**Voices from the staffroom: impacts of further education policy on CPD in the sector[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**Abstract**

This chapter discusses the findings of doctoral research into further education lecturers’ and middle managers’ perceptions of how continuing professional development (CPD) in the sector is planned and implemented. Thematic analysis revealed that mandatory CPD is perceived to: involve conflicting purposes between those planning it and its recipients (deriving from divergent understandings of professionalism and the role of CPD among stakeholders); be characterised as mostly generic and didactic; and lead to lecturers engaging in separate forms of CPD in part to compensate for ineffective mandatory CPD. The chapter demonstrates the value of practice-based doctoral study in enabling the voices of educators to be positioned at the centre of an exploration of their own professional learning.

**Keywords: further education; FE; education policy; CPD; continuing professional development; professionalism**

**Introduction and context**

This chapter discusses the findings of my doctoral research into further education (FE) lecturers’ and middle managers’ perceptions of how continuing professional development (CPD) in the sector is planned and implemented. I firstly give a brief history of fluctuating policies salient to CPD in English FE over the last fifty years. I then consider how this policy context has contributed to differing conceptualisations of ‘professionalism’ in FE among stakeholders, and how these differing understandings impact CPD in the sector. To achieve the latter, I discuss the following three themes derived from my doctoral research:

* conflicted understandings of the purposes of CPD;
* the generic character of mandatory CPD learning content;
* learning as a personal endeavour and the ‘compensatory principle’.

In discussing my work I also intend to highlight issues and offer guidance to other post-graduate research students. My research stemmed from wanting to investigate three aspects: what had led to, in my experiences, the prevalence of a passive, knowledge transmission approach to mandatory CPD sessions; perceptions of educators towards such CPD; and how (else) colleagues engaged with professional learning. This third aspect was inspired by frequent comments from colleagues that most mandatory CPD was in their view irrelevant to their professional learning needs, and often incongruent with their preferred means through which to learn. Indeed, throughout my fifteen years teaching in different FE colleges, mandatory CPD was almost always characterised as didactic and generic (meaning not calibrated for lectures in particular subject areas, career stages, or with specific professional learning needs). Further, I wanted to position FE lecturers’ and middle managers’ perceptions at the centre of an exploration of their own professional learning. This would counter what Taubman (in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) identified as a lack of respect for the expertise and views of professional lecturers in FE, and a historical context in which research in the FE sector has been largely invisible (Solvason and Elliot, 2013).

I framed my research in a social constructivist epistemology, by way of investigating CPD through the perspectives of FE lecturers and middle managers. The inclusion of this second group enabled me to give voice to those charged with the practical organisation of mandatory CPD, but often without the agency to determine its focus. Taking place across 2018 and 2019, this research was timely: Kennedy (2014, p.2-3) argues (and it remains the case at the time of writing in 2023):

[…] the state of the literature on teachers’ CPD as a whole is partial in its coverage, is fragmented, and is under-theorised. […] studies which look at how the concept of professionalism can be mobilised to influence the profession as a whole in relation to CPD is much less evident.

**Terms used**

The terminology relating to CPD in FE has evolved over time. Earlier terms used for ongoing professional learning in education include ‘in-service education and training’ (INSET) and ‘staff development’ (Billing, 1982), with both terms still sometimes applied in secondary education into the twenty first century (see O’Brian and Jones, 2014). Lee (1990 describes ‘staff’development as a narrow concept, in effect a “function of management” which prioritises equipping educators to satisfy the corporate needs of the organisation. This inference draws parallels with later terms used in salient policy discourses, such as ‘workforce training’ (see ETF, 2018).

In this chapter I use the term CPD as defined by Avalos, 2011 (in Postholm, 2012, p.406) to mean “teachers’ learning, how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support [their students]”. It was also the term mostly used by participants in this research. I use the word ‘lecturer’ to refer to educators in the FE sector: in my experiences in the sector the use of both ‘teacher’ and ‘lecturer’ were contested among colleagues, and there appeared no clear preference. There is also an inconsistent application of the terms within literature addressing the sector (Goldhawk and Waller, 2023).

**A brief history of FE policy**

FE lecturers’ CPD had remained a peripheral concern until the 1970s (Lee, 1990). The James Report (HMSO, 1972) marked a watershed moment in FE (Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Broad, 2015) in calling for substantial increases in ‘training’ for practising lecturers in the sector to address their development needs in the sector. The report suggested a range of both formal and informal CPD, from evening team meetings to higher degrees and even secondment to other work sectors (HMSO, 1972). Provision for CPD in FE increased throughout the 1970s following the James Report (Broad, 2015). Then in 1977 a parliamentary sub-committee focused on the ‘in-service training’ of FE lecturers recommended formal teacher ‘training’ for practising lecturers in FE (as had the 1972 James Report) as, unlike with school teachers, qualifications had not been required to teach in FE, resulting in fewer than half of FE lecturers holding a formal teaching qualification at that time (Lee, 1990). Despite this recommendation, there remained no policy requirement for a teaching qualification until 2001 (HMSO, 2001).

Amid this “golden age” in the early 1970s of increased recognition and investment in CPD activities in FE (Broad, 2015), an apparent tension had been identified in attempting to address the divergent needs of government policy, FE organisations, and individual lecturers, through CPD. Elliot-Kemp and Williams (1980, in Lee, 1990) suggest that addressing these differing needs was incompatible, as individualised CPD could not result in organisational improvements. However, this position failed to recognise how CPD interventions at an individual level, such as one-to-one coaching, can serve to both support organisational agendas and the professional learning interests of lecturers (Lofthouse, 2019; Bennett and Bush, 2014).

A lecturer-centred approach to CPD was also considered problematic in relation to resourcing. Addressing common themes within CPD was considered more cost efficient than seeking to attend to diverse individual learning needs (Hopkins, 1986). Such concern for efficiencies echoed the developing neo-liberal policy cultivated by successive governments since the late 1970s which had introduced a discourse justifying reduced public expenditure (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). Over forty years later, mandatory CPD was similarly characterised by the participants in my doctoral research, most of whom articulating a prevalence of generic learning content (or, ‘common themes’), unrelated to the divergent professional learning needs of those in attendance (given varying professional backgrounds, qualifications, and teaching experiences). The neo-liberal policy discourse of efficiencies in CPD within the sector informed, I argue, the development of a managerialist concept of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) for FE lecturers, and a narrow conceptualisation of the purpose of CPD, as discussed later.

By the mid-1980s a top-down approach to organising CPD had become pervasive (Broad, 2015), shifting away from individualised CPD and towards a managerialist culture (Smith and O’Leary, 2013). In the late 1980s organisational and policy agendas were further prioritised in CPD, amid a period of considerable policy change (Broad, 2015). The 1988 Education Reform Act and the Training and Enterprise Councils required:

[…] colleges to act as businesses in what will be a strongly competitive environment. This will mean that FE colleges will need to conduct curriculum audits […] in order to assess market position (Lee, 1990, p.111).

In alignment with this dominant discourse (Gee, 1996) and subsequent to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, incorporation occurred in the sector in April 1993, relocating financial control from local education authorities to college managers and governors. FE colleges were now responsible for funding and planning CPD, with the government “taking a laissez-faire approach” to CPD (Broad, 2015, p.18). Broad (2015) classifies CPD in the years following incorporation as characterised by ‘knowledge transmission’, meaning external ‘expert’-led didactic sessions delivered to FE lecturers, who are given the role of passive recipients of information considered important by senior management (Kennedy, 2014).

The goal of incorporation was to create a marketised, competitive and nationally standardised and regulated FE sector (Lucas, 2004b). The period following incorporation marked a further divergence in priorities between FE college management and FE lecturers (Randle and Brady, 1997). College leaders now took a managerialist approach: prioritising performance metrics such as retention and achievement figures, with CPD focused on ensuring compliance to short-term organisational goals (Broad, 2015). Concerns for professional autonomy and addressing individual professional learning needs had been side-lined (Orr, 2008). Further, the efficiencies required by incorporation led to significant staff redundancies, worsened conditions of work, increased workloads, and a substantial increase in part-time and temporary lecturers in most colleges (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas, 2004a). Engagement with CPD for this enlarged part-time lecturer workforce was highly restricted as such staff were less likely to be able to attend during their work hours, and as specific provision for CPD was rarely provided for these employees (Lucas, 2004a). The part-time participants in my study echoed this problem in connection with their limited engagement with mandatory CPD.

From 1997 successive New Labour governments embraced the preceding Conservative policy of developing a marketised FE sector and designated the FE sector specifically as the central vehicle responsible for ensuring a globally competitive workforce (see DfES, 2006; Foster, 2005; DfES, 2002; DfEE, 1998). This discourse was now interlaced with the language of social justice and widening participation (Aubrey and Bell, 2017) and urgent messages of an apparent need to address the requirements of globalisation (Simmons, 2010; Leitch, 2006). To ensure the FE sector workforce could meet these responsibilities (Orr, 2008), legislation was introduced requiring that from 2001, FE lecturers were obliged to hold a teaching qualification (HMSO, 2001), and from 2007 FE lecturers were mandated to gain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status (HMSO, 2007a). Between 2008 and 2012 FE lecturers were also required by legislation to participate in, and record, thirty hours CPD on an annual basis (HMSO, 2007b). In 2007 mandatory paid membership of the Institute for Learning (IfL) was introduced, an organisation purporting to validate the professional status of FE lecturers and support CPD opportunities in the sector (IfL, 2012).

Some policy changes during this period had the potential to solidify the professional identity and status of FE lecturers, including the mandatory teaching qualifications, the introduction of QTLS status, and interlinking the adult education sector with public discourses of professionalism (Aubrey and Bell, 2017). However, the implementation of these policy reforms were underpinned by increased surveillance and auditing through scrutiny from both Ofsted and the IfL. Furthermore, the codification of professional behaviours through extensive formal descriptors defined professionalism in restrictive, managerialist terms (Aubrey and Bell, 2017).

During the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government the Lingfield Review (2012) however regarded these requirements as overly prescriptive, and it marked the end of this mandatory completion of a teaching qualification and the requirement to log CPD. Membership of the IfL once again became voluntary. Implementing the recommendations of the Lingfield Review therefore marked a further policy swing, this time from policy diktat to de-regulation (Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Gleeson *et al.,* 2015): responsibility for lecturers’ CPD was once more devolved to FE leadership teams. In 2014 the IfL was replaced by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). A branch of the ETF, the Society for Education and Training (SET), focuses on teaching quality and professionalism in the sector (SET, 2018).

**Contrasting conceptualisations of professionalism**

Differing conceptualisations of FE professionalism frame the role and expectations of lecturers according to divergent ideological positions, in turn informing the perceived purposes of CPD for this workforce. Literature considering notions of professionalism and professional identity in FE is abundant (for example Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; Gleeson *et al.*, 2015; Hodgson, 2015; Tummons, 2014), perhaps reflecting its contested nature.

James and Biesta (2007, p.127) rightly assert: “what constitutes professionalism in FE is an elusive concept”, in part due to the wide-ranging composition of professional biographies of the FE lecturer workforce. Definitions of professionalism in FE are also emergent, in that the profession is comparably new (Tummons, 2014) and cannot, therefore, be simply defined against features of professionalism ascribed to older professions (Atkins and Tummons, 2017). For instance, unlike in law, health, or teaching in the state primary and secondary sectors, FE lecturers do not currently require qualifications to practise (teaching), which Millerson (cited in Atkins and Tummons, 2017) identified as a key characteristic of what defines a profession. Thus, some lecturers begin working in the sector with no formal training, qualifications or experiences in teaching (ETF, 2019). Commonly, however, FE lecturers hold qualifications or possess industrial experiences in the subject areas they teach (James and Biesta, 2007). Those within the FE lecturer workforce, particularly in vocational curriculum areas, are therefore often characterised as having a dual professionalism, with the former industry career role, such as hairdressing or catering, often remaining their principal professional identity (Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005).

Discourses of professionalism in FE can be situated within distinct ideological paradigms. The first two considered in this section, the managerialist and utilitarian paradigms, tend to be where policy discourses of professionalism are located, whereas the third, emancipatory paradigm, tends to represent academic and practitioner discourses (Tummons, 2014).

Discourses within the managerialist paradigm conceive professionalism to comprise lecturer compliance, audit and performativity, income generation, inspection frameworks, and through adherence to pre-defined standards or criteria (Atkins and Tummons 2017; Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). Various iterations of professional standards (see ETF, 2014; 2022; LLUK, 2006; FENTO, 1999) define professionalism through descriptors of “occupational performativity” rather than “a philosophy of professionalism” (Atkins and Tummons, 2017, p.362) perhaps because unlike in other education sectors, FE professional standards are rooted in a vocational philosophy of occupational competencies (Lucas and Nasta, 2010) based on industry definitions. Such wording indicates that policy considers the sector through a vocational lens, with the same professional standards applying to academic subjects. The question as to the appropriateness of these standards across sector provision is thus raised.

Managerial professionalism is derived from above (McClelland, 1990, cited in Lucas and Nasta, 2010) and imposed from the outside (Evans, 2008) through policy diktat and inspection. These restricted and restrictive notions of professionalism represent an ideology whereby employees are not trusted to independently perform their roles in an effective manner (Robson, 1998), akin to de-professionalisation (Gleeson and Shain, 1999; Randle and Brady, 1997).

The utilitarian paradigm narrowly defines professionalism (in FE) as comprising generic teaching skills, in the event diminishing the importance of subject expertise (Atkins and Tummons, 2017). Finally, discourses within the emancipatory paradigm recognise lecturers’ professional expertise, agency and autonomy; apply democratically ascribed standards (Atkins and Tummons, 2017; Tummons, 2014); and involve engagement with communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Emancipatory discourses represent professionalism in FE as emergent and developmental in nature, due to the frequently part-time and casual nature of much FE work which elongates the timeframe in which professional identity is formed (Tummons, 2014). Emancipatory discourses of professionalism coincide with elements of what Taubman (in Daley, Orr and Petrie 2015, p.107) identifies as a traditional understanding of professionalism, which comprises:

[…] a specific group of workers with a defined body of knowledge and expertise and a set of values and ethics […] professionals were allowed to act autonomously and exercise their judgment.

Professionals in this sense operate with independence from outside interference and their practices are informed and enriched through engagement with CPD (Taubman in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

It must be recognised that these paradigms are not always evident in isolation from one another. For instance, the LLUK standards (2006) appeared to recognise the expertise of the lecturer, in encouraging the autonomous selection and application of learning theory to inform teaching practices, while elsewhere invoking aspects of managerial professionalism in appealing for adherence to organisational quality systems (Tummons, 2014). Atkins and Tummons (2017, p.363) draw on Gee (1996) to argue that in the current FE standards expressed by the ETF (2014), teachers are indicated as having responsibility for their own CPD, a feature of emancipatory professionalism, but are not involved in “the discursive constructions of professionalism within which they are enrolled as social actors”.

**Effects on professional learning in FE**

This section summarises three themes deriving from my thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2016) in which the divergence in perceptions of what constitutes professionalism for FE lecturers frames divergent understandings of the purpose and form of CPD in FE. I conducted ten semi-structured interviews with FE lecturers who teach across academic and vocational disciplines, and four middle managers. The three themes summarised here address the following research question: what are lecturers’ and middle managers’ perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented, and evaluated?

This research was framed by social constructivism, an epistemology that emphasises “that the world is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation” (O’Leary, 2010, p.6). This positioning in turn informed my choice of methodological approach, that of ‘personalised’ evaluation (Kushner, 2000). Evaluation research predominantly concerns the effectiveness of particular programmes, although as Newby (2014) suggests, this is not always the case: evaluation can also focus on processes or activities. Indeed, the evaluation in this research concentrated on FE CPD activities for lecturers and middle managers. Kushner (2000) argued that personalising evaluation recognises that participants’ own lives, beliefs, values, and work contexts is important: measuring activities against their objectives is meaningless unless we also consider how those objectives relate to the lives of people.

This was also case study research: the case of professional development in an FE college in England. Flyvbjerg (2006) considers a strength of case study research to be that it facilitates the development of context specific knowledge, a form of knowledge that characterises an expert level of understanding in a particular field. As a single case, I could not make generalised claims of knowledge for the whole sector. However, As Flyvbjerg (2006, p.224) contends: “concrete, context-dependent knowledge is […] more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals.” Rather than a search for generalisable features or conclusions relating to CPD, I sought a depth of understanding to obtain a “nuanced view of reality” which offers context specific knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223). The research adhered to all salient aspects of the British Education Research Association (BERA, 2018) ethical guidelines, and the ethics policies and procedures both of the University of the West of England and at the site where the research was conducted. Nonetheless, Ryan (2007) in Seale *et al.* (2013) recognises limitations with generic guidelines when applied to ‘insiderresearch’: research conducted in the researcher’s own place of work. Kvale (1996) argues that the power is located predominantly with the researcher who chooses the questions, steers the discussion, and analyses the data. Munro *et al.* (2004), however, maintain that it is the participant who chooses their answers and the level of detail given, thus holding power. These choices may be affected by interviewees’ positions in the organisation; the researcher’s usual job role; the interviewees’ and researcher’s roles in relation to each other; or organisational politics (Munro *et al.*, 2004). Elsewhere, Mercer (2007) describes a danger of distortion with interview answers that may occur in light of personal concerns or ambitions, or by the need for a participant to continue a professional relationship with the researcher subsequent to the interview. My position was that the means by which power is held and applied as identified by both Kvale (1996) and Munro *et al.* (2004) both occur.

A means to address such power imbalances, at least in part, is to involve participants at the data analysis stage (Sikes, 2006). I invited participants to review transcribed data to ensure its accuracy in representing their views and as part of developing an ethic of care which “realigns the notion of power [and] eliminates the potential for exploitation in work-based projects” (Costley and Gibbs, 2010, p.44). Participants were asked to verify, amend and contest my accounts of their interview answers (Costley and Gibbs, 2010), and check transcripts, albeit still providing only ‘snap-shot approval’ (Sikes, 2006). The research also incorporated transparency through on-going openness, clarity and reflection with regard to the purposes of the investigation, the roles of those involved, and the boundaries in which data was collected (Finlay and Gough, 2003). I therefore attempted to mitigate the ethical concerns inherent in insider research, while recognising that ethical ‘grey areas’ will inevitably remain.

***Theme 1. Conflicting purposes: a planner/recipient disconnect underpinned by contrasting understandings of professionalism in FE***

The data indicated there are contrasting understandings between the participants and planners of mandatory CPD (most frequently identified as the senior leadership team at the College) regarding the underlying purposesof CPD. All participant names cited below are pseudonyms. Stuart summarised these different understandings: for him, CPD means developing and reflecting on teaching and learning practices (this comprising the occupational and personal aspects of professional learning as defined by Fraser *et al*., 2007), whereas he felt the planners of CPD perceive this time to be for relaying organisational messages and diktats:

People being told to do things. Organisational updates. You know, these aren’t professional development. These are something that you do, it’s important…but they’re not to do with your development as a teacher…they don’t lead to any increase in your professionalism, they don’t help you engage with your profession, they don’t change your craft.

Policy update [training] looks like a PowerPoint slide…it may nominally have an activity…the activity is broadly to fill time…it doesn’t lead to reflection…except reflection of what you could be doing in that time.

This disconnect, I argue, stems from conflicting understandings of professionalism in FE, reflected in a differently understood purpose for CPD. Stuart’s perceptions suggest an understanding by planners of mandatory CPD that its purpose is to enact a culture of managerial professionalism (Tummons, 2014), whereby professionalism means compliance to predefined, organisational standards or priorities. This articulation is then manifested in a transmission approach of CPD that locates lecturers as passive recipients of directives that facilitate desired compliance to organisational priorities.

In contrast, for the participants, the purpose of CPD is nearly always described as to enable individualised professional learning that relates to either developing pedagogical practices or subject specific knowledge:

[Derek] the stuff that is related to your teaching and that is related to your subject area...on a personal level, that’s the stuff that I find a most stimulating and most useful...

[Jack] What I see it as is responding to the needs of individuals [lecturers].

[Maya]…keeping up with what is going on in your area of specialism…

These perceptions represent a position whereby lecturers identify professionalism to be emancipatory: professional expertise, agency and autonomy is recognised (Tummons, 2014). It has also been found elsewhere (Goodall, *et al.,* 2005) that teachers consider effective CPD to involve transformative activities that facilitate the development of everyday teaching practices. Jack voiced his frustrations with mandatory CPD that ignores any notion of emancipatory professionalism:

…if it’s top-down CPD, you’re just wasting people’s time. It has to be bottom-up…there is a belief that people don’t know what CPD they need, they need to be told. No they don’t, they need to be given a voice and at least, at least have that voice be heard.

***Theme 2. The generic character of mandatory CPD learning content***

The second theme represents a perception, prevalent across the data, that the content and form of mandatory CPD is usually generic. This means that mandatory CPD mostly involves learning content that is general and mostly introductory in nature, and not specific to curriculum areas, career stages or any other individual (rather than collective) learning needs. Such CPD was predominantly considered as inappropriate or irrelevant to their particular learning needs. Poppy discussed her concerns with generic, all-encompassing CPD activities. Poppy goes so far as to suggest such sessions do not even constitute CPD:

I’ve been to various ones [mandatory CPD sessions]…where it’s supposed to be about, I don’t know, something like setting targets and you think, but I’m already setting targets effectively and I agree we can always improve what we’re doing, but with something as limited as that, I don’t see that as professional development…quite often they’re a bit too broad so they’re not, they don’t really apply to who I teach quite often, then that leaves me feeling a bit deflated**.**

Poppy’s final comment suggests that rather than a conduit to professional learning, generic CPD can conversely lead to lecturers’ time being wasted, and even a negative impact on workforce morale. Likewise, Milo argued that generic CPD sessions tend to constitute a waste of time and are often patronising:

...it tends to be across-the-board rather than specific training…if some of it is irrelevant to you, which a lot of it tends to be…in whole college development days, I just tend to switch off and feel frustrated rather than want to engage. The last CPD was about SMART targets and I was learning how to do that fifteen years ago and I just feel that it wasn’t relevant…that was a waste of time because it really wasn’t teaching us anything new.

Derek also considered that generic CPD is problematic as it does not meet individual or team learning needs that are likely to vary according to subject area and career stage:

CPD should be much more individually tailored or at least tailored to within your department or your area rather than college wide...it’s very difficult on a consistent level over a period of years to find stuff that generically is for every member of teaching staff useful, you might have one [a colleague] that’s taught for 40 years up against someone who’s come into their very, very first teaching post and they’re gonna have different requirements.

Generic content was not always described in negative terms, however. For instance, David found that he hadlearned from these development sessions:

…health and safety…every child counts…you have to learn these…how to organise the class so they don’t get bored…how to write lesson plans…how to write schemes of work…British Values…

Although an experienced vocational subject specialist, it may be that David has found such mandatory CPD useful as he did not himself hold a teaching qualification in either his subject area or in adult teaching. It appears that CPD concerning generic aspects of teaching and learning content may be useful therefore to colleagues who have not previously acquired such knowledge through teaching qualifications.

The predominant position among the participants, however, was of negativity towards generic CPD, considered inappropriate to their learning needs. This position is perhaps best illustrated by the following two comments:

[Derek]…one-off generic day…there’s only so many generic things that you can do which will interest everyone…I’ve been here ten years and I’ve seen stuff getting repeated.

[Milo] [the planners make] sweeping statements that everyone should be doing this…we all have different needs, don’t we?

In regard to Derek’s comment, although repetition of learning content may not itself be inherently problematic, as it may benefit lecturers new to the College, the issue is that a lecturer who has worked at the College for a decade has been required to attend multiple sessions over the years, covering the same content.

Thus, the pursuance of managerial professionalism by the planners of mandatory CPD at the College means a transmission approach intended to convey generic content. Further, this CPD was nearly always described as planned without the involvement of those mandated to attend, and so not addressing professional learning needs as they perceived them.

The case can be made that generic CPD may be appropriate in some circumstances for a transmissive purpose, such as to convey organisational messages or introduce a new college system or procedure. Further, although most participants in this research gave mostly negative views, David’s opinions provide a counterpoint. It would be unwise to conclude, therefore, that CPD described as generic is unanimously perceived as ineffective in all instances.

**Theme 3. Learning as a personal endeavour and the compensatory principle**

Unsurprisingly, participants choose to engage in non-mandatory CPD they perceive to address learning needs in relation to the subject areas in which they teach, specific pedagogical aspects, or for other personal interests, such as in the pursuance of promotion. Some informal, unplanned CPD occurs at the College, according to the participants, through incidental conversations with colleagues, for instance. For the most part, however, non-mandatory CPD was cited as taking place in participants’ personal time and can be considered learning as a personal endeavour. I use this wording to emphasise that choices of engagement with non-mandatory CPD are informed primarily by the values and agency of the individual her or himself and often occur outside of work time. Yahya discussed a range of engagements with non-mandatory CPD activities, expressing at the same time his underpinning reasons for such engagements:

…conversations in the staffroom...conversations I would say with colleagues who work in other institutions as well because I find them useful because that’s the touch with reality...what’s happening on the coal face. Online...I’ll go to different awarding bodies and I’ll watch webinars...just to keep my practical knowledge up, and I’ve done a lot of that recently with all the changes.

Part of learning as a personal endeavour encompasses what I refer to as ‘the compensatory principle’. This term indicates that the purpose of engagement with non-mandatory development is often also to compensate, or fill in the gaps, in professional learning missed by the generic mandatory CPD discussed above. Such instances of compensatory engagement were articulated particularly for the purpose of crucial subject specific learning or updating:

[Maya] I’m very reliant on doing the research [on updates in the curriculum] myself in my own time…which is not actually a very good feeling.

[Milo]…I’ve done CPD that I’ve arranged myself in relation to my subject or my own training…it’s always been…stuff I’ve had to do off my own back and normally paying for [it] myself because of funding shortages.

The need for such engagement by these participants is symptomatic of the underfunded FE sector in which these lecturers work (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson, 1998), located within a dominant discourse (Lucas and Crowther, 2016; Simmons, 2010) whereby little time or resource is afforded to participants’ engagement with professional learning outside of activities that respond directly to the immediate priorities of organisational goals. For Jane, the effect of this restriction of support for non-mandatory, participant-instigated CPD is stark:

Unfortunately it’s resulted in me leaving my particular post [at the College] to search employment elsewhere, which can offer me development. I was looking to go down a more quality route...I’m looking for progression, I want something else.

Jane’s career motives for additional engagement with CPD were not recognised through financial support or time remittance, thus Jane determined that she could only pursue her ambitions elsewhere. The result was the loss of this experienced lecturer and subject specialist for the College and her students. This circumstance also indicates that the personal motivations and interests of lecturers appear to be side-lined when they do not directly concern organisational priorities (Avis, 2009).

Additional themes developed in my thesis responded to the second research question: what are FE lecturers’ perceptions of what constitutes effective CPD? Effective CPD was perceived to involve learner agency and a learning focus that addressed discrete learning needs relating to subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and other professional interests salient to the individual; reflective practice; and learning within a community and, more widely, landscape of practice (Wenger, 1998; Wenger, 2014). The latter, more recently coined term refers to engagement in learning across communities of practice. All these features are absent from the passive, transmissive CPD characterising mandatory College CPD described earlier.

**Concluding remarks**

I have made the case from my doctoral research that generic, mandatory CPD at the College enables the enactment of a restrictive, managerial concept of professionalism. This may be somewhat expected, given that mandatory CPD in FE is located in a political context of neo-liberal performativity (Simmons, 2010) which “locates the teacher within a complex web of organisational managerialism” (Lloyd and Davis, 2018, p.92) centred on satisfying policy demands for accountability and regulation (Mockler, 2013; Ball, 2003). Mandatory CPD as experienced by the participants in this research rejects notions of teacher autonomy, ownership and relevance to individuals’ learning needs and tends to result in reduced teacher motivation (Appova and Arbaugh, 2018; Varga-Atkins, *et al*., 2009).

Kyndt *et al*. (2016) consider that a prerequisite of learning is the involvement of adults’ agency in determining their own learning focus, this feature located within adult learners’ motivation and volition to learn (Illeris, 2007). This argument is consistent with a humanist, andragogical approach, based on the proposition that adult learners want to be in control of their own learning (Knowles, 1975). It also resonates with the argument from critical pedagogy, that learning should occur through a spirit of co-enquiry, rather than characterising students as ‘*tabula-*rasa’ (meaning a blank slate),in need of expert knowledge delivered through transmissive means, a dynamic Freire termed ‘the banking method’ (Freire, 1970).

Aligned to these features, the participants engage in informal learning that represents their own enactment of emancipatory professionalism. There was a clear preference for CPD characterised as enabling transformative learning (Fraser *et al*., 2007) that recognises and incorporates the personal, occupational and (often) social aspects of professional learning.

My doctoral research enabled me to give voice to those in the staffroom in FE. It addressed to some extent the paucity in research of CPD for mid-career FE lecturers. I made recommendations relating to both mandatory and non-mandatory CPD. For the former, I suggested, for instance, that there be a range of opt-in CPD sessions with distinct learning foci. For non-mandatory CPD, I proposed that colleagues’ engagement be somehow recognised by organisations, and that the FE lecturer community of practice be supported and explicitly celebrated by leadership teams. In these ways, the needs and priorities of both the organisation and individuals might be both addressed.

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