prevention, from clearing problems up to anticipating them, and I will judge their success by how far this is done.

43. Lesson number two is that government has to learn to work more coherently. In every poor housing estate you can encounter literally dozens of public agencies - schools, police, probation, youth service, social services, the courts, the Employment Service and Benefits Agency, TECs, health authorities and GPs, local authorities, City Challenge initiatives, English partnerships, careers services - all often doing good work, but all often working at cross-purposes or without adequate communication. This matters because it leads to poor policy and wasted resources - like schools excluding pupils who then become a huge burden for the police.

44. Our challenge must be to overcome these barriers, liberating funds from their departmental silos so that they can be used to deliver the best results. Sometimes that will mean greater competition for funds, to encourage new ideas and to reward departments and agencies for working together. Sometimes it will mean backing projects that cut across the divides, like the Foyer initiatives that deal with jobs as well as homelessness. Sometimes it could mean ensuring that the unemployed youngster or the lone parent has a single point of access to government services and funds, one person who can bring together the budgets that would otherwise be spent separately, so as to maximise their opportunities to find work and take control of their own lives. Sometimes it will mean much more active partnership with business. And everywhere it will mean making sure that budgets are directed to measurable outcomes - not just to doing things because that's the way they've always been done. There is also a third lesson that is just as important. Unless Government is pragmatic and rigorous about what does and does not work, it will not spend money wisely or gain the trust of the public. The last government did little serious evaluation of its policies for poverty, and didn't even know how many people had been on welfare for 10 or 20 years. Its policies were driven by dogma, not by common sense. Our approach will be different. We will find out what works, and we will support the successes and stop the failures. We will back anyone - from a multinational company to a community association - if they can deliver the goods. We will evaluate our policies - and improve them if they need to be improved. And where appropriate we will run pilots, testing out ideas so that we can be sure that every pound we spend is well spent.

We will, in short, govern in a different way. In the 1960s people thought government was always the solution. In the 1980s people said government was the problem. In the 1990s, we know that we cannot solve the problems of the workless class without government, but that government itself must change if it is to be part of the solution not the problem.

## **Conclusion**

45. We must never forget that a strong, competitive, flexible economy is the prerequisite for creating jobs and opportunities. But equally we must never forget that it is not enough. The economy can grow even while leaving behind a workless class whose members become so detached that they are no longer full citizens.

46. The initiative on jobs and welfare that I launched last week with President Clinton was born out of a recognition that this is a shared problem and not one unique to Britain. We can learn from each others experience, and we can also cooperate to find common solutions. To that end we will be using our chairmanship of the G8 next year to drive this agenda forward.

47. Here in Britain, our task is to reconnect that workless class - to bring jobs, skills, opportunities and ambition to all those people who have been left behind by the Conservative years, and to restore the will to win where it has been lost. That will to win is what drives every country. There already is a sense of hope and optimism in the country. People believe that there are new options, new possibilities. And I want everyone to be part of them.

48. That is a new government with a new sense of purpose. A government that believes in giving everyone the chance to succeed and get on in life. It is a government that has a will to win. To those who have lost hope over the last 18 years, I offer them a fresh start. The best thing any government can offer is hope, and that is what I bring today."

## **Appendix 2**

(Taken from <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10037.asp>)

Tony Blair, Prime Minister, September 11<sup>th</sup> 2006, "Our Sovereign Value: Fairness"

### **Our sovereign value: fairness**

1. This lecture takes us to the wellsprings of progressive politics. It is about our sovereign value: fairness. It is about potential never explored; talent torn-off unused, the inability to live a life free from the charity of others. The objective is timeless: we want to expand opportunities so that nobody whatever their background or circumstance should be left behind.

2. My thesis today is straightforward: some aspects of social exclusion are deeply intractable. The most socially excluded are very hard to reach. Their problems are multiple, entrenched and often passed down the generations.

3. Let me summarise my argument. I am not talking about "baby ASBOs", trying to make the state raise children, or interfering with normal family life. I am saying that where it is clear, as it very often is, at young age, that children are at risk of being brought up in a dysfunctional home where there are multiple problems, say of drug abuse or offending, then instead of waiting until the child goes off the rails, we should act early enough, with the right help, support and disciplined framework for the family, to prevent it. This is not stigmatising the child or the family. It may be the only way to save them and the wider community from the consequences of inaction.

4. The political and philosophical vision behind this is classic New Labour. The danger with this whole debate is that it divides into two camps that seem opposing. One says the answer is to improve the material poverty of such families. The other says that they themselves are the problem, a sort of social pathology argument. The reality is that of course material poverty for some families is indeed the root of their problem. That is why the child tax credit, the Working Family Tax Credit, the extra support for children are all absolutely crucial. But for a minority of families, their material poverty may be acute but is not necessarily linked to lack of work or income per se, but may well be the result of a multiplicity of lifestyle issues - drug or alcohol abuse, mental illness, or simply that no-one has ever bothered to offer them a way out. The answer for these families is that a rising tide of material prosperity will not necessarily raise all ships. A cash transfer, at least on its own, is not what is needed. What is needed, instead, is proper structured help, where a due sense of responsibility may be part of the mix, and at a stage early enough to make a difference.

5. And it is not as if there is no evidence base on which to draw. The truth is that around the world, in societies similar to our own, such social exclusion is common. There is now a wealth of empirical data to analyse. The purport of it is clear. You can detect and predict the children and families likely to go wrong. The vast majority offered help, take it. And early intervention is far more effective than the colossal expenditure of effort and resource once they have gone wrong. This is the lesson from Europe, the USA, New Zealand and many other countries.

6. To achieve this, we need a new approach, not one that alters all of what we have been doing up to now, but rather one that accepts the measures to tackle poverty have indeed in many, many cases, been successful; but accepts also that in some cases, with the "hardest to reach" families, with the most problems, these measures aren't enough.

7. It was to define the necessities of life that Seerbohm Rowntree undertook his famous survey here in York in 1899. Rowntree sought to estimate the income of all households and to compare them against a poverty line intended to capture the "minimum necessities for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency".

8. Applying this severe criterion, Rowntree found that 9.9 per cent of the population of York were in primary poverty and that a further 3.2 per cent were near the line. The most immediate cause of poverty was that the chief wage-earner was 'in regular work, but at wages insufficient to maintain a moderate family in a state of physical efficiency'.

This exposed the idea of the idle poor as a fallacy. The poor were working, usually

very hard, and it was inadequate wages that caused the poverty. This fact was emphasised again in the 1960s by Peter Townsend and Brian Abel-Smith's revelation that about two million people were in fact living below the National Assistance scale. For a quarter of them the problem was inadequate earnings. That is why this government, through the national minimum wage and in-work tax credits, has done more than any other to tackle this injustice.

9. The progress we have made is a proud part of our record. Between 1998/9 and 2004 we achieved a fall in child poverty of 23 per cent before housing costs. The number of individuals in absolute poverty has fallen since 1996/97 by 4.8 million. There are 2.4 million fewer people who live in relative poverty, after housing costs, now than there were when we came into government.

10. We are the fastest improving country in Europe for child poverty and are now close to the European average. The number of children in absolute poverty has halved. In this region there are 56,000 fewer children in poverty than there were in 1997 more than the total number of children in York. Nationally, families with children are on average, £1,400 a year better off and the poorest families are on average, £3,200 per year better off. Total spending on financial support for children will have gone up by over £10 billion in real terms since 1997, a rise of 72 per cent. Pensioner households are £1,500 a year better off in real terms. The poorest third of pensioner households are £2,000 a year in real terms better off.

11. 2.5 million more people are now in work than they were in 1997. 1 million fewer people are receiving benefits. We have eradicated long-term youth unemployment. We have invested in regeneration through the national strategy for neighbourhood renewal in the 88 most deprived boroughs.

12. And we have acted to improve public services for the least well-off, especially early in their lives. Beveridge's stated ambition was care from cradle to grave. In fact the welfare state more or less disappeared after childbirth until it was time for primary school. We have begun the process of filling in the gap. We have made good the provision in the early years, which all the research evidence shows is the critical point in the life-course.

13. The Nobel economist James Heckman famously showed that the return on human capital was very high in the early years of life and diminished rapidly thereafter. And yet the emphasis in spending in British social policy had always been the opposite. Investment was negligible in the early years. It then began to grow at just about the age that diminishing returns were setting in. If policies had been devised expressly to defy the evidence they could hardly have been better. We have responded to the evidence and begun to correct the anomaly.

14. The Sure Start programme; the expansion of early years education, into which £17 billion has been invested during our time in government; free learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year-olds, which will be extended to an entitlement of 15 hours a week, for 38 weeks a year, by 2010; we are piloting extending this provision to 12,000 disadvantaged 2 year-olds at the moment; by 2010 there will be 3,500 Children's Centres offering education, health and parenting services all on the same site.

15. But it is precisely because of the success that we have had that the persistent exclusion of a small minority now stands out. About 2.5 per cent of every generation seem to be stuck in a life-time of disadvantage and amongst them are the excluded of the excluded, the deeply excluded.

16. Their poverty is, not just about poverty of income, but poverty of aspiration, of opportunity, of prospects of advancement. We must not in any way let up on the action we take to deal directly with child poverty. But at the same time, we have to recognise that for some families, their problems are more multiple, more deep and more pervasive than simply low income. The barriers to opportunity are about their social and human capital as much as financial. Universal services are not reaching them. And thus it follows that pre-fabricated services cannot answer to individual needs.

In social exclusion we are also talking about people who either may not want to engage with services or do not know how to. Our universal services are all predicated on the assumption that people want them and know how to get them. It is not always a safe assumption.

17. Agencies need incentives to co-operate. We need to liberate professionals to work ingeniously, strip away the rules, conventions and hierarchies that prevent them doing what is best in each individual case.

18. We need working across traditional silos of bureaucracy and government. And means of delivering that help and support which use the expertise and creativity of the voluntary sector, charities and social enterprise as much as the conventional system of the State.

19. This new approach involves complex and variegated decision-making. We shouldn't therefore introduce it in one go, across the board. We should test it in critical areas, where specific problems exist and build our own clear evidence base for future work.

20. Next week Hilary Armstrong will launch our Action Plan. We have defined four groups. They have all proved hard to reach. There has been some progress with each group - but not enough.

21. First, looked after children. There are approximately 61,000 children in care at any one time. They run very high risks of being unemployed, having mental health problems and becoming teenage parents. We need to be frank - we are not yet succeeding. 1 in 10 children in care get 5 good GCSEs compared to 6 out of 10 of other children. Only 6 per cent make it to higher education compared to 30 per cent of all children.

22. Second, families with complex problems - the Respect Task Force identified 7,500 such families. A child born into the most disadvantaged 5 per cent of families is 100 times more likely to have multiple problems at age 15 than a child from the 50 per cent best-off families. One of the biggest problems we face is parents who misuse alcohol. One in eleven children in the UK live with at least one such parent. These children have to take on more responsibility for running their family, they worry that



the secret might be revealed, they often struggle at school and many start to use alcohol and drugs themselves.

23. Third, teenage pregnancies, of which there are 40,000 in the UK at any one time. Like looked-after children, teenage parents are more likely to end up unemployed, have mental health problems and themselves have children who have babies as teenagers. We have made some progress here - conception rates are at their lowest for 20 years.

24. And fourth, mental health patients. Between 125,000 and 600,000 people in Britain have a severe and enduring mental health problem. About 70,000 are on Incapacity Benefit and employment rates among the mentally ill have been falling, despite the fact that the majority are keen to work. The links with other problems are notable: half of those mis-using drug and alcohol have mental health problems.

25. The fact that we have yet to succeed with these groups is not for want of spending. The state spends £1.9bn acting in loco parentis for children in care. It costs about £110,000 a year to keep a child in residential care. And there is very little relationship between spending and outcomes. Families with complex problems cost between £50,000 and £250,000 each. Every teenage pregnancy costs an average of £57,900 in the first five years. A mental health bed costs £1,365 a week.

26. The problem is not that we are not trying, nor that the money is not being committed. It is that we need a radical revision of our methods. The Social Exclusion Plan will be guided by five principles: early intervention, systematically identifying what works, better co-ordination of the many separate agencies, personal rights and responsibilities and intolerance of poor performance.

27. More than anything else, early intervention is crucial. It is a commonplace that prevention is better than cure. But recent advances in our knowledge have offered the promise that we might be able to achieve it. There has been great progress in our ability to spot the risk factors associated with subsequent anti-social behaviour. We also know a lot more about how to protect people against these risks. The protective factors are not surprising - affectionate families, adequate attention from parents.

28. Of course prediction will never be perfect. But the combination of risk and protection means that we can now be reasonably confident that we can identify likely problems at a very early stage.

29. At any one time, children in care make up about 0.5 per cent of all children. But one quarter of the adult prison population has been in the children's care system at some point.

Around a third of looked-after children end up as NEETs (not in employment, education or training).

30. The daughter of a teenage mother is twice as likely to become a teenage mother compared with a daughter of an older mother.

31. Children from the 5 per cent of the most disadvantaged households are more than 100 times more likely to have multiple problems at age 15 than those from the 50 per cent of most advantaged households.

32. Boys with a convicted father are over three times more at risk of being convicted of a crime than those with a non-convicted father.
33. 125,000 children have a parent in custody - and 65 per cent of children with parents in prison go on to offend.
34. People with no qualifications are seven times more likely to be unemployed and five times more likely to be low paid than people with higher education. More than half of female drug users have dependent children.
35. 41 per cent of problem drug-using parents had a child who had repeated a school year.
36. So we can predict. We can then, in the jargon, "intervene". Intervention can sound very sinister. Actually, in the great bulk of cases it means that extra help and support can be provided. It might mean that a more intense health-visitor programme is arranged. Or it might mean parenting classes are offered; or help with drug or alcohol abuse. Or placing families within projects like the Dundee project where the family is given help but within a proper, disciplined framework.
37. This is not about "blaming" anyone for what has happened. It is just about coupling social rights with social responsibilities. This distinction is as old as the debate about poverty itself. It is essentially a replay of the dispute between Helen Bosanquet and Beatrice Webb over the report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in 1909. The Majority Report stressed individual agency: the Minority Report emphasised structural causes. Actually there was no need for two reports - both are true.
38. We then need to be clear about schemes that work and encourage the spread of good practice. We will provide a government hallmark for programmes that have proved to be effective. Commissioning of services will be strengthened. We will incentivise good practice.
39. We will improve Local Authority Area Agreements and look at how we can improve the sharing of information between relevant agencies. The barriers between agencies will be broken down and flexibility enhanced. Often this will require professional rivalries to be set aside and budgets to be pooled.
40. For example, we are pioneering this approach in relation to social care budgets. Imagine a woman who used to rely on social services to get her ready for the day but, because of shift patterns, the earliest they could get her ready for work was 11am. Now she can use her budget to get support around her working hours, enabling her to get back to work - greatly improving her self esteem and quality of life. This is made possible by a budget pooled from Council social care services; cash from the independent living fund; disabilities facilities grant and access to work grant.
41. We are now piloting the same approach for at-risk children. For example, Trafford are piloting a scheme where a young person's lead professional - in addition to directing the mainstream services around the child - has a budget of £200 per week

per child. The funding is drawn from a budget pooled by the Local Council, PCT, Connexions and the Youth Offending team.

42. One 15 year old boy in Trafford had become disaffected, was truanting from school and drifting into offending. The lead practitioner used the budget to fund a tailored joint programme between a local college, employer and school. The programme combined basic skills training with work experience, engaging the boy's interest and getting him out of trouble.

43. Individual budgets allow people to customise the care to their own needs. We have a series of pilots to place the budget in the hands of a lead professional, acting on behalf of the citizen. These will be extended.

44. Again for example, midwives and health visitors already routinely screen and visit new born children - though at present the middle classes tend to ask for, and therefore get, more follow-up help.

45. Under the new arrangements, health visitors and midwives will seek to identify those most at risk, most simply by asking young parents or parents to be about difficulties they may be having, or about their own background. This can be supplemented by information from other public services, where we need to break down barriers to sharing data.

46. For those who are identified at risk, the health visitor or Children's Centre worker will engage in a more detailed assessment to clarify and confirm the level of need. For those identified as being most at risk (around 10-15 per cent of all first born), a two-year home visiting programme will be put in place.

47. Finally, we need a serious drive to root out poor performance. When we first came into government we acted quickly and decisively against unacceptable performance in literacy and numeracy. We need the same decisive, unsentimental focus on social exclusion.

These will be sent out in the Local Government White Paper later this year.

48. For at-risk children, we will also promote an expansion of budget-holding lead professionals for children in care. This will be the focus of the Green Paper this autumn.

We will focus efforts on teenage pregnancy on those areas where rates are rising against the overall downward trend with improved social and relationships education. We will begin an expanded media campaign and offer better access to contraceptives, where appropriate.

49. We will test different approaches to tackling mental health and conduct disorders in childhood, including intensive home-based policies and foster care. We will need to be a lot more ambitious, too, on parenting support and training.

50. For adults, we will test alternative approaches to improving outcomes for people with chaotic lives and multiple needs, and will implement a national individual placement and support approach for adults with moderate and severe mental health problems. Later this year we will publish the Leitch review that will address the poor

prospects of those with few qualifications or skills.

51. This has been a poetic vision articulated in the most technical prose. The vocabulary of public service reform is not designed to lift the heart. But we should not lose sight of the vision we have, nor of the nature of the task we face. It applies directly to social exclusion but also goes wider than that.

52. The vision is opportunity and freedom for all. Let me end where I started. There are people who will shout about the "nanny state", who will tell us it's none of "our business", who will say more reasonably that if you try to predict, you stigmatise. But today's society doesn't work like this. Yes, there are areas in which the State, or the community, no longer has a role or, if it does have one, it is a role that is completely different. It is not for the State to tell people that they cannot choose a different lifestyle, for example in issues to do with sexuality. All that has changed and rightly. But where children are involved and are in danger of harm or where people are a risk to themselves or others, it is our duty not to stand aside. Their fate is our business.

The alternative is that these children, these adults, these families are left behind, abandoned, when they need to be helped.

53. Yesterday, meeting children who are or were in care, two things struck me forcibly. The first was how varied their problems were and thus how individualised the response needs to be. But the second thing was their ability, their talent, the confidence they had been given through being helped, which was allowing them to develop into the type of human beings they have the potential to be. This is the ultimate point. Without help, they would have continued to suffer. With it, they can be fulfilled. Bringing them with us or leaving them behind: that is the choice and in the end, there is only one way for those of us who believe in progress. That's the way we will take.

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Questions for Rob Wye**

**21/9/07**

1. *Success for All* describes the FE sector as having 'twin goals': "social inclusion and economic prosperity". It is difficult to precisely define social inclusion. What is your understanding of the meaning of this term?
2. What did you consider to be the changes that needed to be made within the FE sector to achieve the goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity?
3. *Success for All* often appears to equate social exclusion with disadvantage, for example: "the commitment to widen participation and meet the needs of disadvantaged people." Does this suggest that disadvantaged people have specific educational needs distinct from other people?
4. *Success for All* places the needs of employers at the heart of the FE system: "Success for All is about everyone in the sector – providers, learners and employers." What effect does this have upon the educational role of the sector?

5. *Success for All* presents participation in education as a means of promoting good citizenship. “Adult and Community Learning forms a vital part of the government’s drive to support social inclusion, to widen participation in learning, to build communities’ self-confidence and capacity and to promote good citizenship and personal development.” How does participation in education promote good citizenship?

### **Questions for Sir Andrew Foster**

**28/05/08**

1. “FE Colleges drive social inclusion, helping countless individuals to contribute and grow in self-esteem.” How would you define social inclusion?
2. How do you think the FE sector can play a role in bringing about social inclusion?
3. “The UK has a prosperous history but our future depends on our skills. The world is a competitive market and the marketplace is crowded with nations seeking to succeed.” What do you consider to be the relationship between FE and national economic growth?
4. What do you consider to be the relationship between FE and individual prosperity? Do all qualifications translate into increased earnings potential?
5. “Colleges should sharpen their focus and direct the main force of their effort towards supplying economically valuable skills.” Do you consider there to be a risk of creating a two-tier system with academic qualifications on offer to youngsters in Sixth Forms or older adults who can afford to pay; whilst vocational courses are left for the rest?
6. Do you think there are dangers to taking too much of an instrumentalist approach to education? If, for example, youngsters opt for a particular vocational course at the age of sixteen, or even younger, are they not limiting their options for later in life?
7. “Greater impetus should be given to specialisms in FE Colleges as a powerful quality driver.” Again, might such specialisms not limit the opportunities for those unable to travel, yet not keen to tie themselves down to the institution’s particular specialism?
8. “Currently, FE is the neglected ‘middle-child’ between Higher Education and schools.” Do you think plans to raise the age of compulsory participation will help shift this perception?
9. “The report sets out a clear vision for what is needed to build a first class FE system for the future?” Do you think improvements have been made to the FE sector since the publication of your report?

### **Questions for David Blunkett**

**18/7/07**

1. In *The Learning Age* you say that FE has an excellent track record in reaching disadvantaged people, helping to reduce social exclusion and promoting employability. How you would define social exclusion?
2. You say in the *Learning Age* that learning will be the key to a strong economy

and an inclusive society. How do you consider FE able to bring about social inclusion?

3. What did you consider to be the changes that needed to be made within the FE sector to achieve the goals of social inclusion and economic prosperity?
4. One thing that's discussed in relation particularly to community and adult education is the role of FE and education in promoting active citizenship. How would you describe active citizenship?
5. In the *Learning Age*, learning is described as being at the heart of the government's welfare reform programme. How does this alter more traditional views of education?

### **Questions for Bill Rammell** **22/04/08**

1. Social inclusion seems to be stated as a key policy aim in a number of the documents. It's often talked of as being intertwined, or inextricably linked, with social inclusion. How would you define social inclusion?
2. What would you consider to be the role of FE specifically in relation to social inclusion?
3. Within the actual confines of the classroom would you see FE playing a role in terms of the participation or in terms of the values that can be transmitted?
4. What do you consider to be the relationship between FE and national economic growth?
5. Do all qualifications necessarily translate into increased earnings potential for individuals?
6. Is there a place for education that goes beyond the needs of the workplace? Do you think there is still a role for learning for pleasure?
7. Recent documents published in relation to the FE sector place a great deal of emphasis upon offering young learners support. Does this suggest a new direction for FE, perhaps moving away from instrumental aims to a more 'supportive' role for the sector.

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