This study examines the phenomenon of professionalization in adult education in Ireland and the impact of professionalization on the field of adult education. It aims to investigate the effect of policy and regulatory changes that have taken place during the period 2000 to 2016. The study questions how these changes are altering the field, the identities and practices of practitioners and ultimately the experiences of adult learners.

Adult and Continuing Education have been part of the education discourse in Ireland for many years, however, recent policy, structural and regulatory change have raised questions about the field, its purpose, its underpinning philosophy. The Government White Paper “*Learning for Life*” (DES, 2000) was the first significant policy paper setting out national structures, funding streams and regulation for adult education. While there has been significant development in adult education between 2000 and 2016, including increased funding and a widening of access for adults to education, the development of adult education as a recognised profession has been slow to materialize. The sector continues to be defined by part-time and casual work with little security of tenure, limited opportunities for career development and a lack of structured career paths. Recent policy developments, a new National Strategy for Further Education and Training (SOLAS, 2014), a new strategy for Professional Development for Further Education and Training (SOLAS, 2016), new regulations introduced by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Teaching Council of Ireland (Teaching Council, Regulation 5, 2011) coupled with significant structural change in the sector, have reignited the debate on professionalization.

` The research methodology in the study is a single case study, conducted within the constructivist paradigm, that is informed by a conceptual framework that draws on a socio-cultural perspective on learning and meaning making.