The view from the deck - exploring lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of English FE sector professional development: a case study evaluation.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of the West of England, Bristol for the degree of Professional Doctorate in Education

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February 2020

Acknowledgments

Abstract

The focus of this research was to investigate both how further education (FE) lecturers and middle managers engage in professional development and what they perceive to constitute effective professional development. This focus represents an area of stark paucity in the literature that requires attention in this historically under-funded, yet evermore burdened, education sector (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson, 1998) that can ill afford to divert scarce time and money to forms of professional development that do not incur some form of salient learning. The original contribution of this work is located both in addressing this paucity and in developing an existent framework for the evaluation of professional development (proposed by Fraser et al., 2007) that can be applied in future research.

Framed by an epistemology of social constructivism and as an insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012), I used semi-structured interviews with lecturers and middle managers and conducted thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2016) of the data.

I found that there are contrasting understandings between the participants of mandatory professional development and the planners (senior managers) regarding the underlying purposes of professional development, underpinned by divergent conceptualisations of professionalism in the sector. Mandatory professional development was perceived as generic and transmissive (Kennedy, 2005) (didactic) in nature, and often perceived as irrelevant to the professional learning needs of those mandated to attend. Non-mandatory professional development was characterised as addressing critical learning needs as identified by participants, albeit with little organisational support afforded to this form of professional learning. While mandatory professional development tends to comprise top-down communication of policy priorities, the professional learning needs of FE lecturers are often sidelined. Lecturers and middle managers therefore frequently address their own professional learning needs in their own time, at their own expense, which appears to perpetuate a culture of cynical compliance among professional educators in the sector (Coffield in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

Effective professional development was found to involve: the voice and agency of the learners in determining the focus of learning; opportunities for reflection; suitable physical conditions for learning; active learning and an element of fun; and learning in a community and landscapes of practice (Wenger, 2014).

Word count: 61,034

Abbreviations

BERA	British Educational Research Association
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CPD	Continuing professional development
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
FE	Further education
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
HE	Higher education
IfL	Institute for Learning
INSET	In-service education and training
ITT	Initial teacher training
LLUK	Lifelong Learning United Kingdom
Ofsted	Office of Standards in Education
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PPR	Professional performance review
QTLS	Qualified teacher learning and skills
SET	The Society of Education and Training
SLT	Senior leadership team
SMART	Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely
TES	Times Educational Supplement
UCU	University and College Union
UWE	The University of the West of England

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Opening comments

Ongoing professional learning is argued to be a critically important activity in the education sector (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018; Desimone, 2009; Duncombe and Armour, 2004) predominantly in order to improve students' outcomes (Kennedy, 2016; Desimone, 2009; Timperley, 2008). Duncombe and Armour (2004, p.142) draw on Schön (1983) to argue, rightly, that becoming a professional teacher "requires both initial and ongoing training" as "initial teacher training alone is insufficient in giving teachers the knowledge and skills required for their entire careers". Developments in theories of learning, pedagogical approaches, learning technologies and changes in sector policy mean that the ongoing nature of professional learning is crucial in order for educators to remain cognisant of such change. Further, as Desimone (2009, p.181) contends:

> […] understanding what makes professional development effective is critical to understanding the success or failure of many education reforms.

It has been found that professional development perceived as effective tends to address, unsurprisingly, the individual professional learning needs of those in attendance (Goodall, *et al.*, 2005). In the early years (Ingleby, 2018; Robson, 2006), primary (Duncombe and Armour, 2004) and secondary (Goodall, *et al.*, 2005) sectors, however, teachers often perceive their experiences of professional development to be ineffective in achieving this goal for various reasons (see chapter two). As with other areas of research in further education (FE), there is a stark paucity in the literature in connection with professional development in the sector (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; Jameson and Hillier, 2003).

What constitutes effective professional development will remain an elusive and inherently contestable concept, as attempts to define efficacy in this field are informed by divergent epistemological and ideological approaches, such as: the positivist leaning evaluation of impact against predefined objectives (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019); evaluating development activities *per se* to

determine subject relevant content (Desimone, 2009); or interpretive approaches, such as obtaining the perceptions of the planners, deliverers and/or recipients of professional development (Earley and Porritt, 2010). It must be recognised, therefore, that what comprises effective professional development will vary considerably according to variant axiological positionings among stakeholders, including policy makers, Ofsted, college managers, lecturers and students.

This thesis investigates what constitutes effective professional development for FE lecturers in England according to the perceptions of vocational and academic lecturers and middle managers within this sector. I researched this field through the lens of a personalised case study evaluation (Kushner, 2000) in one FE college in the southwest of England (hereafter referred to as 'the College'). In this opening chapter, I firstly discuss the focus and timing for this research. I next consider pertinent definitions and interpretations of key terms. I then introduce salient contextual features that locate and affect professional development in FE. I consider the accuracy and value of the much used metaphor of FE as the 'Cinderella sector' (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) against the impoverished financial and cultural conditions of the sector (Augar, 2019; Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson, 1998). I then detail the path of professional development policy in FE in England since the 1970s, a period that marked a distinct increase in political and academic attention on professional development in the sector (Lee, 1990), framed by an emergent policy discourse of neo-liberalism and globalisation (Simmons, 2010). Following this I discuss the organisational (miso) context in which the research took place and my personal contexts. I finally present the core aims of this research and the accompanying research questions. In the final section of this chapter I outline the organisation of the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Research focus

This work gives voice to FE lecturers and middle managers through ascertaining their perceptions of the professional development of which they engage. An alternative approach would be to situate government policy on

professional development in FE at the centre of this work, or to give equal emphasis to both policy and perceptions of FE professional development in England. The perceptions of the planners (often members of college senior management teams) could also be investigated in order to analyse how decisions are made among tensions between addressing the demands of policy, funding agencies, inspection, and the professional learning needs of individual lecturers and middle managers.

However, my epistemological positioning, as expressed in chapter three, led me to the position that that FE lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions should be at the centre of an exploration of their own professional learning. As Freire (2004, p.15) argued, people are "able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing - of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't". In my experiences of professional development in the sector, I have perceived little recognition of mine and other lecturers' professional voice(s) in the planning and realisation of our own professional development. FE lecturers are thus seldom regarded as professionals capable of knowing, in this Freirean sense, their own development needs or how to address them. This is not to suggest lecturers and middle managers will always know what they need to learn (Kruger and Dunning, 1999), or that there is always the volition to identify of address their own professional learning needs (Illeris, 2007). My argument is that the recognition of lecturers' and middle managers' understandings of their own learning needs and how to address them might lead to more effective outcomes.

My positionality at the commencement of this work was that there is a culture of compliance and efficiency driven managerialism (Tummons, 2014; Wong, 2008) in the sector that "limits professional agency" and "encourages uncritical compliance" (Taubman in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015, p.110) on the part of FE lecturers. Most mandatory professional development I have experienced in FE comprises didactic, one-size-fits-all sessions led by an 'expert' who aims to impart knowledge to lecturers who are often assumed to be *tabula rasa* (Freire, 1970), or blank slate (Dewey, 1938) learners. I have often been unclear as to who precisely plans mandatory professional development in the

colleges in which I have worked, and in my experiences decisions regarding the learning foci at these events do not involve any meaningful participation from the lecturer or middle manager recipients. Although my experiences can only be considered as anecdotal, the prevalence of this dynamic for mandatory professional development in the schools sectors is also found elsewhere (Priestley, Minty and Eagar, 2014; Keay and Lloyd, 2011; Desimone, 2009). The result of these circumstances in my perception is that the learning content at mandatory development events is often irrelevant or at the periphery of my professional learning needs and every day teaching practice. I have often felt at the end of such events that I have acquired little new knowledge that can enhance my ability to support my learners. I would note, this perception derives from my experiences at various FE organisations, thus not the place of research in particular.

Such a transmissive dynamic, comprising passive, didactic skills updating (Kennedy, 2005), fails to recognise both individual learning needs and the contextual complexities of learners and learning (Keay, Carse and Jess, 2018). Adult learners carry their own experiences, motivations and volition to learn (Illeris, 2007) and tend to prefer involvement in the planning of decisions regarding their own learning (Knowles, 1975). Equally, non-learning can occur in instances whereby adult learners feel learning content is irrelevant or already known (Jarvis, 2010). However, these features cannot be regarded in isolation from contextual features. While Jarvis (1987) refers to societal conditions informing and affecting learning, Illeris (2018, p.96), who offers to my mind the current most comprehensive approach to learning theory, considers:

> […] all learning always comprises three dimensions: the content dimension, which is usually, but not always, cognitive; the incentive dimension, which includes engagement, interest and motivation and is mainly emotional; and the interaction dimension, which is social (also when it is a text, a picture, a film or the like) and may have many layers, ranging from the immediate situation, the local, institutional, environmental, national and other conditions to the global context in general.

Illeris (2018) concisely illustrates the multiple contexts that locate and inform (professional) learning that I consider in chapters two, four and five.

I found that my initial positionality, as stated above, corresponded to much of the literature in this field, predominantly drawing from research in the schools sectors: one-size-fits-all development activities disconnected from teachers' every day teaching practices are regarded poorly by teachers (Ingleby, 2018; Luneta, 2012; Beavers, 2009; Robson, 2006; Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Hustler *et al.,* 2003), whereas teachers consider effective professional development as involving high relevance and applicability to the classroom (Hustler *et al.,* 2003).

There are contrasting arguments too, albeit with less prevalence. Postholm (2012), for instance, argues that didactic, speaker-led development lectures can contribute to professional learning in instances whereby the practitioner has chosen to attend, and such an event builds on lecturers' existing interests and background knowledge. In these instances, it may be that internal dialogues are awakened in the lecturer (Vygotsky, 2000, in Postholm, 2012) in relation to their pedagogical practice, which can in turn activate learning for that individual. Such contrasting literature aided me in refining my research focus: I would thus seek to ascertain particular features of effective professional development, such as the mandatory or voluntary nature of learner participation.

Taubman (in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) argues that there remains a lack of respect for the expertise and views of professional lecturers in the FE sector in current managerialist education policy. Constructs of professionalism in a sector subject to market forces and competition instead comprise reductionist notions of compliance (to management control) and regulation (Taubman in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; Tummons, 2014). Contrasting conceptualisations of professionalism in FE are considered in chapter two as they correspond to divergent understandings of the purposes and dynamics of mandatory professional development in the sector.

The perspectives of FE lecturers are largely absent from current literature on professional development in this sector. Postholm (2012) identified a paucity in literature exploring the efficacy of current in-service (not trainee) professional development for academic and vocational FE lecturers; this

remains true at the time of writing (July 2019). This paucity represents a wider historical context in which research in the FE sector has been largely invisible (Solvason and Elliot, 2013). Elliot (1996) identified a marginalisation of research in the sector and Solvason and Elliot (2013) argued that this remained the case in the early twenty first century. Solvason and Elliot (2013, p.2) add that a key feature largely absent from existing literature is "the voice of the FE lecturer". Reasons for this absence are interlinked with low numbers of FE practitioners engaging with formal research as "there is neither the time nor space within post-compulsory education to explore philosophical issues for their own sake" (Solvason and Elliot, 2013, p.5). Ball (2006, p.11) argues that academic reflection tends to be sidelined in cultures of "goal attainment, performance improvement and budget maximisations", an assertion of particular salience to the FE context. Furthermore, FE is situated in a culture with a poor tradition of fomenting and supporting professional learning (Fletcher *et al.* in Hodgson, 2015). There is currently, therefore, an incomplete contextualisation and underdeveloped analysis of professional development in the sector, and this is important: FE lecturers as adult learners themselves have diverse preferences, experiences, motivations, dispositions and agency (Illeris, 2018; 2017; Jarvis, 2010, Illeris, 2007; Knowles, 1990) which influence their views of, and engagement with, professional development.

To be clear, the paucity to which I refer concerns the perceptions of specifically mid-career FE lecturers (defined below). Existing literature does explore the perceptions of those in initial teacher education for FE (see Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; Orr and Simmons, 2010; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Harkin, Clow and Hillier, 2003); professional development for higher education (HE) provision lecturers in FE (Turner *et al.*, 2015); and the perceptions of teacher educators regarding professional learning in FE (Eliahoo, 2016). See chapter two for further discussion of this adjacent research.

An exception to this paucity is O'Leary and Wood (2017), whose work draws attention to the commonly reductive and performative use of observation in the FE context. O'Leary and Wood (2017) consider observation as a potentially powerful tool for professional development for the FE teaching workforce as a

whole, rather than solely in reference to a particular constituent group, such as trainees, higher education (HE) in FE lecturers, or teacher educators. In a similar vein to an approach articulated (earlier) by O'Leary (2014, p.4), I wanted to underpin my analysis of professional learning by drawing on "a range of [adult learning] theories to synthesise elements of policy, practice and context". However, I departed from O'Leary and Wood (2017) in that I wished for my research to embrace all forms of professional development discussed by my research participants, rather than focus on a single predetermined activity, such as observation. As discussed above, my core concern was exploring what features of professional development are perceived to be most effective, and why, and not in this instance how to make a particular development activity somehow more effective.

An additional reason for my focus on lecturers' and middle managers' perspectives is that this would enable me to incorporate in this work the consideration for participants' engagement with both mandatory and non-mandatory professional development. This latter form involves engagements with numerous professional learning activities that are initiated by participants and are not required or recorded by the College. This may include formal, planned activities such as the pursuance of qualifications, or informal, unplanned activities such as staffroom conversations (Fraser *et al.*, 2007).

In framing my research through the perceptions of the participants, I would avoid regarding FE lecturers as passive adherents of distant policy-makers. I did not want government policy or quango definitions and diktats on professional development, the dominant discourses of those in power (Pitsoe and Leseka, 2012, drawing from Foucault, 1977), to drown the voices of teaching professionals who lecture and manage in the sector. I wanted to develop an embryonic, unrestrained and empowering new discourse in this field, owned by FE lecturers and middle managers, and in doing so develop a narrative distinct from the prevalent discourse (and policy) of neo-liberal competition and performativity that permeates into FE (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) and (re)defines those working in the sector within a deficiency model of managerialist professionalism (Tummons, 2014). Divergent concepts of

professionalism and professional identity in relation to FE lecturers, and how this interrelates with professional development, are discussed in chapters two, four and five. In the event I hoped, on a small scale, to challenge the impoverished professional culture in FE (Hodgson, 2015; Lukas and Nasta, 2010; Robson, 1998) and address calls for the sector to (re)claim its own professional identity (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

Why now?

The idea for this research focus emerged in early 2015, although my interest in researching professional development in FE had developed much earlier in my career (discussed in the personal contexts section below). The data gathering phase of the research took place in 2018. This research was timely and important: the sector has remained in a phase of deregulation following the Lingfield Review (2012) which marked the rejection and removal by the (then) coalition government of the regulations affecting professional development in FE as determined by (the now defunct) Lifelong learning UK (LLUK, 2007). In this ongoing phase of apparent governmental non-interference concerning professional development, and with little focus on the sector in the public discourse (Hodgson, 2015), there remains little research in this field, as outlined in the preceding section.

Despite this ostensibly hands-off policy approach following Lingfield (2012), macro contextual features continue to inform FE college leaders' priorities regarding the purposes, form and content of mandatory professional development. Particularly, FE college leaders operate within, and are responsible to, sector policy that allocates FE as the sector to address an apparent national requirement to create a skilled workforce able to compete in a global market (Simmons, 2010; Orr, 2009). Yet there was, and remains, a paucity of literature in the field of professional learning for mid-career lecturers and managers in the sector. I was concerned that mandatory professional development in this context was being (perhaps necessarily) planned predominantly in response to the priorities and demands of external stakeholders, such as funding agencies and Ofsted, and therefore sidelined individual professional learning needs relating to pedagogical practices or

other aspects of lecturers' and middle managers' professional work. Indeed, the issue of unmet teachers' professional learning needs has been raised in relation to the primary and secondary sectors (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018) and the findings of the present work predominantly corroborate my initial concern (see chapters four and five).

I therefore wanted to establish a snap-shot representation of lecturers' and middle mangers' engagement with both mandatory and non-mandatory professional learning activities and to investigate what participants perceive as effective professional development. Following this I could analyse the intersection between participants' current engagement with professional learning and what they perceive to be effective. Through this process I would be able to consider what meanings and values FE lecturers and middle managers place on professional development, including: what the purposes and outcomes of professional development are, or should be, according to these groups; what features and contexts inform these perspectives; and how might analysis of such findings enhance future professional development in this context.

Professional 'development', 'professional learning' or 'practitioner learning'?

Coffield (2000, p.3) argues that discourses relating to professional development are marked by a "conceptual vagueness". O'Brian and Jones (2014) contend, rightly, that the term itself is ambiguous and contested in nature. For the purposes of this work I use the term 'professional development' as an umbrella label in reference to any form of activity in which learning takes place in connection with lecturers' and middle mangers' work. This encompasses both formal and informal professional development activities which are either compulsory or voluntary in nature; take place internally or externally to the College; occur in groups or individually; are planned or unplanned in advance; and activities which are initiated or realised with or without the involvement or management of other parties, such as college managers or external consultants (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). Professional development can also take place consciously or unconsciously (Illeris, 2007),

the latter form constituting the acquisition of often (but not always) tacit knowledge (Eraut, 1994), through implicit learning (Reber, 1993), whereby the learner is unaware that an activity in which they are engaged is incurring changes in knowledge or skills. The learner may later become aware of the learning process that occurred, or not at all (Simons and Ruijter, 2004).

Professional development can be defined as "teachers' learning, how they learn to learn and how they apply their knowledge in practice to support [their students]" (Avalos, 2011 in Postholm, 2012, p.406). My choice to use the term professional development derives from a pragmatic decision to apply the lexis most commonly used by my sector colleagues, in my experience. Indeed, this term is not unique to the immediate research context. More widely in education "the term professional development [has become] commonplace" (O'Brian and Jones, 2014, p.684). I acknowledge, however, the contested nature of this term. 'Professional development' is not used universally, and the alternative, newer term professional *learning* is now in use elsewhere in the literature (see Keay, Carse and Jess, 2018; Wells, 2014). O'Brian and Jones (2014, p.684) argue that the term professional development indicates "systematic career progression" while the term 'professional learning' suggests a less performative and more reflective approach. Although I agree with this assertion and I also therefore prefer the latter term, professional learning was not the commonly used term among my colleagues for what was being researched, thus, it may have introduced confusion for participants in that I might be referring to something new or different to their usual experiences of professional development (or, 'learning').

Derrick (2013) argues that the term 'practitioner learning' ought to be adopted in order to circumnavigate the contested meanings associated to the word professional and because discourses on professionalism contribute little in reference to FE colleagues' learning *per se*. This argument fails to recognise that divergent conceptions of professionalism in FE (see chapter two) contextualise and underpin differing perspectives of professional development and the two terms should not, therefore, be divorced from one another. Further, 'practitioner learning' is again not the commonly used term among the

research participants in this work and could incur a similar confusion for participants as to what I was referring.

Contrasting definitions of 'learning'

Although there is no consensus definition of 'learning' (Ertmer and Newby, 2013) and the use of a single definition will remain contentious, Ertmer and Newby (2013, p.45) argue a definition by Shuell (1991) represents common elements of various attempts at a definition: "learning is an enduring change in behaviour, or in the capacity to behave in a given fashion, which results from practice or other forms of experience". This definition is broadened further by Illeris (2007, p.3), who describes learning as: "any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing". The findings of the present research indicate that any acknowledgment of the complexities of learning appear largely absent from current reductionist notions of (professional) learning at both the policy and organisation levels, in which learning appears to be predominantly understood solely in the restrictive sense of relaying organisational messages and diktats (see chapters four and five).

Defining 'effective' professional development

In this section I introduce some divergent but interconnected features of what constitutes 'effective' professional development according to the literature. This section serves as a springboard for extended discussion in the following chapter of how this term is defined elsewhere.

Outcomes: There is some commonality in the literature, referring both to the primary and secondary sectors, that to be considered effective, professional development must incur improvements in students' outcomes (Kennedy, 2016; Desimone, 2009; Timperley, 2008). However, it has also been found that establishing evidence of a direct positive impact on outcomes is problematic (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018). Other outcomes of professional development have been articulated as: the extent to which students' learning experiences are enhanced; the degree of success in which curriculum changes are enacted; whether greater organisational flexibility is

achieved (Nicoll and Edwards, 2012); and changes in classroom teaching practices (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017).

Cordingley (2013, in McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018) argues that the improvement of student outcomes should always underpin the planning of professional development. This argument is somewhat confined, in my view, to mandatory professional development. Indeed, Kyndt *et al.* (2016) counter that professional learning outcomes for teachers are broader than solely improving (their) students' academic performance. While I agree improved student outcomes to be the primary purpose for engagement in professional development, and nearly all professional development aims to ultimately enhance students' educational outcomes, I suggest this starting point is too narrow and restrictive *per se*. There are other distinct outcomes for professional development that relate to: the pursuance of promotion (Lee, 1990); aspects relating to pastoral support for students; legislative knowledge pertinent to subject areas; FE practitioner research that can inform policy decisions or lead to efficiencies of some form in addition to enhancing teaching and learning practices (Lloyd and Jones, 2018); administrative activities; and to equip colleagues to navigate a context of changing policy (Villeneuve-Smith *et al.*, 2009). This final assertion was particularly salient to the FE sector during the period of intense policy flux on professional development and qualification requirements in the sector in England between 2001 and 2012 (see table A on page 30).

Recognising agency: Cranton and King argue that effective professional development must consider "educators as whole persons - their values, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching" (Cranton and King, 2003, p.33). This position holds that there is a need to recognise lecturers' agency in the planning of professional development activities, and in doing so, corresponds with psychological and humanistic theories of learning (Illeris, 2017; Jarvis, 2010; Knowles, 1990; 1975) which consider the agency, disposition and contexts of the learner to be core features of learning.

Other characteristics: Other identified features of effective professional development include: the involvement of reflection (Avalos, 2011; Desimone,

2009); professional collaboration among teachers (Vangrieken *et al.*, 2015); professional learning as ongoing, as opposed to one-off engagement with a particular learning focus (Cordingley *et al.*, 2012); the involvement of support from specialists of the focus of learning (Cordingley *et al.*, 2012); and the involvement of coaches (Lofthouse, 2019; Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017).

As discussed earlier, what constitutes 'effective' professional development is inherently complex and contestable. This complexity is mirrored in literature (as indicated above) that focuses on divergent aspects of professional development in seeking to identify or define what is effective. Indeed, the desired purposes, outcomes and characteristics of professional development are wide-ranging for teachers, college leaders and the policy context in which it occurs. This work departs from current literature as it seeks an emergent, situated characterisation of what constitutes effective professional development entirely through the perceptions of those working in FE.

The use of other terminology in this work

Throughout this work I use the term 'participants' to make specific reference to one or more of the fourteen FE lecturer or middle manager research participants who were interviewed as part of the present work. I use the term 'lecturer' rather than 'teacher' in reference to FE classroom educators. In my conversations with colleagues in the College both words were contested and I could perceive no particular preference. This disagreement may reflect divergent understandings of these terms and what they may infer. For instance, some colleagues considered the word 'teacher' as inappropriate in the FE context as they feel the word relates to working with children, as opposed to adults. Other colleagues, however, preferred 'teacher' to 'lecturer' as they described the latter word as inferring a solely didactic approach to teaching. These differing preferences mirror the inconsistent application of these terms across literature in connection with educators working in FE. While some authors use the term 'teachers' (for instance Avis, 2009), others use 'lecturers' (see Lloyd and Jones, 2018, themselves located in the FE sector), while others use both words interchangeably within the same article (see Bathmaker and Avis, 2005).

I therefore chose the term 'lecturer' in part as this is the word used in the College work contract for this role. I also felt using the job name 'lecturer' would add clarity in distinguishing between educators in differing sectors. I would therefore avoid using the terms 'teacher' and 'lecturer' interchangeably in reference to FE colleagues, which I felt may on occasions introduce some ambiguity as to whom I was referring, without additional clarification on each occasion. This decision also corresponded with the widespread use of the word 'teachers' in reference to primary and secondary school colleagues, according to its prevalence throughout my readings of the literature relating to these other sectors (for instance McChesney and Aldridge, 2019; Appova and Arbaugh, 2018; Murphy and De Paor, 2017; Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016).

The words 'mandatory' and 'non-mandatory' are used throughout this work to distinguish between, firstly, professional development activities that the participants are required to attend in order to satisfy contractual obligations of their role, and secondly, engagement with non-compulsory professional development that is initiated by individuals or curriculum teams themselves.

Although definitions of 'mid-career' will remain contentious, for the purposes of this research I determined mid-career to indicate lecturers and middle managers with between five and twenty years' experience, using as a reference point Sammons *et al.* (2007) who identified a similar range as encompassing the common mid-stage of FE teachers' careers. I determined this rather wide range to be acceptable as my predominant concern was to avoid the involvement of beginner teachers and those likely to be nearing retirement. The perceptions of professional development for colleagues in these other two career stages are likely to differ from mid-career lecturers due to distinct personal motivations, professional learning needs, and career values (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016; Illeris, 2009). Additionally, the perceptions of trainee lecturers in the sector in this field are already addressed to some degree in the literature (see Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; 2005; Orr and Simmons, 2010).

FE* sector *context: the 'Cinderella sector'

The analysis drawn from the findings in this work are situated in, and refer to, professional development solely in the English further education sector. The four nations of the UK have distinct further education systems in regard to relevant agencies, funding mechanisms and conditions of work (Hodgson, 2015).

FE in England has been described as an invisible sector (Hodgson, 2015), portrayed as such due to its low political profile, caused as the sector, often characterised particularly by its vocational and training provision, is regarded as somehow therefore inferior and thus for "other people's children" (Galley, 2014, in Hodgson, 2015, p.1). Jameson and Hillier (2003) argue that FE is overlooked and undervalued as it is critically under researched and lacks opportunity or support for practitioner research and publication. Further, it is argued that conducting research for those within the sector is challenging and problematic (Lloyd and Jones, 2018; Satchwell and Smith, 2009) as any research culture within the sector is embryonic in comparison with other education sectors. Therefore, research that does focus on FE tends to originate from higher education (HE) researchers (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

Provision in the English FE sector ranges from pre-entry level courses to foundation degrees. In the 2017/18 academic year there were just over 2.2 million learners registered in the FE sector in England, constituting over one million fewer learners since 2006, excluding apprenticeships (Association of Colleges, 2019). As of 2017 provision for these learners is located across 273 organisations of differing structures and sizes, including 183 general FE colleges and 64 sixth form colleges, who provide post-compulsory vocational and academic education provision and together employ 60,000 members of lecturing staff in the sector in England (Association of Colleges, 2019).

After years of post-war political neglect (Lucas, 2004a) the FE sector in England become widely referred to as the 'Cinderella' sector of education in England (Feather, 2013; Randle and Brady, 1997). This deficit metaphor

become shorthand by politicians and academics alike for alluding to the sector as the politically and socially overlooked, poor relative among education sectors (Baker, 1989). However, this metaphor is rejected in some more recent literature with the view that it positions the sector as a passive and helpless victim, in waiting of a saviour (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). Daley, Orr and Petrie (2015) advocate an alternative metaphor to describe the sector: the '12 dancing princesses'. This metaphor draws on a Brothers Grimm fairy-tale in an attempt to represent the notion that rather than being passive victims, those within the sector subvert formal systems in FE in order to maintain focus on teaching practices deemed valuable to learners by the lecturers (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015). However, Hafez (also in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) argues this metaphor is itself problematic as it indicates that in subverting formal systems and requirements, lecturers thereby acknowledge a tacit surrender of professional autonomy, trust and self-direction. For Hafez (in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015), FE lecturers must not capitulate in this manner and must instead define and reclaim their own professional identity and authority. I have responded to this appeal through this work, as an FE insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012).

However, to my mind, such arguments on the perceived meanings or inferences of applied metaphors illustrate how metaphors can instead serve to distract from, rather than clarify, what characterises FE in England. Nonetheless, these contested metaphors do both indicate a troubled education sector with an ill-defined identity. Coffield (2014, p.14) argues that nobody could claim the FE sector "is healthy and in good spirits". The literature and sector data supports this assertion. For instance, FE is widely identified as (still) financially impoverished (Augar, 2019; Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson 1998). Incorporation of the sector in 1993 (Further and Higher Education Act, 1992) intensified these adverse conditions in the sector, already affected by sector cuts and efficiency drives, apparently necessary according to the neo-liberal ideology applied to the public sector (I return to this in the following section).

FE sector funding in England, unlike with schools' budgets, has been unprotected, and reduced by 45% between 2009-10 and 2017-18 (Belfield, Sibieta and Farquharson, 2018). Belfield, Farquharson and Sibieta (2018, p.6) of the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that:

> Spending on further education fell faster [than other education sectors] during the 1990s, grew more slowly in the 2000s, and has been one of the few areas of education spending to see cuts since 2010.

This shortfall has coincided with a period of falling FE student numbers (Association of Colleges, 2019, Belfield, Sibieta and Farquharson, 2018), likely due to reduced course provision, and falling numbers on initial teacher training courses for FE (Zaidi, Howat and Caisl, 2017). This final feature may be attributable in part to the post-Lingfield Review (2012) relaxation of the requirement for a teaching qualification to practise in the sector. Nonetheless, a reduction in FE lecturers of approximately 15,000 since 2009 has also been attributed to sector cuts, attacks on pensions, and real-terms falls in sector pay, according to FE sector unions (Harden in Belgutay, 2017).

FE lecturer pay in England remains well below the average of school teachers' pay and a much higher proportion of lecturers in FE colleges, 46% (ETF, 2019a), are employed on a part-time contract in comparison with the UK workforce as a whole, at 25% (ONS, 2019). Further, contracts of work in FE in England are often temporary in nature (Grummell and Murray, 2015; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; James and Biesta, 2007).

Although part-time work offers flexibility to lecturers who wish to work fewer hours, this prevalence of part-time working in the sector also creates difficulties for lecturers in accessing professional development. Indeed, Gleeson *et al.* (2015, p.81) voice concerns that the part-time FE workforce has "restricted access both to ITE [initial teacher education] and continuing professional development opportunities". Further, Gleeson's (2014) description of part-time lecturers as periphery staff in the sector is apt in reference to their lack of involvement in formal, mandatory professional development, according to the findings of the present work (see chapters four and five).

Budgetary restraints in FE also mean that it is not uncommon for lecturers to cover classes and teach subjects of which they are not experienced or qualified (James and Biesta, 2007). The FE lecturer workforce has therefore been described as casualised, fractured (Gleeson *et al.,* 2015) and located in a milieu of performativity and interminable change (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009). To operate in these circumstances relies on lecturers' ability to manage and traverse pressures placed upon them in such conditions (Gleeson *et al., 2015;* Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009; Colley, James and Diment, 2007*).*

In the next section I remain at the macro level context, however, I next focus on the FE sector in connection with professional development policy in particular. This section culminates with an outline of the current policy situation for professional development in this sector.

FE sector context: a history of professional development in FE

The lexis of professional development has altered somewhat over the last fifty years from the wording discussed earlier in this chapter. Former terms of common usage referring to professional learning in education included 'in-service education and training' (INSET) and '*staff* development', this latter term likely first used in 1971 (Billing, 1982). Indeed, both terms are still sometimes applied in secondary education today (O'Brian and Jones, 2014). Lee (1990, p.112) describes 'staff' development as a narrow concept, in effect a "function of management" which prioritises equipping lecturers 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). However, these earlier terms did not always reflect such restricted notions of development activities. Similar to the more recently articulated purposes of 'professional learning' outlined earlier, it has been argued INSET in the FE context considered lecturers as lifelong learners and thus encompassed individuals' development needs (Hopkins, 1986). Further, it is argued such earlier terms represented lecturer-focused, individual purposes for professional development largely absent in contemporary political and academic discourses, such as lecturers' job satisfaction and support of lecturers' preparation for promotion (Lee, 1990). I would note, however, that

the more recent work of Sywelem and Witte (2013) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001) does connect professional learning to these features.

Despite the extensive growth of the FE sector in England during the 1950s and 1960s, practising FE lecturers' professional development had remained a peripheral concern until the 1970s (Lee, 1990). The James Report (HMSO, 1972) marked a watershed moment for professional development in FE (Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Broad, 2015) in calling for substantial increases in 'training' for practising lecturers in the sector to address lecturers' development needs in this (then) expanding sector. The report suggested many forms of professional development from evening team meetings to higher degrees and even secondment to other work sectors (HMSO, 1972). Provision for professional development increased throughout the 1970s subsequent to the publication of the report (Broad, 2015). By 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 and less than half of FE lecturers therefore held a formal teaching qualification at that time (Lee, 1990). A requirement for a teaching qualification to teach in FE remained absent from policy, however, until 2000 (HMSO, 2001; DfEE, 2000).

Amid this "golden age" in the early 1970s of increased recognition and investment in professional development activities in the sector (Broad, 2015, p.17), an apparent tension had been identified in attempting to address the divergent needs of government policy, FE organisations, and individual lecturers, through professional development. Elliot-Kemp and Williams (in Lee, 1990) claimed that addressing these differing needs was incompatible, as individualised professional development activities could not, in their view, result in organisational improvements. However, this false-dichotomy fails to recognise how professional development interventions at an individual level, such as one-to-one coaching, can serve to both support organisational agendas and the professional learning interests of the lecturers (Lofthouse, 2019; Bennett and Bush, 2014).

An individual, lecturer-centred approach to professional learning was also considered problematic in terms of resourcing. Addressing common themes of professional development was considered more efficient than addressing diverse individual development needs (Hopkins, 1986). Such concern for efficiencies echoed the developing neo-liberal policy cultivated by the Conservative Governments since the late 1970s which had introduced a discourse justifying reduced public expenditure (Lucas and Crowther, 2016). Indeed, over forty years later, mandatory professional development at the College was similarly characterised by the research participants in the present work, who articulated a prevalence of generic development content relating to pedagogical approaches, apparently unrelated to the (differing) learning needs of those in attendance (see theme 1.2 in chapters four and five).

A much used but often ill-defined term (Flew, 2014), I refer to neo-liberalism as "a policy-related doctrine" (Flew, 2014, p.49), introduced under the first Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher, and associated with deregulation, privatisation, competitive market behaviours, balanced budgets and austerity (Overbeek and Van Apeldoorn, 2012). This policy approach was applied in reaction to the economic and social crises occurring during the 1970s, such as rising inflation and unemployment, with responsibility apportioned to Keynesian economics (Overbeek and Van Apeldoorn 2012).

By the mid-1980s a top-down approach to organising professional development had become pervasive for reasons of planning (Broad, 2015), suggesting a shift away from individual-centred professional development practices and towards a managerial culture in the sector (Smith and O'Leary, 2013). In the late 1980s organisational and policy agendas were further prioritised in professional development, amid a period of substantial policy change (Broad, 2015). The 1988 Education Reform Act and the Training and Enterprise Councils required (Lee, 1990, p.111):

> […] 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.

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 professional development activities, with the government "taking a laissez-faire approach to the development of staff" (Broad, 2015, p.18). Broad (2015) classifies professional development in the years following incorporation as characterised by knowledge transmission. This approach predominantly involves external expert-led didactic sessions delivered to FE lecturers, who are regarded as passive recipients of information considered important by senior managers (Kennedy, 2014; 2005).

The goal of incorporation was to create a marketised, competitive and nationally standardised and regulated FE sector (Lucas, 2004b). Indeed, Leathwood (2000) identified the prevalence of this ideological approach across the public sector. 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 professional development activities predominantly focused on ensuring compliance to short-term organisational goals (Broad, 2015). Concerns for professional autonomy and addressing individual development needs had been sidelined (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 many (but not all) colleges (Broad, 2015; Hodgson, 2015; Lucas, 2004a). Engagement with professional development activities for this enlarged part-time lecturer workforce was found to be highly restricted as such staff were less likely to be able to attend during their work hours and as specific provision for professional development was rarely provided for these employees (Lucas, 2004a). As discussed in chapters four and five, the part-time participants of the present work described similar issues in connection with their limited engagement with mandatory professional development.

From 1997 successive New Labour Governments embraced 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 status (HMSO, 2007a). Between 2007 and 2012 FE lecturers were also required by legislation to participate in, and record, thirty hours of continuing professional development on an annual basis (HMSO, 2007b). In 2007 mandated paid membership of the Institute for Learning (IfL) was introduced, an organisation which purported to validate the professional status of FE lecturers and support professional development opportunities for those in the sector (IfL, 2012). It was to the IfL that FE lecturers were required to log their professional development hours each year.

Some aspects of the policy changes during this period had the potential to solidify the professional identity and status of FE lecturers, by way of mandatory teaching qualifications, the introduction of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status, and interlinking the adult education sector with public discourses of professionalism (Aubrey and Bell, 2017). However, the implementation of the reforms were underpinned by increased surveillance and auditing by both Ofsted scrutiny and the IfL. Furthermore, the codification of professional behaviours through extensive formal descriptors defined professionalism in restrictive, managerial terms (Aubrey and Bell, 2017) as discussed further in chapter two.

During the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government the Lingfield Review (2012), however, regarded these requirements as comprising overly prescriptive policy compliance. The Lingfield Review (2012) marked the end

of the mandatory completion of a teaching qualification and the requirement to log at least thirty hours of professional development. Membership of the IfL also returned to a voluntary basis. Implementing the recommendations of the Lingfield Review (2012) represented a further policy swing, this time from policy diktat to de-regulation (Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Gleeson *et al.*, 2015). Responsibility for lecturers' professional development was once more devolved to FE organisation management teams. In discontinuing the requirement for a specific teaching qualification to lecture in FE, it would appear a policy assumption resumed by which vocational or academic knowledge is determined as sufficient to teach without ensuring accompanying pedagogical skills and knowledge. Table A (below) presents this period of policy flux surrounding qualifications and professional development for those entering and practising in the FE sector in England.

Table A: Changes to FE lecturer requirements to practise and professional development requirements. Adapted from Hodgson, (2015)

Year	Qualification / status required to practise as an FE lecturer in England	Professional Development requirements	Key factor(s) affecting change in Qualifications or Professional Development
1997-1999		No formal requirement	New Labour Government: DfES consultation on standards and qualifications of FE lecturers
2001	'A teaching qualification' (required for new lecturers)		Government white paper
2006			DfES announces intention to introduce mandatory CPD element in FE in publication: 'Professionalism of the Learning and Skills Sector'
2007	QTLS (required via the IfL); Membership of the IfL (mandatory)	30 hours of recorded professional development required	LLUK introduce mandatory units of assessment in ITT in England; QTLS status introduced and mandatory CPD through IfL
2011			LLUK abolished (under Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition Government)
2012	Membership of the IfL (voluntary); teaching qualifications (legally) optional	No formal requirement	Lingfield Report published
2014	IfL discontinues and key functions transferred to ETF and SET		

In 2014 the IfL dissolved and was replaced by (or, rebranded as) the Education and Training Foundation (ETF), which resembles a comparable organisation in remit and structure to the IfL. The ETF received legacy assets from the IfL and explicitly took "on its [the IfL's] legacy" (ETF, 2019b). Further, successive

governments since 2014 have funded a branch of the ETF branded the Society for Education and Training (SET), whose main concern is professional development in FE in England (SET, 2018). SET membership is voluntary and stands at 20,000 as of June 2019 (ETF, 2019b) representing around a third of the FE workforce in England (Association of Colleges, 2019). It is difficult to draw direct comparisons with other professional membership bodies in education and other sectors, as the purposes and conditions of membership of each body differ to the extent that useful comparisons of membership are not viable. For instance, some professional bodies double as trade unions (such as the British Medical Association) and in some instances membership is conferred via peer recommendation and applications must fulfil specific criteria (for example, the Chartered College of Teaching).

The miso context: the 'College' and organisational policies relating to professional development

My place of work is a large urban college of further education in the South of England. Since 2010 the College has sustained budgetary cuts of 45% in line with national sector cuts (Belfield, Sibieta and Farquharson, 2018). These cuts have marked a period of multiple rounds of lecturer and manager position redundancies at the College; a pay freeze which continues at the time of writing (2019); sales of major capital (building) assets, and ongoing internal efficiency drives. There have been four principals in the period between 2010 and 2019.

There are two policy documents available to employees at the College that make somewhat fleeting references to professional development planning. I could source no policy documents that refer specifically to managers' professional development at the College. At the commencement of my research I found the 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy' (2017, p.2), predominantly concerned with articulating the observation process of the organisation, stating that "commonplace issues", along with aspects of teaching judged to be highly effective and effective by observers through observation and learning walks, feed into the "College Development Plan". On reviewing College policies in 2019, I found this policy to have been amended

and (re)named the 'Teaching, Learning and Assessment Improvement Policy and Procedure'. The policy remains predominantly unchanged apart from more detailed sections on the meaning and consequences of various observation outcomes and the addition of a section under the subtitle 'Professional Development' (on page five of the document). Given the pertinence of this section to the contextualisation of the present work I present it in full here:

> An insufficient progress outcome triggers coaching support and a further observation within four to six weeks, (or earlier on request from the teacher / assessor). Failure to improve at a 2nd observation may trigger a review of the teacher's / assessor's performance. Actions arising from this outcome if sufficiently commonplace will be fed into the wider college development plan. Significant and exceptional progress outcomes will typically feed in to the College professional development planning. These actions may be delivered 'locally' by curriculum teams or through specialist inputs into these teams. In both FE and HE, strengths and areas for improvement will be built into self-assessment and self-evaluation documents and improvement plans.

This text represents to me a primarily deficiency model approach to professional development, as the first half of this section refers solely to the purpose of professional development as fixing what observers perceive as poor teaching and learning practices. Nonetheless, this approach is consistent with how O'Leary (2013, p.348) describes the purpose of observation in the FE sector as the primary vehicle for continuous improvements:

> Its dominance as the key means of collecting evidence about what goes on in classrooms, underpinned by the aim of improving the quality of teacher knowledge, competence and performance, has been repeatedly endorsed by the custodians of quality for the sector (e.g. Ofsted 2008).

The second half of the College policy section cited above does refer to "significant and exceptional progress outcomes", which I understand to be verbose terminology for 'good teaching'. It is not clear, however, what professional development entails when teaching and learning is considered good or excellent. In addition, this section omits any reference to non-mandatory professional development activities or how such activities might be supported by the College. It is inferred, therefore, that lecturers are positioned as passive agents to whom professional development is 'delivered'. Thus what

constitutes professional development in this document is defined singularly by what is valued by the presiding custodians of quality, primarily Ofsted (O'Leary, 2013).

The second policy document at the College that refers to professional development (at the time of writing) does acknowledge the learning interests of lecturers. The 'Personal Performance Review' (PPR) Policy (2013, p.4) of the College, which formally replaced what was previously referred to as appraisals, states that a purpose of PPRs is to: "identify continuous professional development needs and identify development needs that support the realisation of their [colleagues'] full potential and aspirations". These PPRs were discussed by only two of the participants in the current research. 'John' (a pseudonym) stated that he embarked on an online course following support given at appraisal. 'Maya' stated that professional development had been discussed at appraisal but that no subsequent support had been given for non-mandatory development that she wished to pursue (see chapters four and five). The present research indicates, then, that this apparent aim of PPRs is currently realised in only isolated instances.

Elsewhere, organisational requirements for professional development at the College are stipulated within the generic lecturer contract for the organisation (box 1) below. It is unclear as to why managers must agree to continuing professional development activities undertaken by lecturers (point 1.1 in box 1). This insistence could be for the purpose of recording development activities or to enable mangers to scrutinise lecturers' uses of their time or choices of professional learning focus.

Box 1: Extract from the lecturer contract of work at the College

<div style="border:1px solid">

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

1.1   CPD must be agreed with your Director and will include mandatory training events and industrial updating.

1.2   You are required to commit to and actively participate in your training and development.

1.3   You are required to maintain a record of the CPD you have undertaken for discussion at your annual appraisal.

</div>

Whatever the reason, it is apparent that professional development is conceived in this document in restrictive terms, in that it fails to recognise non-mandatory informal, unplanned forms of professional development (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016; Kennedy, 2005) that cannot be practically agreed by mangers in advance and, indeed, such a process would be nonsensical. Informal, unplanned forms of professional learning may include staff room conversations, personal reading or interacting with colleagues online in webinars, for instance. Kyndt *et al.* (2014, pp.2393-2394) offer a comprehensive definition of the forms of professional development that are missed or of which little value is placed in the College contract:

> Informal learning is characterized by a low degree of planning and organizing in terms of learning context, learning support, learning time, and learning objectives. Informal learning opportunities are not restricted to certain environments […] Informal learning is undertaken autonomously, either individually or collectively, but without an instructor. It often happens spontaneously and unconsciously.

See further discussion of informal professional learning in chapters two, four and five. In subsequent chapters I also discuss how contrasting notions of professionalism in the sector are represented through mandatory and non-mandatory forms of professional learning. This contract document, for instance, represents a desire by senior leaders in the organisation to enact a managerialist form of professionalism among lecturers (Tummons, 2014) whereby compliance and audit are prominent features (Atkins and Tummons 2017; Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; O'Leary, 2013). Framed within a macro policy context of performativity (Orr, 2009) this contract of work pays little attention to informal, non-mandatory forms of professional learning, such as those articulated above by Kyndt *et al.* (2014), as these forms of professional development may not directly relate to the priorities of such policy (Avis, 2009). I acknowledge, nonetheless, it may be that the purpose of the contract document is solely to articulate features mandatory to the role and for this reason omits comments regarding other forms of professional learning.

The College contract for lecturers maintains an auditing requirement by way of the mandated recording of professional development activities (1.3 in box

1, above), albeit a considerable period after government policy itself removed this aspect as a requirement (following Lingfield, 2012). It may be that despite government policy change, the "normalising gaze" (Foucault, 1977, p.184) of Ofsted has resulted in College senior leadership concerns for maintaining auditable evidence of lecturers' engagement with professional development. In borrowing this term I refer to an effect of wide-ranging data auditing by Ofsted that leads managers to still perceive there to be an ongoing tacit requirement for professional development records to be available at ever-impending inspection visits (Gleeson *et al.*, 2015). Thus, even though Ofsted is not always looking, the College behaves in such a way as if it were. In the context of the present work, recent Ofsted inspection outcomes at the College may have served to reinforce a desire by senior managers to maintain auditable professional development records even though they are not explicitly required by Ofsted itself. The College has received two Ofsted inspection outcomes of 'inadequate' and two outcomes of 'requires improvement' since 2013, resulting in increased external monitoring by Ofsted and the (then) FE commissioner, Sir David Collins, until 2017. This recent Ofsted narrative has significantly informed and steered formal professional development focus in the College, as indicated in the organisational policy and contract documents discussed above.

The researcher's personal context(s)

In reference to interpretive approaches and as an insider researcher, both discussed in chapter three, Goodall (2003, p.56) states: "the whole thing would be a sham if I didn't implicate myself in the framing and telling of the story". I must not, therefore, presume or imply that I hold an objective, detached relationship either to the area of research or the research participants with whom I engage. Goodall (2003) suggests making explicit the influence of personal history and characterising work as personal and self-reflexive. In this vein I outline my personal background and contexts in this section.

I have been an FE lecturer since 2003. Early in my career I developed a strong interest in the nature of professional development in FE, in part due to my curiosity with the continuous policy changes in requirements to practise in the

sector, regarding qualifications, professional development, and membership of a professional body (as illustrated in table A). The genesis of my interest in professional learning had started earlier than this point, however. My father and stepmother had been secondary and primary school teachers, respectively, whose conversations on this matter had earlier stoked my interest. My father had sometimes articulated how he perceived mandatory professional development for teachers at the secondary school where he taught to be irrelevant to his learning needs, or incongruent to his preferred means (activities) through which to learn. My father and I felt it was somewhat ironic and bizarre that in a place of learning these particular problems might occur.

Changing policies specifically affecting the FE sector led me early in my career to develop the view that within the sector there were contested understandings of both what constitutes a 'professional' standing, and of what professional development should entail in FE. Prevailing political winds and the whims of often-changed education ministers framed these uncertainties. To illustrate, since the 1980s there have been 28 major pieces of legislation affecting the FE sector, 48 Secretaries of State with some degree of responsibility or involvement with the sector, and six different ministerial departments overseeing the education sector (Norris and Adam, 2017).

Thus, I was soon cognisant that the mandatory professional development my colleagues and I experienced was interconnected with wider political and ideological features. I also found mandatory professional development sessions to mirror the policy flux and a managerial concept of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) advocated by policy. Further, contrasting perceptions of what constitutes professionalism and professional development among managers and colleagues in the colleges I have worked indicated to me that these are contested terms across the micro, miso and macro contexts in which they take place. In the event, I soon wanted to investigate differing concepts of professionalism and professional development in this sector.

I undertook a master's degree between 2009 and 2011, in which I developed an understanding of ontology and epistemology, which later served to inform

my approach to the research in this work (as articulated in chapter three). For my master's degree I researched English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students' preferences for in-class learning activities. I was intent on giving voice to, and placing value on, ESOL students' perceptions of how they like to learn English, whether through reading, gap-fill, role-play, online games or other learning activities. Drawing from Freire (1970), I wanted to situate students' learning in their own lived experiences and in doing so recognise the importance their voice and agency in the learning process (Knowles, 1990; 1980).

This same positionality permeated into my approach to the present work. I again wanted to give voice to learners at the centre of my research, thereby recognising and valuing their otherwise largely sidelined voices. I remain in alignment with the assertion of Freire (1970) that learners are not, and should not be, regarded as empty, passive vessels of which to be filled with knowledge by purported experts (Freire, 1970, referred to this as the banking model). Accordingly, as with my prior research, my approach would involve recognising the contexts, predispositions and preferences (Illeris, 2007) of my research participants. This led to my chosen methodological approach of personalised case study evaluation (Kushner, 2000), discussed in chapter three.

Since 2013 I have also been a learning and development coach. In this role I work with other lecturing staff across all academic and vocational subject areas, on both a one-to-one and group basis, to develop teaching and learning practices through coaching. My application for this position was driven in part by my desire to expand my experiences of the sector beyond the rather subject based silos in which we tend to work in FE, in my experience. I also wanted to apply my interest in professional development by making myself useful to colleagues in a development process that felt more individualised and owned by lecturers. I must declare therefore that my starting point for the research in this work was that I saw effective professional development to be characterised in these ways, as opposed to the mandatory, generic, one-size-fits-all development days for the whole lecturer workforce, which colleagues

and I otherwise tend to experience. By giving lecturers the space and support to identify their own learning needs and how they might address them, colleagues with whom I work often feel there are developments in their pedagogical practice (based on features such as students' engagement, behaviours, work and outcomes). My affirmation of the use of coaching as a developmental approach is not novel: the effectiveness of coaching as a support and development approach is widely acknowledged (Lofthouse, 2019), although not itself uncontested (see Lane, 2010; Jarvis, Lane and Fillery-Travis, 2006).

My coaching role has facilitated professional development whereby lecturers are empowered to participate in identifying their own development needs and outcomes, and how they might address these needs. To my mind lecturers' interest, motivation and engagement is substantially increased (reflecting Illeris, 2007; Knowles, 1990) through this practice and in turn FE students' learning is likely to be enhanced. Separate from my participation in peer coaching, throughout my career across four colleges in England, professional development has largely been characterised in my view as often (but not always): insufficiently planned and last-minute in nature; rarely linked to specific team, individual (lecturer) development or student needs; and almost never subsequently reviewed in terms of impact. Perhaps of most concern to me was that lecturer colleagues and I were very seldom actively involved in the planning or realisation of professional development we were mandated to attend. It would appear, therefore, my father's experiences were not unique to colleagues in the secondary sector.

During my career, appraisals have been sporadic in frequency, and their purposes have varied. I would characterise discussions of professional development in my appraisals as fleeting box-ticking exercises, seldom followed through by meaningful organisational support, such as financial support or time remittance for such activities. Indeed, as noted earlier, appraisals were seldom identified as a conduit for professional development by the participants in this work. Nonetheless, although I have pursued a doctorate in an individual capacity, I shall remain grateful to the College for

providing some support towards the financial cost of pursuing this qualification. It would appear, therefore, that despite the acutely challenging period of austerity which the organisation has endured in recent years, there remains some recognition of the value and purpose of supporting lecturers' own choices of professional development.

In early 2015 I registered on the doctorate in education programme in order to investigate these themes in a structured, formal and rigorous manner. I had had enough of my own complicity in endless complaining, among lecturer peers, of the perceived problems with professional development in our sector. I instead wanted to explore what informed the planning and realisation of professional development in my workplace, identify what is perceived as effective professional development, and investigate how lecturers and middle managers' perceptions might inform and benefit future professional development. In so doing I hoped to offer a positive and purposeful contribution and perhaps affect changes for the better in regard to FE professional development. I wanted to emerge from, or rise above, cynical compliance (Coffield in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

My focus in this work is not to investigate whether FE lecturers and middle managers correctly 'know' all their professional development needs and address them accordingly; indeed, it is unlikely that individuals can always identify and address their own professional learning needs (Jarvis, 2010; Kruger and Dunning, 1999). Rather, as discussed in the introductory paragraphs, I have sought to give a professional voice to this workforce, and in doing so investigate their perceptions of professional development as learners. Whether FE lecturers and middle managers can or will accurately articulate their professional learning needs, their views matter. Perceptions of professional learning experiences inform participants' motivation and volition to learn (Knowles, 1990), informed by the tapestry of personal, organisational and policy contexts considered in this chapter.

Research purposes and questions

With the intention to identify and conduct research characterised as useful, practical and manageable in scope (Hopkins, 1985), the central purposes of this research were to:

- ascertain FE lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of the processes for planning, implementation and evaluation of continuing professional development;
- evaluate the effectiveness of current professional development practices according to the perceptions of FE lecturers and middle managers;
- identify and evaluate common themes or characteristics which lead to effective professional development for mid-career FE lecturers.

Green (in Gilbert, 2008) advises that research questions ought to be interesting, relevant, feasible, ethical, concise and answerable. Alvesson and Sandberg (2011) argue that research questions should result from the consideration and critique of existing literature and advocate the problematisation of the area of study, to open up new lines of enquiry and construct novel and interesting research questions using a reflective and critical approach. In this spirit, my research questions attempt to represent "concrete questions to which concrete, specific answers can be given" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p.126):

1. What are lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented and evaluated?
2. What are FE lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development?
3. What can be learned by FE managers, lecturers and policy makers through the analysis of perceptions of professional development practices in FE in England?

These questions were designed to address each of the preceding research aims in the same order. These questions align with the personalised

evaluation (Kushner, 2000) methodological approach used in this research (discussed in chapter three) and give voice to research participants (Jackson, 2003) whose viewpoints can be considered within the contexts and circumstances in which they are situated (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012).

I was aware my initial questions might evolve or refocus in light of the developing narrative between emerging research data, analysis, and theory. In the event the questions remained largely unchanged, with the exception that I added the dimension of also seeking FE college middle managers' perceptions. I arrived at the view that the perspectives of these colleagues were also required in order to more fully contextualise and inform my evaluation of professional development. I had learned during the period of research that middle managers and lecturing staff alike are predominantly recipients of mandatory professional development. Although middle managers at the College sometimes lead (or deliver) development events, the underlying purposes and content of these sessions are mostly determined by members of the senior leadership team (SLT) according to these manager participants.

I also felt that given their hierarchical positions in the College, middle managers might be privy to organisational processes for the planning of professional development, and as such might provide insightful data in reference to addressing the first research question. Although the sole involvement of lecturer participants would constitute a defensible approach itself for this work, my eventual approach enabled me to explore features affecting or informing professional development of which lecturers may not be aware (such as college-level budgetary or resource constraints, organisational priorities, or wider policy drivers). I would also be able to identify whether there was a dissonance in perceptions between lecturers (the recipients of mandatory professional development) and middle managers (the deliverers) in connection with their professional development.

Thesis structure

This work is organised into five chapters. In chapter two I present my literature review, whereby I critically engage with the most salient research in relation to

professionalism and professional development in FE, in other education sectors, and in other fields of work. I also outline the predominant adult learning theories which underpinned the data analysis in chapters four and five.

In chapter three I outline my ontological and epistemological positionality and discuss how this frames the methodological approach I have chosen for my research, personalised case study evaluation. I also discuss the research method used and briefly reflect on discounted methods, in presenting a comprehensive depiction of my research journey. I detail the planning and practical considerations involved with insider-researcher, semi-structured interviews, my approach to sampling, and I reflect on the interview experience. I also engage with issues of validity and reliability specifically in relation to my methodological approach and the research method used. Following this, I discuss ethical matters relating to my research and how I attempted to address foreseeable concerns.

In chapter four I present my research findings in a systematic manner, applying three lenses of analysis for professional development proposed by Fraser *et al.* (2007) and my own (fourth) lens. I then discuss my corresponding thematic analysis through the identification and interpretation of latent themes pertinent to the first two research questions.

In the fifth chapter I address the third research question through discussion of the implications of the findings of the present research. I offer recommendations relating to professional development practices in the FE context and suggest areas of future research in this field. I also discuss my claims to originality within this work and acknowledge limitations. I conclude by reflecting on my research journey.

Chapter summary

In this opening chapter I have introduced the purposes and contexts of my research. I have argued that the present research was necessary due to a paucity in literature that warranted attention, and was timely in this ongoing period following policy deregulation in the sector regarding professional

development. I have situated my research in three contexts: in the (macro) policy context; the (miso) organisational context; and in the (micro) individual context. I argued that the development of neo-liberal policy in the UK and its influence on FE, particularly following incorporation, is widely argued to have resulted in impoverished conditions of work (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson, 1998) in the sector. Such circumstances have steered much professional development towards a transmission approach (Kennedy, 2005) in FE that both sidelines learner voices and is often centred on addressing sector policy and Ofsted inspection requirements.

In addition I developed my argument that this work would also, importantly, give voice to FE lecturers and middle managers in relation to their own professional learning. Such an approach aligns with an emancipatory concept of professionalism (discussed in chapter two) and facilitates conditions conducive to professional learning (Illeris, 2007; Knowles, 1990; 1980).

Chapter 2: Literature review

Opening comments

In this chapter I present a comprehensive literature review that critically engages with salient literature in order to provide a springboard into the field of professional development and to "establish and justify the need for research" (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 121). I recognise that conducting a literature review is not a neutral process and I am mindful of the need to avoid deliberate cherry-picking (Morse, 2010) of literature which may support pre-existing positions I have in relation to professional development; otherwise, my review will be characterised and limited by confirmation bias (Kaptchuk, 2003). I reviewed literature across education sectors and in other work sectors, both from the UK and overseas. The sole exclusion criterion concerned literature in languages other than English and Spanish, the latter being my second language. My engagement with the literature constituted an iterative process as I revisited the available literature throughout the duration of this work to ensure my work was informed by the most current research (to July 2019).

The literature discussed in this chapter was found from combining interrelated search terms such as (not exhaustively): 'professional development', 'professional learning', 'CPD', 'further education' and 'FE'. In light of the scarcity of literature relating directly to my specific research field, I placed no limit on the timeframe of publication. My initial literature search focused on articles from four journals: Professional Development in Education; the International Journal of Lifelong Education; the Journal of Vocational Education and Training; and the Journal of Research in Post-compulsory Education. I also reviewed relevant academic books, websites and blogs. My search parameters later widened to articles matching these search terms across the entire University of the West of England (UWE) library database.

After expressing the importance of professional development according to the literature, I consider contested notions of what constitutes professionalism in FE. I later discuss literature in connection with the purposes of professional development and features of what may constitute 'effective' and 'ineffective'

professional development, including salient literature focused on the FE and schools sectors, and in other sectors.

I later discuss theories of learning, as I align with Armour *et al.* (2015), who contend that effective professional development is underpinned by complex processes of learning that require consideration. In so doing I consider the prevalence of the andragogical theory of adult learning in literature relating to professional development and I introduce the holistic theory of Illeris (2007) as the principal reference point for my analysis of the features which both locate and affect learning and non-learning.

The importance of professional development

Kennedy (2014, p.2-3) argues (and it remains the case at the time of writing):

> […] 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.

The present work can be considered a response to this second assertion by Kennedy (2014) in that I interlink discourses of professionalism in relation to the FE sector (in the current chapter) with divergent approaches to the planning and implementation of professional development in the sector (in chapters four and five).

Concern for what constitutes effective professional development in education is widespread in the literature (Ingleby, 2018; Policy Consortium, 2018; SET, 2018; Spencer *et al.*, 2018; Aubrey and Bell, 2017; Eliahoo, 2017; Sywelem and Witte, 2013; Orr, 2009; Armour, 2006; Robson, 2006; Harkin, 2005; Guskey, 2003). Orr (2009, p.483) concisely summarises the need for engagement with this field of study in FE: "professional development is universally celebrated as something good, with little analysis of what it entails". Coffield (2000) also considers that discourses related to professional development are vague. In reference to teachers' perceptions *per se*, Ingleby (2018, p.23) cites Eraut (1994) to argue "there is a need to understand how

educators process interpretations of CPD if we are to understand how professional development influences professional practice".

Literature centred on professional development in the schools and early years sectors is most prolific (Ingleby, 2018; Keay, Carse and Jess, 2018; Beavers, 2009; Luneta, 2008; Robson, 2006; Goodall, *et al.*, 2005; Hustler *et al.,* 2003) although pertinent also to the FE sector, notwithstanding contextual differences between sectors that must be recognised. There is a much narrower range of existent literature which focuses directly on aspects of professional development in FE (see Lloyd and Jones, 2018; Eliahoo, 2017; O'Leary, 2016; Harkin, 2005) which typifies the wider scarcity of FE focused literature (Hodgson, 2015; Solvason and Elliott, 2013). I return to this literature later in this chapter.

Contrasting conceptualisations of professionalism in further education

The literature on professionalism in FE frames the role and expectations of FE lecturers and middle managers according to divergent ideological positions, in turn informing perceptions of professional development for this workforce. Literature considering notions of professionalism and professional identity in FE is abundant (for example Atkins and Tummons, 2017; Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; Gleeson *et al.*, 2015; Hodgson, 2015; Tummons, 2014; Bathmaker and Avis, 2013; O'Leary, 2013; Colley, James and Diment, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007) perhaps reflecting its inherently contested and insecure 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; Clow, 2005). For instance, unlike in law and health, FE lecturers do not currently require qualifications to practise (teaching), which Millerson (1964, cited in Atkins and Tummons, 2017) identified as a key

characteristic of what defines a profession. Thus some lecturers begin their careers in the FE sector with no formal training, qualifications or experiences in teaching (ETF, 2019a) as it is not a requirement. 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 are therefore often characterised as having a dual professionalism, with the initial or former industry career role often remaining the principal professional identity of many FE lecturers (Orr and Simmons, 2010; Gleeson, Davies and Wheeler, 2005). This concept of dual professionalism in the literature tends to refer predominantly to lecturers of vocational provision. Nonetheless, numerous academic lecturers with whom I have worked in FE also have backgrounds in other industries, such as law, politics and the sciences. Indeed, some of the research participants in this work also have such professional biographies (see chapter four). I suggest, therefore, a similar duality in professional identity exists for many lecturers of academic provision in FE.

Discourses of professionalism in FE are 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 (Tummons, 2014), whereas the third, emancipatory paradigm, tends to represent academic and practitioner discourses (Tummons, 2014).

Fomented particularly since the 1988 Education Reform Act, discourses within the managerialist paradigm conceive professionalism in education through the lens of 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; Tummons, 2014; O'Leary, 2013). Various iterations of professional standards (see ETF, 2014; 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 lexical usage suggests that policy considers the sector predominantly through a vocational lens, with the same professional standards also applying to academic provision. 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 no longer 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 ongoing professional development (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) at the same time 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 professional development, a feature of emancipatory professionalism, but are not involved in "the discursive constructions of professionalism within which they are enrolled as social actors", implying outsider control of such constructions and thereby also representing a managerialist understanding of professionalism.

The purposes of professional development

Wide-ranging purposes of professional development are identified by the diverse political, social and professional contexts of those seeking to define them. Bell and Gilbert (1996) describe professional development through how activities interrelate with personal, social, or occupational purposes. Kennedy (2005) positions professional development activities into three groups according to purpose, as either transmissive, transitional or transformative in nature. According to Kennedy (2005) transmissive professional development involves passive skills updating, often planned and delivered by an external expert. In contrast, transformative professional development is characterised by professional autonomy and professional inquiry, such as action research. Transitional development can support the underlying agendas of either or both the organisation and the individual, such as coaching (Kennedy, 2005). I found the application of these groupings valuable in articulating distinct characteristics of professional development and how they relate to perceptions of effectiveness (see chapters four and five).

Commonly cited purposes for professional learning in education include: enhancing students' learning (Luneta, 2012; Guskey, 2003); the development of teachers' professional knowledge (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001); and to

prepare teachers to enact changes in policy or practice (Sywelem and Witte, 2013; Day, 1999). Seferoglu (1996, in Sywelem and Witte, 2013), in reference to the secondary schools' sector, considers that professional development is required in order to address knowledge gaps for teachers who are not fully trained during their initial teacher education. This argument is also salient to the FE sector as, unlike in the schools sector, some 10% of practising lecturers in FE hold no teaching qualifications (ETF, 2019a). Even for FE lecturers with teaching qualifications, there is a wide variance in the highest level of qualification held, from level 2 to level 7 (ETF, 2019a). This variation indicates that the professional learning needs in FE are also likely to differ considerably among the FE teaching workforce.

Professional development has also been linked to cultivating teacher satisfaction and thus lower staff turnover (Parkes and Stevens, 2000 in Sywelem and Witte, 2013); in preparation for career development (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2001; Lee, 1990); and in reference to practitioner research (Lloyd and Jones, 2018), which can serve to inform the policies and practices of organisations. Professional learning for educators can therefore be said to address one or more purposes driven by either policy, the organisation, the learning needs of individuals in reference to pedagogy, or other learner motivations.

A government funded report purportedly representing the perceptions of those working in FE in England, 'Training Needs in the Further Education Sector', claims the principal purposes of what it terms "workforce training" are to achieve "improvements in staff performance […] competitiveness, and reputation; and the need to keep up with public policy change" (ETF, 2018, p.6). It is striking that the ETF report (2018) makes only indirect reference to students' learning. Such purposes instead correspond, unsurprisingly, to the current FE sector neo-liberal policy discourse and tend to result in transmissive forms of professional development (Kennedy, 2005) as they prioritise policy goals over individuals' own learning needs and priorities. I return to this report later in the present chapter.

Features of analysis: formal and informal professional development

Fraser *et al.* (2007) argue the conditions within which professional development activities take place can be formal or informal. Fraser *et al.* (2007, p.160) state that formal activities comprise activities "explicitly established by an agent" other than the lecturer(s), whereas informal activities are "sought and established" by lecturers themselves. However, these definitions are problematic, in my view, as they are ambiguous. It is unclear as to whether watching a TV documentary, for instance, comprises a learning activity established by the learner or the producer of the programme, indeed, it could be argued both ways. In my attempt to unambiguously categorise forms of professional development in chapter four, I draw on another definition, Richter *et al.*, (2011, p.117), who argue that informal learning activities do not "follow a specified curriculum and are not restricted to certain environments".

Whereas much literature tends to focus on formal forms of professional learning in education (Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Duncombe and Armour, 2004; Borko, 2004), some more recent literature gives greater prominence to informal development activities (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016). However, degrees of formality should be considered as on a continuum, rather than dichotomous (Eraut, 2004). Kyndt, *et al.* (2016, p.1113) consider that informal and formal forms of professional learning:

> […] represent the ends of a sliding scale of formality, ranging from totally unorganised learning as a by-product of working to learning that is organised within an educational setting.

The paucity in literature relating to (more) informal forms of professional learning in the FE sector, however, is striking. For this reason I wanted to incorporate within the scope of the present work all forms of professional development across this scale of formality.

In reference to other education sectors, it has been argued that the field of informal professional learning warrants attention as research concerned with formal professional development indicates that it is seldom applied to teaching practices (Fraser, 2010; Hoekstra *et al.*, 2007). It has also been argued that recognition for informal professional learning may support teacher retention

(Shanks, Robson, and Grey, 2012) and relates to increased pressures on teacher workload (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). These arguments are directly applicable also to the FE sector context. Indeed, the findings of the present work (see chapters four and five) suggest that FE lecturers may (and do) leave the organisation in which they work in circumstances whereby they feel a lack of recognition and support in addressing their self-identified learning needs. Further, informal (but critical) professional learning occurs as a personal endeavour (see theme 1.3 in chapter four) when generic mandatory professional development and lecturer workloads mean this learning is not addressed within normal working hours.

Features of analysis: degrees of planning, scope and other characteristics

In addition to locating professional development by its degree of formality, Fraser *et al.* (2007) characterise professional development as planned or incidental in nature, again these terms representing the polarities of a continuum. 'Planned' refers to pre-organised or pre-determined engagement with a particular form of professional learning activity for a specific purpose. Planned professional development might comprise attendance at an external teaching and learning conference focusing on a specific feature of pedagogy, or study towards a qualification, for instance. Conversely, 'incidental' activities are not planned in advance, instead occurring by chance or in a spontaneous manner. Staffroom and corridor conversations among colleagues often constitute such incidental learning. In addition, Fraser *et al.* (2007) consider professional development to involve one or more personal, social or occupational features. Personal features encompass lecturers' beliefs, values and motivations. Occupational features link pedagogical theory to teaching practice and (thus) provide intellectual stimulation (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). Social features involve collegiate relationships and interactions. Bailey, Curtis and Nunan (2001) emphasise a distinction between individual and collaborative professional learning; the former refers to activities of a typically individual endeavour while the latter form means learning in groups, as in communities of practice (Wenger, 1998).

(Professional) learning can also take place in a conscious or unconscious manner (Illeris, 2007). For instance, informal professional learning (as defined by Fraser *et al.*, 2007) may take place through staffroom or over-the-photocopier conversations with colleagues discussing a new resource or teaching method, while those participating may not consciously register this event as a moment of learning (Illeris, 2007). Reber (1993) referred to such a process as tacit learning.

McChesney and Aldridge (2019) argue that determining impact must be the central concern of the analysis of professional development events or activities, a feature largely absent from the features identified by Fraser *et al.* (2007). McChesney and Aldridge (2019, p.318) advocate the use of teacher interviews, surveys and self-report data that can serve as a "valid way of examining the impact of professional development". However, McChesney and Aldridge (2019) also argue that participant reactions only enable a partial conceptualisation of professional development impact as, in their view, some impacts on teaching and learning are missed through this method alone. I infer from this argument that the authors advocate a mixed methods approach to determining impact, perhaps with some form of accompanying data metrics on students' outcomes. McChesney and Aldridge (2019) acknowledge that determining the direct impact (however established) of a particular professional development activity or event is problematic as various forms of professional learning overlap, rendering it difficult to establish which form of professional learning results in what specific impact (if any).

Forms of professional development

Professional learning activities have been identified as: discrete professional development days led by managers or external experts (SET, 2018; Kennedy, 2005); the pursuance of formal qualifications (SET, 2018; Kennedy, 2005); classroom observation and subsequent reflection (Eliahoo, 2017; O'Leary and Wood, 2017; O'Leary, 2014; Goodall *et al.*, 2005); reflective practice (Spencer, *et al.*, 2018); self-observation and reflection through the use of video (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001); coaching or mentoring (Kennedy, 2005; Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001); reflective writing (Turner *et al.*, 2015; Bailey, Curtis

and Nunan, 2001); engaging in research (Lloyd and Jones, 2018; Kennedy, 2005); participating in communities of practice (Lloyd and Jones, 2018; Wenger, 1998); communities of praxis (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015); team teaching (Bailey, Curtis and Nunan, 2001); reading journal articles or books; participation in online community discussion forums; reading blogs; viewing relevant television programmes (SET, 2018); classroom trial and error through experimentation; storytelling (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016); and staffroom conversations with colleagues (Fraser, *et al.*, 2007).

Most of these activities do not require explanation. However, I shall expand briefly on the meaning of two of these activities which are perhaps less commonly understood. Communities of praxis (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) combines terminology drawn from both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Freire (1970) to infer a community of (critically reflective) practitioners reconciling theory and practice. Freire (1970) defines praxis as reflection and action. A community of praxis is concerned with the "sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise but critically it is seeking to reconcile the theoretical work done in university settings with the practice of everyday classrooms" (Anderson and Freebody, 2012, p. 363).

Storytelling as a form of professional learning can be considered as a heuristic, reflective practice of teachers telling stories of professional practice, including the peculiarities of a class activity, for instance. Doecke (2015, pp. 153-154) argues that storytelling as a vehicle for professional reflection and learning:

> […] typically involves a play between the rich particularity of specific scenes and incidents and a provisional judgement about what it has all meant.

> Its reflexivity and provisionality, its focus on lived experience – show that it is an indispensable means for remaining fully responsive to what is happening around us.

The above list of professional learning activities is not exhaustive, rather the purpose of this list is to provide some illustration of the divergent range of professional learning activities of which educators engage. Indeed, Kyndt *et al.* (2016) identified 129 different learning activities among their analysis of literature in connection with informal forms of professional learning alone.

Characteristics of 'effective' and 'ineffective' professional development

Guskey (2003) refers to 'characteristics' of effective professional development, which incorporate both purposes (such as to develop teaching and learning practices) and particular features of professional learning, such as the inclusion of procedures for evaluation, or being site based. There is little consensus for which characteristics constitute effective professional development (Ingleby, 2018; Guskey, 2003). In response, Guskey (2003) suggests an agreed set of criteria intended to articulate what characterises effectiveness in professional development in order to inform those planning professional development for educators. A difficulty with this proposal, however, is that what may define 'effective' is inherently contestable, given divergent ideological positions of policymakers, managers and lecturers in reference to the purposes and forms of development activities; learning content; means to evaluate the impact of development activities; and learning incentive(s). As James and Biesta (2007, p.3) rightly argue, "any discussion about improvement requires value judgments about what counts as improvement".

Keay, Carse and Jess (2018, p.1) describe teachers as "complex professional learners" whose deep professional learning is characterised as: non-linear and emergent; messy and recursive; theoretically informed; and teacher centred. Effective professional development practices have been characterised in this vein as iterative, ongoing and actively involving participants (Luneta, 2012; Keay and Lloyd, 2011; Desimone, 2009; Putnam and Borko, 2000). A prevalent argument within the literature is that in cases of effective professional development teachers are at the centre of the decision making process of what, when, and how learning takes place, in recognition of their existing knowledge and experiences (Beavers, 2009; du Preez and Roux, 2008; Cranton and King, 2003; Terehoff, 2002) and to address teachers' specific needs (Muijs *et al.*, 2004). Teachers need to see a clear line of sight between development activities and benefits to their students (Beavers, 2009; Guskey, 2002), thus teachers consider effective professional development as

involving high relevance and applicability to the classroom (Hustler *et al.,* 2003).

In contrast, one-off one-size-fits-all professional development activities which do not recognise and incorporate these aspects and are disconnected from teachers' every day teaching practices are regarded poorly by teachers (Ingleby, 2018; Luneta, 2012; Beavers, 2009; Robson, 2006; Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Hustler *et al.,* 2003). Effective professional development activities tend to also require the active participation of teachers (Beavers, 2009; Conti, 1989; Knowles, 1989), although Postholm (2012, p.407) suggests this is not always necessary in instances whereby "internal dialogues" are awakened in the audience members of didactic development sessions. Guskey (2002) describes effective professional development as incurring sustained change that is regarded as continuous and ongoing in nature. This is an important characteristic for Guskey (2002, p.388) as:

> Learning to be proficient at something new or finding meaning in a new way of doing things is difficult and sometimes painful. Furthermore, any change that holds great promise for increasing individuals' competence or enhancing an organization's effectiveness is likely to be slow and require extra work.

I concur with the central assertion of Guskey (2002) that learning can be difficult and painful. For instance, in the context of professional learning for experienced teachers or lecturers, exposure to new and potentially improved approaches to teaching or supporting students may result in cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) on the part of the learner whose existing approaches may therefore be called into question. Cognitive dissonance may occur in circumstances whereby new information or evidence conflicts with existing beliefs, approaches or cognitions, leading to mental discomfort. A person can reduce this discomfort through accepting the new evidence and thus changing their belief; justifying the existing belief by modifying the new conflicting evidence or cognition; or denying some or all of the new evidence or cognition (Festinger, 1957). These psychological difficulties of learning must be recognised, as the second and third resolutions to cognitive dissonance as presented here can result in non-learning (Jarvis, 2010; Illeris, 2007) and (therefore) unchanged pedagogical practices on the part of teachers or

lecturers. There are additional features that can make learning difficult, as I return to later in the current chapter.

Guskey's (2002) reference to the ongoing nature of effective professional development also resonates with my positionality. Indeed, to investigate this feature I added an additional lens for analysis (to those of Fraser *et al.*, 2007) in my evaluation of professional development that focuses on the dynamic of timeframe and frequency of engagement with professional learning, as discussed in subsequent chapters. In so doing I could establish whether timeframe and frequency of engagement interrelated with perceptions of effective professional development in the context(s) of the present research, and if so, why this might be the case.

I depart from Guskey (2002), however, in his inference that professional development will always incur learning something new. This position indicates a tacit assumption that the content of professional development always involves some form of knowledge, skills or pedagogical approach that is new or different to the current practice of those in attendance. While this may often be the case, it is my contention that professional development activities or events with generic learning outcomes may not on every occasion address learning needs or offer new knowledge or skills to those in attendance, potentially therefore resulting in non-learning. This positionality was born from numerous personal experiences and experiences shared by colleagues in which professional development events are often concerned with beginner-teacher learning content (such as target setting or assessing learning) of which many colleagues feel they already have sophisticated understandings. This is not to say that fundamental aspects of teaching and learning ought not to be revisited or problematised by experienced teachers, solely that such content *per se* cannot be assumed to offer something new to experienced educators. This argument is made elsewhere: Sywelem and Witte (2013) also consider that a lack of professional development provision relevant to learners can constitute a barrier to professional learning.

Stimulation of in-action and on-action reflective practice (Schön, 1983) is also a recurrent feature in the literature of effective professional development in

education (Spencer *et al.*, 2018; Harkin, 2005 Hillier, 2002; Moon, 1999). The former term refers to reflection during an activity (such as teaching). The latter term means a retrospective form of reflection following the end of a particular activity. Schön (1983) advocates a process of on-the-spot (in-action) reflection and experimentation in addressing problems. This constitutes a process of professional learning that diminishes a theory-practice dichotomy through reflection that interlinks theory and its immediate application in practice. These concepts built on earlier ideas of reflective practice (see Dewey, 1933). It has been suggested, however, that due to the demands of heavy workloads in FE, opportunities to foster a culture of reflective practices are limited (Harkin, 2005).

Literature considering professional development in other occupations indicate additional features of what may constitute effective professional development. Forrest and Peterson (2006), in the context of management education, argue that a teacher-learner dynamic of partnership, trust and self-awareness are central tenets of effective professional development. In reference to the professional learning of medical registrars, Bedi (2004) argues that the development of independent meta-learning skills is key and must replace a dependency on an expert trainer. Birzer (2004), with regard to criminal justice programmes, argues that effective professional development aims to develop self-directed problem solvers, through the incorporation and sharing of learners' real-world experiences of problem solving.

Timperley (2015) cites Bell *et al.* (2010) in emphasising that efficacy in professional development interconnects with practitioner research and research-based interventions applied by practitioners. Engagement with research may serve to resolve potential cognitive dissonance and thus reduce non-learning as (Timperley, 2015, p.237):

> There was also evidence that engagement in and with research was linked with an increase in teachers' readiness to identify the underpinning rationale for the new approaches being explored, i.e. developing a practical theory about different approaches to teaching and learning.

However, contextual and cultural features specific to the FE sector often inhibit lecturers' and middle-managers' ability to engage in, and with, research, as discussed in the next section. Thus, the potential benefits of this form of professional learning as articulated by Timperley (2015) are therefore currently somewhat restricted for those teaching in FE.

Ingleby (2018) finds that for private early years providers, with a perpetual focus on profit maximisation, providers tend to characterise professional development as a low priority, and it is often regarded by practitioners as an add-on rather than being interpreted as a core activity of professional practice. Further, professional development in this context is perceived as ineffective as it overlooks the specific professional learning needs of early years practitioners. Parallels can be drawn with the FE sector as although a core objective of organisations is not profit maximisation, it is still to maximise income through funding that can be drawn down from agencies such as the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), businesses sponsoring employees to learn, and students themselves, through full cost recovery provision.

Those working both in private and state early years provision also voice resistance to professional development activities predominantly concerned with preparing for Ofsted inspections, perceived as separate to, and a distraction from, their core pedagogical work (Ingleby, 2018). In addition, practitioners in the early years sector cite their lack of influence on their own professional development to be the source of much frustration (Ingleby, 2018). In other words, this feature constitutes a lack of recognition of their professional voice (aligning with Beavers, 2009; du Preez and Roux, 2008; Terehoff, 2002). A similar focus on both impending Ofsted visits and the lack of learner voice is similarly identified by the participants in the present research in reference to mandatory professional development in FE (see chapters four and five).

Goodall *et al.* (2005, p.9) found in schools that colleagues given the responsibility to lead or facilitate professional development activities in schools often felt they were not equipped with the appropriate "skills and tools to

adequately perform the evaluation role". Although Goodall, *et al.* (2005) now represents dated research, it remains one of the most salient reference points in this field at the time of writing. McChesney and Aldridge (2019, p.312) refer to Goodall, *et al.* (2005) as "the most detailed examination of school-based evaluation practices to date". I could find no corresponding literature that addresses these same aspects in the FE context. This work to some extent responds to this paucity, as my interview questions to both lecturers and middle managers included their perceptions of evaluation practices at the College (see chapters four and five for corresponding discussion, and appendix 3 for the interview schedule).

It is recognised that lecturer agency also has the capacity to impede effective professional development from taking place (Illeris, 2007; Guskey, 2002). As participants, lecturers are complicit in affecting the success (however defined) of professional development according to the "feelings, emotions, motivation and volition" (Illeris, 2009, p.10) they bring to learning activities. These aspects direct what Illeris (2007) refers to as the mental energy required for learning to take place and are informed by, and hold a symbiotic connection with, what is to be learned, the nature of the activity and forms of participation. Situated by these three features, lecturers may choose to reduce their participation in development activities to reluctant compliance or non-compliance (Hoyle and Wallace, 2005) whatever the intended purposes or nature of a professional development activity. In such instances, learning is more likely to be limited or absent (Illeris, 2007). This can occur in instances where lecturers consider learning content to be unnecessary or irrelevant to their learning needs as they perceive them, or when learners feel distracted by one or more emotional, physiological or environmental factors.

Finally, practical inhibitors to effective professional development have been identified. These features include a lack of funding or resources available to support development activities and excessive teacher workloads which restrict or prevent opportunities to engage with professional development (Sywelem and Witte, 2013).

Characteristics of effective and ineffective professional development are therefore wide-ranging in the literature, albeit with some recurring features: the perceived relevance of professional development to everyday teaching practices; the extent of teacher (or lecturer) participation at both the planning and implementation stages; the time and financial resources available for professional development; the extent to which managers feel qualified and supported to evaluate development activities; the dispositions of the participating lecturers towards development activities; and other contextual (practical) features that can facilitate or impede learning.

Literature on professional development in FE

The literature available at the time of writing (2019) in connection with professional development in FE tends to focus on constituent groups within the sector and is, for the most part, pursued by HE based researchers. The scarcity of existent literature deriving from FE practitioners (Lloyd and Jones, 2018) suggests that formal research is a peripheral activity in FE which does not hold a parity of esteem with HE research (Satchwell and Smith, 2009). Thus, the perceived core role of FE lecturers is to transmit, rather than create, knowledge (Moodle, 2002 in Lloyd and Jones, 2018). This position appears unlikely to shift in the near future as senior college managers are unlikely to invest resources in activities that are not concentrated upon driving forward organisational performative metrics required by sector policy (Avis, 2009) and the custodians of quality for the sector, Ofsted.

Lloyd and Jones (2018) suggest that conducting research for FE lecturers can be problematic and risky as it may raise tensions with managers operating within a managerialist culture: theory creation and epistemological exploration does not align well with (or constitutes a distraction from) addressing the more pressing performative policy demands of the sector. For this reason I was anxious of colleagues' perceptions of my research, particularly those of mangers. In the event, however, no lecturers or middle managers questioned my research with such misgivings; similarly, senior managers have not articulated any such concerns to me. However, it is also true in my experiences in the sector that there is very little explicit promotion or public validation of

practitioner research. Indeed, some participants displayed surprise that I was engaging with doctoral research at all, thus supporting the assertion that formal practitioner research is at the periphery of FE lecturer activity and not seen as the norm (Satchwell and Smith, 2009).

Broad (2015) argues that engagement with professional development in FE is often restricted as lecturers have limited opportunities to develop links with colleagues in the same field. Lloyd and Jones (2018) hold that research communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in FE are restricted and problematic in FE as practitioner research conflicts with the cultural and epistemological norms of the sector, as described above. The practice of autonomous, reflective research will unlikely be endorsed within a dominant discourse that fosters managerialist professionalism (Taubman in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) that situates professional practice within a culture of supervision, accountability and standardised work practices. Lecturers are therefore (instead) expected to compliantly and efficiently undertake tasks adherent to policy demands and ascribed to them by managers (Sachs, 2001). Activities that may question or distract from this arrangement are thus often sidelined (Lloyd and Jones, 2018).

Eliahoo (2017, p.183) found barriers to engagement with professional development for teacher educators in FE (congruent with Broad, 2015) due to:

> […] continuous and rapid changes in the sector; a draconian inspection regime; a shortage of time for collaborative practice...[and] a lack of support for research and scholarship.

Such conditions predominantly result in a preference by senior managers in FE for investing in mandatory, one-off, expert-led development events (Kennedy, 2014; 2005) over ongoing, practitioner-led, professional development activities commonly recognised as effective in the literature (Timperley, 2015).

Literature focused on FE addresses the following themes most proximate to this research: the perceptions of teacher trainers regarding professional development in FE (Eliahoo, 2017); the use of observation as a developmental tool in FE (O'Leary and Wood, 2017); professional development for trainee FE

lecturers (Orr and Simmons, 2010; Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Harkin *et al.*, 2003); the professional development of higher education (HE) provision lecturers in FE (Turner *et al.*, 2015); and creating research groups within FE (Lloyd and Jones, 2018).

Eliahoo (2017, p.187) found that teacher educators in FE view professional development as critical both for developing subject expertise and to "remind them of it was like to be a learner". Eliahoo's (2017) findings suggest that peer mentoring and joint observations are perceived as the most helpful forms of professional development, although she does not discuss why this might be the case. It could be that these preferences reflect the prominent use of these forms of professional learning in the initial teacher education courses on which they teach.

Turner *et al.* (2015) researched reflective writing with HE in FE lecturers in a longitudinal study, concluding that this activity offers an effective and ongoing process through which professional development goals are identified by practitioners themselves through reflection-on-practice (Schön, 1983), meaning reflection on an event or activity after it has ended. Both Eliahoo (2017) and Turner *et al.* (2015) found that professional development activities which actively involve and give ownership to lecturers are perceived as effective by educators, as this dynamic ensures a connection between development activities and (self-identified) learning needs (also argued by Beavers, 2009; and du Preez and Roux, 2008).

O'Leary and Wood (2017) argue that graded observations in FE often amount to a performative measure of teaching practices and call for observation to be repositioned as a tool for lecturer reflection and investigation. Such change depends on an altered organisational culture whereby observation is instead conceived as a supportive, developmental vehicle for professional learning, rather than a snapshot assessment tool of lecturers' competence (O'Leary and Wood, 2017). This proposed repositioning of observation places the lecturer at the centre of the professional development activity (as advocated elsewhere: Eliahoo, 2017; Turner *et al.*, 2015; Beavers, 2009) whereby the objective is to facilitate peer discussions and reflective practice. O'Leary and

Wood (2017) echo Goodall *et al.* (2005), who found that school teachers in England feel effective professional learning can result from observation and subsequent professional discussion.

The literature specifically seeking to identify educators' perceptions of professional development for particular groups in FE (Eliahoo, 2017; Turner *et al.,* (2015) and in schools (Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Hustler *et al.,* 2003) raises the question of whether similar or distinct perceptions are held by the wider academic and vocational FE lecturer workforce in England, to which the present work has sought to address.

Perceptions of professional development according to government funded research

In April 2018 the ETF (2018, p.1) published what it claimed to be an "independent and comprehensive report" of research into the training needs of people working in FE in England. This section considers the findings of this report, which merits thorough consideration as the report states that its findings will inform and underpin future FE policy in relation to professional development in the sector.

The lexis used throughout this report indicates how the government and its proxy, the ETF, perceive professional development in FE. The frequent uses of the terms 'training' and 'competencies' in the report suggest a narrow and reductive definition of professional development which can be considered as comprising perfunctory, bureaucratic box-ticking of ascribed standards or descriptors of practice. This conception of professional learning contrasts from how effective professional development is perceived in the literature discussed earlier.

The neo-liberal ideology underpinning the dominant policy discourse for FE is at once evident in the introduction to the report (ETF, 2018, p.5):

> The vocational skills and knowledge generated by the Further Education sector are critical to the competence of much of the workforce and, hence, to national productivity and competitiveness.

The report also makes clear who will be responsible for any (future) failure to achieve these apparently indisputable goals (ETF, 2018, p.11):

> Essentially, a skilled national workforce cannot be generated in inadequately managed or under-skilled teachers and tutors.

This assertion either fails to identify, or simply ignores, contextual and systemic features which impact on the sector, such as sustained sector cuts, policy flux and distractions caused to organisations in preparing for Ofsted inspections with frequently shifting focus and expectations of auditable performance metrics (Policy Consortium, 2018).

The ETF report (2018, p.87) finds that 71% of participants from colleges feel the greatest organisational 'drivers' (which I assume to mean purposes) for training and development are to maximise efficiency and performance. These 'drivers' are remarkably similar to the policy goals of FE articulated in the introduction to the report, but almost entirely absent in the salient literature on professional development discussed earlier in this chapter. Conspicuous in its absence, however, is any direct reference to learners' outcomes, as widely cited elsewhere (for example Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016; Luneta, 2012; Guskey, 2003). It could be contended that this aspect falls within the catch-all term 'performance', if lecturers' performance is measured through learner outcomes. Even if this suggestion is true, however, any reference to learners' outcomes is at best indirect and no more than inferred in the text of the report.

The report claims its findings represent the view that there is currently "evidence of a high volume and wide spectrum of training undertaken by FE sector staff" (ETF, 2018, p.82). According to the ETF report the most common forms of professional learning comprise day-long sessions, conferences and online training. Elsewhere, the report suggests that nearly all providers "give high priority to workforce training and development" (ETF, 2018, p.6). 90% of providers have a training and development plan; and the same percentage of providers report that development activities "met most or all of their training needs" (ETF, 2018, p.7). The findings quoted here, however, draw from phone interviews with senior FE managers. I would suggest it unlikely that these participants, in publically representing their own organisations and (thus) their own performance as senior managers, would give anything but this such positive narrative to external parties. Notably, however, almost half (46%) of

the college-based survey participants described some or all professional development activities as no more than box ticking exercises (ETF, 2018, p.66). This figure appears astonishingly high, particularly given the composition of survey participants, of whom a greater percentage are managers (33%) than lecturers (32%). Whatever the reasons, this finding suggests that nearly half of the survey participants consider much of the professional development in which they engage to be, for all intents and purposes, meaningless. I would also note that while the ETF report (2018) does include this finding in the data it presents, there is no accompanying analysis of the reasons or implications for this finding.

There are discrepancies identified within the ETF (2018) report findings with regard to the focus of professional development provision available to the FE workforce. According to the report 82% of further education organisations claim that professional development in the sector seeks to address aspects of pedagogy, whereas only 55% of individual participants felt this was an aim of the professional development activities they had experienced. Hence, a disconnection is evident between the perceptions of FE senior managers and college employees in reference to whether the professional development to which they engage relates directly to pedagogical practices.

This government-funded report differs substantially in several aspects from the literature on professional development considered earlier and the findings of the present work. The ETF (2018) report uses a lexis which narrowly defines professional development from the outset and privileges the purposes of professional development stipulated in sector policy. The research methods used in the report give greater voice to managers than lecturers through in-depth interview participants that comprise solely senior college managers. Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the report findings suggest there is substantial and effective provision in place in the FE sector, that in FE there is a "strong training culture" no less (ETF, 2018, p.7), and that future professional development apparently needs to focus on aspects mirroring pre-existing policy objectives. To my mind the ETF (2018) report amounts to a vehicle

which serves as a mouthpiece to validate the current policy discourse of FE in England.

Theories of learning

If an intended outcome of professional development is lecturers' learning (Avalos in Postholm, 2012), an exploration of professional development should be underpinned by theories of learning. The latter twentieth century was marked by a shift towards cognitive, constructivist and humanist conceptions of learning (Postholm, 2012; Jarvis, 2010; Bednar *et al.*, 1991) and away from behavioural approaches (Merriam, 2001). It is not unknown, however, for more recent literature to advocate a behavioural perspective in reference to professional learning (see for example Peel, 2005, in reference to coaching).

Learning theorists tend to give attention to differing features of learning, typically either learning content (such as Piaget, 1967); incentives to learn, including aspects such as learner motivation and emotions (Rogers, 1969; Freud, 1959); aspects of interaction among participants (Bourdieu, 1998; Giddens, 1993) or a combination of these features (Jarvis, 2010; Illeris, 2007). Some theoretical approaches consider learning to take place in distinct stages or steps (Gagné, 1977; Piaget, 1967) while others emphasise a cyclical process (Mezirow, 1991; Kolb, 1984).

The predominance of the andragogical approach in the field of professional learning

Many attempts to underpin professional development with learning theory reflect a propensity among scholars in the West to apply an andragogical approach (Picower, 2015; Merriam and Bierema, 2014; Rachal, 2002; Merriam, 2001) which emphasises distinctions between child and adult learning (Loeng, 2013; Chan, 2010). Alexander Kapp has been credited as coining the word 'andragogy' (Loeng, 2013; Rachal, 2002), but the term came to prominence by Rosenstock-Huessy in 1924, and Lindeman in 1926 (Loeng, 2013; Chan, 2010). For Rosenstock-Huessy andragogy embodied the notion that adult education could solve social problems and constitute a means to a

better future (Loeng, 2013). Andragogy was thus predominantly concerned with learner voice and ideas of political emancipation. However, as the term was later adopted by Malcolm Knowles the focus of what constitutes andragogy shifted from a social to an individual perspective (Loeng, 2013; Rachel, 2002). Knowles (1989) reconceived andragogy into a set of (eventually) six assumptions that distinguish adult learners by:

1. the need to know: adults need to know why something needs to be learned;
2. adults' self-concept: adults are autonomous and independent;
3. life experiences: adults learn from a rich array of life experiences;
4. readiness to learn: adults are inherently ready to learn;
5. orientation to learning: what adults learn is for immediate, rather than future use;
6. motivation: adults are internally motivated to learn.

These assumptions, according to Knowles (1989), need to be incorporated into the planning and realisation of adult learning provision in order for effective learning to occur. The andragogy of Malcolm Knowles (1989; 1984) as distinct from its earlier conceptions, outlined above, subsequently achieved popularity among English language literature (Rachal, 2002) despite various unresolved criticisms of the approach. Firstly, it is argued that the six assumptions remain tenuous, as they are based on hypothesis and conjecture rather than research and empirical evidence (Jarvis, 2010; Pratt, 1993). It is also argued that the assumptions do not apply only to adult learners, but also to children, meaning the adult/child distinction is therefore over-stated (Jarvis, 2010; Rachel, 2002). Further, the andragogical approach tends to assume adult learners can always identify and acknowledge what they themselves need to learn (Merriam, 2001), although some researchers applying this theoretical approach do acknowledge this concern, such as Zepeda *et al*. (2014). An additional concern is that the andragogical approach of Knowles fails to recognise social, political or economic contextual features (Pearson and Podeschi, 1997).

Despite these concerns, the andragogical approach to learning remains popular among adult education literature (Chan, 2010; Rachal, 2002) in

reference to professional learning (such as Zepeda *et al.*, 2014; Karagiorgi *et al.* 2008; Forrest and Peterson, 2006; Bedi, 2004; Birzer, 2003; Terehoff, 2002) as the assumptions of andragogical learning theory still resonate with the experiences of adult educators today (Merriam and Bierema, 2014). It could be that many academics connect (still) with Rosenstock-Huessy's earlier conception of andragogy which emphasises learner voice and political empowerment (Loeng, 2013).

Indeed, some assertions of the andragogical approach of Knowles (1989; 1984), albeit in acknowledgement of the concerns summarised above, do speak in part to my positionality on professional learning, specifically: the argument for a democratic process for (professional) learning in which the agency of the adult learner is identified and respected; that learning is often more successful when students are involved in the identification of their own learning needs (Forrest and Peterson, 2006; Terehoff, 2002); that students' experiences need to be considered as part of the learning process (Birzer, 2003; Terehoff, 2002); and that the andragogical approach serves as a vehicle to develop adult learners' independent learning skills (Bedi, 2004; Birzer, 2003).

Despite my leanings toward these assertions, much literature that applies an andragogical understanding of learning is also characterised, however, by a failure to situate professional learning in the wider social, political and cultural contexts in which they take place. For instance, while Terehoff (2002) urges school managers to place teachers at the centre of the professional development process, she fails to consider the tensions between teachers' learning preferences and the effects of external influences on professional development such as impending Ofsted inspections or government policy. Further, much (but not all) literature advocating an andragogical lens fails to recognise concerns of the andragogical approach, as discussed above, thus adopts this theoretical approach to learning in an uncritical way.

However, Zepeda *et al.* (2014) and Karagiorgi *et al.* (2008) are exceptions in that they attempt to address such concerns. Zepeda *et al.* (2014) argue that professional development policy needs to be grounded in andragogical

principles, a distinct standpoint, in that the field of professional development is recognised to be situated in and affected by the wider policy context. Karagiorgi *et al.* (2008) recognise that the concept of andragogy is contested and review various problematic aspects of andragogy in attempting to define 'adults'; reconcile the idea of the homogenous adult; and acknowledge the lack of evidence to underpin claims made in relation to the adult learner (Haggis, 2002 in Karagiorgi *et al*, 2008). Karagiorgi *et al.* (2008) therefore develop a rigorous and transparent narrative of their application of learning theory, an approach I have sought to emulate in my own research. It can be seen in chapters four and five that, although I do not approach the field of professional development in FE from an explicitly andragogical position, there is some overlap in the assertions and implications I draw from my thematic analysis of the findings, for instance, in connection with the role of (adult) learner voice and agency (see themes 1.3 and 2.1).

A holistic approach to learning

To illustrate the plurality of approaches to learning theory, Illeris (2007) attempts to locate notable learning theorists among three interlinked continua (diagram 1, below) linking three domains concerned with learning content, incentive and interaction. The content domain refers to what Illeris (2007) terms the functionality of learning and includes learning content and learners' capacity to learn. The incentive domain comprises aspects of learner sensitivity (of self and of the environment) and encompasses learners' motivations, emotions and volition. Thirdly, the interaction domain encompasses aspects of learner integration that involve learners' actions, communication and cooperation (Illeris, 2007).

The scholars positioned in diagram 1 are those which Illeris (2007, p.256) determines to have considered, to some degree, all three aspects and thus constitute, in his view, a "comprehensive learning theory". Piaget is positioned on the top left of the diagram to indicate his predominant focus on learning content. Vygotsky is positioned further down the activity theory continuum towards the interaction corner, in recognition of his consideration, more than, say, Piaget, for the social/interaction element of learning. Freud is positioned

in the top right corner given his attention on incentive(s), albeit only indirectly in connection with learning *per se* (Illeris, 2007). Other theorists are situated in such a manner so as to represent their focus in relation to one another.

Diagram 1: "Positions in the tension field of learning" (Illeris, 2007, p.257)
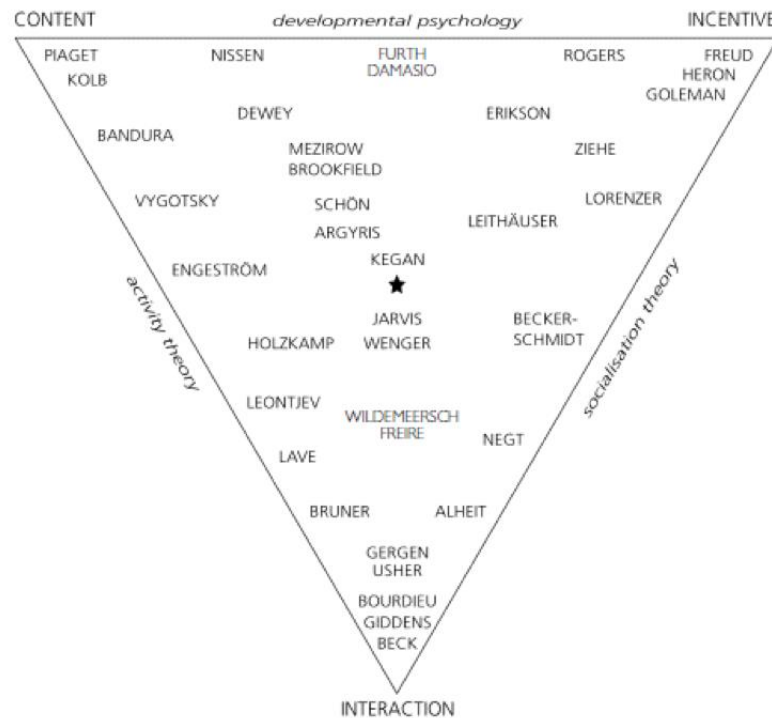
The question to address therefore is which approach(es) to apply when considering professional development through the lens of learning theory. Such a decision will be informed by the academic field(s) of the researcher, their epistemological positionality, and the nature of the research. For instance, a researcher concerned with seeking a predominantly sociological lens for analysis might apply the Bourdieuan concepts of field and habitus to professional learning events. A psychological approach may instead draw on the perspectives of Freud or Rogers, for instance.

For this work I applied the holistic theoretical approach of Illeris (2007) who situates his own approach at the centre of the three continua above, represented by the star, indicating his attempt to give equal consideration to the content, interaction and incentive dimensions of learning. I also considered applying the approach of Jarvis (2010) also positioned by Illeris (2007) near the centre in diagram 3, above. However, to my mind, non-learning is more

fully explored by Illeris (2007), who offers specific criteria which I could apply to the analysis of my research findings in this regard.

To identify conditions in which learning may not occur, Illeris (2007) draws attention to features in one or more of the three learning domains identified above (content, incentive and interaction) that can impede or block learning. For instance, within the content domain, a lack of concentration or a misunderstanding by the learner of intended learning may occur due to insufficient or poor explanation of the learning content by the teacher or lecturer. In the incentive domain, a "mental defence against learning" (Illeris, 2007, p. 160) may take place whereby a student perceives learning in a particular circumstance to be somehow threatening or limiting or in which the learner has no voice or influence on the conditions leading to learning. This aspect echoes the andragogical assertion, as discussed earlier, that adult learners' agency needs recognition as part of the conditions conducive to learning. For this aspect, Illeris (2007) draws on Freud's (1940) concept of a psychological defence mechanism which interlinks with repression, regression and isolation. Thirdly, in reference to the interaction dimension, Illeris (2007) refers to external pressures on learners experienced through learning which students feel objectionable, resulting in learner resistance. Resistance is expressed (leading to non-learning) in situations in which (Illeris, 2007, pp.171-172):

> […] one is faced with something one, for one reason or another, regards as so unacceptable that one either cannot, or will not, put up with it. It can occur, more generally, if one finds oneself in contexts one experiences oneself as being in conflict with, e.g. a more or less unwanted school or training course, a specific subject, a specific teacher or the social situation in the class or team.

This concept of resistance to learning is of particular salience in my analysis (see chapters four and five). Illustratively, I suggest that ineffective professional development often relates to events where the learning content is perceived by participants to be inappropriate or irrelevant to their learning needs, resulting in non-learning. Indeed, this feature can be located in both the incentive (learners have no voice) and interaction (the learners find the focus of learning irrelevant) domains as proposed by Illeris (2007). Conversely,

the participants of the present research often perceived professional development to be effective in instances whereby they are actively involved in the planning and realisation of professional development, this representing a humanistic, andragogical position and echoing literature in the schools sectors (see Luneta, 2012; Keay and Lloyd, 2011; Desimone, 2009), as their involvement gives them voice and influence (located within the incentive domain of Illeris, 2007).

These concepts of non-learning can be similarly applied to the findings of proximate literature. Early years practitioners' negative perceptions of Ofsted focused professional development activities (Ingleby, 2018) can be similarly connected to both the incentive and interaction domains. Ingleby (2018) found that early years practitioners perceive themselves to have little influence on their own development (the incentive domain) and in the event reject the priorities and purposes of professional development determined by mangers (the interaction domain): both aspects presenting conditions whereby non-learning is more likely.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I discussed divergent conceptions of professionalism in relation to the further education sector. I argued that the dominant neo-liberal policy discourse (Gee, 1996) framing the sector, discussed in the first chapter, foments a managerialist understanding of professionalism by policy makers that characterises FE lecturers as passive adherents to, and enactors of, a culture of performativity and audit.

I then discussed literature relating to multiple features of professional development in education, including purpose, degrees of formality, scope and impact. These features in turn inform the analysis of what is perceived as effective professional development. I then considered what features have been associated in the literature with effective and ineffective professional development. Effective professional development tends to involve a transformative approach (Fraser, *et al.*, 2007) whereby (professional) learners' voices are involved in the planning and whose outcomes relate to learning

needs as perceived by teachers themselves. There is also some consensus in the literature that for educators professional learning should comprise sufficient time, space and support to discuss, research and reflect on pedagogical practices (Keay, Carse and Jess, 2018; Lloyd and Jones, 2018; O'Leary, 2017; Harkin, 2005).

Conversely, transmission approach professional development in which teachers or lecturers are restricted to passive participation (Kennedy, 2005) tends to be negatively regarded by educators in the schools and early years sectors alike and can result in non-learning (Illeris, 2007), suggesting that such activities constitute ineffective professional development.

There is a marked ideological and epistemological dissonance between policy makers and teachers, in connection with the desired purposes and forms of educators' professional learning. For the former group, the purpose of professional development is predominantly understood to be short-term knowledge transmission (Kennedy, 2005), such as preparing teachers for policy change or implementation (Lloyd and Jones, 2018; Spencer *et al.*, 2018). In contrast, for teachers, professional development should comprise transformative approaches (Kennedy, 2005) in which pedagogical knowledge is created and developed over time and owed by the learner.

I also discussed the ETF (2018) report on workforce development, which I argued to present an invalid representation of professional development in the sector, due to problematic choices of research methods and conclusions that are insufficiently supported by the data presented in the report. I finally focused on theories of learning, in particular the holistic approach of Illeris (2007) and elements of andragogical learning theory that informed my analysis of the findings, as presented in chapters four and five.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Opening comments

In this chapter I discuss methodological considerations. I begin by outlining my ontological and epistemological positioning and discuss how this frames the methodological approach to this work, case study evaluation. I explain my rationale and concerns with the application of this approach. I then discuss the research method used, semi-structured interviews, and other potential methods I chose not to use. I discuss planning and practical considerations involved with interviews and reflect on my interview experiences. I also consider issues of validity and reliability pertinent to this research. Following this, I discuss ethical matters relating to my research and how I have attempted to address concerns, both in general terms, through adherence to the BERA (2018) guidelines, and as an insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Humphry, 2012; Burke, 1989): researching within a person's own place of work.

My ontological and epistemological positionality

This research is framed within the interpretive paradigm, underpinned by an ontology of social constructivism (Ültanir, 2012; Creswell, 2009) which maintains that people construct their social world and the social world can only be understood from the subjective positions of the people operating within it (Beck, 1979; Becker, 1970). This position leads, for me, to a constructivist epistemology by the investigation of professional development through the multiple lenses of individuals' perspectives (Crotty, 1998). A tenet of this epistemology is its acceptance of complexity and the multiple realities from which people perceive the world. Social constructivism emphasises "that the world is constructed by human beings as they interact and engage in interpretation" (O'Leary, 2010, p.6). This approach comprises inherent subjectivities which qualitative research recognises and embraces, rather than seeks to remove (Lichtman, 2014). Indeed, O'Leary (2010) argues, particularly (but not solely) in social sciences research, attempting to fully eliminate subjectivities is a futile endeavour in any case. In broad terms, Creswell (2009)

argues social constructivism to be concerned with participants' views of a particular situation or phenomenon under study. It should be acknowledged, however, that social constructivism can be understood differently, according to the perspective and position of the researcher. Ültanir (2012, p.196) draws on Brooks and Brooks (1993) to (more precisely) articulate a common thread of this epistemological approach that:

> […] defines knowledge as temporary, developmental, socially and culturally mediated, and thus, non-objective.

Ültanir (2012, p.196) also argues that constructivism involves:

> […] the learner to actively engage in meaning-making…Thus, constructivists shift the focus from knowledge as product to knowing as a process.

I would note that I determined this positionality the 'best fit' with the type of knowledge I sought to uncover in order to address the research questions, not due to some "slavish attachment and devotion" (Janesick, 2007, p.48) to this particular way of knowing. I would not deny, however, that the ontological and epistemological argument presented here speaks to my own positionality, coloured by own axiological positioning and how I am biographically situated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

This constructivist positioning in turn framed my choices in relation to the methodological framework and research method in this work. As Opie argues (2010, p.20):

> […] if the social constructivist position is taken it will be necessary to collect subjective accounts and perceptions that explain how the world is experienced and constructed by the people who live in it.

Addressing the research questions from this perspective thus involved the consideration of participants' perceptions as located within, and informed by, their personal, social and professional contexts, leading to a personalised evaluation methodology (Kushner, 2000), as discussed below.

As part of a social constructivist approach, my own interpretations, analysis and uses of the research data also need to be understood as located within my own contexts (Creswell, 2009; Crotty, 1998). Thus, I acknowledge my

position as a social actor "who duly recognises his or her role as an instrument for studying the social aspects of other human beings" (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016, p.20) and in so doing aim to avoid unacknowledged bias (Sikes in Opie, 2010). My analysis of the data and what I refer to as findings are not, therefore, claimed to be absolute or objective truths, such claims incompatible with the constructivist positioning, rather, as tentative interpretations open to alternative understandings. Such consideration is anchored within the interpretivist paradigm whereby human action is shaped by multiple individual contexts (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016, p.26):

> […] reasoning and sense-making as varying from individual to individual, recognising the role of the researcher as a potential variable in interpreting the world, with a personal influence upon the enquiry.

In a similar vein, the agency of the reader in inferring meaning from my analysis is also recognised and similarly located by (readers') individual contexts and their own axiological positionings (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016). My positionality as described above frames my approach to the capture and analysis of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of the complexity of situations, in this instance participants' perceptions of professional development. In addition to addressing the research questions, this approach enabled me to give voice (Freire, 1970) and recognise the ecological agency of participants from a workforce whose voices I have argued to be ignored by the prevailing managerialist conception of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) in FE.

'Agency' in broad terms refers to individuals' "capacity to act" (Priestley, 2015, in Bovill, *et al.*, 2019, p.2). However, the concept of agency remains somewhat elusive without more precise conceptualisation. In clarifying the meaning of specifically ecological agency, Bovill *et al.* (2019, p.2) elaborate:

> An ecological model of agency is useful in understanding the interplay of an individual's capacity to act, with the structures and contexts in which they are enabled or constrained.

Thus in discussing agency in the present work I am referring to the choices and actions of individuals as located within multiple interlinking cultural, structural and material features (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998) that can

facilitate or inhibit agency. Agency is further shaped by several internal features, including personal beliefs, values, life histories, and personal ambition(s) (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Bovill, *et al.* (2019, p.2) thus express agency as not a thing that an individual simply owns, rather, a "property which can be cultivated given conducive [external and internal] circumstances".

Through this work I could therefore challenge the tacit policy position of regarding the FE lecturer workforce as comprising *tabla rasa* (Freire, 1970), or blank slate (Dewey, 1938) recipients of transmitted information or knowledge determined by sector policymakers. This research thus also aimed to establish an embryonic alternative to the dominant policy discourse which embraces the "voice(s) from below" (Gleeson *et al.*, 2015, p.1) whereby FE lecturers' and middle-mangers voices are (instead) given prominence. I wanted to explore where a Deweyan line was being drawn, or could be drawn, between the delivery of information for policy or organisational purposes, alongside a consideration for professional learners' interests and experiences (Dewey, 1938).

The interpretivist, social constructivist positioning leads to particular tensions in relation to reliability and validity (Nudzor, 2009). The acknowledged subjectivities of the approach lead to concerns of reliability: "there is every propensity that contradictory and inconsistent explanations are, or would be, advanced to explain social phenomenon" (Nudzor, 2009, p.118). Such concerns are recognised and accepted as a core tenet of interpretivist research. Further, research validity and reliability in social science research can (and should) be determined in a distinct manner to positivist approaches, to which I return later in the present chapter.

Elsewhere, Bernstein (1974) suggests that subjective reports can be incomplete, misleading or inaccurate in nature due to analysis through perceptions. Similarly, Morrison (2009) maintains that individuals' perceptions can be plainly wrong. For instance, a person may act as though another person dislikes them based on an erroneous supposition, thus, the perceptions of the person are wrong (although this dynamic may result in a

self-fulfilling prophecy). Further, the process of negotiating the meaning of a phenomenon (here, that of professional development) can be skewed by power imbalances among those participating in the process (Bernstein, 1974). I return to this concern in the ethics section later in this chapter.

While remaining cognisant to the concerns identified here, throughout this work I embraced the subjectivities of this interpretivist approach. I proceeded with an ongoing and explicit critical reflection of agency, the fallibility of human perception, the power dynamics of those involved and the ensuing analysis, which I acknowledge to be my own contestable interpretations of data. Further, in acknowledgment of these concerns, the methodological approach used in this work, personalised case study evaluation, explicitly recognises these such contextual features (Yin, 2009; Kushner, 2000).

Methodology

Methodology can be defined as "a theory and analysis of how research should proceed" (Harding, 1987, p.2) and leads to the method(s) employed in particular research (Carter and Little, 2007). I used personalised case study evaluation (Kushner, 2000) as my methodological framework for the present study. In this section I describe each aspect of this approach and outline my justification for its use. In this vein I identify the specific purposes, strengths and concerns with both evaluation and case study research and how such features interrelate with the contextual and insider research (Floyd and Arthur, 2012) nature of the present work. In defence of my chosen methodological approach I also give brief attention to discounted alternative methodologies similarly consistent with my epistemological positioning.

(Personalised) evaluation

Evaluation research is conducted in order to gain an understanding of what is happening in particular circumstances (Newby, 2014) and to establish the degree to which something is working (Thomas, 2011; Creswell, 2009). Evaluation research predominantly concerns the effectiveness of particular programmes (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016; Plewis and Mason, 2005), although as Newby (2014) argues, this is not always the case:

evaluation can also focus on processes or activities. Indeed, the evaluation in this work addresses any forms (or, activities) of professional development of which lecturers and middle managers engage. In addressing research question one I established a snap-shot representation of FE lecturers' and middle managers' engagement with professional development (this being the 'what is happening'). To address research question two I ascertained what constitutes effective professional development (or, the 'degree of effectiveness'), although in this instance, through the perceptions of those involved, thus constituting a 'personalised' evaluation (Kushner, 2000; Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999). Finally, my responses to research question three involved consideration of the implications of the findings corresponding to the first two questions.

I had not intended to apply an intervention or cycle of interventions to current professional development activities, as characterises action research (McNiff, 2002). It made little sense to intervene in current professional development in order to investigate potential improvements when there was little qualitative research that could inform decisions regarding any such interventions. Indeed, the only publication at the time of writing that has sought to illustrate current professional development in the sector is the flawed ETF (2018) report discussed in chapter two. I would note, however, that the evaluation presented in this work could nonetheless serve as a precursor to subsequent action research (Alkin, 2011).

In recognising the tensions between externally mandated evaluation, often positivist in its planning and process (McNamara and O'Hara, 2004), against an interpretive approach, this research is framed by the latter, as discussed earlier. Kushner (2000) argued that personalising evaluation recognises that participants' own lives, beliefs, values and work contexts is important: measuring (professional development) activities against their objectives is meaningless in itself, unless we also consider how those objectives relate to the lives of people.

In accordance with Kushner (2000), MacDonald (1985) also argues that evaluation should be underpinned by the experience of participants. For me,

this stance to evaluation, as distinct to a discrete evaluation model of which Kushner (2000) does not present, offered a useful methodological foundation with which I could pursue my research that was consistent with my interpretative, constructivist positionality. Indeed, this approach locates contextual variables informing the perspectives of research participants at the core of evaluation research.

Personalising evaluation according to Kushner (2000, p.9) means focusing on the experiences of participants rather than "an aggregate level of analysis" or "through the rhetoric of sponsors or managers". I understand the use of the word managers here to refer to employees involved with policy interpretation and who in turn hold power to decide the content and form of (learning) programmes, and as such are not involved as participants in the present research. Adopting this approach to evaluation requires caution, as advised by Kushner (2000, p.9):

> There is no case for using evaluation against any stakeholder group; though there is a case for asserting a compensatory principle in favour of those who start out with relatively lower levels of access to evaluation.

Personalised evaluation offered a vehicle by which I could privilege the "voice(s) from below" (Gleeson *et al.*, 2015, p.1), although it was also important that I also acknowledged my own voice in the process of analysis (Kushner, 2000). The evaluation contained within this work thus differs from much evaluation research in that evaluation is often commissioned and owned by sponsors (such as policy makers or organisations) who themselves define the purposes, agenda and uses of findings (Stockman and Meyer, 2013). Such research is usually informed by, and conformative to, the politics of such sponsors (Stronach and Morris, 1994). In such instances the researcher (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.48):

> may be unable to stand outside the politics of the purposes and uses of, or participants in, an evaluation […] Research ceases to become open-ended, pure research, and, instead, becomes the evaluation of given initiatives.

Therefore a particular concern with evaluation research is that it can be driven by, and used for, particular pre-determined political means such as to justify

or corroborate policy decisions. However, while this work is not sponsored or steered by the agendas of other organisations, nor does this mean this research is free from political influence. I question the blanket assertion by Radford (2008, p.506) that the work of researchers is "governed by a sense of objectivity and independence from ideological beliefs". This argument represents to me a naïve position which either misses or disregards the political dynamic as a constituent feature informing individual agency. As Griffiths (2003, p.68/90) argues, "everyone we meet are social, political creatures" who are located by "socio-political positions [informed by] race, class, gender, sexuality and so on". In accord with this argument, I suggest that no individual interaction with research is apolitical. I therefore align with the position, as articulated by Karlsson and Conner (2006, p.56), that evaluation and politics are inseparable in all circumstances, acknowledging that it could be argued that this position "must eventually lead to the abandonment of scientific principles" as the researcher needs to (therefore) engage in corresponding political, ethical and moral issues.

Thus, this work is informed by my own politics (Qu and Dumay, 2011), from the methodological choices I make and my method of obtaining data, to the analytical processes I apply and the assertions I draw from data. The data obtained in my research is likewise informed by the politics of the research participants through the answers they provide. The potential application (or not) of my research findings are similarly informed by the politics of each reader, such as college managers, lecturers and, potentially, policy makers. Indeed, any knowledge generated from this work by way of evidence, explanation and resultant propositions (Caplan, 1991) may feed into the decision making process for future professional development at an organisational level, and perhaps more widely, only if it is determined to be politically acceptable by those individuals managing professional development provision (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Therefore even ostensibly independent evaluation research cannot evade political influence as all parties interacting with research are informed by their own political positionality. By 'independent' I mean self-initiated, self-planned and self-funded research, free from (external) organisational or policy agendas.

Evaluation research: frameworks for analysis

In pursuing an evaluation methodology I needed to determine both what precisely should be evaluated regarding professional development and which framework for evaluation (if any) I would use. Various frameworks for evaluating professional development in education are proposed in the literature, each corresponding to distinct and sometimes overlapping foci, for instance: professional development content (Desimone, 2009; Borko, 2004); the nature of participant involvement and teacher agency (King, 2014; Earley and Porritt, 2010; Fraser *et al.*, 2007); contextual elements such as organisational and policy contexts (King, 2014; Desimone, 2009; Fraser *et al.*, 2007); and impact, such as student outcomes (Guskey, 2002). Not dissimilar to other academic fields, McChesney and Aldridge (2016) argue that the literature relating to the evaluation of professional learning in education is characterised by disagreement and mutual critiques, underpinned by divergent epistemological and methodological arguments.

Early in the realisation of this work I considered applying various frameworks for evaluation, such as those cited above (including King, 2014; Earley and Porritt, 2010; Guskey, 2002) and particularly that of Desimone (2009). I was drawn to the argument presented by Desimone (2009, p.183) that characteristics of professional development should be the focus of evaluation rather than development activities *per se* (similar to Fraser *et al.*, 2007, of whom this position is inferred rather than directly articulated) and that these characteristics should centre around five features of professional development commonly identified in the literature that are:

> […] critical to increasing teacher knowledge and skills and improving their practice, and which hold promise for increasing student achievement (Hawley and Valli, 1999; Kennedy, 1998; Wilson & Berne, 1999): (a) content focus, (b) active learning, (c) coherence, (d) duration, and (e) collective participation.

Indeed, I added the feature of duration to my analysis as this feature was absent from my chosen approach (see below). My epistemological position was also in accordance with Desimone (2009) that teachers' self-report data

(of professional learning and resultant changes in pedagogical practices) comprises a valid means to evaluate professional development and its impact.

In the event, however, I applied the triple composite framework of Fraser *et al.* (2007) as it offers, for me, the clearest and most coherent framework to present data and facilitate the analysis of the following aspects of professional development: latent purpose(s); learning content in connection with professional relevance; teacher agency; and contextual features. These features (as with Desimone, 2009) are consistent with the holistic theory of learning proposed by Illeris (2007) as they encompass the consideration of learning content; learners' motivations and volition to learn; and of wider contextual features such as the learning environment, communication and cooperation.

Thus in order to organise and generate meaning from the transcribed interview data, I clustered data (Miles and Huberman, 1994) according to the triple lens composite framework proposed by Fraser *et al.* (2007), comprising approaches developed by Bell and Gilbert (1996), Kennedy (2005) and Reid (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007). Fraser *et al.* (2007) argue these three frameworks combine to offer professional development researchers a comprehensive approach for analysis according to contexts, purposes and conditions, respectively. Firstly, Fraser *et al.* (2007) consider forms of professional development according to their purposes, labelled transmission, transitional or transformative. Professional development for transmission comprises passive skills updating, often planned and delivered by a third party expert. Transitional professional development activities, such as coaching, can support the underlying agendas of both the organisation and the individual. Transformative development activities are characterised by professional autonomy and professional inquiry, such as action research (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). The triple composite framework also considers the learning focus of professional development in reference to personal, social and occupational contexts. Thirdly, professional learning is evaluated according to four conditions in which professional development takes place, these being formal or informal, and planned or incidental activities.

In addition, I added a fourth lens of analysis, absent from the framework of Fraser *et al.* (2007), in order to also facilitate analysis of the dynamics of timeframe and frequency of engagement and how they might relate to perceptions of effective professional learning. This additional lens was born from my initial alignment to the argument that professional learning requires sufficient time to achieve (Desimone, 2009; Cohen and Hill, 2001; Guskey, 1994).

The framework proposed by Fraser *et al.* (2007) is not uncontested. My own concern with this framework related to the ambiguous manner in which some characteristics of professional development are defined by the authors, which could introduce difficulties in attempts to accurately characterise and analyse different forms of professional learning. In order to reconcile such ambiguities I drew from more precise definitions elsewhere in the literature, particularly from Kyndt *et al.* (2016) and Richter *et al.* (2011) in reference to what constitutes informal, as distinct to formal, professional learning. See chapter four for further discussion on definitions for these terms.

McChesney and Aldridge (2019) claim the framework of Fraser *et al.* (2007) omits the consideration of impact of professional development. My response to this concern is twofold. Firstly, it *is* possible to evaluate the impact(s) of professional development through the lenses of Fraser *et al.* (2007, p.160), who state that in evaluating the learning focus through their model the impact of professional learning is considered "on an individual basis", with the individual referring to the teacher(s). This approach is consistent with an emancipatory conception of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) whereby teachers' professionalism and expertise is recognised and individuals are therefore entrusted to articulate the impact of their own professional learning on both themselves and, ultimately, their students. This approach also aligns with my epistemological positionality as detailed earlier.

My second response to McChesney and Aldridge (2019) is that while I agree impact comprises a key feature in the evaluation of professional development, and I (do) consider impact to the extent of participants' perceptions as expressed above, attempting to interrelate impact with specific forms of

professional learning is a highly contestable and complex process that itself represents a distinct focus warranting discrete research. To illustrate the complexity of such an endeavour, improvements in students' outcomes could derive from one or more of the following (not exhaustively): teachers' changed pedagogical practice following a particular form of formal or informal professional learning activity (Desimone, 2009); the introduction of learning technologies in the classroom (Goddard, 2002); physical learning environments (Cleveland and Fisher, 2014); contextual differences among learner cohorts in reference to educational backgrounds, behaviours or volition to learn (Illeris, 2007); the enactment of changed curriculum or other salient educational policy; or even random variations in outcomes over time. Therefore, I decided that it would be sufficient for the evaluation in this work to consider impact in the terms expressed by Fraser *et al.* (2007).

Case study research

In this section I move from an introductory discussion of case study and what this approach purports to achieve, to a discussion of the precise characteristics of the case researched in this work, including contentious aspects. I also consider how the case study methodology is coloured by the insider-researcher nature of the present work.

Case study research offers a framework in which to gain a holistic view of a particular issue in its contexts (Yin, 2009; Stake, 1995). Case studies recognise the multiple variables operating within a particular case (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007) to enable the development of a representation of what is occurring (Balbach, 1999). My proposed research is thus the case *of* professional development (the issue) *in* an FE college in England (the contexts) through the perceptions of its key participants (lecturers and middle managers). Through framing my research as a case study, I could focus on the discovery and analysis of rich, in-depth and context specific knowledge (Thomas, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2006).

In the social sciences, case study research seeks the thick description (Geertz, 1973) of participants' thoughts and experiences of a phenomenon. Merriam

(1998, p.19) summarises key characteristics and in turn my rationale for applying a case study methodology:

> A case study design is employed to gain an in depth understanding of the situation and the meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice and future research.

This description resonates with Flyvbjerg (2006) who considers a key strength of case study research to be that it facilitates the development of context-specific knowledge, a form of knowledge that characterises an expert or virtuoso (drawing on Bourdieu, 1977) level of understanding in a particular field of study. As Flyvbjerg (2006, p.222) contends, "context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity". The epistemological position assumed with this approach is that "case knowledge is central to human learning" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.222). Thomas (2011) argues that a core characteristic of case study research is that this form of deeply contextualised, specific knowledge is valued above knowledge that purports to be generalisable. Indeed, Thomas (2011) contends that criticisms of case study research based on its limited ability to generalise are tempered by the argument that across social sciences research there is little possibility for significant generalisation. The legitimacy of case study research is instead drawn from the development of exemplary knowledge and phronesis (Thomas, 2011, p. 211):

> Seeking generalisability – seeing generalisability as the first and most important aim of social science – can inhibit or even extinguish the curiosity and interpretation that can come from phronesis.

At the centre of my decision to apply case study research in this work is my desire to develop this form of knowledge, phronesis, through abduction (the development of explanatory arguments based on the enquiry of a specific case), while also embracing contextual complexities, and developing an analysis that acknowledges the provisionality of my argument and (thus) potential fallibility (Thomas, 2011).

There are both divergent and overlapping forms of case study research articulated among prominent scholars in this field (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2009;

Mitchell, 2006; de Vaus, 2001, Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Thomas (2011) advises that researchers articulate the subject or origin of the case, followed by the purpose, approach and process the research will follow. In this vein, the present research can be defined as a local case, defined by Thomas (2011, p.77) as research that constitutes "an example of something in your personal experience [in this case, professional development in an FE college] about which you want to find out more". This focus is distinct from a key case or an outlier case, the former constituting an exemplary case of some phenomenon, the latter form inferring the investigation of a phenomenon due to its divergence from the perceived norm (Thomas, 2011).

The purpose of this local case was instrumental (Thomas, 2011; Stake, 1995), and evaluative (Merriam, 1998; Bassey, 1999). It was instrumental in that the purpose was to examine a case in order to gain insight into the specific issue (Stake, 1995) of professional development. This purpose contrasts with general interest intrinsic case study research in which the case itself is of principal interest (Stake, 2005). The present case study was also evaluative, as this work was framed by my aim to establish participants' engagement with professional development and to determine what professional development is effective, according to participants' perceptions. Further, this case is an individual (Robson, 2002) or single case (Yin, 2009) as it was not one of a series of individual (case) studies undertaken to obtain a (more) complete picture of a phenomenon (Robson, 2002; Stake, 1995). However, this study could later become one of a series of subsequent case studies in this field.

The exact coverage of case study research is somewhat contested. Creswell (2004) maintains that case studies are concerned with single bounded systems such as a person or an organisation. Yin (2009), however, argues that case studies cannot disregard the contexts in which they are situated. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) suggest a case study can comprise both these conceptions, although they do not elaborate on instances whereby case study involves the study of a phenomenon in isolation from its contexts as suggested by Creswell (2004). My own position aligns with Yin (2009) as it would be negligent in my view to disregard contextual issues salient to the

specific case in question, such as the wider policy context (see chapters one and two) or the personal contexts of the researcher (in this case, an insider researcher) or the research participants within the organisation. Indeed, Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue that case studies seek to portray vivid and rich descriptions of aspects salient to the case through individual or groups of actors, and seek to understand their perceptions of events.

Various concerns have been expressed in connection with the use of case study in social sciences research. Yin (2009) identifies issues with determining validity and reliability through this form of research, which I address in the corresponding section relating to research validity and reliability in the present chapter. It has been variously argued (for example Patton and Applebaum, 2003; Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1984; Nisbet and Watt, 1984) that there is limited potential with case study for findings to be generalisable. This concern cannot be discounted: I cannot make claims of indisputable knowledge of professional development in the sector across England based on the data from the single case involved in this work. In response to this criticism, Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that case study findings can contribute to generalised knowledge through two processes. Firstly, a particular case can contribute to knowledge accumulation (among preceding and subsequent cases) in a field of study. Secondly, Flyvbjerg (2006) draws on Karl Popper's (1959) principle of falsification of a proposition (that all swans are white, through the single observation or, a case of, a single black swan) to argue that a case can lead to generalisable knowledge through the falsification of hypotheses or claimed knowledge relating to a field.

Moreover, this concern for generalisability reflects a deeper misunderstanding of the underlying purpose of this form of research (Thomas, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2006), discussed earlier. 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 professional development across the sector, in my research I have sought a depth of understanding of professional development in a particular context, to obtain a "nuanced view of reality" which

offers context specific, as opposed to rule-based, knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.223).

Nisbet and Watt (1984) argue that findings of case study research can be characterised as selective or biased as, it is claimed, case studies tend to confirm the researcher's pre-existing positionality of an issue. Case study research is thus argued to be particularly prone to researchers' subjectivities. This concern is particularly salient in connection with the present work given my insider-research role (Lloyd and Arthur, 2012; Unluer, 2012) at the College where I have pre-existing views on professional development that could colour my analysis or lead to cherry-picking (Morse, 2010) data to support my own argument.

Flyvbjerg (2006) counters these concerns in asserting that researchers using case study methodology commonly report that their findings often reveal errors in pre-existing assumptions or hypotheses. This form of research thus tends to enable falsification rather than verification (Geertz, 1995; Campbell, 1975). I nonetheless remained cognisant of this critique throughout my presentation and interpretation of the data, critically reflecting on my analysis and ensuring that the development of themes was shaped by the data and not by my existing views. Indeed, I found that coaching as a form of professional development had much less prominence in the data that I had assumed it might, and coaching was seldom cited by participants in reference effective professional development.

Nisbet and Watt (1984) also warn against typical pitfalls of case study research to which I also sought to avoid, particularly in relation to the use of data. These pitfalls include: the over-stating of sensational features drawn from data, in the event distorting the portrayal of a case; an over-reliance on anecdote to the detriment of in-depth analysis; and blandness, where participants' views are unquestionably accepted or the inclusion only of aspects to which participants agree (Nisbet and Watt, 1984).

In uncovering underpinning features of professional learning perceived as effective (see chapters four and five), I interconnected latent themes emergent

from my analysis of the data to salient learning theories such as those of Illeris (2007), Wenger (1998), Knowles (1984), Schön (1983) and Rogers (1969). Prominent scholars in the field of case study research have divergent positions on the role of theory. Stake (1995) suggests it is possible for theory to be absent from research with a descriptive focus, whereas Yin (2009) suggests theory can serve as a guide, particularly to exploratory case study research. In agreement with Yin (2009), my position is that drawing from theories of learning facilitates a deeper analysis of the findings as themes are developed and analysed through theoretical lenses, not in isolation. Indeed, drawing on theories of learning is appropriate in this context as professional development activities are, at least ostensibly, predicated on a desire to result in some form of learning.

Case study research and the insider researcher dynamic in a professional context: challenges and opportunities

An insider researcher can be considered as an individual who researches a group or organisation to which they themselves belong (Breen, 2007) in a professional (or other) context. There are often particular opportunities and advantages available to such researchers, although the insider researcher dynamic may also introduce additional challenges. While later in this chapter I discuss ethical considerations and reflect on my experiences as an insider researcher investigating the perceptions of the professional group to which I belong, I shall briefly indicate some features here in illustration.

Advantages to this insider research dynamic can include: having a greater understanding of the culture under study (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002); straightforward access to sites of research and gaining access to participants; the involvement of colleagues who may be particularly supportive and willing to participate; and a greater initial understanding (by the researcher) of organisational politics at the site of research (Unluer, 2012). Smyth and Holian (2008) state that insider researchers tend to possess salient knowledge that would otherwise require substantial time to acquire. Particular concerns may arise relating to: researcher bias due to the insider researchers' existing knowledge or familiarity with the case (Unluer, 2012); the potential

consequences of power dynamics between the researcher and participants (Costley and Gibbs, 2010; Mercer, 2007; Munro *et al.*, 2004; Kvale, 1996); and ethical concerns such as maintaining individuals' anonymity (BERA, 2018). I return to these concerns and how I addressed them later in this chapter.

Discounted methodological approaches

In addition to case study research other methodological approaches consistent to my epistemological framing of this work were available. I had to therefore decide which approach would, to my mind, best address the research questions I had presented. The alternative approach to which I gave most consideration was narrative enquiry. In narrative research the principal aim is the (re)presentation individuals' stories, often in a chronological order (Creswell, 2018), that in this instance could facilitate the contextualised analysis of participants' perceptions in relation to professional development. However, as Creswell (2018) argues, the purpose of narrative enquiry is to explore the life of the individual, whereas the focus of case study research is the development of in-depth descriptions and analysis of a phenomenon (in this instance, professional development). For this reason I applied the latter methodology. While I wanted to give voice to participants and locate responses by how participants are biographically situated (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) using the personalised approach to evaluation advocated by Kushner (2000), the primary focus of the present work was to study professional development (as perceived through individuals) rather than focus on life stories *per se*. Case study research was therefore consistent with my focus on establishing engagement with professional learning (research question one), analysing what is effective (research question two), and considering the implications of such findings (research question three).

I was able to more straightforwardly discount other qualitative methodological approaches. For instance, my aim was not to seek the generation of theory through grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), nor did I intend to explore the meaning or essence of a phenomenon by way of phenomenology (Creswell, 2018; Petty, Thomson and Stew, 2012). Nonetheless, in defending my decision to use case study research in this research, I do not mean to infer

that this was the only possible methodological approach. Indeed, it could be argued that a narrative approach might better give voice and contextualise the perceptions of participants than case study research, hence this was a difficult decision. As argued earlier, however, my prime concern was to develop some level of phronesis relating to the field of professional development *per se.*

Research methods

A research method comprises a specific procedure by which data is collected for subsequent analysis (Creswell, 2009). The choice of method(s) used is informed by: the epistemological position assumed by the researcher; methodological decisions; the ability of a method to answer research questions; and feasibility of the research given the available time, resources and access to participants (McNeill and Chapman, 2005). In this section I outline and defend my choices of method for data collection in this work. The first method I had planned to apply, focus groups, was abandoned due to the practicalities considered below, but merits some brief attention nonetheless, in presenting a comprehensive depiction of my research journey and to chronicle key considerations I made when determining which methods to apply.

Focus groups

I had planned to carry out focus groups with FE lecturers in order to enable the emergence of data through the interaction of participant groups discussing professional development. This would comprise the exploratory phase of my research (Barbour, 2007). I had hoped focus groups might also serve to reveal salient themes I had not previously anticipated (Barbour, 2007). In addition I wanted to use focus groups in order to triangulate data obtained from individual interviews (Robson, 2002; Bailey, 1994). I had planned for groups of between six and eight participants (Fowler, 2009), albeit inviting more to each group, as advised by Morgan (1988), in order to counter potential non-attendance. I considered how I might attempt to achieve diversity in both demographic representation (Barbour, 2007) and representation across

academic and vocational subject areas in order to obtain perspectives that would to some extent reflect voices across the College.

I was also cognisant of the limitations and risks of focus groups. For example, groups may involve non-participatory members or participants who dominate; and discussion may lead to disagreement or conflict (Barbour, 2007). I had planned to mitigate these issues through encouraging (a greater degree of) equal contributions where necessary and attempting to ensure respect among participants.

In the event, I was not able to organise focus groups at the College. I found I was unable to organise a focus group on a day, time and place that a group of lecturers and/or middle managers could attend. After multiple failed attempts to organise a group, I determined that for pragmatic reasons I should focus my time on the individual interviews (discussed below). I had established that the differing availability of colleagues and demands placed on colleagues' time were incompatible with this method in this research context. In the College, colleagues commonly work on a part-time basis, on multiple sites, on different days, at different times and manage substantial workloads which vastly restricted the availability of nearly all the potential participants I approached. I equally found that attempting to organise a focus group subsequent to individual interviews, with the same participants, was not possible for the same reasons. I was (perhaps naïvely) surprised by this problem of practicality as in my early reading of the literature concerns relating to focus groups tended to focus on aspects such as potential power imbalances within groups (Newby, 2014) rather than practical challenges of arranging groups. Such challenges are (albeit fleetingly) noted elsewhere, however (for example, Howard, Hubelbank and Moore, 1989).

With some irony I had realised that the only potential time I could successfully convene focus groups at the College would be during college-wide professional development days, in which all lecturing staff are mandated to attend. These events therefore comprised the only occasions lecturing staff were potentially available at the same place at the same time. I would not, however, organise focus groups on these days: to draw colleagues away from

professional development sessions at such events would represent an unacceptable ethical concern to my mind, in that I would be diverting participants' time away from their own development activities by way of their attendance (instead) at my focus group.

Interviews

The research method I used comprised one-to-one semi-structured interviews with lecturers and middle managers at the College. In reflecting my epistemological positionality, outlined earlier, this method "regards knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversation" (Kvale, 1996, p.14). Through interview, I could access the in-depth perceptions, beliefs and interpretations (Connolly, in Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016) of colleagues in reference to professional learning, including unexpected information (Morris and Twitchen, 1990). I would emphasise that my use of interviews as the research method was to establish and explore participants' perceptions of what comprises effective development activities, not to (claim to) provide a definitive definition or generalised description of what constitutes effective professional development. This position is consistent with the tenets of personalised case study evaluation as outlined earlier (Thomas, 2011; Kushner, 2000; Stake, 1995).

There are a number of differing forms of interview reflecting varied purposes, structures and focus (Qu and Dumay, 2011; LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Patton, 1980). In the present work I used semi-structured interviews. I produced in advance an interview schedule in order that the research questions could be addressed, but I also permitted a degree of digression on the part of interviewees to enable coverage of additional salient aspects and to deviate from my schedule to pursue such lines of enquiry (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

I chose this method as semi-structured interviews would offer a dynamic in which a researcher/participant rapport could be developed, facilitating the elaboration of thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of participants' perceptions. Connolly (in Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016, p.139) argues that

though developing a positive rapport with research participants, it is possible to encourage more "forthcoming and fulsome" responses. Being an insider-researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012) fortuitously provided me with a head start in this regard. As the interviewees were my work colleagues, we enjoyed an existing rapport and, to my mind, relationships of trust (Atkins and Wallace, 2012). Albeit framed through the lens of my own interpretations, my experiences appeared consistent with the assertions of Palaiologou, Needham and Male (2016) in that I would characterise my participants' responses as predominantly both forthcoming and fulsome, as their views appeared to be expressed frankly, openly and in depth.

Face-to-face interviews enabled me to consider the multi-layered features of communication between participants and myself. In addition to the words uttered by participants, I could reflect on paralinguistic and non-verbal cues such as tone of voice and body language, respectively. In so doing I could seek to gain a greater insight of participants' perceptions and attitudes in connection with professional development (Mori et al., 2011), while remaining cognisant of the inherent subjectivities involved in such communication analysis. I captured such non-verbal aspects through brief written notes during and immediately after interviews, in acceptance that this approach may constitute a minor distraction (Oltmann, 2016). I would also reflect on my own spoken and non-spoken language during interview, and the potential impact of my own performances as an interviewer.

However, my primary focus was to discover participants' constructs of reality (Creswell, 2009) in connection with professional development, not to interpret responses through analytical methods focusing on language. Thus, while these additional language aspects served to further colour my analysis of participants' perceptions, my analysis is not centred on interpretations or judgments of participants' verbal and non-verbal language per se. In one interview for instance, while a participant stated verbally what she perceived to be the evaluation process following mandatory professional development, her tone, facial expressions and shoulder shrugging in that moment indicated to me her uncertainly in her own response. In the analysis I would not therefore

judge that the process as described by this participant is not in place, rather I would describe her understanding of an evaluation process at the College as (in my interpretation) tentative in nature (as I do in chapter four). I further discuss such features in connection with planning considerations and in reflecting on my research experience, below.

I acknowledge that such interpretation of non-verbal communication is not unproblematic, with potential for both interviewee and interviewer non-verbal communication to be misinterpreted. For instance, such an approach can (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p. 568):

> […] introduce the potential for response bias, because participants may [themselves] read interviewers' reactions to participant responses and adjust their replies accordingly.

Further, it may be that I misunderstood para-linguistic cues due to cultural variations unknown to myself (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Non-verbal communication, such as expressiveness and silences, for instance, can be understood differently among distinct cultures and individuals (Semani-Azad and Adair, 2014; Ephratt, 2011).

Other criticisms of interview also require attention. Bernstein (1974) warned that using verbal data to analyse events and viewpoints can be incomplete and therefore misleading. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.12) go further to suggest that interview research can be "unreliable, impressionistic and not objective". However, such criticism itself draws on contested positivist leaning assumptions of how both reliability and objectivity are defined, to which I return in the corresponding section below. Nonetheless, these concerns served as a useful reminder that I needed to acknowledge I could not claim to definitively 'know' the inner intentions or motivations of participants or how these aspects may inform answers to interview questions. Indeed, this position is consistent with the constructivist framing of this work and (thus) the acceptance of the provisional nature of knowledge.

There is also the concern that the researcher will over-represent their own position in data (Bernard, 2011) through cherry-picking interview data (Morse, 2010) to confirm the researchers' pre-existing beliefs or assumptions. I aimed,

through an openly reflexive and self-critical approach to analysis, to address this concern to the fullest extent possible. Nonetheless, such mistakes can occur within the inherent nature of the interview as a human endeavour. Hitchcock and Hughes (1989) maintain that even with the avoidance of such obvious errors, "because interviews are interpersonal […] it is inevitable that the interviewer will [always] have some influence on the interviewee and thereby, on the data" (in Cohen, Morison and Manion, 2001, p.204).

Other concerns include participants' answers being clipped if given insufficient time to reflect or formulate full answers (Kvale, 1996) or if insufficient time has been allowed for the interview. I also needed to avoid giving advice rather than listening, and to close interviews too soon (Field and Morse, 1989). The interviewer/interviewee power dynamic also affects responses (Munro *et al.*, 2004) as discussed in the research ethics section below. In addition, responses may be restricted according to the level of spoken English of participants (Bailey, 1994). I therefore also considered these aspects throughout my data analysis in chapters four and five.

Discounted alternative methods

Potential alternatives to face-to-face interviews were telephone or Skype interviews. Telephone interviews are a commonly used method (Knox and Burkard, 2009) as they enable interviewee participation without the need to travel. The timings of telephone interviews can also be more flexible (Musselwhite *et al.*, 2006). Further, telephone interviews (specifically) can reduce bias due to the absence of perceived visual agreement or disagreement of the interviewer through facial expressions (Musselwhite *et al.*, 2006; Shuy, 2003). For these reasons I considered the use of telephone interviews at some length, particularly as this method might enable greater participation among harder to reach (Opdenakker, 2006) part-time lecturers whose time for participation in research was particularly limited (see chapter five for further discussion on the limited participation of this group and the implications of this for the findings in this work).

Despite the potential advantages of telephone interviews, I did not pursue this approach for two reasons. Firstly, in-person interviews would enable me to consider paralinguistic and non-verbal features during and after interviews, as discussed in the preceding section, thus enhance my ability to collect authentic and deep perceptions (Brown and Danaher, 2017). Although Skype interviews might offer the same advantage, I also found through initial discussions with colleagues regarding their potential participation that a consistent preference for in-person interviews had emerged. Indeed, all the colleagues whom I consulted wanted to participate in work time, rendering the telephone or Skype interview option redundant. Thus, face-to-face interviews were the preferred approach for participants and it was appropriate, in my view, to accommodate such preferences (as also advised by Knox and Burkard, 2009).

Interviews were not the only feasible research method to obtain data in this work. The primary alternative method comprised the use of questionnaires. This predominantly quantitative approach (Rowley, 2014) offered the possibility of engaging with a large number of participants and thus potentially obtain a considerable quantity of responses. It also offered the possibility to acquire data I could straightforwardly categorise and group through, for instance, Likert scale answers (Rowley, 2014) and potentially triangulate findings with other methods. Opie (2010) notes that questionnaires are particularly useful in obtaining statistical (quantitative) data, such as percentages of respondents who feel a particular way. The nature of such data would, however, offer only limited depth and detail, and as such inconsistent with my pursuance of rich, in-depth data. Using questionnaires would therefore be somewhat inconsistent with my epistemological framing of this work. The possibility of open-ended questions in questionnaires often fail to achieve a similar depth to interview responses as respondents often feel less inclined or less confident expressing views on paper (Opie, 2010). Conversely, interviews enable participants to explain their views "with greater richness and spontaneity" (Oppenheim, 1992, p.81).

Interviews: planning considerations

In this section I make reference to various additional considerations for research interviews and how these considerations interlink specifically with the present research.

Type of interview: As discussed above, I used face-to-face semi-structured interviews (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992) as the method to obtain participants' perceptions of their experiences of professional development. Fontana and Frey (1994) place semi-structured interviews in the centre of a continuum of a structure and formality, between structured and unstructured interviews, whereby an interview schedule is used alongside a leeway to digress into different themes within the interview as they arise. Semi-structured interviews enabled me a degree of control and flexibility that offered the advantages succinctly stated by Opie (2010, p.118):

> a depth of feeling [can] be ascertained by providing opportunities to probe and expand the interviewee's responses. It also allows for deviation from a prearranged text and to change the wording of questions or the order in which they are asked.
>
> Although provision for negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewee's responses is made, the semi-structured interview will also impose an overall shape to the interview and help prevent aimless rambling.

I recognise that as the use of semi-structured interviews involves probing and follow up questions in light of differing responses, the effects of my own performance need to be considered (Qu and Dumay, 2011, p.247):

> […] semi-structured interviews are able to produce different responses contingent to the traits of the interviewers. Different interviewers will evoke different responses from the same interviewee given the way questions are asked and probed.

Piloting: Gillham (2000) advises the use of pilot interviews, characterised as a practice run of questions in a developed state in the same research setting as that planned for subsequent interviews. Through a pilot interview (with 'Milo') I was able to clarify ambiguities and potential areas of confusion caused due to the wording of questions. The pilot also provided an opportunity for me to rehearse, reflect on, and develop my interview skills (Gillham, 2000). For

instance, I found through reflection both in-action (during the interview) and on-action (following the interview) (Schön, 1983) that I would need to give greater time to participants to respond to my questions before asking or determining myself whether alternative wording or clarification was required. In addition to learning that more time was reasonably required for participants to process and respond to my questions, such a moderation in approach facilitated, to my mind, a better flow of interactions in subsequent interviews.

Sampling and participants: I applied purposive sampling (Robinson, 2014), to attempt some degree of representativeness both demographic and of subject areas within the College workforce. I therefore planned to interview four middle managers and ten lecturers who work across both vocational provision (such as hairdressing or construction) and academic provision (for example, 'A' levels). These numbers were informed by both what I perceived to be adequate in order to generate sufficient data, coupled with the time and financial cost involved (Gillham, 2000). I also aimed for at least half of the participants to be part-time lecturers in order for the data to reflect and give voice to this majority group in the FE workforce (ETF, 2018) whose access to mandatory professional development was, I suspected, somewhat limited, due to differing work patterns.

I was able to interview the desired number of participants from these corresponding areas of the College. However, the eventual participants were predominantly full-time colleagues, with only two part-time lecturers involved. I found access to this group to be problematic due to this same issue of differing working hours and correspondingly restrictive time availability to participate in research interviews.

I also acknowledge that the nature of voluntary participation in my research could lead to unavoidable self-selection bias (Robinson, 2014) whereby those who consented to participate may have distinct perceptions, attitudes or contexts to those who did not, in a manner unrelated to my sampling criteria. I could only remain cognisant of this concern and the possible impact of this feature on my findings. Indeed, as noted above, my findings and analysis was framed by the responses of participants who were predominantly full-time

colleagues. Likewise, interview responses would (intentionally) privilege the perceptions of mid-career colleagues, as defined in chapter one.

Access: The insider-researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012) nature of this work facilitated easy access to research participants. As an employee of the College for over ten years and as a teaching and learning coach who works with lecturers and managers across subject areas, I had existing contact and access to colleagues across the breadth of College provision. In determining who I approached to participate, I took chance opportunities in staffrooms to approach colleagues I knew to work in differing areas of College provision. I discuss this approach further in the ethics section of the present chapter, below.

Interview locations, arrangements and timing: Various practical considerations of interview were anticipated (advised by Gadd, 2004; Kvale, 1996), such as interview locations and the potential for interruptions or distractions during interview. I had aimed for interviews to take place where interruptions or other distractions would be less likely (Newby, 2014; Field and Morse, 1989). I also considered seating arrangements. I sought to establish a face-to-face positioning, but at an angle, as opposed to directly opposite participants and behind a table, so as to avoid a potential job interview feel which may result in participant anxiety or stage fright (Field and Morse, 1989).

On reflection of the pilot interview and the earlier interviews, I determined that I also needed to recognise the potential influence of the day and time of day of interviews and indeed recognise the time of year (I do not claim this to be a novel idea: see, for instance, Bullock, 2016). I realised that responses given at the beginning of a new academic year could potentially differ from those articulated during a period of exams, for instance, or immediately before or after a professional development event.

Recording and transcription: The interviews were recorded by a voice recorder. I had concluded that I could not make sufficient notes to capture full responses and immediate notes on tonal or non-verbal aspects (although I took brief written notes to record non-verbal aspects during responses). I could

also use the recorded data to more precisely analyse responses and reflect on issues of bias or misunderstandings which may have occurred during interviews.

Interview research often overlooks specific considerations in relation to transcription, according to Bird (2005) and Kvale (1996). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) urge that where transcription is used the researcher must state the conventions to which the transcriptions adhere. Thus, in the following paragraphs I discuss my process of transcription and a critical reflection of this process (Lapadat, 2000). I transcribed my interview recordings verbatim, but not in full. I transcribed sections that I determined to be pertinent in addressing the research questions only (see appendix four) and I acknowledge this process to be an act of subjective interpretation. I used an ellipsis (three dots) to indicate the omission of discourse markers, extended hesitation or repetition, and digressions that I determined were not somehow relevant or useful to my analysis of perceptions of professional development. This decision was largely for pragmatism: I wanted to focus the greatest part of my available time to data analysis rather than data transcription, while, as across interpretive enquiry, acknowledging the subjectivities inherent in selecting particular extracts in such a manner. Indeed, Walford (2001, p.92), in discussing the "fetish of transcription", argues that he seldom transcribes all interview data due to the immense quantity of time required to achieve a full transcription.

Nonetheless, I recognise the contestability of this approach to transcription, particularly the concern that selective transcription can result in language which does not "represent the real world" (Oliver, Serovich and Mason, 2005, p.1). Further, Lee (1993) identifies the potential for transcriber selectivity of the data. However, Kvale (1996) argues that aiming for some form of completeness in transcription is unachievable, and advises researchers to instead focus on a process of transcription that is useful for the research being undertaken. Kvale (1996) further argues that even ostensibly full and detailed transcripts constitute selective interpretations of a social situation. The apparent benefits of producing a full transcription are not unproblematic in any

case. For instance, the production of a full transcription of all the data for the reader does not in itself enable the researcher to claim a more accurate representation of data (Gibbs, 2007).

For me, the cost of employing a transcriber was also prohibitive and thus not an option. Even were I to employ a third party for this task, concerns would remain with regard to both the technical choices in their presentation of the spoken word in writing and in their interpretations of what was said by participants. The use of transcription software can address issues of time, however the reliability of the transcription is limited by the accuracy of the speech recognition of the chosen software (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

In chapters four and five my presentation of the findings and corresponding analysis include illustrative quotations from the interviews in the form of these partial transcriptions. Para-linguistic elements of speech, such as long pauses; vocal inflections and tone; speaker volume; pace of speech; and non-verbal communication and behaviours (Atkinson and Heritage, 1994) are not represented by a particular symbol or code to indicate such features. I instead make reference to these features within my corresponding discussion of the quotations where salient to the analysis. I felt that this approach would enable the clearest representation of participants' voices for the reader.

The use of illustrative quotations: Direct quotations are used to illustrate salient perceptions and assertions made by the participants. As in the transcription itself, I use an ellipsis to indicate the omission of discourse markers, repeated words or phrases, or digressions from the principal point being illustrated. I do not use the term 'sic' to indicate the intentional inclusion of incorrectly spoken syntax or lexis on the part of participants, as these features constitute naturally occurring speech (Brown, 1994) and can, I suggest, imply a judgment by the researcher of the spoken language used by the participant. I use square brackets '[ ]' to interject within quotations my own words or comments, with the intention to clarify meaning where I determine this to be necessary for the reader. I again acknowledge the subjective nature of this processes and the contention that I am reforming the voices of the

participants through my own situated interpretations (Kvale, 1996). I also remained cognisant of this concern throughout the process of analysis and proceeded with continuous critical reflection and reflexivity (Lee, 2009; Holloway, 2005).

Following the interviews I consulted with participants regarding my transcripts where I felt it necessary to check meaning, in attempting to portray an authentic representation of their perceptions (Mero-Jaffe, 2011; Lapadat, 2000), although I align with Walcott (1994) who suggests that in interpretative research attaining full accuracy and authenticity in reporting data will remain an unachievable endeavour and should therefore not be claimed as such.

Personal dynamics and other non-verbal aspects: Oppenheim (1992, p.70) argues that interviewers need to consider their own tone of voice; maintain a polite manner; dress appropriately; manage personal space; present a non-judgemental approach; and demonstrate an authentic "willingness to listen". These features correspond to appropriate conduct for research interviews and explicitly demonstrate respect for the time and effort of individuals in their participation. In addition, professional power dynamics between the interviewee and interviewer are explored in the ethical considerations section below.

The language dynamic: I was also concerned with the use of language in the interview context. The extent to which research participants and I shared a lexis of pedagogy and professional development differed according to each participant. Participants' use of such language is informed by qualifications, experiences, dispositions and cultural backgrounds (Qu and Dumay, 2011) and was not, therefore, a straightforward matter of us sharing a common language of teaching and learning. Qu and Dumay (2011) assert that even when the interviewer and interviewee may be using the same terminology, words may carry different cultural meanings according to each person. I needed to therefore remain aware of the terminology I used during interviews and adjust my phasing where necessary to facilitate the engagement and understanding of participants. I likewise clarified my own understanding of

participants' responses through repeating back answers using my own phasing for confirmation (or clarification) and asking following up questions.

I was aided in this need to be conscious of language use by experiences in my regular work as a teaching and learning coach. In this role I communicate with colleagues from a range of backgrounds, from new and unqualified lecturers at one end, to, at the other end, experienced and highly qualified professional lecturers with sophisticated understandings of learning processes. In my experience colleagues tend to use a corresponding level of pedagogic language when discussing teaching and learning; thus, it has been necessary that I become well versed at mirroring language used by those I am coaching.

I also needed to consider that respondents' primary language may not be English, and that this may affect the understanding or interpretation of words and meanings. My experience as an English for Speakers of Other Languags (ESOL) lecturer, and as a learner of another language myself, aided in my approach: my awareness of language use and the need to develop a mutual understanding between those I interact with is, in my every day work, a primary concern and thus at the forefront of my thinking. English was the second language of two of the participants. Such language considerations were minimal in this instance, however, as both participants possess what I professionally consider to be an expert command of the English language, indicated through accurate syntactic and lexical usage, such as their uses of the subjunctive form, colloquialisms and idiomatic expressions.

Developing questions: I developed a question schedule for the interviews (see appendix three) with open questions (Newby, 2014) intended to be springboards into relevant discussion which could subsequently be steered by interviewee responses. The questions were worded to ensure clarity, while providing participants the scope to interpret and apply their own understandings and meanings to concepts and experiences. I also wanted to avoid question wording which might restrict answers, steer particular responses or suggest correct responses (O'Leary, 2010). Indeed, the pilot interview served to refine the subsequent wording of my questions to avoid

such pitfalls to the greatest extent possible. I also wanted to avoid the use of pedagogical language that may be outside of the understanding of some colleagues, as considered above. The following two questions from the schedule illustrate the straightforward and open (question) wording I had sought:

- What does professional development mean to you?
- What, in your view, characterises effective professional development in relation to your work as an FE lecturer?

Such questions both enabled me to address the research questions and recognise the professional agency and perceptions of the participants who could steer their responses according to their understandings of these concepts, precisely the data I was seeking to obtain. There was also, therefore, scope through this approach for the identification and discussion of features I had not foreseen (Morris and Twitchen, 1990). The ordering of the questions was also important (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016) as a logical sequence of questions would enable the development of a flowing and coherent conversation in which participants' ideas and perceptions could develop through the course of the interview (Fielding and Thomas, 2001).

Interpreting answers: In framing interviews as a "situated event in which the interviewer creates the reality of the interview situation" (Qu and Dumay, 2011, p.247), I acknowledge participants' responses as immediate in nature, that is to say responses might be more developed or nuanced (although not necessarily more 'true') were participants given an hour or a day to respond. The thematic analysis later in this work is therefore framed by such responses. Although participants were invited to subsequently check transcripts in order to modify or extend responses where they determined this necessary, no participant chose to make changes to what they had said during interviews.

My interpretations of responses at the data analysis stage would also be coloured by paralinguistic and non-verbal cues, as discussed earlier. In addition, it must be recognised that underlying motivations or behaviours may result in misinformation given by participants during interviews (Walford, 2001). I return to this feature in the ethics section below.

There was also the possibility to consider what has *not* been said in interviewee responses and explore potential meanings of the absence of particular answers (Dilley, 2000). In reference to forms of professional development not identified or discussed by interviewees, it may be that some learning activities are so brief, informal and embedded in participants' daily routines, such as over-the-photocopier conversations (Fraser, *et al.*, 2007), that some participants do not associate these activities with moments of professional learning. Indeed, in the present work, informal, unplanned staffroom or over-the-photocopier conversations among colleagues were not once identified as a form or conduit for professional learning across the ten lecturer participants and only by one manager participant. It can be inferred from this that, among the participants, when new knowledge is acquired between colleagues through such moments, this constitutes a form of unconscious learning (Illeris, 2007). This form of learning has also been termed implicit learning (Reber, 1993), in which (Simons and Ruijter, 2004, p.213):

> People do not realise that activities they are undertaking or processes they are involved in, can or will lead to changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes and/or learning ability. Awareness of learning *processes* (thus explicit learning processes) can arise before, during or after the activities and processes. Sometimes this awareness does not arise at all. When learning outcomes are implicit, people do not realise what they (have) learn(ed) during activities such as working, playing or problem solving.

Composition of participants

I was pleased to be able to interview the full number of participants I had planned over the summer and autumn of 2018, ten lecturers and four middle managers (see table B below). The pseudonyms of the participants were self-selected. It must be noted also that the chosen names do not correspond to an assumed gender in all instances. All but two of the lecturer participants were female, a representation above the sector average of 61% (ETF, 2019a), and three of the four manager participants were female, again constituting an over-representation of the current sector average (ETF, 2019a).

Table B: Research participants

Pseudonym	Role and Curriculum Area	Time in Further Education	Full-time / Part-time
Stuart	Lecturer: vocational	5-10 years	Full-time
Maya	Lecturer: vocational	5-10 years	Full-time
Jane	Lecturer: vocational	11-15 years	Part-time
David	Lecturer: vocational	11-15 years	Full-time
Jen	Lecturer: vocational	11-15 years	Full-time
Poppy	Lecturer: academic	5-10 years	Full-time
John	Lecturer: academic	5-10 years	Full-time
Olive	Lecturer: academic	5-10 years	Part-time
Milo	Lecturer: academic	5-10 years	Full-time
Derek	Lecturer: academic	11-15 years	Full-time
Jack	Manager: vocational	11-15 years	Full-time
Hugh	Manager: academic	5-10 years	Full-time
Esmerelda	Manager: vocational	16-20 years	Full-time
Yahya	Manager: academic	16-20 years	Full-time

The lecturer participants taught among them the following range of subject areas: functional numeracy; hairdressing; aerospace engineering; electronics; teenage English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision; GCSE English; International English, forensic science; law; the certificate in English language teaching (CELTA); early years' education; health and social care; and performing arts. This coverage represents a wide ranging, albeit incomplete, range of academic and vocational provision across the College. This subject range, together with the gender balance of participants, and their time spent working in FE indicates, I argue, that my research data has an acceptable degree of validity in terms of scope of participants and corresponding data (Winter, 2000).

I was unable to include participants in some curriculum areas, such as construction provision, primarily due to practical difficulties in arranging an interview with potential participants, and due to staff turnover. For instance, two potential participants in this provision left the College after initial agreement to participate had been made by these colleagues. Further, regrettably only two of the participants were part-time staff members. Further participation from part-time colleagues would have facilitated a more

prominent voice for this majority group in the sector (ETF, 2019a) at the College and (more widely) of FE lecturers in England.

I found that arranging times for interviews for part-time colleagues was extremely limited and most often not possible, due to the nature of part-time working hours and the correspondingly restrictive time availability of these colleagues. I also found that part-time colleagues who had declined to participate were understandably not prepared to engage with in-person or phone interviews outside of work time, thus closing this potential means to reach a greater number of part-time staff.

I recognise therefore that the interview data of the present work and my analysis somewhat privileges the voices of full-time colleagues over part-time peers. I remained aware of this dynamic throughout my analysis and ensured that wider inferences I drew were explicitly framed by data that predominantly represents the perceptions of full-time colleagues who, in light of different conditions of work, may have distinct perceptions or preferences with regard to professional development.

The interviews: experiences, reflections and modifications

In order to facilitate reflection (Schön, 1983) and reflexivity (Lee, 2009) in relation to the interview process, participants and the data, I kept an interview journal (as advocated by Lee, 2009) in which I recorded my thoughts relating to all aspects of the interviews. I engaged with critical reflection throughout the period of the interviews, as advised by Alvesson (2011). The following sections represent these reflections.

The fourteen interviews varied in length, predominantly due to both the duration of participants' response times and the follow up questions I asked in each interview. I did not pursue subsequent, follow up interviews, for two reasons. Firstly, I had determined the data I had obtained was sufficient to address the research questions (May, 1991, in Knox and Burkard, 2009). I also felt (as did the participants) that I had obtained enough contextual information about each participant in order to inform my analysis of how their perceptions of professional development might be coloured by contextual

features. Secondly, while I was able to check transcripts with the participants where necessary to confirm wording or meaning after interviews, to my mind it would have been ethically problematic to ask more time of these participants of whom time is so limited. Indeed, single interviews are the most prevalent approach in education research (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006) and, more importantly, single interviews are often preferred in conditions where access to participants is problematic or when the research questions can be addressed in a single interview (May, 1991 in Knox and Burkard, 2009).

Reflections: the pilot interview and accessing participants

The experience of the pilot interview led me to be more assertive in choosing the exact location of subsequent interviews, in order to ensure a place was used where there would be a minimal likelihood of disruptions. I was initially concerned with enabling the participants to choose where to meet as a matter of courtesy. However, my pilot interview took place in an office, which resulted in the somewhat predictable interruption of the office phone ringing on two occasions. We paused the interview in these moments. Not only did these instances interrupt the flow of the discussion in the moment, I also felt that both the participant and I had begun to almost expect further, almost inevitable distractions, thus affecting our ongoing focus on the interview. There was also the potential for the anonymity of the participant to be compromised as it would have been apparent to any colleagues entering the room (although none did in this instance) that there was an interview taking place, with colleagues potentially asking questions (for interest or curiosity) relating to the nature of the interview. I determined that all subsequent interviews would take place in a classroom or empty meeting room and that a 'do not disturb' sign would be placed on the door.

Following the pilot interview I initially sought to introduce my research to potential participants via email, as in my experiences in the College this is the typical means of communication among colleagues with differing work patterns and who often work on different physical sites. In my email I introduced the purposes of my research and invited recipients to read the participant information sheet (appendix one) and informed consent form

(appendix two) I had attached, albeit not to sign at that stage. I received few responses (three) from these emails. However, I was not surprised with this low response as I had anticipated that among the typical deluge of email traffic of which FE lecturers and middle managers need to process and prioritise, my email would understandably fall into the category of least urgent. I instead started taking chance opportunities with individual colleagues, at the photocopier, or in staff rooms, to mention my research and invite their participation. I initiated such conversations at times when no other colleagues were present in order to preserve colleagues' anonymity should they choose to proceed with participation. This alternative approach proved much more effective. Most colleagues I approached appeared interested and willing to participate. This face-to-face approach had appeared to bring to life the research (for potential participants) more effectively than had emails. Ahrens and Dent (in Qu and Dumay, 2011, p.248) argue, "the task of gaining interviews with busy managers, for whom time is at a premium, is non-trivial". I would extend this assertion to include lecturers, for whom available time for participation in research interviews is equally in short supply in this context of heavy workloads (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015).

This was not an ethically unproblematic approach to obtaining research participants. Initiating contact with potential interviewees in this manner is open to concerns of subtle coercion to participate (Kvale, 1996). It can be argued that colleagues might struggle to decline in-person invitations to participate as a matter of courtesy or due to power-differentials (Qu and Dumay, 2011) between the insider researcher and colleagues who may feel unable to decline for fear of reprisal. I determined that the likelihood of such unintentional coercion was minimal. As I hold the same lecturer position as those I approached, and a subordinate position to potential manager participants, I considered colleagues' decisions to participate would unlikely be determined by concerns of power imbalances or reprisal. Further, colleagues I approached appeared to understand the voluntary nature of participation and that they could reject my invitation to participate should they wish for any or no reason, indeed, I explicitly stated these aspects to colleagues. In the event, two colleagues opted not to participate and by their

own accord explained their particularly busy workloads during what was an exam period in their subject areas.

Reflections: being an interviewer and interviewing colleagues

I discovered in the pilot interview how initially challenging it was for me, as a novice interviewer, to make follow-up, unplanned questions concisely and with brevity. As discussed earlier in reference to the pilot interview, I had also restated or elaborated on the planned questions too quickly and verbosely, as a reaction to my perceived belief that clarification was required. I soon realised that participants appeared, for the most part, to be simply pausing to consider their responses. I therefore strove to give space for participants to do so without further input from myself. Most participants appeared comfortable asking for clarification where required in any case. I thus become more accustomed to, and comfortable with, moments of silence (Qu and Dumay, 2011; Doyle, 2004; Kvale, 1996). Further, as noted by Qu and Dumay (2011), moments of silence can also reveal areas for which participants do not want to divulge their understandings or opinions.

I felt that my ability to pursue new or different lines of query improved with experience. During earlier interviews, I had followed my schedule closely, likely due to a combination of nerves on my part and an overriding concern to ensure my research questions had been addressed. In later interviews, I more fluently asked follow-up questions, in the event more truly enacting the semi-structured nature of the interviews, as articulated earlier.

Without exception, in my perception contributions by participants were frank and sincere. As an insider-researcher, the existing relationships I had with the participants provided a dynamic enabling a strong platform for trust and openness (Mercer, 2007), although this dynamic also presented problematic elements. As some participants spoke negatively of other colleagues or particular College professional development activities or processes, some individuals appeared to seek, through gesture and intonation, either tacit or explicit acknowledgment and sometimes agreement on my part. At such times I attempted to maintain a neutral expression and not give any spoken

indications of my own views. I cannot claim to have been always entirely successful in this attempt, however. On one occasion an automatic reaction for me was to nod and smile in response to comments to which I held strong personal agreement. I felt nonetheless in the analysis of interview responses that participants' comments had not been instigated or developed further in light of my responses. For me this occurrence represented a "spontaneous and genuine rapport" and not part of a conscious attempt to 'do rapport' or 'fake friendship' in the negative terms described by Duncombe and Jessop (in Miller *et al.*, 2014, p.118) whereby:

> They [the interviewer] encourage or persuade interviewees to explore and disclose experiences and emotions which – on reflection – they may have preferred to keep to themselves or even 'not to know'.

Reflections: interview responses

I was surprised that among responses there appeared little divergence between the perceptions of academic and vocational lecturer participants, as I had assumed prior to the interviews, due to differing contextual features (such as professional backgrounds) steering their perceptions. It became apparent during the interviews and through my data analysis that the professional histories of mid-career FE lecturers in this research did not simply correlate with, or determine, lecturers' engagement with professional development activities or perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development.

I found vocational and academic lecturers' responses were more aligned than I had anticipated, perhaps in part as the professional biographies of the two groups were not always as straightforwardly delineated as might be assumed. To illustrate, a vocational lecturer, 'Stuart', had had an academic, rather than vocational, educational background: he had earned a degree in law. Conversely, Derek, whose professional background had been in the retail sector, was now teaching foundational degree art history at the College. Even in instances whereby the participants' subject areas represented their professional backgrounds, their responses still predominantly overlapped in my analysis, and underpinned the latent themes expressed in table D, below.

In my analysis I therefore considered what other underlying features brought participants' responses together regarding professional development, such as agency, subject relevance and appropriate physiological conditions for learning. Where there were divergences in participants' responses I ensured I presented and explored these alternative viewpoints, in order to ensure I was not cherry-picking data (Morse, 2010) or failing to recognise conflicting data that would enrich the analysis. In this manner I sought to ensure the greatest possible validity in my presentation of the data.

Similarly, the findings indicated there to be few substantive differences between the lecturer and middle manager participants. I propose that the mostly shared perceptions among participants relates, in part, to a common lack of voice and agency in the planning, implantation and evaluation stages of mandatory professional development and a shared desire to enact an emancipatory from of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) through particular processes for, and forms of, professional learning. The participants tended to articulate shared perceptions regarding what features they consider to underpin effective professional development: for instance, the data from both lecturers and middle managers indicated a clear preference for professional development that relates specifically to their subject areas and aspects of teaching or learning they themselves identify as addressing personal (or team) professional development needs. These aspects are discussed particularly in connection with themes 1.1, 1.3 and 2.1 (see table D and chapters four and five).

Middle manager participants' responses were particularly enlightening with regard to planning processes for mandatory professional development. The organisational position of these managers tended to enable a deeper insight into the planning of these such development activities. I would note, however, that even among middle managers' responses there was little consensus regarding a specific procedure of planning at the College. This feature is discussed below in connection with the Quadrants of Teacher Learning lens (Fraser *et al.*, 2007) through which the processes of planning for mandatory professional development are considered.

Acquiring from participants their views of what constitutes effective professional development was often accomplished through first allowing participants to discuss what they perceived to be ineffective. Participants tended to speak more assuredly about features of ineffective (rather than effective) professional development. For instance, colleagues were often quick to illustrate examples of ineffective professional development and, conversely, more hesitant in drawing on examples of what they perceive to be effective. This tendency indicates to me a prevalence of negative perceptions among the participants towards generic or one-size-fits-all mandatory professional development which is reflected in other education sectors (Ingleby, 2018; Luneta, 2012; Beavers, 2009; Robson, 2006; Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Hustler *et al.*, 2003), and which informed the development of theme 1.2.

I was surprised by the limited range of professional development activities which most participants identified and discussed. Participants spoke predominantly of mandatory whole College development days, located within the formal, planned quadrant of Reid's analytical framework (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007) as presented in chapter four. It appeared throughout most of the interviews that these events were at the forefront of interviewees' conscious (Illeris, 2007) or straightforwardly identifiable experiences of professional development in the sector. It may be, then, that some other informal, spontaneous forms of professional learning constitute tacit learning (Reber, 1993). Indeed, these forms of professional learning are by nature elusive and difficult to capture.

Further, several forms of professional development which I know to be taking place in the College were rarely identified by participants during the interviews, such as coaching and individual action research activities. In addition, participants seldom made reference to appraisals or the observation process as sources informing the planning of development activities. As I suggest in chapter five, it appears that appraisal and observation tends to not be connected to professional learning among the participants in this case study, despite the articulated purposes of appraisal and observation in College policy documentation, as discussed in chapter one.

Validity and reliability

Embracing the complexities of interpretative enquiry involves the close consideration of research validity and reliability, and I concur with the position of Thomas (2011) that research in the social sciences (in this instance, education) must be approached in a manner distinct from the positivist epistemological approach inherent in natural sciences research (although such distinctions have been contested, for instance Goldacre, 2013; Silverman, 2013). Contrasting ontological and epistemological positions result in contested meanings for these terms (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016), therefore, definitions and applications of these terms are considered in this section.

Validity can refer to the extent to which research has resulted in data which measures or addresses what it intends to measure (Noble and Smith, 2015). Scaife (in Opie, 2010) argues that validity extends to the choice of research method itself, the data resultant of the chosen method, and any ensuing claims to knowledge made by the researcher. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p.179) argue that "at best we strive to minimalise invalidity", and in this vein I do not claim to have achieved absolute validity in this research.

Generalisability

Generalisability concerns the potential wider application of findings, also referred to as external validity (LeCompte and Goets, 1982). It is argued that interpretive enquiry presents inherent issues with generalisability, as such enquiry is often located by particular contexts and thus regarded as specific to a particular research activity (Nudzor, 2009). This concern is compounded by the particular circumstances underlying case study research (Thomas, 2011; Patton and Applebaum, 2003; Nisbet and Watt, 1984). Yin (2009) argues validity is difficult to assert given the unique context of case study research, and that the analytical rather than statistical nature of case study analysis can offer only limited claims to truth. As argued earlier, context-based knowledge enables a deep understanding of a phenomenon and is thus useful despite concerns of generalisability (Thomas, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Thus, there is

no pretence that findings within case study research represent a picture of what is happening in all circumstances outside of the researched case, rather, a rich understanding of the dynamics of the case is sought to develop some degree of phronesis. As Thomas (2011, p.7) argues:

> We escape from a tendency too often found in academic writing to obfuscate with abstractions rather than clarify with specificity; to bring a fog over the topic in hand with abstract words and the seeking of generalisation where none is possible and none is helpful.

While I agree with this position, I would add that the replicable nature of this research can, I argue, enable the potential future development of generalisations as this study could comprise one of multiple (later studied) cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995).

Credibility

Scaife (in Opie, 2010) considers credibility as an extension or elaboration of research validity, although others (such as Sapsford and Jupp, 1996) infer that credibility is a central aspect of validity. Lincoln and Guba (2000) define credibility as the extent to which findings can be trusted. Ma (in Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016. p.31) elaborates: "credibility […] is prioritised, i.e. data analysis and interpretation are trustworthy in the sense that they are true descriptions of the phenomenon". Sapsford and Jupp (1996) echo this position and contend that to establish validity in research assertions and inferences drawn by the researcher need to reflect the data that underpins interpretations.

I have used strategies recommended by Noble and Smith (2015) and Sturman (1999) as guides in my attempt to achieve credibility to the fullest extent possible in the present work. Strategies involved: ongoing reflexivity and critical reflection throughout the research process and subsequent analysis; the use of audio recordings to enable the revisiting of participants' accounts and themes emergent from data analysis; the use of extracts from participants in order that readers can judge as to whether themes truly reflect participant accounts (Noble and Smith, 2015); presenting data transparently in such a way as to enable alternative analysis; presenting data which challenges the position of the researcher; acknowledging biases; and checking data quality

(Sturman, 1999). In reference to this final aspect, my ability to triangulate data as a procedure to verify the quality of my data was curtailed in part at the point I decided to not proceed with focus groups.

My attempts to realise valid research are visible throughout this work. At the design stage, I selected a research methodology and method consistent with my epistemological framing, and capable of addressing the research questions. During the interview process I sought to recognise and address issues related to the interview process. In analysing and reporting my data I actively sought to avoid cherry-picking data (Morse, 2010) to reinforce my initial beliefs, for instance, that engagement with coaching would be frequently identified by participants as an effective means of professional development. Indeed, the findings found this to be a baseless assumption: only two participants fleetingly identified coaching as a form of professional learning, thus serving to falsify my presumption. I also revisited the data frequently in order to avoid making inferences or drawing conclusions that were insufficiently supported by the data (Noble and Smith, 2015).

Reliability

Reliability tends to mean research replicability, accuracy and the possibility for consistency in findings (Noble and Smith, 2015). Defining reliability in these terms assumes a positivist epistemological lens (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) as variables can be closely controlled and data measured as in natural sciences research. This interpretation of the term reliability is thus contestable in reference to qualitative, social sciences research, as these tenets are argued to be incompatible with corresponding approaches (Thomas, 2011; Golafshani, 2003). The notion of reliability as requiring replicability is poorly suited to approaches that seek to recognise and embrace the "uniqueness and idiosyncrasy of situations" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.202) and involve the subjective (and potentially differing) interpretations of researchers (Kvale, 1996). Thomas (2011, p.63) argues that expectations of reliability in connection with case study research are necessarily reduced in his view, as:

> […] with just one case, there can be no assumption from the outset that,
> if the enquiry were to be repeated by different people at a different time,

similar findings would result. […] A common approach is to hold on to the notion of reliability as a criterion for the assessment of all research, even research that could never achieve (and would never want to achieve) findings that are consistent from one time to another or one researcher to another.

This position on reliability in reference to qualitative, interpretative research is not universally held, however. Silverman (2013, p.301), for instance, argues that researchers in the social sciences domain need to still articulate to the reader the procedures used to ensure "your methods were reliable and your conclusions valid". While my position is close to that of Thomas (2011), I am mindful of the concern of Silverman (2013) as I agree that a dismissal of the concept of reliability in any form would represent, for me, an incompleteness in addressing methodological considerations. While Scaife (in Opie, 2010) argues reliability in terms of accuracy and consistency of results may not be a useful criterion to ensure the quality of research, there are alternative means to claim research reliability. For qualitative research the term can alternatively refer to the suitability of the data gathering process; consideration of the status position of the researcher; the selection of participants; the research method used; and the conditions or contexts of research (Scaife in Opie, 2010). The first four of these features are considered in the present chapter, while the conditions and contexts of research are presented in chapters one and two and interlinked with the research findings in chapters four and five.

Thematic analysis

Once the data had been systematically organised and presented according to the triple composite framework of Fraser *et al.* (2007), and my additional lens of timeframe and frequency of engagement, I applied thematic analysis to seek patterns of meaning, themes and interconnections in the data to address the research questions (O'Leary, 2010; Braun and Clarke, 2006). My intention was to engage in inductive thematic analysis through the identification and interpretation of latent themes pertinent to the research questions.

There is little consensus regarding an exact approach for using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I adhered to Denzin and Lincoln (2000) and Boyatzis (1998) who propose that thematic analysis comprises the

systematic identification (using a coding process) and interpretation of themes emerging through analysis of the data, a process that has the potential to draw a rich and detailed account of data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The thematic analysis in this work is inductive, in that I considered theme development as deriving from data itself, rather than from existing concepts, the latter constituting a deductive approach (Wyse *et al.*, 2017). Boyatzis (1998) notes that themes can be directly observable in data (the manifest level) or can represent features underpinning or interlinking data (the latent level). My thematic analysis is characterised predominantly as the latter.

The application of thematic analysis required consideration for what I would determine to constitute a theme and how I might identify and compare the potential significance of themes emerging from my analysis of the data. The prevalence of a data item or topic emerging across participants' responses would indicate the emergence of a theme, although as Braun and Clarke (2006, p.10) warn "more instances do not necessarily mean the theme itself is more crucial". I followed the guidance of Braun and Clarke (2006, p.10) in reference to assigning a level of significance to a theme: "the 'keyness' of a theme [can be determined by whether] it captures something important in relation to the overall research question[s]".

As with any approach to data analysis, I recognise that thematic analysis has potential pitfalls. For instance, I needed to ensure I did not make claims in the analysis that were not represented (or poorly represented) in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I also needed to ensure that my analysis, framed within an interpretivist, constructionist epistemology, would acknowledge that other interpretations of the data are possible.

I would note that thematic analysis represents one of several potential approaches to interpretive data analysis. Thematic analysis constituted to my mind the 'best fit' approach in this work, in that the characteristics of thematic analysis were (both) in harmony with my constructivist positionality and enabled me to develop responses that could best address the research questions. Alternative approaches included narrative analysis, whereby data

is sequenced to represent how people make sense of their world; discourse analysis, which focuses on underlying features of communication *per se*; and phenomenological analysis, which focuses on participants' interpretations of lived experiences (Wyse *et al.*, 2017). The latter form of analysis, albeit similar to thematic analysis, is instead wedded to a phenomenological epistemology, thus theoretically bounded (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis, however, is unconstrained by a particular epistemology, thus its application is compatible to constructivist and other paradigms (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Through repeated readings of the data, I embarked on a process of open coding, meaning the identification and labelling of salient ideas or categories within the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) in order to capture features of potential relevance in addressing the research questions (see table C, below, as an illustration of my coding). These codes then informed the development of themes, constituting "larger patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organising concept" (Clarke and Braun, 2017, p.297). For instance, the codes 'peer learning / sharing practice' and 'sharing research in communities and landscapes of practice' were later amalgamated into the theme: (2.5) Learning in a community (of practice) (borrowing the lexis of Wenger, 1998) as I had determined that these codes shared an underlying meaning (in this instance, learning within and across communities of FE lecturers and managers).

I considered a particular pattern of data to constitute a theme according to my own judgement in light of both its prevalence in the data and its salience to the research questions. I would note in reference to prevalence, however, that it was not necessarily the case that higher instances of a potential theme present in the data correlated with its importance. As Braun and Clarke (2006) advised, I needed to judge whether patterns constituted a pertinent theme of analysis predominantly in light of their relevance to the research questions.

I began to notice (open) codes as I transcribed the data and through subsequent, repeated reading of the transcriptions. I firstly used colours (using a highlighter tool in a Word document) to highlight comments in the transcripts to identify potentially salient features of professional development discussed by participants (see table C, below). I then considered how these features

might interrelate through latent themes underlying these codes. For instance, the development of theme 1.1. emerged as I noticed, through repeated readings of the transcripts over time, that the participants' perceptions of professional development, and what they considered to be the planners' perceptions, corresponded with underpinning emancipatory and managerialist conceptions of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) respectively. For example, 'Stuart' considered that professional development should address individual learning needs, representing a feature of the emancipatory conception of professionalism. Conversely, 'Stuart' perceived mandatory professional development (planned by senior managers) to predominantly involve the communication of policy or organisational updates (see page 154), representing a managerialist conception of professionalism, whereby lecturers are passive recipients and compliers of management directives.

Table C: Illustration of data codification (interview with 'Stuart', vocational lecturer)

Extract from interview transcript	Codes
I read around subjects quite a lot….I'll read papers… sometimes it's a case of reading an exec summary and saying is that interesting, **is that relevant**…good lit reviews and **blogs** are really useful to…almost fact check that where that thought took me is…has anyone done that before…**webinars which I watch**… thinking about what current practice is, **what current practice is used by others**…**FE Research Meet a cross college idea** that you're bringing research into FE and…practitioners from HE coming in to speak but you've also got **FE practitioners taking about their action research**…it wasn't a college organised event…it has host colleges. I took part with this as one of its host colleges …you can have a look at videos of speakers…**It sparks reflection**	**learning content *relevant* to individual** **Online activities** **Peer learning / sharing practice** **Sharing research in among communities / Landscapes of practice** **Reflection**

Table D below presents the themes emergent from my analysis of the data. The themes addressing question one correspond to engagement with either mandatory or non-mandatory professional development. In the second part of chapter four I use each theme as a heading to punctuate the corresponding discussion, within which I explain in full the meaning of these themes and present illustrative quotes that underpinned the formation of these themes.

Table D: Thematic analysis

Questions	Latent themes
1: What are lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented and evaluated?	Mandatory professional development 1.1. Conflicting purposes: a planner/recipient disconnect underpinned by contrasting understandings of professionalism in FE; 1.2. The generic character of mandatory development content and implementation.
	Non-mandatory professional development 1.3. Learning as a personal endeavour and the 'compensatory principle'.
2. What are FE lecturers' and managers' perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development?	2.1. (Agency and) learning focus: subject specificity and self-identified features of teaching and learning; 2.2. Vehicles for reflective practice; 2.3. Practical conditions conducive to learning; 2.4. Active learning and fun; 2.5. Learning in a community (of practice).

Ethical considerations

This section outlines my engagement with ethical considerations throughout my research, as counselled by Palaiologou, Needham and Male (2016, p.47):

> […] ethical praxis should be central in research, underpinning and guiding all stages of the process when determining the methodology, design, analysis, conclusions and dissemination of the research.

This research adheres 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 the organisation in which I conducted the research. This process included the attaining of

ethical approval from both organisations. Nonetheless, Ryan (2007) recognises limitations with generic guidelines when applied to insider research. Insider research is conducted in the researcher's own place of work in which Floyd and Arthur (2012) suggest additional ethical engagement is required. Thus, in this section I also discuss this additional ethical domain. Furthermore, I recognised that engagement with ethical considerations needed to include being (Palaiologou, Needham and Male, 2016, p.48):

> […] prepared for the unexpected, be prepared for changes, be prepared for messy situations that will be determined by the subjectivities of the researched.

BERA ethical standards

My initial reference point for ethical engagement in this work was the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018). These guidelines advise an underpinning "ethic of respect" (2018, p.5) for those involved in research, incorporated through adherence to particular ethical tenets. Indeed, there is a consensus that the consideration of particular ethical principles are critical to the research process, such as obtaining the informed consent of those participating and the right of participants to withdraw (Ellis, 2007; Pring, 2004). I would note, some research methods necessarily prevent the application of such aspects, at least in advance of the data collection stage. Exceptions include covert research, or working with children, for instance (Sikes in Opie, 2010), in which obtaining the voluntary informed consent of research participants is not compatible with the mode of research or those being researched. Such instances, however, were not pertinent to the present research.

The key tenets for consideration as identified by BERA (2018) comprise: voluntary informed consent; transparency; right to withdraw; incentives to participate (which I did not use in this work); potential harm arising from participation; privacy and data storage; and disclosure. In this instance I did not need to engage with ethical considerations relating to working with children or vulnerable adults.

(Voluntary informed) consent*:* BERA (2018) indicates that potential participants need to understand and voluntarily agree to participation before the commencement of the research. This includes providing information regarding the purpose and process of the research, the rationale for the individuals' involvement in the research, and how and to whom data will be reported. Consent should be characterised by openness and disclosure to participants and avoid deception. I thus ensured that every participant read and understood (according to both their judgement and to my mind) the participant information sheet (appendix one) and signed an informed consent form (see appendix two).

Transparency: This aspect emphasises that "researchers should aim to be open and honest with participants and other stakeholders" (BERA, 2018, p.16). Further, consent, as characterised above, should extend to the use of research data for future purposes. In this vein I included this stipulation in both my participant information sheet and consent form (appendices one and two).

Right to withdraw: There needs to be a clear understanding on the part of participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage, with "any or no reason" (BERA, 2018, p.18), and with no fear of reprisal. It was necessary, however, in the participation information sheet (appendix one) to inform potential participants that there was an end date to their ability to withdraw from participation, for pragmatism. Following the stated date, the data analysis would be near competition and would be subsequently made public at some stage following submission. It would therefore be unfeasible to disentangle and retract particular participant data after this stated time.

Harm resulting from participation in research: There is a duty of care for researchers to recognise, and plan to minimise, potential risks to participants, including potential distress or discomfort (BERA, 2018). I determined that in this research there was minimal such risk to participants.

Privacy and data storage: "It is considered the norm" (BERA, 2018, p.21) for participants' data to be managed with confidentiality and applied with anonymity. Adherence to the Data Protection Act (1998) and the subsequent

General Data Protection Regulations (European Union, 2016) is advised, although participants also maintain the right for their data to be recognised publically should they wish (BERA, 2018). Further, participants' permission must be granted for the sharing of their data to the research supervisors. I therefore included this stipulation on both the participant information sheet (appendix one), the consent form (appendix two) and verbally restated this with each participant before the commencement of each interview. As part of the process of anonymity, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym for the interview and for subsequent reference in the text of this thesis. I also changed or omitted information in the transcriptions that might otherwise enable the identification of participants. Despite these efforts to ensure anonymity, I made clear that I could not guarantee the anonymity of individuals as identifying features may still be (unintentionally) included.

It must be further recognised that attempts to ensure organisational anonymity would be futile given my declared position as an insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). I could not feasibly erase public records linking myself to my place of work, which can be obtained through a simple internet search. This aspect further compounded, then, the importance of attempting to ensure the individual anonymity of participants. I was also required to carefully consider potential reputational repercussions of my research findings and analysis to the College. In part for this reason, I framed the purpose and analysis of this work on what constitutes effective professional development, rather than what is ineffective.

Disclosure: In instances whereby indications of illegal or safeguarding issues became apparent during interviews, I was required to consider the disclosure of such information to the relevant authority (BERA, 2018). This refers to comments or behaviours displayed by participants which indicate potential harm to the participant or others. I would have needed to decide whether such behaviours constituted enough a threat so as to warrant overriding the earlier agreement of anonymity and confidentiality (BERA, 2018). During this research I did not need to disclose information to other parties for these purposes.

An additional layer of ethical engagement: insider research

It may be that prior to the commencement of research, participants give verbal confirmation of understanding and formally agree in writing to the purposes and process of the research and the ethical procedures outlined above. However, insider research can present situations in which data may be obtained, but for which consent has not been given through this procedure. As a teaching and learning coach who often 'hot desks' in staffrooms across the college, I may inadvertently overhear colleagues' comments and in the event become complicit in privileged eavesdropping (Burke, 1989). I may hear remarks relevant and illuminating as research data, but for which consent has not been given to use (indeed, such information would not comprise interview data so should not be used). I needed to be aware of potential role-creep therefore as I switched between my College employee and researcher roles, and avoid gleaning unguarded confidences from colleagues for my research (Costly and Gibbs, 2010), be they pre-existing research participants or not.

I also needed to remain cognisant that my eventual approach to gaining participants as an insider researcher could be considered ethically problematic, as discussed earlier. I found approaching individuals and inviting their participation in person, without prior notice, to be effective in obtaining participants, although it could be considered that this might constitute a somewhat coercive approach. I perceived my approach to be ethically acceptable in this instance, however, as I hold the same position to lecturer participants and a lower hierarchical position to the middle manager participants. I also stressed the voluntary and confidential nature of their participation both verbally and in writing.

(Insider researcher) interviews

As regards ethical considerations of using insider researcher interviews, Floyd and Arthur (2012) refer to an asymmetry of power between the researcher and the participant. 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 (thus hold power over) their answers and the level of detail given. 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) considers there to be 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. I propose that the means by which power is held and applied as identified by both Kvale (1996) and Munro *et al.* (2004) are not mutually exclusive and instead occur simultaneously in insider researcher interviews. At the same time the interviewer shapes the questions and analyses the data, while the interviewee chooses the data they provide in the form of their interview responses.

A means to address such power imbalances involves participants at the data analysis stage (Sikes, 2006). Such efforts do not, in my view, resolve such concerns entirely; even in instances whereby participants are named as co-authors in research, the same danger of distortion as defined above (Mercer, 2007) may persist. I did, nonetheless, go so far as inviting 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 (Costly and Gibbs, 2010) and check transcripts, albeit still providing only snap-shot approval (Sikes, 2006). No participants chose to make any changes through this process.

To further mitigate such ethical concerns, the present research required transparency (BERA, 2018) through upfront and 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 also framed my representation of participants' voices and how participants' voices are juxtaposed within the context of insider research (Ryan, 2007). I therefore attempted to mitigate the ethical concerns inherent

in insider research, while recognising that ethical grey areas will inevitably remain.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have described the underpinning ontological and epistemological framework of this research and considered contentious aspects of this framework. I have also outlined my methodological choices, discussed multiple considerations of the research method applied, and detailed my interview reflections and experiences. I also summarised pertinent aspects relating to research reliability and validity in the context of qualitative, social sciences research. I finally explored ethical matters both in reference to my adherence to BERA (2018) guidelines and in light of literature that urges the additional consideration of ethical issues arising from engagement with insider research, and in particular, the use of interviews in this context.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings and thematic analysis

Opening comments

As the title indicates, there are two parts to the present chapter with distinct, albeit interrelated, functions. In the first part, I organise and report my findings salient to the first research question in a systematic manner (Lee, 2009). This difficult, often undervalued stage is "at the heart of qualitative enquiry" (Walcott, 1994, p.55) as it is crucial to draw as accurate a description of the data as possible (according to my interpretations) in attempting to get right what follows, namely, the accompanying analysis. I approach my presentation of the data through a specific analytical framework (that of Fraser *et al.*, 2007), as counselled by Walcott (1994). In the second part of this chapter I present my interpretation of the findings through thematic analysis of the research data corresponding to both the first and second research questions. To restate, these questions are:

- What are lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented and evaluated?
- What are FE middle managers' and lecturers' perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development?

I address the third research question (what can be learned by FE managers, lecturers and policy makers, through the analysis of perceptions of professional development practices in FE in England?) in chapter five, as my responses to this final question comprise the implications of the findings presented in this chapter and the recommendations I subsequently make.

As outlined in the preceding chapter, I use the lenses of the triple composite framework for analysis of professional development as proposed by Fraser *et al.* (2007). In doing so I re-present the different forms of professional development activities in which participants engage, organised by: how they are planned; their underlying purposes; and according to which personal, social and occupational aspects of professional learning are involved. I elaborate on the meaning of these constructs in the corresponding sections within this chapter. I further present the findings through my own fourth lens, of timeframe and frequency of engagement, as I shall argue these are also

salient features in the analysis of engagement with professional development. I also discuss how participants perceive formal, planned development activities to be evaluated, in order to develop a full(er) representation of professional development processes at the College. I thus present the findings through the lenses of context, purpose, scope, timespan and evaluation procedures.

Research question 1: what are lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented and evaluated?

Planning mandatory professional development

In this section I organise the data through the lens of how professional development is planned, and by whom, using Reid's "Quadrants of Teacher Learning" (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007, p.157). I use this framework as a springboard an expanded discussion regarding participants' perceptions of what informs mandatory professional development at the College. I develop this discourse in particular because engagement with non-mandatory development activities is instigated by the participants themselves, for self-identified learning purposes, as illustrated in theme 2.1 (discussed later in the present chapter), whereas who and what informs mandatory professional development in this context appears elusive and complex in the data, thus meriting particular attention.

The forms of professional development in diagram 2 (below) are positioned in each quadrant according to participants' perceptions of the extent to which they are described by participants as planned or unplanned and formal or informal in nature. The quadrants are delineated by two axes that represent two polarities, according to planning (on the horizontal axis) and formality (on the vertical axis). At one end on the horizontal axis, 'planned' indicates activities that are prearranged. At the other end 'incidental' activities are characterised as "spontaneous and unpredictable" (Fraser *et al.*, 2007, p.160). On the vertical axis, Fraser *et al.* (2007, p.160) state that 'formal' activities comprise activities "explicitly established by an agent" other than the lecturer(s), whereas 'informal' activities are pursued and realised by lecturers themselves. There is no further guidance regarding this second category by

Fraser *et al.* (2007) which leaves an ambiguity regarding the meaning of these terms. For instance, if a lecturer reads a book or watches a television documentary not directly related to pedagogy or a particular teaching subject, but which nonetheless somehow informs the lecturer's professional practice, is this development activity an opportunity established by the book author, television producer, or the reader? I interpret the development activities in these instances, therefore, according to who instigates the activity. For the purpose of this work, therefore, these examples constitute informal activities: it is the lecturer who creates a learning opportunity by engaging with such material whose original aim(s) differed from this specific purpose. Participants instigate these activities that *they* consider to constitute professional development as it will somehow inform their work as an FE lecturer. My interpretation of informal professional learning also draws, in part, from Kyndt, *et al.* (2014, pp.2393-2394) who describe such learning as:

> Informal learning is undertaken autonomously, either individually or collectively, but without an instructor. It often happens spontaneously and unconsciously. From the lecturers' perspective, it is unintentional. Finally, informal learning outcomes are unpredictable.

This definition offers a more precise definition of informal learning that articulates various circumstances of such learning, although I contest the final two assertions that informal learning is (apparently always) unintentional and that learning outcomes are (apparently in every circumstance) unpredictable. There were various occasions where the participants described their intentional engagement with learning activities for particular purposes. For instance, Yahya said, "I'll watch some of the political programmes […] read some of the broadsheets coz they'll give the bigger picture of FE". Although Yahya does not know in advance what exactly he will learn about the FE sector in each instance of engagement with these activities, I would nonetheless characterise this activity as intentional and purposeful. I therefore also drew from Richter *et al.*, (2011, p.117), who argue that informal learning activities do not "follow a specified curriculum and are not restricted to certain environments". This definition reflects the wide ranging implicit and explicit forms of informal professional learning that I wanted to consider in the present analysis.

Diagram 2: locating professional development activities according to Reid's Quadrants of Teacher Learning (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007)

```
                  whole College          online courses        formal
                  CPD days
                                      external events
          interacting with
          link colleges                              departmental
                           Study for a               activities
                           qualification
          FE Research                          1:1 peer
          Meets              Peer               coaching
                             observations
                                                  webinars
  planned  ◄─────────────────────────────────────┼─────────────────────────►  incidental

                                  TV
                               documentaries
                                                        conversations on social media

              academic                                      Talking to colleagues
              research
                        personal
                        reading

                                              informal
```
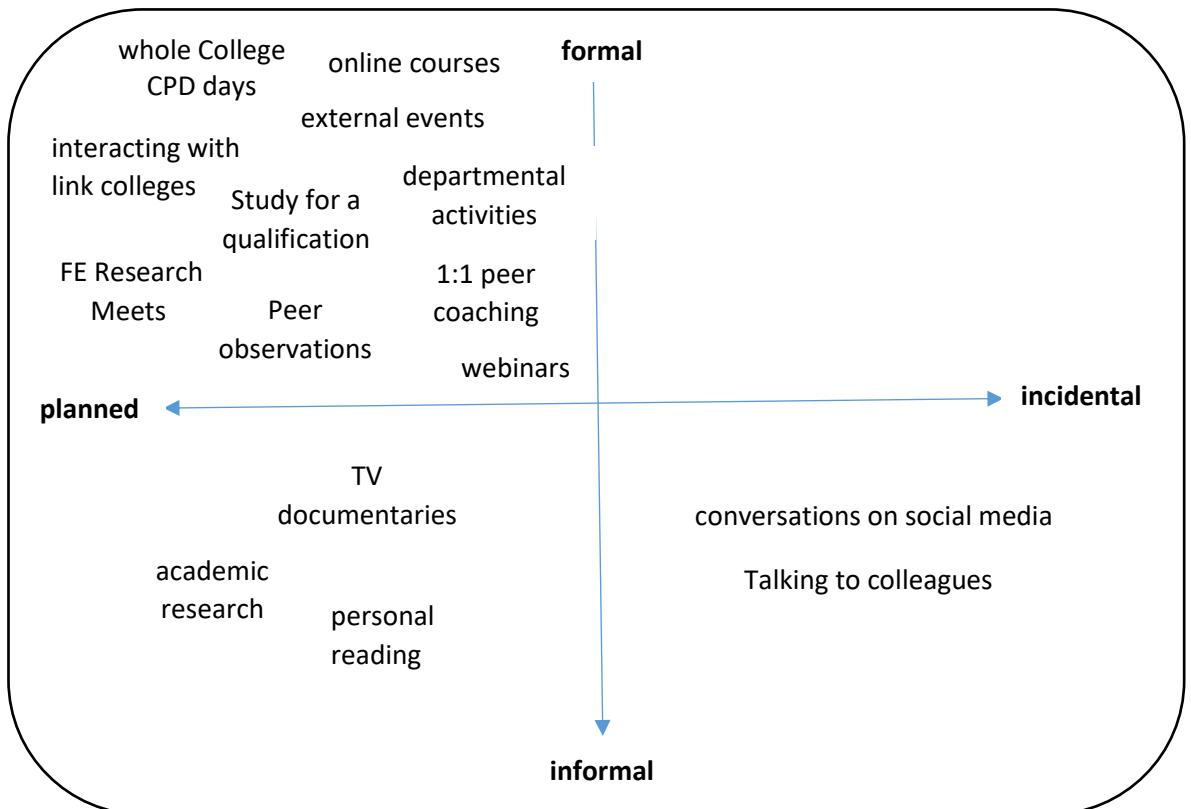
In diagram 2 I position forms of professional development according to my interpretations of how each activity is predominantly described by the participants. As different activities cannot occupy exactly the same position in the diagram, I consider activities positioned in the same quadrant to have similar characteristics in reference to planning and formality according to the data.

'Whole College development days' are events in which the whole College workforce is present at a single site for a sequence of professional development sessions that are not planned by the lecturers or middle managers mandated to attend. These sessions are predominantly (but not always) delivered by either an external speaker or a middle manager at the College, such as the four manager participants involved in this research. Part-time lecturers are not required to attend this such professional development if they do not work on the day of the event and thus tend to unavoidably forgo engagement with the intended learning content on such days:

> [Jane] I've got another job on a Friday so…I'm not quite sure what happened on that CPD day.

The implications of part-time colleagues missing these mandatory events are discussed in chapter five in connection with research question three. 'Departmental activities' refer to subject teams meeting and engaging with some form of professional development activity. 'Interacting with link colleges' is a process whereby delegates from the College visit other colleges (with current good or outstanding Ofsted outcomes) with the intention to learn from sector peers' approaches, systems and policies.

It can be seen that the forms of professional development discussed by the participants are located predominantly within the formal, planned quadrant of professional development activities, located in the top left quadrant of diagram 2. Conversely, no formal, unplanned activities (such as spontaneous peer conversations occurring during planned events) were discussed by the participants. It cannot be inferred from this, however, that such forms of professional learning do not therefore occur in this context. It could be that participants do engage with such activities but did not recall such instances during their interview, or do not perceive such activities to constitute professional development. Formal, unplanned activities could therefore constitute the implicit (unconscious) acquisition of (sometimes tacit) knowledge (Eraut, 2004; Simons and Ruijter 2004).

Some participants stated that their engagement with informal development activities (activities below the horizontal axis in diagram 2) is currently zero, or very limited. For instance, in reflecting on her engagement with such activities, Milo said: "not really, not on a regular basis, no". Jen's comments indicated some cursory engagement: "at the moment, no, other than a bit of reading". Milo said that the reason for her limited engagement with informal (non-mandatory) professional development is that "there hasn't been enough time or funding to be able to do the CPD I'd like to do". Milo's comments indicate a consequence of the impoverished circumstances in which FE operates (Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015; Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a), whereby financial support and time for professional development is often only

afforded in the form of mandatory whole College professional development events. I later argue (see theme 1.3 below) that in the absence of allocated time and funding for non-mandatory, self-determined professional development in work time, many of the participants (albeit not Maya) compensate by engaging in such activities in their own time and at their own expense. While many of the participants engage with non-mandatory learning in this manner, these circumstances have sometimes led to negative perceptions of the organisation for which they work (such as Maya), and at worst, colleagues leaving the organisation (Jane).

It can be seen from diagram 2 that most forms of professional development are instigated or planned by individuals other than the recipients. In reference to whole College development days, there was much uncertainty expressed among participants as to who within the College plans such events, although the senior leadership team (SLT) were most cited as the planners. However, responses to this question varied and the words used, in addition to paralinguistic communication (tone) and non-verbal features (in this instance shrugging and particular facial expressions) used by participants indicated uncertainty, for instance:

> [Jane]…is it maybe [the] quality [department]? I don't know…it comes from hierarchies isn't it…up above.

Derek and Jack also cited in general terms senior managers as the planners for mandatory professional development activities. John suggested more specifically, albeit still tentatively, that the SLT plan mandatory professional development, with occasional involvement from unspecified departmental colleagues. John also speculated as to the process that determines the content of mandatory development activities, whereby learning needs are perhaps identified through data metrics and relevant experts are employed to lead development events to address these needs:

> I'd like to know…in terms of who does it I'm not actually sure. I assume it's the senior leadership team…I think at times they have involvement from different departments…they rope in who they feel is best suited to meet a particular need that they have identified…but I don't know how they identify those needs…based on wider college data, maybe with

non-attendance they bring someone who's an expert on how to improve attendance…

Esmerelda (a middle manager participant) identified multiple stakeholders who plan whole College development days and expressed her lack of voice in the planning of these events:

> …we'll be told what's happening, or it's based on something that's come from Ofsted...human resources, the SLT team, it'll be the quality team, so a variety of teams. I can't remember if we've [middle managers] ever been asked what we'd like to have...

Yahya and Jack, also middle managers, concurred with Esmerelda that middle managers have little voice in the planning of mandatory College development activities:

> [Yahya] Currently we're [middle managers] sent dates in our diary, we're sent agendas and themes and then we're told to get our staff to book into these themes…the email comes from Workforce Development.

> [Jack] I think SLT run the kind of College development. I don't know what informs their choices…they see issues throughout the year and say we'll do that in July…and end up with a list of things…they'll bank them up like that…

Hugh, however, the fourth middle manager participant, considered the planning of whole College development days as a process whereby middle managers *are* involved, albeit in a limited capacity:

> Often the planning in the past, straight down from management…my involvement differs…sometimes it's something that's discussed as a wider leadership team [including middle managers], sometimes it's just something that there is in place for us and we go ahead and provide that…we are often told what should be part of the day at least.

It was not clear why Hugh's view was different in part to the other manger participants. In reference to mandatory departmental events, divergent positions were expressed by middle manager participants regarding their involvement in determining the content and planning of these events. Hugh said of departmental events:

> I have to balance it between the expectations of the College of what I do that day and what I know to be important for that team at that time as well…so both are resolved…It's left to us.

Hugh is balancing knowledge delivery, the content of which determined is by the organisation, and recognising the interests of his learners (the lecturers), a balance articulated by Dewey (1938). However, Yahya felt he has little agency in planning departmental development activities for his own team, leading to frustration on his part:

> I had suggestions that I put forward…and I was told no, because it's for other things and I can understand that...after eighteen years' experience I know how to best use that…afternoon [time allocated for professional development activities]...I'm a head of department, at the very least you should have confidence in my decisions. It's based on the assumption that you're head of department and this is what you're gonna do...I wanted to spend the first few sessions in September building a relationship with my teams...I was told that not what that time is used for. So I went straight in as instructed, [with] ProMonitor [a College IT system], attendance issues…

These responses echo the assertions of Priestley, Minty and Eagar (2014) that mandatory professional development is often perceived as something done *to* teachers, rather than activities in which they themselves have professional voice and agency. The lecturers and middle managers are thus seldom regarded as professionals capable of knowing in the Freirean sense (as discussed in chapter one) their own learning needs or how to address them. Cranton and King (2003) argue that a recognition for lecturers' values and beliefs is a critical tenet of effective professional development, yet, this feature appears sidelined in the mandatory professional development discussed by the participants. This restriction of professional agency mirrors findings elsewhere in education research (for instance, Ingleby, 2018, in the early years context). I shall argue in chapter five that although FE lecturers and middle managers may not always be aware of, or openly express, their own learning needs (Manning, 2007; Kruger and Dunning, 1999), a recognition of their voice and agency in the planning of mandatory (as with non-mandatory) professional development is (more) likely to create conditions conducive to learning.

In summary, according to prevalence most engagement with professional development by the participants comprises planned, formal activities. Mandatory professional development is predominantly, but tentatively, perceived as planned by the SLT, without the involvement of lecturer

participants and seldom that of middle managers. There is little commonality among participants' responses as to what informs the planning of mandatory professional development. Further, it is apparent that part-time colleagues often miss mandatory events to due working patterns, and there appears to be no formal procedure by which these colleagues can engage with the learning content at another time in order to catch up on what was missed by non-attendance. Non-mandatory professional development planned by participants comprises personal reading, watching documentaries and research activities. Unplanned (spontaneous) forms of professional development identified include talking to colleagues and conversations among sector peers on social media. These findings informed the development of themes 1.1 and 1.2 in particular (discussed later), in which I articulate an underlying disconnect between the participants and the planners in regard to the purposes (theme 1.1) and resultant content (theme 1.2) of mandatory professional development in this context.

Latent purposes of professional development

The 'purposes' of professional development can be straightforwardly understood to be the learning outcomes of a particular development activity. For instance, the purpose of a professional development session could be for attendees to learn a new approach to classroom behaviour management. However, Kennedy (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007) identifies an additional layer of latent 'purposes' to professional development that she characterises as transmissive, transformative and transitional in nature.

To restate these categories, transmissive professional development indicates an underlying purpose of compliance on the part of teachers or lecturers, and as such "does not support professional autonomy" (Fraser *et al.*, 2007, p.159). The purpose of transformative professional development is to link theory and practice, promote reflection and facilitate "considerable professional autonomy at both individual and profession-wide levels" (Fraser *et al.*, 2007, p.160). Professional development with a transitional purpose can either support a transmissive, compliance agenda, or a transformative agenda supporting professional autonomy (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). Table E, below, displays how I

locate the professional development activities discussed by participants according to these characteristics.

There are various possible interpretations of the underlying purposes of professional development activities when characterised in the manner articulated by Fraser *et al.* (2007). My placement of activities within these groupings are framed by my interpretations of how activities are described by participants. For instance, while whole College development days could, in particular circumstances, be perceived as transformative or transitional, participants' responses predominantly described their experiences of such events as having an underlying transmissive purpose. To illustrate, the following comments by both lecturers and a middle manager (Esmerelda, reflecting on delivering a session) were made in reference to sessions at whole College development days, which indicate an underlying purpose of transmission:

> [John] we do turn up, we sit down and we listen and, oh yeah, told to do something and we do it…

> [Poppy] More often than not it is someone talking to us, which personally I don't find effective because I switch off unless it's something I'm really enthusiastic about.

> [Milo:]…it tends to be cross the board rather than specific… there was one [development day]…she [an external expert] just kind of stood there pointing at a PowerPoint.

> [Esmerelda]…if you're getting in in the morning you think I'll just go through this PowerPoint I've been given…it's just like a meeting isn't it, it's not really CPD is it?

Table E: Participants' professional development activities grouped according to underlying purpose as defined by Fraser *et al.* (2007)

Purposes	Development activities discussed
Transformative	Talking to colleagues; personal reading; conversations on social media; watching TV documentaries; attendance at an 'FE Research Meet'; engagement with webinars; study for a qualification; 1:1 peer coaching; peer observations; academic research; online courses
Transitional	departmental meetings/events; Interacting with link colleges; attendance at external events or workshops
Transmissive	Whole college CPD days

Stuart spoke of the purposes of whole College development days from the perspective of both a deliverer and recipient at mandatory development events as Stuart has for some years voluntarily led professional development sessions at these events. Stuart believes that mandatory professional development at the College is informed primarily by Ofsted feedback to the College and thus often comprises activities with an underlying transmissive purpose:

> …I think ultimately, often, it's based around previous Ofsted judgments, so if you get an Ofsted judgment that kinda says this is an area for improvement then maybe the next two years this'll be, you know, this one line that the inspector's decided to put together will be CPD.

Conversely, participants consider most other forms of professional development with which they engage as transformative, as they involve professional autonomy and facilitate reflective practice. For instance, in reference to conversations on social media, Stuart explicitly identified reflection as a key feature:

> …it let me ask questions of people without an agenda with a higher degree of anonymity…it let me question and challenge and find out what they do and led to a lot of reflection.

Maya made the following remarks in reference to directive coaching support that infers, albeit more implicitly, a form of peer supported reflective practice:

> I do [find coaching effective], especially if somebody comes in and watches your lesson and says, actually do you realise if you do that you know…you could do that this way...do you realise you're actually standing in one place …there's various things you kind of pick up.

Coaching as a vehicle for professional learning in education is increasing in prevalence (Lofthouse, 2019; Jones, 2015; Burley and Pomphrey, 2011) although there are contested understandings of the core purpose(s) and criteria of coaching (Ives, 2008). Lofthouse (2019, p.39) argues:

> Coaching allows both coach and coachee to 'share', 'learn' and 'find solutions' through their participation, with an expectation that dialogue would be both 'exploratory' and 'reciprocal'.

Directive coaching is a form of coaching, as indicated in Maya's comments above, whereby the coach makes suggestions or gives advice in "equipping

people with the tools, knowledge, and opportunities they need to develop themselves" (Peterson and Hicks, 1996, p.14), specifically when a coachee lacks the current experience or knowledge to arrive at their own solutions.

I consider external professional development events as transitional, as they are described by different participants as either transformative or transmissive. Derek spoke of his engagement with external workshops as constituting a transformative form of professional development:

> …a workshop where they…take you through techniques and activities…skills which you can immediate translate to the classroom...immediately latch onto aspects of the curriculum...it benefits you because you learn more, but it also benefits your students in a direct way.

Maya, however, chooses to engage with external events with transmissive purposes, in order to focus on compliance in the form of policy updating that directly informs her subject specific vocational knowledge:

> …to keep track of what changes are coming through…me checking the government requirements all the time...every time I will go back and see because every year it changes…

Maya's emphasis on policy compliance as a key reason for professional development is coloured both by the specific legal requirements of her subject (which I shall not disclose in order to maintain her anonymity) and perhaps also by her professional background as a former Ofsted inspector, a role in which demonstrating adherence to externally mandated standards is paramount (previously the Common Inspection Framework, now replaced by the Education Inspection Framework in September 2019). Indeed, in reference to mandatory College development days, Maya values professional development that focuses on transmissive compliance:

> I think the Inset days that we're having now are far more effective than the ones we were having before…key messages coming through...it's given us a better understanding of how funding works, how we get rated, things like that.

Theme 1.1 (see below) emerged in part from the nature of mandatory professional development activities that are characterised as having transmissive purposes. Conversely, themes 2.1 (agency and learning focus),

2.2 (reflective practice), 2.4 (active learning and fun), and 2.5 (learning in a community of practice) suggest a correlation between transformative activities and activities that participants characterise as effective.

Scope of professional development: aspects of professional learning

The third lens of the triple composite framework comprises Bell and Gilbert's (1996, in Fraser *et al*., 2007, p.157) "aspects of professional learning". Bell and Gilbert (in Fraser *et al*., 2007) consider professional learning to involve one or more aspects, each involving corresponding points of focus, as indicated in table F, below.

Table F: adapted from Bell and Gilbert's aspects of professional learning (in Fraser *et al*., 2007)

Aspects	Focus
Personal	- teachers' beliefs, values and attitudes; - teachers' interests and motivation
Social	- collegiate relationships, between groups and individuals (such as through communities of practice); - contexts, which can be supportive or restricting
Occupational	- links between theory and practice; - intellectual stimulation and professional relevance

In table G, below, I present the development activities discussed by participants in relation to these aspects. It can be seen in table G that participants consider most activities they discuss to involve all three aspects of professional learning. These same activities are characterised as transformative or transitional in purpose. To illustrate, Stuart explained FE Research Meets, and in so doing linked this form of professional development to all three aspects (indicated in italics):

> A cross-college idea that you're bringing research [*occupational: linking theory and practice; intellectual stimulation*] into FE and…practitioners from HE coming in to speak but you've also got FE practitioners talking about their action research [*social aspect: communities of practice*; *personal aspect: interests and motivation*]…it sparks reflection [*occupational aspect: intellectual stimulation; personal: interests and motivation*].

Table G: professional development activities and the aspects of professional learning they address (Fraser *et al.*, 2007)

Development activity	Aspects
peer observations	Personal, social, occupational
conversations on social media	Personal, social, occupational
talking to colleagues	Personal, social, occupational
attendance at external event	Personal, social, occupational
attending 'FE Research' meets	Personal, social, occupational
engagement with webinars	Personal, social, occupational
departmental meetings	Personal, social, occupational
1:1 peer coaching	Personal, social, occupational
academic research	Personal, social, occupational
watching TV documentaries	Personal, occupational
study towards a qualification	Personal, occupational
personal reading	Personal, occupational
online courses	Personal, occupational
interacting with link colleges	Social
whole college CPD day	Social

Four of the professional development activities discussed in interviews encompass solely personal and occupational aspects: watching TV documentaries, studying towards a qualification, personal reading and online courses. These activities were discussed by participants with little or no reference to collegiate relationships, rather, as a personal pursuit of knowledge corresponding to respondents' personal and occupational interests. John spoke of engagement with online courses and study towards a qualification that involve personal and occupational aspects:

> …the learning that I did online was very useful because it helped me in terms of managing my workload…marking, coz I've always had a problem with marking [*occupational: professional relevance; personal: interests*]

> …the CMI level 3 course that I'm doing now is really challenging me to actually up my game [*personal: interests and motivation*] in terms of teaching and how I manage the classroom and my workload again [*occupational: professional relevance*].

Participants discussed whole College development days and interaction with link colleges in reference to social aspects, predominantly (but not solely) in reference to the perceived restrictive contexts in which they occur: mandatory attendance, planned by others, and transmissive in nature (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). In turn mandatory, whole College development days are described as

frequently side-lining the personal and, ironically, occupational aspects of professional learning:

> [Poppy]…if people have been forced to go…then they're automatically, you know, a bit resistant to it.

> [Olive]…if you've just someone standing there talking at you for longer than about twenty minutes you tend to switch off…I just tend to switch off and feel frustrated...

> [Yahya] There's been occasions when…I've been sat there thinking this has got nothing to do with me...it's really interesting, but I can't see how it'll help me tomorrow.

Yahya has little professional interest in the content of some College development day activities as he perceives some content as irrelevant to his work (neglecting the occupational aspect) and does not encompass a learning focus that engages with his professional interests (the personal aspect). These events were seldom discussed as linking to personal values and beliefs or having professional relevance (however, see Maya's comments above, indicating her favourable perception of these events, as a contrasting viewpoint).

As discussed in connection with themes 1.3 and 2.1 later in the present chapter, the participants often interlinked effective professional development closely with the personal aspect, particularly in reference to activities that entail intellectual stimulation and professional relevance (Fraser *et al.*, 2007). In contrast, ineffective professional development tended to correlate with instances when the personal aspect, participants' beliefs, interests and motivations, are overlooked. This is a critical feature regarding perceptions of effective professional development, because as Bell and Gilbert (in Fraser *et al.*, 2007, p.158) argue, the "impetus for change originates in the personal aspect […] and can be encouraged or restrained" by lecturers' attitudes, "interest and ownership of the learning opportunity" and "choice and control in determining engagement with learning opportunities". This humanistic argument is consistent with the andragogical and psychological position that adult learners need to be self-directive and engage with content that is regarded as relevant to them (Keay, Carse and Jess, 2018; Murphy and de Paor, 2017; Knowles, 1984; Rogers, 1969).

Illeris (2007, p.157) considers that non-learning is likely to occur in circumstances in which "pressure is experienced in the direction of learning that one finds unacceptable". Therefore, non-learning is (more) likely to occur through forms of professional development in which the personal aspect is ignored, such as in the instances of mandatory College development cited by Poppy, Olive and Yahya on the previous page. Jack spoke of how recent work with link colleges had not incurred professional learning for him:

> In the past we've been linked with [another] college which was just a waste of three Friday afternoons as far as I was concerned…if you don't have the same cohort…you don't deal with the same day to day problems you're not, it's just chalk and cheese.

In working with sector peers with very different contextual features and issues, Jack's personal impetus for change in this instance has been restricted as he feels this activity in its current form does not incur professional learning. According to Jack, learning through this form of professional development would instead require linking with peers from another inner city college with similar contexts and challenges.

Timeframe and frequency of engagement

To this point I have applied the structures of the triple composite framework of Fraser *et al.* (2007) to present in a systematic manner the fifteen forms of professional development of which one or more participants discussed. In this section I present my own additional lens of analysis in order to illustrate the timeframe and frequency of engagement with these activities. Consideration for these additional two dynamics comprise an important additional layer of analysis, to my mind, in order to develop a more complete representation of participants' engagement with professional development. Without taking into account these features, my analysis would be at risk of neglecting the nature of engagement with each activity and participants' perceptions of this feature. For instance, informal, unplanned development activities (such as peer conversations) may appear to be a less significant form of professional development given that these activities are fewer in range in the data, but of potential significance is that the frequency of engagement with this form of

learning is much greater according, in contrast with formal, planned development activities.

The addition of this lens is also based in part on my concerns relating to what I consider to be imprecise and overly generalised references in the literature to frequency of engagement with professional development. Kyndt, *et al.* (2016) go so far as to use the terms 'informal learning' and 'everyday learning' interchangeably, which to me represents an overly simplistic depiction of the nature of engagement with informal professional learning. Their usage of the word 'everyday' (learning) appears to be underpinned by their earlier, somewhat narrow definition of informal learning as "engagement in daily work related activities" (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2014, p.2393) and in the absence in their analysis of informal learning activities that may not always occur on a daily basis. Indeed, the data from the present research suggests that informal forms of professional learning do not necessarily occur on a daily basis. For instance, personal reading and watching TV documentaries are not always described by participants as daily activities, but do constitute informal professional development activities. This distinction is an important feature in illustrating the nature of engagement with distinct forms of professional learning and ultimately in the exploration of what characteristics lead to perceptions of effective professional learning. Presenting the data in reference to timeframe and frequency of engagement in this work would thus enable me to consider these dimensions with a greater degree of depth and precision.

To present professional development activities according to timeframe and frequency of engagement, in diagram 3 (below) I juxtapose activities using two axes to represent these corresponding dynamics. The horizontal axis in diagram 3 represents the timeframe of engagement with particular development activities. The 'single event' polarity of this axis represents one-off development activities, days or events, the focus of which is not part of a linked series of specifically interrelated activities. The 'ongoing' polarity of this same axis indicates ongoing engagement (with no pre-determined end point) with an activity that shares a connected learning focus. The centre of the horizontal axis therefore represents the position whereby a particular

professional development activity is described as either a one-off event involving a discrete focus, or in other instances, involving engagement with an activity over time with one or more continuing themes of learning. For instance, personal reading can both comprise reading a standalone article on a single occasion, or reading one or more academic articles or books over a long(er) timeframe that is connected by a particular aspect of teaching and learning, such as classroom behaviour management.

The vertical axis of diagram 3 represents the frequency of engagement with professional development activities. The top end of this axis indicates a high frequency of engagement, such as every day discussions with colleagues. The opposite end of this axis indicates very infrequent engagement that might occur on, for instance, an annual basis. Derek described whole College development days as infrequent, and with content that tends to differ from one event to the next (thus positioned in the low frequency, single engagement quadrant in diagram 3, below):

> …two or three times a year we'll have one day where we'll…put on a load of things...it feels like it's something that has to happen a couple of times a year.

Conversely, departmental meetings are positioned as high frequency as they are identified as occurring at a specific time on a weekly basis:

> [Poppy] now we have the Wednesday afternoons which are supposed to be about professional development…

Jack stated that he attends "maybe two or three" external events a year. Stuart engages frequently with personal reading:

> I read round subjects quite a lot…I'll read papers…good lit reviews and blogs are really useful.

Maya speaks of one-to-one peer coaching as a development activity that, during the engagement period with a coach, is ongoing (meaning themes across coaching sessions are interlinked), but that there are substantial gaps between periods of engagement with coaches:

> We had coaches who worked with us on a one-to-one basis, and then there's no contact unless you ask for it…nothing in between…

In recognition of a variance in frequency and timeframe of engagement with coaching, I have positioned this activity at the centre of diagram 3.

In summary, mandatory professional development activities tend to be described by participants as low frequency, and with infrequent engagement, whereas there is suggestive evidence that engagement with non-mandatory, informal, unplanned, and planned activities appears to be high(er) in frequency and tend to be characterised as ongoing. There are distinct exceptions to these tendencies, however: mandatory attendance departmental meetings are described as high frequency (weekly), and non-mandatory FE Research Meets are described as low frequency. These exceptions therefore temper the possibility to infer straightforward correlations between mandatory or non-mandatory development activities and the frequency or timeframe of engagement.

Diagram 3: timeframe and frequency of engagement with development activities.
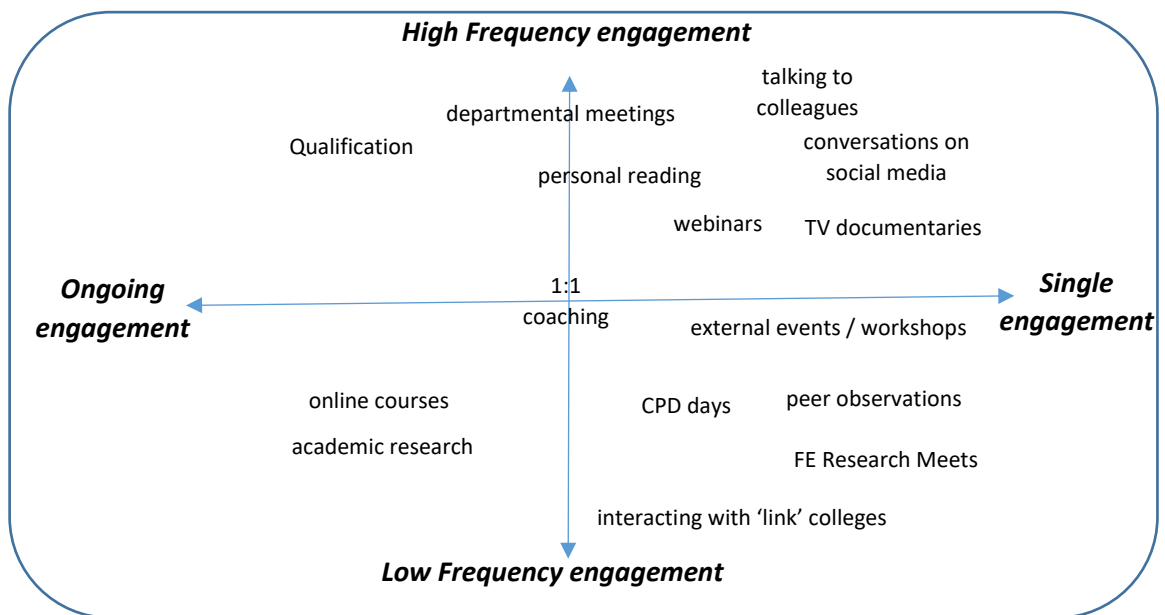
Evaluating development activities

The final dynamic I consider in relation to participants' engagement with professional development concerns the evaluation of mandatory College development activities. A commonality among responses was that participants are unclear of a particular process for evaluation, or indeed whether mandatory professional development at the College is evaluated. For instance, Stuart stated: "It isn't. I don't believe it is". Jane's perceptions were

similar: "No I don't think it is evaluated". Lecturer participants' responses were mirrored by the middle manager participants. For example, Yahya said: "certainly as a manager we're not asked for any feedback [by SLT]".

Some participants did identify an evaluation process, although they were unsure as to what happens with information gathered through the process. Poppy felt that feedback given by lecturers regarding whole College development days appears to be disregarded:

> Sometimes they have asked us to fill out a survey or leave what we thought on a post-it at the end. But then to my knowledge nothing's like, it's not acted upon.

Poppy's remarks mirrored Milo's response:

> We do give feedback…I filled in a little form at the end of the day and put it in a box, but you don't hear anything back from anybody about how that's gonna be improved on.

Jack also felt evaluation of College development days consists of some form of survey. Jack identified an issue with the timing of evaluation, suggesting that due to bad timing of evaluation it is likely response rates will be low:

> They do [evaluate development activities], I mean the College sends out a kind of survey to say which lessons [development sessions] you enjoyed and which you didn't…the issue the College has got is if [you] do a CPD event in mid to late July and send it out three or four days later, sixty percent of the college are, you know, in Calais.

David could not recall a specific evaluation procedure, but he speculated that there might be some form of evaluation taking place as:

> They haven't said anything but I have a feeling it could be because they do change some things.

Olive also spoke of some tacit form of evaluation for mandatory professional development other than feedback surveys or post-it notes. Olive suggested evaluation might take place through subsequent lesson observations, although to me this comment also represents little more than speculation:

> I presume…it's assessed by how you're performing in the classroom…if you've done a specific CPD then they wonder round and you've not implemented any of it it's gonna be a bit obvious.

Jen's comments illustrated a desire to be consulted following professional development activities and for the process to be transparent:

> I'd like to know, you know, you said we did, everyone knows that's what you should do…but I can't say I've ever really thought…something will happen.

There were no contrary perceptions relating to evaluation in the present research to those illustrated here. No specific process was articulated by either lecturer or middle manager participants in regard to what happens to feedback that may have been obtained through post-it notes, forms or surveys. David, when responding to my question on the evaluation of professional development activities, articulated potential consequences of not doing so:

> I hope it is, because if it's not evaluated then they're going to carry on doing exactly the same thing every year and [if] they don't listen to what input they get from managers or lecturers…then it'll just be a total waste of time.

David's comments here unwittingly and concisely mirror my own position on the potential implications of poor evaluation of professional development.

Summary of findings

In the first part of this chapter I have presented my research findings and articulated the following features that correspond to the first research question:

- there is a predominance of engagement with formal, planned professional development in terms of range of activities;
- mandatory professional development events are described as planned by others (predominantly perceived as the SLT), transmissive in purpose and tend to address solely (restrictive elements of) the social aspect of learning;
- non-mandatory professional development is considered transformative or transitional in purpose and tends to incorporate personal, occupational and (less often) social aspects of learning;
- there is much variance among frequency and timeframe of engagement with development activities. Tentatively, engagement with informal and unplanned professional development tends to be

higher frequency and more ongoing than engagement with mandatory activities; whole College development days are predominantly characterised as infrequent and short term in nature, although departmental meetings are frequent;

- there is a commonly expressed uncertainty, and a divergence of understandings, regarding the nature of an evaluation process for mandatory professional development activities;

- Without exception, participants considered that evaluation feedback is not used to inform the planning of future professional development.

In drawing on these characteristics and my interpretations of the data, I next discuss the latent themes emergent from my search for patterns of meaning within the data (Clarke and Braun, 2006). In doing so I address the first and second research questions in turn.

Thematic analysis

Research question one: what are lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of how professional development in FE is planned, implemented and evaluated?

The first two themes discussed in this section emerged from my analysis of participants' responses in relation to mandatory attendance professional development. The third theme concerns participants' engagement with non-mandatory activities.

Theme 1.1. Conflicting purposes: a planner/recipient disconnect underpinned by contrasting understandings of professionalism in FE

The data suggests that there are contrasting understandings between the participants of mandatory professional development and the planners (most frequently identified as the SLT) regarding the underlying purposes of professional development. Stuart summarised these different understandings: for him, professional development 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 feels the planners of mandatory professional development 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 propose, has developed through divergent perceptions of what constitutes professionalism for FE lecturers and managers. Stuart's comments suggest an understanding by planners of mandatory development that its principal purpose is to enact a culture of managerial professionalism (Tummons, 2014) among lecturers and middle managers, a culture whereby professionalism is defined as compliance and performativity to predefined, organisational standards or priorities. This managerial perspective is situated within the prevalent neo-liberal doctrine (Flew, 2014) in which the FE sector is located, which prioritises compliance over individual development needs (Orr, 2008). This notion of professionalism is then represented in a transmission approach to mandatory development activities that intentionally position lecturers as passive recipients of directives that facilitate this desired compliance to organisational priorities.

In contrast, for the participants, the purpose of professional development is predominantly 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: meaning lecturers' professional

expertise, agency and autonomy is recognised (Tummons, 2014). It has also been found elsewhere (see Goodall, *et al.,* 2005; Hustler, *et al.,* 2003) that effective professional development is considered by teachers to involve transformative activities that facilitate the development of everyday teaching practices. Jack voiced his frustrations with professional development 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.

In summary, the planning and implementation of mandatory professional development facilitates a managerial perception of professionalism that prioritises compliance and performativity. Such professional development thus rejects the emancipatory conception of professionalism and in doing so rarely addresses the individual learning needs and professional interests of those mandated to attend. In chapter five I contend that in ignoring such concerns, the intended outcomes of professional development are unlikely to be satisfied for those espousing either managerial or emancipatory professionalism as these conditions are (more) likely to result in non-learning.

Theme 1.2. The generic character of mandatory professional development learning content

Whereas the first theme relates primarily to divergent understandings of the underlying purposes of professional development, theme 1.2 concerns the content and implementation of mandatory development activities that are again, I shall argue, informed by the dominant managerial notion of professionalism in FE (Tummons, 2014).

Theme 1.2 connects the perception, prevalent across the data from the present research, that the content and form of mandatory professional development is often generic. This means that mandatory development activities often involve learning content that is general and introductory in nature and therefore not specific to curriculum areas, career stages or specific learning needs. Indeed, these events were predominantly considered by participants as inappropriate or irrelevant to their particular learning needs.

Poppy discussed her concerns with generic, ostensibly all-encompassing professional development activities. For Poppy, such sessions do not constitute professional development:

> I've been to various ones [mandatory development 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…there have been some sessions that slightly relate to what I do but 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 in this extract suggests that rather than constituting a platform for professional learning, mandatory events such as those depicted by Poppy can conversely result in lecturers feeling their time has been wasted, in activities perceived as condescending (potentially leading to a negative impact on workforce morale). Likewise, Milo argued that generic development sessions tend to constitute a wasteful use 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 professional development sessions are problematic as they do 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 had learned 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 professional development content as useful as he does not himself hold a teaching qualification in either his subject area or in adult teaching. It appears that professional development concerning generic aspects of teaching and learning content may be particularly pertinent therefore to colleagues who have not previously ascertained such knowledge through teaching qualifications.

The predominant position among the participants, however, was of negativity towards generic development content, often considered inappropriate to their professional 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 could benefit lecturers new to the college for instance, the issue appears to be that Derek (as a mid-career lecturer who has worked at the College for ten years) is himself required to attend repeated development sessions.

Thus, the pursuance of managerial professionalism by the planners of mandatory professional development is often facilitated by a transmission approach that conveys generic content. These development activities were nearly always described as planned without the involvement of those mandated to attend and it is perceived that individual lecturers' and middle mangers' professional learning needs are therefore sidelined at mandatory events. Hugh, a middle manager participant, is the sole participant who gives a partially different account in his assertion that in some instances she is consulted as part of the planning process, as discussed earlier.

It can be argued that generic professional development may be appropriate in some circumstances, particularly for transmissive purposes such as to convey important organisational messages or introduce a new college system or procedure. Although most participants in the present research cited predominately negative views, illustrated through comments such as those presented above, Maya and David's opinions provide a counterpoint. As discussed earlier, Maya likes organisational policy updates at whole College events and David finds development sessions concerning generic aspects of teaching and learning (such as writing lesson plans) useful. It would be remiss to conclude, therefore, that professional development described as generic is unanimously perceived as ineffective in all instances.

With this caveat in mind, in chapter five I consider the implications of generic development activities. I shall propose that such activities tend to result in limited professional learning for most mid-career FE lecturers and middle managers due to both the learning content and (therefore) a limited incentive to learn (Illeris, 2007). In light of these findings I shall recommend alternative means to convey learning content that can be considered transmissive and generic, that are faster, more cost effective, and for which part-time colleagues would also have access.

Theme 1.3. Learning as a personal endeavour and the compensatory principle

Unsurprisingly, participants choose to engage in non-mandatory professional development 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 (Lee, 1990). Some informal, unplanned engagement occurs at college according to the participants, through incidental conversations with colleagues, for instance. For the most part, however, non-mandatory engagement takes place in participants' personal time and can be considered, I suggest, learning as a personal endeavour. In using this term I mean to emphasise that choices of engagement with non-mandatory activities 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 development 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 professional development discussed in connection with theme 1.2. Such instances of compensatory engagement appear to occur 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 neo-liberal goals. For Jane, the effect of this restriction of support for non-mandatory, participant-instigated professional development 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 professional development were not recognised though financial support or time remittance, thus Jane determined that she could only pursue her ambitions elsewhere. The result is 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 sidelined when they do not directly concern organisational priorities (Avis, 2009).

In theme 2.1 I give further examples of participants' engagement with professional development that can be considered as a personal endeavour, often instigated to compensate for learning that is missed in mandatory, generic professional development.

Research question 2: what are FE lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development?

My discussion in this section is centred on five themes that represent key features underpinning what participants perceived to constitute effective professional development. It must be acknowledged in this analysis that responses were not always binary: for instance, activities discussed were not necessarily regarded by participants as universally either effective or ineffective in all circumstances. For instance, Jack described some external development events to be effective, while others are ineffective. For Jack, a key feature that determines whether such events are effective is whether he perceives a specific (external) event to be cost and time efficient. To reiterate, therefore, I am not attempting to present the findings in a manner to indicate that specific development activities were perceived as intrinsically effective *per se*, while others are ineffective, rather I have sought to ascertain particular features or characteristics inherent in what is considered by participants to be effective professional development.

Theme 2.1. (Agency and) learning focus: subject knowledge, classroom practices and other professional interests

Professional development is considered effective by participants when it comprises subject specific learning or updating which serves to enhance their pedagogical practices, and ultimately their students' learning. There is a clear

distinction between how participants tended to perceive transmissive, generic mandatory professional development (see themes 1.1 and 1.2) and what participants perceived to be effective. The following comments most succinctly summarise this position:

> [Milo] CPD needs to be specific to what I do.

> [Derek]…it benefits you because you learn more, but it also benefits your students in a direct way.

Many examples were given of engagement with non-mandatory professional development that is subject specific or relates to particular aspects of pedagogy determined by lecturers' own learning interests. Such professional learning thus encompasses the personal and occupational aspects of professional learning (Fraser, *et al.*, 2007). Maya regularly reads government requirements for her vocational sector, and often reads a professional publication to keep abreast with vocational knowledge. Olive engages with a law provision exam board for the same purpose. Derek attends drama workshops with professional actors to:

> learn skills which you can immediately translate to the classroom …immediately latch onto aspects of the curriculum.

Hugh engages with awarding bodies, both at external events and online. According to Hugh this engagement has "been vital" to understand the requirements of the awarding bodies (although curiously, despite its importance, such engagement appears to be outside of the remit of mandatory professional development at the College). Yahya and Poppy linked their engagement with webinars to subject specific learning. For Poppy, webinars are useful as "…it's like choosing the things that will be relevant to you". Similarly, Poppy reads the Times Educational Supplement (TES) and Guardian Education as she can choose to invest time in reading that she determines to be relevant and useful to teaching in her subject area.

Personal engagement with professional development was not always located solely within participants' subject specialisms, however. John, for instance, explained his engagement with online courses to inform and enhance his

practices as an FE lecturer in general terms, not necessarily for subject specific development:

> …courses online like Coursera [an online learning platform]…it's like a twelve week course where you just follow it online...being a teacher I'm always trying to streamline what I do...is there something I can glean from here to help me to be a better practitioner…

At the core of this theme is professional development that enables participants' individual professional learning needs to be addressed, in connection with subject knowledge; classroom teaching and learning practices; and wider aspects of their role (such as keeping abreast with sector policy and issues pertinent to particular subject teaching, learning, assessment, or even matters of law). Such professional development is determined by the agency of participants to identify what precisely their learning needs are and how they might address them. As Illeris (2007, p.26) argues:

> It might be uncertainty, curiosity or unfulfilled needs that cause us to seek out new knowledge or new skills.

Professional development involving the individual agency of learners encompasses the motivations and volition of individuals to learn, features that Illiris (2007) argues underpin the conditions required for learning. This argument also is consistent with Knowles' (1984) conception of andragogy in which adult learners need to be self-directive and engage with content that is regarded relevant. This position also resonates with Rogers (1969) who had earlier emphasised that adult learners require self-direction. More recently, Keay, Carse and Jess (2018) argue that secondary teachers' ability to self-identify and organise their learning needs is a key component in regarding teachers as complex professional learners. Likewise, Murphy and de Paor (2017) consider that effective professional development for teachers addresses the specific learning needs of teachers as they perceive them. The findings corresponding to theme 2.1 provide suggestive evidence that this well-rehearsed argument of the need to recognise learners' agency therefore extends to the context of FE lecturers and middle managers as learners.

Theme 2.2. Vehicles for reflective practice

Some participants described effective professional development as activities that in some manner stimulate some form of reflection. Reflection is also frequently cited elsewhere in connection with effective development activities (Spencer *et al.*, 2018; Harkin, 2005; Hillier, 2002; Moon, 1999). The word 'reflection' can be considered, without clarification, a rather imprecise and vague conception, thus, in this section I also consider divergent definitions of reflection according to the literature. Reflection can be defined as (Dewey, 1933, p.9):

> […] the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends.

Later conceptions of reflection refined this broad definition. Brookfield (1987), for instance, advocated critical reflection, in which current meanings, concepts and assumptions are challenged and other approaches or possibilities are explored by the person engaged in such reflection.

Stuart perceived any development activity to be effective when it facilitates apparently any form of reflection: "anything that's led to reflection is effective". Milo articulated the nature of reflection, for her, and why reflection is effective:

> I like it when you're asked to do tasks and think about what you're doing and reflect on your own practice and learn from other people who do similar things to you…it's more meaningful and it's more memorable.

For Milo, reflection means considering or comparing colleagues' pedagogical approaches in relation to her own in order to consider what might improve her own teaching practices. Poppy and Esmerelda argued that reflection enables educators to develop their own practice:

> [Poppy] Whether it's something you've identified or something another person's identified...generally speaking teachers are quite reflective... [effective professional development involves] trying to help people improve on the good practice they already have.

> [Esmerelda] It's been about us working together as a team and all-embracing what the trainer is getting us to do and coming away thinking gosh that's, that's made me think, that's made me reflect…singing from the same hymn sheet.

This such reflection, taking place during professional development activities, can be considered as reflection-on-action. This term draws from Schön (1983), who refers to reflection after an event that initiated the process as reflection-on-action, whereas immediate reflection is termed reflection-in-action, whereby there is an immediacy in reflection and new application of knowledge. Mezirow (1990) posits that reflection encompasses the application of something learned in a later situation. Similarly, Illeris (2007, p.66) defines reflection as "afterthought", and proposes:

> As a learning process, reflection can, therefore, be characterised as accommodative learning that does not occur immediately in connection with the trigger impulses, but after a time lag implying the further elaboration of the impulses.

In referring to accommodative learning, Illeris (2007) draws on Piaget (1980) to describe learning that requires the student to reshape pre-existing ideas or understandings. This form of learning tends to be more gradual and challenging then its counterpart, assimilative learning, whereby new information or knowledge fits into a student's existing framework of ideas and understandings of a phenomenon.

However, Illeris (2007, p.66) also rightly acknowledges that:

> […] it is also quite possible that some immediate learning from this interaction has taken place.

The participants do not explicitly distinguish between reflection-in-action or on-action (Schön, 1983). However, it can be inferred that in these instances that engagement comprises reflection-on-action, as the reflection to which they refer occurs during professional development sessions and relates to their current teaching. Participants are not, therefore, reflecting in the movement (while teaching) as characterises reflection-in-action (Schön, 1983). What participants appear to consider effective is professional development that enables reflection defined by Gore and Zeichner (1991, p.121) as (with my italics):

> […] an *academic* version, which focuses on teachers' skills in disseminating the discipline content and presenting in such a way as to maximise its accessibility for their students.

Reflection is thus perceived by participants as a feature of effective professional development as it constitutes a vehicle to developing their approaches to teaching and learning and in turn their students' outcomes.

Theme 2.3. Practical conditions conducive to learning

Theme 2.3 encompasses various circumstances of professional development that the participants perceived to facilitate or inhibit learning, including physical comfort relating to the learning environment *per se*, catering, and the timing of professional development activities or events. I shall suggest suitable conditions (such as physical comfort) constitute a pre-requisite for learning, whereas unsuitable conditions such as poor lighting, air conditioning or heating, unpleasant air or insufficient seating more often result in non-learning, as learners are likely to be distracted from learning by discomfort resulting from such circumstances (Armitage, *et al.*, 2012; Knowles, 1990).

Adverse physical conditions of learning were frequently cited in reference to what made particular professional development activities ineffective. Olive spoke at length about how physical comfort levels in mandatory development activities affects the success of such sessions. Olive spoke of the physical conditions during a College development day that were not conducive to learning:

> We was in a room, they crowd too many of us in and honestly I don't think anybody in the room could stay awake coz it was so hot and closed and airless, and it's really ineffective coz I walked out of it thinking I had no idea what you was talking about, I was struggling too much to focus coz of the bodies and the heat.

Jen openly said that she made her escape from a development session on a whole College development day:

> People were being sort of well I suppose disrespectful but frustrated and the room was very, very full…the trainer sort of said "are you lot supposed to really be in this session, there's rather a lot of you"...so a bit of quick thinking I said actually I didn't book onto it...so I'll go if you like…he looked quite grateful...I'm glad I left.

The distracting effect of adverse physical conditions are explicit in these comments from Olive and Jen. For Olive, the unpleasant conditions of the

session were unacceptable and too distracting for any learning to occur. In Jen's example, Jen could only focus on the conduct of her peers and an opportunity to escape the situation, and not, therefore, the intended learning content. John discussed the positive effect on colleagues of the College providing good catering at mandatory development events:

> The food at CPD days, it definitely helped...after lunch everyone seemed to be a little bit more enthusiastic...it's like an encouragement...encouraging staff to want to participate.

It is unclear as to whether John perceived the catering as some form of treat or payment (for attendance). Nonetheless, it can be inferred that the quality of catering made John feel valued by those running the day (the SLT) in these instances, resulting in his perception of a greater will on the part of staff to engage with the day.

Although physical conditions were discussed mostly in reference to negative experiences at formal, mandatory development events, in my interpretation the findings indicate that appropriate physical conditions therefore constitute a pre-requisite to what is considered effective professional development. The conditions of learning for professional development can be understood both in its immediate context and by how it represents the wider socio-political circumstances of the learning (Illeris, 2007, p.97):

> The learning situation always, and at one and the same time, can be regarded as both the immediate situation that the learner or learners find themselves in, e.g. at a school, a workplace or leisure-time activity […] and as a societal situation that is more generally influenced by the norms and structures of the society in question in the widest possible sense.

When I joined the organisation in 2008 mandatory professional development often took place offsite, with plentiful physical space, professional catering and resources to accommodate the staff in attendance. In my perception such conditions served to implicitly communicate the value the SLT placed on College staff and their professional learning, and provided comfortable, suitable conditions for professional learning to take place. Such facilities are not now afforded by College SLT at these events, however. Thus, a connection can be drawn between the efficiencies required in response to a policy context

of austerity (see chapter one) and 45% cuts in adult education funding between 2009-10 and 2017-18 (Belfield, Sibieta and Farquharson, 2018) and the current unfavourable circumstances of mandatory professional development at the College. It can also be argued that such conditions reinforce the argument that FE remains a neglected, underfunded 'Cinderella' sector with little status, notwithstanding the responsibility placed on it to create a workforce capable of competing in a global market (Simmons, 2010; Orr, 2009; Leitch, 2006).

The timing of professional development events is also identified as a key feature that affects perceptions of effectiveness. John said in reference to the timing of mandatory professional development events at the College:

> [Development events have been] held just before Christmas where the attitude going in there was already kind of dampened a bit because…do I have to go in like a couple of days before Christmas...even if the activities were beneficial, the attitude going in you're already negative.

Jane also made reference to the timing of mandatory professional development:

> [College CPD days at] the beginning of the academic year...there's a lot of time taken up with that type of thing…you could be using that time preparation, having those team meetings, standardising.

For Jane, a part-time lecturer, the timing of mandatory development activities are of concern as she often misses such events:

> I didn't actually go to that one [most recent development day] because I don't work on a Friday, I've got another job on a Friday so...I'm not quite sure what happened on that CPD day.

There was no commonality among responses as to preferable times for mandatory professional development, however. Thus, the timing of whole College development events constitutes an apparently irresolvable concern when attendance is expected of an entire teaching workforce of whom over 60% are part-time lecturers (ETF, 2019a) with a wide variance in working patterns (Hodgson, 2015).

Theme 2.4. Active learning and fun

Some participants discussed effective professional development as incorporating some form of immediate active interaction with new knowledge or skills. Active learning refers, in broad terms, to the learner doing more than engaging through passive listening (Bonwell, 1991). I develop this notion further below. Interlaced with this feature, effective professional development was also sometimes described as including an element of fun. Olive recalled a fun, active session:

> I personally prefer interactive things and I've had some fun ones where ... [during a classroom technology session] you were playing with the stuff, learning how to do it, and we gained a lot out of it.

Derek considered that:

> …it has to be very engaging, it has to be very practical and interactive and physical all the time...that's the style of teaching that appeals to me.

John and Jen explained why, for them, active forms of professional learning are effective:

> [Jen] There's one that definitely stands out…going back a few years... [it] wasn't just about learning the latest, kind of IT, record keeping thing…we had a brilliant day…we did a lot of team work…felt during the day [we] learnt to do some new things…it was good fun and we did stuff…you could take what we wanted.

> [John] I actually prefer doing stuff…I quite like a mixture of like, getting a bit of theory and going away to apply that into whatever I'm doing. For example there was a really good development session that we had where we were being introduced to a piece of software, and it was introduced…then we went away to computer rooms…we are introduced to something and then we actually get to do it straight away. If it's just being told I can't really translate that necessarily into practice.

For John, transmissive development sessions in which information or learning content is didactically communicated is less likely to be applied at a later stage. John therefore feels that for him a didactic, passive (as opposed to active) approach is likely to incur only surface level, or lower order learning (Gagné 1977; Bloom, 1956).

Likewise, Derek specifically related effective development sessions with a feeling of enjoyment: "...it's fun for you to do as well". Esmerelda described a development session she found to be effective due, in part, to an energising approach to the session:

> …we had to work together and we were put in groups…it was about describing an apple which really opened up our minds...so it was a really simple activity that really set the, set the bar for the rest of the training…also the sort of energising activities.

Active engagement with learning activities is frequently cited as a feature of effective learning (Beavers, 2009; Illeris, 2007; Knowles, 1990; Conti, 1989; Dewey, 1961) as it can facilitate the acquisition and retention of new knowledge through students' sustained engagement with, and application of learning content. Indeed, Dewey (1961) argued that active learning was of greater importance than the learning content *per se* as in his view this feature facilitates the development of learners' self-direction and self-realisation that (also) recognises learner voice and foments learner self-esteem.

Willis (2007, p.1) refers to neuroscience research to argue that "superior learning takes place when classroom experiences are enjoyable" as such conditions lead to positive experiences and, crucially, lower stress levels within the learning environment which facilitate learning. Conversely, Willis (2007, p.2) argues:

> Under stressful conditions information is blocked from entering the brain's areas of higher cognitive memory consolidation and storage. In other words, when stress activates the brain's affective filters, information flow to the higher cognitive networks is limited and the learning process grinds to a halt.

Further, professional development activities characterised as fun by participants (when perceived positively) can stimulate positive emotions, motivation and the volition of learners to engage in learning content (Illeris, 2007). Illeris (2007, p.75) connects these three elements to what he terms the incentive dimension of learning, arguing:

> […] on the basis of these we mobilise the energy that is the necessary motive power of learning. They thus also become part of our learning processes, influencing the quality of the learning that takes place, for example with respect to permanency and utility.

It must be recognised, however, that individuals process experiences in different ways as informed by their biographies, perceptions and personalities (Jarvis, 2010). Thus, the extent to which participants perceive activities to be fun, and the perceived importance placed on fun as a feature of effective professional development, is deeply subjective. Resultant recommendations for practice informed by this theme are therefore framed as such in chapter five.

Theme 2.5. Learning in a community (of practice)

Discussing teaching practices and ideas among peers (both internally and externally to the College) was identified by many participants as a specific feature of effective professional development. This theme relates to engagement in, and among, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and, more widely, landscapes of practice (Wenger, 2014). The latter, more recently coined term refers to engagement in learning across (not only within) individual or specific communities of practice.

Milo and Stuart explained why they perceived learning with peers to be effective:

> [Milo] I like the CPD we have within our small teams…my colleagues are very experienced and very full of new ideas.

> [Stuart] The most engaging stuff…is just conversations with other professionals on social media...it let me question and challenge…that has been the most effective.

John spoke keenly about a particular mandatory College development day where the activities were led by internal lecturer-colleagues rather than College managers or external experts. John explained that these sessions were effective as internal colleagues have an acute understanding of contextual features relevant to those in attendance at the sessions:

> There was involvement from the English department, and I remember they took quite a few of the sessions which turned out to be really good...I thought it actually works really well if you've got colleagues doing the CPD for you...as opposed to having external people coz…sometimes external providers, sometimes they will lead according to what they've prepared and not necessarily according to our needs, whereas the, our colleagues, they have the same students that we

have, they understand where we are located...they understand the challenges we face…they understand that sometimes maybe a computer doesn't work…their CPD was brilliant, I really enjoyed their CPD, I felt it was very relevant to me.

John found these activities effective as these peer-led development sessions recognised and incorporated underlying contextual features affecting the teaching practices of the lecturers in attendance, thus embracing both the social and occupational aspects of professional learning (Fraser, *et al.*, 2007). Indeed, Jack, albeit from the position of the middle manager who oversaw the planning of these sessions, suggested that John's positive perceptions of these peer-led sessions where more widely held:

It was a cross-college development day…and the English department worked, looking at feedback or feedforward in the hope that…other departments might take on board the importance of correcting students' work and seeing the benefits of it…I designed it myself and that was eight teachers delivering it…the feedback was generally quite positive.

Professional learning through a community of practice can also result in other positive outcomes, such as nurturing peer relationships and in turn to strengthen the community itself. Olive articulated this position:

Good and effective professional development isn't always necessarily about improving subject knowledge and subject styles, it can also be about, like, improving staff relationships.

Chapter summary

The five themes presented in this section (2.1, 2,2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5) constitute the underlying features that characterise effective professional development according to the participants in the present research. In summary, effective professional development is perceived to involve:

- activities that address subject specific learning needs, self-identified aspects relating to teaching and learning, and non-class based elements of the FE lecturer role;
- activities that stimulate reflection of teaching and learning practices;
- a learning environment that is physically comfortable for the staff in attendance;

- activities that take place at a suitable time (as defined by the participants), which is problematic in reference to whole organisation mandatory development events;

- activities that are characterised as interactive and fun (recognising that defining fun and perceptions of its importance in relation to professional learning are highly subjective);

- learning among a community, or landscape, of practice (Wenger, 2014; 1998).

This chapter has presented my interpretations of the research data and the latent themes emergent from my analysis that addresses the first two research questions. I firstly presented the findings relating to engagement with professional development. In reference to mandatory development activities, much uncertainty was expressed by the participants as to a specific process for both planning and evaluating formal professional development activities. There was commonality, however, in the perception that planning for mandatory events seldom encompassed the learning needs and preferences as identified by the participants. Thus, the participants have little agency in the planning, implementation or evaluation of the development events they are mandated to attend. The transmissive activities at mandatory events, whose purpose is commonly perceived to be knowledge transfer and compliance (Kennedy, 2005), represent a managerialist concept of professionalism that restricts the professional agency and voice of individuals (Tummons, 2014). For departmental activities, it appears that the manager participants tend to have some (albeit restricted) degree of agency in the planning and implementation.

Non-mandatory, planned and unplanned development activities are described as transformative or transitional in purpose and implementation, tend to occur more frequently than mandatory activities and more often involve ongoing engagement with particular learning themes, although there are exceptions to these characterisations. Non-mandatory development activities are described as encompassing personal, occupational and, less often, social aspects of professional learning.

In connection with research question one, three salient themes emerged. Firstly, in relation to mandatory development events I argued that there is a disconnect between the participants' own understandings of the purposes of professional development, and those perceived to characterise the planners. deriving from divergent conceptions of professionalism between these two groups. Secondly, I argued that the generic content of mandatory development events, born from planners' desire to enact managerialist professionalism (Tummons, 2014), often sidelines the individual learning needs of those in attendance. In the event, little learning takes place at such events, according to most (but not all) participants, who predominantly perceived such content to be irrelevant to their needs and a wasteful use of time. I finally proposed that engagement with non-mandatory development activities is determined by participants' personal learning needs and in doing so often compensates for what mandatory professional development fails to address.

In addressing the second research question I indicated that the participants expressed a clear preference for activities characterised as enabling transformative learning (Fraser, *et al*. 2007) that tend to recognise and incorporate the personal, occupational and (often) social aspects of professional learning (Fraser *et al*., 2007). The themes identified in reference to effective professional development comprise activities or circumstances which: focus on the acquisition or maintenance of specific subject knowledge or self-identified aspects of teaching and learning; stimulate reflective practice; take place in a suitable environment; involve some degree of interaction or application of the learning content and a fun element; and take place in a community, and across landscapes, of practice (Wenger, 2014; 1998).

In chapter five I analyse the meaning and implications of these findings: the 'so what?' of this work. I develop my argument that incorporating the agency and voice of FE lecturers and middle managers is important in order for professional learning in the context of mandatory development activities. I thus address the third research question: what can be learned by FE managers, lecturers and policy makers through the analysis of perceptions of professional development practices in FE in England? I also present my recommendations

in light of the findings, consider limitations of this work, and draw my final conclusions to this thesis.

Chapter 5: implications, recommendations and conclusions

Opening comments

In this final chapter I draw together the threads of this thesis. Briefly restating the purposes of this work, I then present my responses to the third research question: what can be learned by FE managers, lecturers and policy makers through the analysis of perceptions of professional development practices in FE in England? Later in the chapter I propose recommendations in light of this research and consider limitations of the present work. I also articulate how this work constitutes a contribution to new knowledge. I approach each of these sections in a reflective and reflexive manner, as counselled by Lee (2009). I end with personal reflections of my research journey.

Purposes of this work

The underlying purposes of this research were to establish a snap-shot representation of lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of the planning, implementation and evaluation of professional development (research question one) and to investigate what participants perceive to constitute effective professional development (research question two). The findings from these two questions would also enable me to analyse the intersection between current engagement and what participants perceive to be effective. Through such analysis, I could consider what can be learned through the analysis of participants' perceptions of professional development that might enhance future professional learning in the sector (question three).

Research question three: what can be learned by FE managers, lecturers and policy makers through the analysis of perceptions of professional development practices in FE in England?

Planning and implementation: mandatory professional development

Mandatory whole College professional development events were characterised by the participants in this work as predominantly transmissive, planned by others, encompass solely restrictive elements of the social aspects of professional learning and involve learning outcomes that are often generic.

These perceptions correspond with McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe (2018, p.3), who found in reference to the primary sector in Northern Ireland:

> There exists a mismatch between the development activities that teachers themselves endorse […] and those that they have access to in their professional lives, typically involving passive dissemination of information.

Mandatory departmental meetings are similarly described in the findings, although these activities are described as occurring more frequently and more often involve subject specific learning content, features that tend to instil motivation and facilitate relevant professional learning (Cordingley, 2015; OECD, 2014; Desimone, 2009). The purposes and content of departmental meetings are still predominantly determined by senior managers, however.

These forms of professional development facilitate a restrictive, managerial concept of professionalism (Tummons, 2014) and appear somewhat expected, given that mandatory professional development 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).

Such mandatory professional development 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 that a prerequisite or antecedent 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 both a humanist, andragogical approach, based on the proposition that adult learners want to be in control of their own learning (Knowles, 1975) and the argument from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), that proposes learning should occur through a spirit of co-enquiry, rather than teachers (in this instance, senior managers) viewing students (lecturers) as *tabula-rasa,* in need of expert knowledge which is delivered through transmissive means, a dynamic Freire termed the banking method (Freire, 1970).

Further, the findings indicate that mandatory professional development tends to cover solely elementary aspects of teaching and learning. The mid-career lecturers and middle managers in this case study tended to perceive such professional development content as irrelevant to their learning needs as in their perceptions they already have developed understandings of basic concepts of teaching and learning. Jarvis (2010, p.160) refers to this such perception as "presumption". Mandatory professional development is often characterised by a generic focus, which is then, unsurprisingly, often perceived as ineffective in addressing specific learning needs relevant to the mid-career lecturers and middle managers mandated to attend. Non-learning for this reason has also been found in the schools sectors (Kyndt *et al.*, 2016; Cameron, Mulholland and Little, 2013).

These features informed the development of themes 1.1 and 1.2, in which I developed my argument that there is a disconnect in this FE context between the planners and the recipients of mandatory professional development regarding its underlying purposes (theme 1.1), and that the learning content at these events often concerns elementary aspects of teaching and learning and are characterised as generic (theme 1.2). Thus, a key outcome in addressing the first research question is that mandatory professional development in this case study appeared to solely incur learning in the restrictive sense of relaying organisational messages in relation to systems and policy. The findings indicate that learning in reference to pedagogical approaches appears to be minimal, and tends to occur solely among teachers who do not hold teaching qualifications or favour such transmissive forms of professional learning. An unintended consequence of such restricted learning appears to be discontent among lecturers and a perpetuated culture of cynical compliance (Coffield in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) towards mandatory professional development. Such outcomes suggest a poor return for the resources invested in such events in FE.

Mandatory professional development for part-time colleagues

The part-time participants stated that they were mostly unable to engage in whole College mandatory professional development due to the timings of these events. This is consistent with the findings of Broad (2015) who found the timing of professional development to constitute a barrier to access for part-time lecturers. These findings provide suggestive evidence that this majority group within the FE lecturer workforce (ETF, 2019a; Hodgson, 2015) is therefore often unable to attend mandatory development events when they occur on a single day at a single place, as they (always) do at the College. The tension between professional development opportunities and work schedules has also been found in the secondary sector (OECD, 2014). O'Sullivan *et al.* (2015) in McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe (2018) found that the most important factor affecting engagement with professional development is that mandatory development takes place in school hours. In the FE context, the predominance of differing part-time working patterns among lecturing staff appears incompatible with the notion of mandatory attendance events that take place on a single day and site: whatever the time, there will be part-time lecturers unable to attend. Part-time lecturers may have other jobs or childcare responsibilities for instance, or they may understandably not attend because there is no form of payment or other compensation to attend these events outside their normal, paid working hours. In this regard part-time staff appear to be considered as peripheral staff (Gleeson, 2014) resultant from the limited opportunities available to them to access or engage with mandatory professional development. I make recommendations below as to how these issues might be addressed.

In the present research there were no particular means identified by part-time colleagues as to how they could catch up with learning content from mandatory events that was missed. Later in this chapter I propose an alternative process by which the content of mandatory professional development can be conveyed in such a manner that all part-time staff have access. I also recommend that future research in this field focuses on the part-time lecturer workforce, in order

to more fully examine the implications of this issue for these lecturers, their students and the organisations in which they work.

The evaluation of mandatory professional development

McChesney and Aldridge (2019, p.308) define evaluation as the act of articulating "value - its worth, contribution, or effects". Numerous frameworks for the evaluation of professional development have been proposed (for example King, 2014; Desimone, 2009; Fraser *et al.*, 2007). McChesney and Aldridge (2019, p.308) argue, rightly, that meaningful evaluation is critical in order to "facilitate improvements in the quality and outcomes" in professional development, and the evaluation of professional development by its recipients has been widely advocated (Porritt, Spence-Thomas and Taylor, 2017; Guskey, 2014; Goodall *et al.*, 2005; Killion, 2003). Evaluation tends to relate to participant satisfaction (Muijs and Lindsay, 2008; Goodall, *et al.*, 2005); features of development activities *per se* (Birman *et al.*, 2009); and on the impact on teaching and learning (King, 2014; Muijs and Lindsay, 2008). Among these distinct foci, there is a predominance for evaluating teacher satisfaction (in the secondary context) according to Pedder and Opfer (2010).

Despite consensus in the literature that evaluation is an important feature that informs the quality and relevance of professional development, the findings suggest that there is no clear process for participant evaluation of mandatory events in the context of the current research. These findings contrast with Goodall, *et al.* (2005) in secondary schools, who found that some form of evaluation, usually in relation to teacher satisfaction, occurs in 75% of the one thousand schools involved in their research.

It may be that in the FE context, senior managers wish to avoid an explicit, public form of lecturer or middle manager evaluation as potential negative findings could constitute a risk to the organisation's public image (were they not to remain confidential) and could relay undesirable messages to organisations to whom colleges are accountable (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019), such as funding agencies and Ofsted. Indeed, the present research indicates that negative feedback is likely, given the contrasting perspectives of planners and recipients with regard to the purposes and nature of

professional development in the sector (as I argued in connection with themes 1.1 and 1.2) and tensions deriving from the demands of policy, funding, inspection *and* the learning needs of lecturers and middle managers that may inform the planning of mandatory professional development.

Non-mandatory professional development

The literature indicates that there tends to be little organisational support for professional learning in the workplace in education outside of mandatory activities (as found in the schools' sector by Richter, *et al.*, 2011; Hoekstra, *et al.*, 2009). Teachers do, nonetheless, often engage in non-mandatory forms of professional development (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016). The non-mandatory professional development activities discussed by the participants in this work include engagement with online courses; external events; formal qualifications; peer observations; webinars; coaching; academic research; TV documentaries; personal reading; conversations on social media; talking to colleagues; FE Research Meets; and academic research.

Engagement with non-mandatory professional learning comprises both planned and unplanned, transformative and transitional activities that encompass the personal, occupational and (less often) social aspects of professional learning. Non-mandatory professional learning is perceived by participants as involving more frequent and ongoing engagement, compared to mandatory engagement. Non-mandatory professional learning was commonly perceived as occurring alongside, and in addition to, the professional duties of the participants. It was also recognised to comprise both conscious and unconscious learning (Illeris, 2007) of tacit knowledge (Eraut, 1994):

> [Jen] it's often felt like something that's gone alongside what I'm doing every day and then I...coz I like to have a little side line, something I'm studying...and then at some point in the future I either consciously or unconsciously, it sort of informs what I'm doing.

Professional development is often considered effective when it is sustained over time, as a longer timeframe enables sustained engagement, active learning and time for connections to be made with existing practice (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016; Cordingley, *et al.*, 2012; Timperley, 2008). Similarly, Cordingley

(2015) argues that sustained engagement can enable a sequence of learning, consolidation, and engagement with related support activities. Conversely, one-off development activities tend to offer poor quality opportunities for professional learning (Darling-Hammond *et al.*, 2017) as there is insufficient time and opportunity for transformative learning to take place.

Engagement with non-mandatory professional learning is perceived to address individual learning needs that relate directly to the subject knowledge, pedagogical learning needs of the participants and other non-teaching aspects of participants' jobs. The transformative nature of most non-mandatory development activities and the inclusion of the personal and occupational aspects of professional learning informed the development of theme 1.3 in which I proposed that much non-mandatory professional development constitutes learning as a personal endeavour that takes place autonomously, predominantly in participants' own time, and addresses learning needs missed by mandatory professional development.

Despite the potential benefits of non-mandatory professional development, this form of professional learning is perceived as being seldom supported at an organisational level, corresponding with the findings of Hoekstra, *et al.* (2009) in the schools sectors. There appears to be a tacit reliance on the professional integrity of lecturers and middle managers, therefore, to address critical individual learning needs (such as subject updating or learning relating to pedagogical approaches) in their own time and at their own cost. The participants often described non-mandatory professional development as a necessary additional part of their jobs, unrecognised or compensated by the College. This perception appears to be damaging to the morale of some participants (such as Maya and Milo), and in one instance this lack of organisational support led to the loss of a vocational lecturer (Jane), having decided to leave the organisation due to a sustained lack of organisational support for the non-mandatory professional development she wanted to pursue. Therefore, the consequences of failing to support the pursuit of non-mandatory professional development can be severe.

An additional consideration in connection with theme 1.3 is that learning that takes places as a personal endeavour is framed and limited by participants' ability and willingness to self-identify and address their own learning needs. It is possible that individuals are not aware of some aspects for which they require learning (Kruger and Dunning, 1999), or do not have the volition to identify of address their own professional learning needs (Illeris, 2007). Therefore, the findings presented here should not be taken to mean that engagement with non-mandatory professional development necessarily addresses all the professional learning needs of all individuals.

Lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of what constitutes effective professional development

I developed five salient themes from my thematic analysis of the data that correspond to the second research question. In this section I consider the wider implications of each theme. Firstly, professional development is perceived as effective when individuals have the agency to self-identify and address professional learning needs that relate directly to their subject specialisms or specific aspects of teaching and learning (theme 2.1). The findings strongly suggest that this occurs (in the FE context) almost always by way of non-mandatory professional development, corresponding to theme 1.3.

This theme is consistent with findings in the secondary sector where it has been found that professional development is considered effective when it relates directly to pedagogical knowledge in teachers' own fields (OECD, 2014; Desimone, 2009) and there have been similar findings in HE in FE (Lawrence and Hall, 2018). My findings coincide with Appova and Arbaugh (2018, p.17) who clarify that to be effective, content specific professional development:

> […] needs to be differentiated to specifically address and accommodate the differences in teachers' professional and learning needs […] as well as the differences in the student populations that teachers serve.

The self-identification of learning needs by adults is a core feature of the andragogy of Knowles (1984) whereby this feature is considered a precondition or antecedent (Kyndt *et al.*, 2016) of learning for adults: the most salient learning occurs when adult learners have agency to decide what that

learning needs to be. A need by the participants to self-identify their learning focus can be understood as located within their locus of control (Rotter, 1966) whereby "individuals who believe they are in control of their success or failures are more motivated to engage in learning" (Schunk, 2012, in Appova and Arbaugh, p.7). Nonetheless, it would be wise to recognise that not all adult learners can be assumed to be self-directed, as posits Jarvis (2010). Further, two participants in this work (David and Maya) have positive perceptions of mandatory professional development whose purposes, content, and form is outside of their control. These participants' perceptions are perhaps distinct from those of the other participants due to particular aspects of how they are biographically situated. David holds no subject specific or sector specific teaching qualification, thus David speaks favourably of professional development sessions focusing on elementary aspects of teaching and learning. In regard to Maya, it can be argued that there is a connection between Maya's positive regard for professional development that focuses on policy compliance and her former career as an Ofsted inspector, a role characterised through values of compliance, regulation and adherence to prescribed standards.

The second theme (2.2) responding to the second research question concerns participants' desire for professional development that enables some form of reflection. Reflection is a widely cited feature of professional learning (Kyndt, *et al.*, 2018; Darling-Hammond, *et al.*, 2017; Avalos, 2011; Meirink, Meijer and Verloop, 2007; Kwakman 2003), as an "instrument of change" (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018, p.5). Schön (1983, p.62) notes that reflection serves as a vehicle to address contextualised issues, whereby the teacher can:

> Reflect on the way he has framed the problem he is trying to solve, or on the role he has constructed for himself within a larger institutional context.

Reflective practice thus complements an approach to professional development that values learner agency and a salient focus, informed by context, subject and individual learners' needs, as discussed in connection with themes 1.3 and 2.1. Correspondingly, opportunities to reflect on

professional practices are perceived by participants as a feature of effective professional development.

Thirdly, effective professional learning requires, as a prerequisite, a comfortable and appropriate physical learning environment (theme 2.3). 'Appropriate' here means that the physical space needs to be of an adequate size for the number of participants and there needs to be a suitable temperature, lighting, ventilation and catering for those in attendance. These features are mirrored by Knowles (1980, p.69), who argues that in order for learning to occur the "physical environment is characterised by physical comfort" established through appropriate seating, temperature, ventilation, lighting and positioning of attendees. Maslow (1943) had earlier posited that satisfying physiological needs were a first tier motivation: if physiological needs are unmet, motivation will be limited to satisfying these needs and not, by extension, intellectual needs, such as learning.

The findings indicate that the basic physical conditions of mandatory professional development events need to be adequate before engagement with professional learning can occur. Throughout the duration of this work I found no similar theme in the literature relating to professional development in other education sectors. The apparent uniqueness of this theme for FE perhaps indicates the particularly impoverished circumstances in this sector whereby ostensibly straightforward physical conditions conducive to learning are not always afforded.

The fourth theme relates to the inclusion of active learning and a fun element in development sessions. Bonwell and Eison (1991, p.iii) define active learning as engagement in higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) though discussion, reading, writing and problem solving. The participants tended to favour these such activities. Thus, the findings reflect Bonwell and Eison (1991, p.6), who consider that:

> If the objectives of a course are to promote long-term retention of information, to motivate students toward further learning, to allow students to apply information in new settings, or to develop students' thinking skills, then discussion is preferable to lecture.

These features appear to enhance the motivation of the participants to participate in development activities and learn new knowledge. This theme contrasts with the findings of Appova and Arbaugh (2018, p.17) who found that for secondary teachers' professional development activities:

> …even those that actively engage teachers, often fail to provide deep and meaningful learning opportunities [as they involve] teachers just sitting around and talking.

The same authors (Appova and Arbaugh, 2018, p.17) recommend that:

> Professional developers make better effort in reaching beyond active and collaborative participation aiming more toward providing deep, relevant and meaningful learning opportunities – opportunities for learning that would be highly motivating to teachers.

These authors infer that active learning and deep learning are incompatible or mutually exclusive. It is perhaps tempting to dismiss the idea of active and fun learning as trivial or irrelevant in this manner and not a conduit to deep learning. However, these features can be located within what Illeris (2007) refers to as the incentive dynamic of learning within which active, fun activities, when favoured, can stimulate motivation and volition to learn. It would be ill-advised then to perceive these features as superficial considerations. The participants articulated a clear preference for the inclusion of active engagement with learning and (often) fun as part of what stimulated their interest, engagement and ultimately learning. In contrast to a transmissive, didactic approach, active learning complements the learner-centred approach discussed in connection with themes 1.3, 2.1 and 2.2.

I recognise, however, these features are not required in all instances for learning to take place. For instance, a passive learning dynamic can also stimulate ideas and lead to new thinking (Postholm, 2012). Thus, it should not be assumed that learning occurs solely through active learning activities. Further, as argued in chapter four in connection with this theme, making generalisations in relation to the role of fun must be tempered in light of the fundamentally subjective nature of fun and individuals' perceived desire for fun as a feature of professional learning.

The fifth theme comprises learning among communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). A community of practice is a group of professionals in a particular field in which learning occurs through interactions among the group (Wenger, Trayner and De Laat, 2011; Wenger, 1998). Learning can also occur across different communities in wider landscapes of practice (Wenger, 2014). These forms of professional development are considered by the participants to be effective as the knowledge and ideas exchanged relate to shared contextual features such as subject, student cohorts, or organisational matters, and are therefore perceived to have a high relevance in addressing individuals' professional development needs. Indeed, it has been widely argued that learning through communities of practice provides a conduit for enhanced pedagogical knowledge, classroom practices and student achievement (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018; Thurlings and den Brok, 2017; Cordingley, 2015). Communities of practice can facilitate professional learning in connection with addressing self-identified needs (theme 1.3), determining and addressing a relevant learning focus (2.1), reflective practice (theme 2.2) and active learning (theme 2.4).

What can be learned: summary

All the participants in the present research reported engagement in some form of professional development. This is broadly consistent with research in FE (ETF, 2019a) and in other education sectors (McElearney, Murphy and Radcliffe, 2018). Whereas mandatory professional development was frequently characterised as a transmissive vehicle to communicate organisational messages and address elementary aspects of teaching and learning, non-mandatory professional development was characterised as addressing critical pedagogical and subject learning needs.

In articulating five themes that encompass features that the participants perceived to constitute effective professional development, it should not be concluded that all five themes constitute necessary prerequisites to effective professional development on every occasion. For example, some participants found professional development sessions effective when they themselves had not identified or determined the learning focus, rather, colleagues in the

English department had planned and led these sessions. It could be that these peer-led sessions were perceived effective as they represented the enactment of a community of practice whereby the deliverers, lecturers in the English department at the College, understood and addressed the shared (situated) learning needs of the participants. It was also found that effective professional development does not always require engagement with communities of practice. For instance, participants discussed effective professional development activities that were also solitary in nature, such as reading, watching TV documentaries, and completing online courses.

Recommendations: mandatory professional development

The findings of this work have resulted in the following recommendations for the planning and implementation of mandatory professional development in FE colleges.

- **Use appraisals to inform the planning of (and to evaluate) professional development.** Appraisals could be used to obtain lecturers' and middle managers' perceptions of their own learning needs to inform the focus of future mandatory and non-mandatory professional development. These meetings could also be used as part of the evaluation process of prior mandatory professional development as proposed in the final bullet point corresponding to mandatory professional development.

- **Ensure appropriate physical conditions.** The comfort of those in attendance should be a key consideration at professional development events. Appropriate conditions comprise sufficient space, seating, ventilation and lighting for those in attendance. This is a necessary precondition to establish an environment conducive to learning (Knowles, 1980) that will not, therefore, interfere or disrupt learning.

- **Offer a range of opt-in development sessions with distinct learning foci**. Such sessions could be informed through consultation with lecturers and middle managers in order to both recognise their

professional voice and to more often address particular learning needs as they perceive them. Such an approach would facilitate conditions whereby mandatory professional development serves to "provide collective experiences that are targeted to groups of teachers with similar needs and challenges" (Desimone and Garet, 2015, p.225). This approach does not preclude activities or sessions that could also be determined by the planners, including generic, transmissive content related to elementary aspects of teaching and learning, where such content is determined to be necessary. Thus, both the needs and priorities of the organisation and of individual lecturers can be met, a balanced approach to learning articulated by Dewey (1938).

- **Create opportunities for active learning and reflective practice.** The use of active learning activities and the inclusion of opportunities for reflection are advised, to stimulate engagement with learning content. Conversely, didactic sessions in which the participants' role is that of passive recipient, should be minimised.

- **Provide online access to learning content.** The content or summaries of mandatory professional development sessions could be placed online in order that part-time colleagues could access such learning content in cases where they are unable to attend in person. Similarly, transmissive organisational messages could be communicated in written form such as through email, or other communication technologies rather than in-person, at professional development events. This approach would be low-cost and time efficient. Furthermore, part-time colleagues would not miss such messages, as such information would be available to access at any time and place.

- **Evaluate mandatory professional development.** The introduction of a transparent, meaningful evaluation process would be a judicious step in order to both inform improvements for future development events and to enhance the motivation of those mandated to attend by this public

validation of their professional voices. As a starting point, evaluation could investigate one or more of the following: relevance to learning needs; participants' perceptions of the professional learning activities *per se*; how professional development addresses contextual and strategic elements; and the impact of professional development (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019) according to lecturers and/or managers. Approaches to how evaluation is best realised is contested. Desimone (2009) suggests that (teacher) interviews, surveys, and class observations provide reliable data. Guskey (2002) considers teacher reflections and portfolios provide a useful vehicle for reflecting on professional learning. Others argue that data collection, such as student achievement data, provides an objective measure of analysis (Bryk, 2015). These approaches are not mutually exclusive, thus it may be useful to use more than one such method in order that planners of professional development can obtain a both qualitative and quantitative data.

Recommendations: non-mandatory professional development

It is widely argued that informal (non-mandatory) professional learning in education is important for educators across sectors (see Kyndt *et al*, 2016; Van Daal, Donche, and De Maeyer, 2014; Shapiro, 2003) and the findings of the present research indicate it to be similarly important in the FE sector. The following recommendations make reference to non-mandatory professional development in this context.

- **Recognise lecturers' personal endeavours.** It would be beneficial for FE organisations to recognise and support the personal endeavours of lecturers and middle managers in the work they do to independently address their own critical professional learning needs. Such work appears central to the maintenance and updating of subject knowledge, ensures colleagues adhere to exam board regulations and processes, and informs and develops approaches to teaching and learning. It has also been argued that recognition for this form of professional learning is likely to facilitate teacher retention (Shanks, Robson, and Grey,

2012). FE colleges are located in a financially deprived sector (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010), thus forms of recognition and reward could comprise low cost options such as time off in-lieu in the quiet summer months or at other non-teaching times. Scholarly activity days or times could also be introduced, also during non-teaching times, to enable and encourage colleagues to address their own specific professional learning needs at work during work hours.

- **Develop and celebrate the community of practice.** Non-mandatory professional learning could be shared and celebrated among colleagues at departmental or organisational show-and-tell events, should lecturers and mangers wish to participate. These events could provide a conduit to strengthen the professional community of practice (Wenger, 1998) for learning within the organisation and provide public validation of the professional integrity of colleagues in addressing their own professional learning needs.

- **Use coaching to support non-mandatory professional learning.** Teaching and learning coaching teams, where they exist, could support non-mandatory (but critical) professional learning activities in addition to mandatory professional development. As Lofthouse (2019, p.37) argued, coaching can strike: "a balance between the agenda of the organisation or project and the motives and interests of their coachees."

Contribution to new knowledge: addressing an area of paucity

Lee (2009, p.33) draws from Cryer (2000) who contends that originality can be discerned in doctoral study through various means, including "an exploration of a topic" and an "improved model". In this section I discuss how my work is marked by originality in reference to the former. In the following section I consider how I (also) achieved the latter through the development of an existing model of analysis in this work which could be applied in future research.

The principal aim of this research was to investigate FE lecturers' and middle managers' engagement with all forms of professional learning and to establish what participants perceive to constitute effective professional development. In doing so I have addressed, albeit on a small scale, an area of paucity in the literature that requires attention in this historically under-funded education sector (Hodgson, 2015; Lucas and Nasta, 2010; Lucas, 2004a; Robson, 1998). I argued in the opening chapter that located within an ongoing policy context of austerity FE colleges can ill afford to divert scarce time and money to development activities that do not incur some form of professional learning or somehow enhance the experiences or achievement of FE students.

Although the literature on engagement with professional development is prolific across education sectors (Boylan *et al.*, 2018; Kyndt, *et al.*, 2016) and such literature serves to provide points for comparison with the FE sector, as it is located within differing educational sectors the ability to draw inferences from such literature in reference to the FE sector is restricted. The case study research of the present work has thus contributed to the body of knowledge concerning the contextualised exploration of engagement with, and perceptions of effectiveness, regarding professional development specifically in the further education sector.

Contribution to new knowledge: developing an (existing) analytical approach

I built on the analytical framework for professional development of Fraser *et al.* (2007) that proposes three lenses for analysis (according to planning, purpose and aspects of learning) by adding the fourth lens of frequency and timeframe of engagement. I argued in the preceding chapter that without taking into account these additional features, my analysis would neglect any consideration of the nature of engagement by participants with different forms of professional learning and how participants perceive this dynamic. For instance, informal unplanned activities may appear to be less significant, given that these activities are fewer in range, but the greater frequency of engagement with such activities temper such assumptions.

I found, tentatively, that mandatory, whole organisation, professional development in the context of this research tends to be one-off (as defined in chapter four) and infrequent in nature. This finding contrasts with non-mandatory engagement with professional development that tends to occur more frequently and more often involves an ongoing theme of learning. A key finding from the application of this additional lens is that participants often perceived effective professional development to be characterised as ongoing, rather standalone in nature. This finding concurs with Cordingley (2015) who argues that effective professional development tends to involve sustained learning. This timeframe and frequency of engagement lens of analysis could be applied in other research contexts to similarly investigate potential correlations between these dynamics and the perceived efficacy of professional development.

Limitations of the present study and recommendations for future research

Conventional wisdom of case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2006) is that the ability to generalise from findings from this approach is problematic due to its highly contextualised nature (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, 1984). This feature could underpin an argument against the use of case study research in an FE sector described as "unified by being different" (Gleeson *et al.*, 2005, p.447). In response, Flyvbjerg (2006) contends that case study research can contribute to a body of other cases that can together develop a clear(er) depiction of that being investigated in a particular field. Case study research can therefore contribute to generalised knowledge as part of a collective endeavour among researchers exploring a tapestry of salient, yet diversely contextualised cases. This defence is further articulated in chapter three. The research methodology and method applied in the present work could therefore be replicated in other FE settings to enable the development of multiple cases and an emergent body of knowledge regarding perceptions of professional development in the sector. Flyvbjerg (2006, p.227) goes further in his argument that generalisation need not be the singular goal of research anyhow:

Formal generalisation is only one of the many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge. That knowledge cannot be formally generalised does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society.

This is not to criticize attempts at formal generalization, for such attempts are essential and effective means of scientific development; rather, it is only to emphasize the limitations, which follow when formal generalization becomes the only legitimate method of scientific inquiry.

Further, Thomas (2011) argues that case study research provides an opportunity for the development of phronesis and should thus be judged within this context.

A limitation of this research is that I applied only a single research method, thus limiting the possibility for triangulation in the data analysis. It was unfortunate that for practical reasons I was unable to carry out focus groups in addition to the interviews, for the reasons discussed in chapter three. As Thurmond (2004) acknowledges, triangulation can require a degree of planning and organisation that may not always be available to researchers. In this instance, the participants' conditions of work were incompatible with meeting as a group at single time and place. The additional data would have enabled me to further triangulate the perceptions of the participants and obtain data through the distinct process of participants communicating with one another (Robson, 2002; Bailey, 1994). The analysis in this work is therefore restricted to the analysis of one-to-one interview data.

This research excludes the voices of the planners of mandatory professional development in FE, thus the analysis is framed solely through the perceptions of recipients (lecturers) and deliverers (middle managers), of mandatory professional development. Indeed, this such framing is what I had intended in order to privilege the voices of "the voice(s) from below" (Gleeson *et al.*, 2015, p.1). What this means, therefore, is that the perceptions and agency of the planners, most often cited as the SLT, are not considered in this work. Indeed, this focus merits attention for future research, whereby senior managers' perceptions of professional development are analysed. This would enable an exploration of the tensions managed by those in such roles between policy

compliance, budgetary restrictions and satisfying lecturers' and middle managers' preferences regarding professional development.

Also in reference to the participants, I was only able to involve two part-time colleagues. This constituency of the FE lecturer workforce was therefore poorly represented in the findings of this work. I have been unable, therefore, to develop my analysis to the extent I had hoped with regard to their perceptions, how they engage with professional development, and what challenges they face. This research therefore unwittingly mirrors Gleeson's (2014) characterisation of part-time FE lecturers at the periphery and full-time lecturers as core staff in FE (which is ironic, given that now the former is the majority group). It remains my concern that part-time lecturers have limited access to mandatory professional development opportunities. For this reason future research could focus on part-time FE colleagues, perhaps by way of approaches to research that could circumnavigate the logistical issues I found in seeking their involvement though focus groups and interview (such as questionnaires). I would note, however, that alternative research methods would necessarily require an alternative epistemological framework from that I applied in this work.

This research could serve as a springboard to future action research in which interventions could be made to explore the proposed effects and implications of incorporating participants' voices in mandatory professional development: can a Deweyan line be found between satisfying organisational demands and personal interests and motivations? Future research could also further investigate formal, unplanned professional development, a form of professional learning that was not identified by (any) participants in this work.

Concluding comments

I reflect on my doctoral journey with a sense of pride that I have engaged in research concerned with the sector within which I still teach, a sector in which conducting research and pursuing higher level qualifications is, perhaps, a particularly challenging endeavour. Lloyd and Jones (2018, p.77) eloquently summarise my own research context:

> […] research is often undertaken in the individual's own time, outside of their normal work. FE staff do not generally have the same access to journals, support networks and funding opportunities available to those in the HE sector. This situation means that undertaking research from within FE can be a lonely business, as despite the support of the awarding institutions for those undertaking postgraduate qualifications, much of the work is done independently.

As an insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012) my work is characterised as derived from within, rather than from the outside, the FE sector, and as such represents my efforts to elevate the voices of those *within* FE, including my own, among academic discourses of the sector.

This work has enabled me to acquire a broader and deeper critical understanding of the historical-political dimensions of the sector in which I teach. In particular I have become cognisant of the neo-liberal context in which the FE sector is located and how this ideology permeates into sector policy. On this learning journey I have also progressed, I hope, from novice to some level of competence in the field of qualitative research inquiry. My understandings of research methodologies and methods are certainly more sophisticated that they were at the starting point of this work. Further, I have developed a keen understanding and interest in research ethics, particularly in relation to the power dynamics involved with insider research. I have also developed a strong interest in divergent and contested theories of learning which now inform my professional work as both teacher and learning and development coach. For instance, I often now introduce concepts from andragogical learning theory into coaching discussions relating to working with adult learners.

The focus has not been whether FE lecturers and middle managers correctly know all their professional development needs and address them accordingly; indeed, it is unlikely that the individual can always identify and address their own professional learning needs (Jarvis, 2010). Rather, I have sought to formally give voice to this workforce, and in doing so investigate their perceptions of professional development as adult learners. Whether FE lecturers and middle managers can or will accurately articulate their professional learning needs, their perceptions matter at the very least as

learners' perceptions of learning events inform their motivation and volition to learn (Illeris, 2007).

This work was shaped by a methodological approach of which I had been previously unaware, personalised evaluation. On reading Kushner (2000) I had a 'eureka' moment with regard to the methodological approach I would apply for this work. I could reconcile my desire to both evaluate the effectiveness of professional development, and do so through the interpretive lens of participants' perspectives, as opposed to the more commonly applied positivist approach to evaluation research (McNamara and O'Hara, 2004). This approach would offer an essential lens for my research because, in accordance with a constructivist epistemological positionality, I wanted to recognise the multiple viewpoints of those involved (O'Leary, 2010). Personalised evaluation recognises that participants' own lives, beliefs, values and work contexts is important: "to measure a programme against its objectives [...] is a meaningless exercise itself, as those objectives [...] relate to the lives of people" (Kushner, 2000, p.xiv).

As discussed in the opening chapter, Taubman (in Daley, Orr and Petrie, 2015) argues that there remains a lack of respect for the expertise and views of professional lecturers in the FE sector in current managerialist education policy. Solvason and Elliot (2013, p.2) consider that a key feature largely absent from existing literature is: "the voice of the FE lecturer". This work represents my response to these characterisations by way of giving voice to participants who work in the sector. This work, together with future, perhaps more widespread endeavours to give voice to those in the sector could introduce a counter-narrative of FE contrasting with the dominant neo-liberal discourse, and perhaps returning to earlier articulated values for adult education (Russell Report, 1973, p. xi):

> The value of adult education is not solely to be measured by direct increases in earning power or productive capacity or by any other materialistic yardstick, but by the quality of life it inspires in the individual and generates for the community at large.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: participant information sheet

Exploring deliverer and recipient perceptions of efficacy in English FE sector professional development: a case study evaluation.

Participant Information Sheet   Date: _____

This information sheet is for mid-career further education lecturers, and FE managers, who have been invited to participate in the research study: Exploring deliverer and recipient perceptions of efficacy in English FE sector professional development: a case study evaluation. For the purposes of this study 'mid-career' is defined as those who have been lecturing for between 5 and 20 years. The research is being undertaken by Andy Goldhawk as part of his doctoral (EdD) study. He can be contacted at andy.goldhawk@cityofbristol.ac.uk The lead supervisor for this research is Dr Richard Waller, who can be contacted at Richard.Waller@uwe.ac.uk.

Research Purpose

This research aims to explore FE lecturers' and managers' perceptions of professional development events and activities: in particular, what constitutes *effective* professional development according to those managing and lecturing in the sector.

Participation

Lecturers and managers will be invited to take part in a 1:1 interview with the researcher at a location of your convenience. It is intended the interviews will last no longer than an hour. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed for the purposes of analysis. You will be invited to read and comment on the transcription should you wish.

Risks and Confidentiality

Every care will be taken to anticipate and minimise any risk to yourself resulting from participation in this research study. However, there is a small possibility that you share sensitive or confidential information that has the potential to cause some degree of emotional discomfort. You have the right to not answer questions or answer in a manner in which you choose, in which case no negative consequence will occur from this. The interview (and recording) can also be paused or stopped. Your identity will be anonymised through the use of a pseudonym (which you are welcome to choose yourself); however, a small risk will remain that your identity may be deduced through your position in the college; this is particularly the case for middle managers of whom there are few colleagues in such roles. All information

(through recordings and transcripts) about you will be kept confidentially, only to be shared between the researcher and his doctoral supervisors.

Right to Withdraw

Your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw at any stage (before the deadline below) and without giving reason. Please note, once the research and subsequent analysis is completed it may no longer be possible to remove your contributions.

Deadline for withdrawal: 31st July 2018

Data Storage

Audio recordings will be stored in a secure location in a locked container. Electronic information will be password protected. Access will be limited to the researcher and his doctoral supervisors. Following the completion of this work, data recordings and transcriptions will be kept in the same manner for potential future use (by the researcher). The completed thesis will be available to public access and potentially sections thereof in subsequent publications (such as in academic journals).

Approval by the University of the West of England

The University of West of England ACE Faculty Research Committee and the University Research Ethics Committee have approved the research articulated in this document.

UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Exploring deliverer and recipient perceptions of efficacy in English FE sector professional development: a case study evaluation

Agreement of Informed Consent form

CONFIDENTIAL

I have been invited to participate as an interviewee / member of a focus group in the following doctoral research study conducted by Andy Goldhawk: Exploring deliverer and recipient perceptions of efficacy in English FE sector professional development: a case study evaluation, and:

1. I confirm I have received, read and understood the Participant Information Sheet dated _____ in reference to the above study. I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and any such questions have been addressed to my satisfaction;

2. I understand that my participation in this research study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time and without giving reason;

3. I understand that data collected in relation to my participation in the above research study may be shared with the doctoral supervisors of Andy Goldhawk, at the University of the West of England, for the purposes of monitoring to ensure the ongoing appropriateness in which the research is being conducted;

4. I agree to take part in this research study.

Name:

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Signature:

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Date:

…………………………………………………………………………………..

Interview Schedule

For lecturers

I will firstly ask for an outline of the professional background, including information on: prior career(s); their route into lecturing in the sector; qualifications undertaken in order to teach. These questions inform my personalised evaluation approach (Kushner, 2000).

- Which subject area(s) do you teach?
- How long have you been a lecturer in further education?
- Do you lecture full-time or part-time?
- What does continuing professional development (CPD) mean to you? What is it for?
- What, in your view, characterises (or, what factors enable) *effective* professional development in relation to your work as an FE lecturer?
- Please give examples of CPD activities or events you have participated in, in the past, which were effective? Why were they / what made them effective?
- In your view what makes a CPD activity or event *in*effective? Can you give any examples of *in*effective CPD you have experienced?
- What informs the planning of CPD that takes place in the College? Are you involved in the planning or leading of CPD activities? How are CPD events and activities in the College planned?
- How is (the impact of) CPD evaluated following CPD events or activities?
- Do you take part in CPD activities not planned or led by the College? (for example, your own research or work towards a qualification elsewhere) / Tell me about such development activities. Does the college support you in any way with these separate activities?

For managers (those who plan and lead CPD events and activities)

- What does continuing professional development (CPD) mean to you? What is it for?
- How are professional development activities planned, implemented and evaluated in the College? / What factors inform or influence CPD planning and implementation?
- What is your role in this process?
- Do you feel you are suitably supported / qualified / prepared to lead professional development activities?
- What, in your view, characterises (or, what factors enable) *effective* professional development for FE lecturers?
- Please give examples of CPD activities or events you have managed or participated in, which were effective? Why were they / what made them effective?
- In your view what makes a CPD activity or event *in*effective? What are the potential causes / reasons for ineffective CPD in your view?

Appendix 4: example transcription (from the interview with 'John')

- What does continuing professional development (CPD) mean to you? What is it for?

It means something different to me now because, coz recently I've just done like a business management course which...one of the modules was to think about CPD...so now...I think of progression, of opportunities I think of upping my skills...whereas I think if it was 4, 5 months ago CPD for me would have been, well, another day when we just get held into college for no reason and get told loads of different things that we probably don't necessarily need...I think of it now more of an opportunity to gain something for myself in terms of upping my skills. CMI level 3 Business Management...I'm doing it through the college so as part of my last appraisal I asked if I could access any sort of training...it's an introduction into first line management...there's a unit which was called development opportunities.

- What characterises *effective* professional development in relation to your work as an FE lecturer?

Training or programmes that are directly linked to what I do on a daily basis...linked to my actual job role...if it's something that's gonna help me to do something better or more efficiently then I feel that's worthwhile CPD...seeing that link between whatever I'm doing for CPD and how that affects my actual job role...it could be anything because I have had CPD where I have actually implemented somethings not in class but in terms of how I manage my administrative side of the job...the majority of it has been college-wide...I haven't had the opportunity to take on much CPD which could be say online or reading a book.

- Please give examples of CPD activities or events you have participated in, in the past, which were effective?

The teaching and learning that I did online was very useful [COSERA] because it helped me in terms of managing my workload...marking, coz I've always had a problem with marking...the CMI level 3 course...that I'm doing now is really challenging me to actually up my game in terms of teaching and how I manage the classroom and my workload again.

From the previous CPD days that we've had at the college-wide ones, there was one aspect that really stood out for me, which was the teaching squares...there was this idea

of teachers being able to go and kind of, um, look at other teachers' practice which I found very useful because sometimes when you're in your room with 30, 20 students you know, you can only go by what you know, but if you're able to look at someone else...you are kind of comparing and saying actually do you know what, I think I might be doing OK...I've put in place several things...we do a lot of practical work in the lab...My technique when it came to practical work was very different from the teacher I observed and I really enjoyed the way she kind of arranged her groups and got her materials for each group...she'd get one group to go up and get the material first and then call the next group, whereas I used to just put everything out...so I kinda took that on board...it really helps in, kind of, managing that kind of chaos...especially when you have a practical going on.

I actually prefer doing stuff...I quite like a mixture of like, getting a bit of theory and going away to apply that into whatever I'm doing...for example there was one really good CPD that we had where we were being introduced to a piece of particular software, and it was introduced as a college-wide and then we went away to computer rooms...we are introduced to something and then we actually get to do it straight away. If it's just being told I can't really translate that necessarily into practice...that was to do with WamEdu and I actually started it quite a lot. There was one CPD where there was involvement from the English department, and I remember they took quite a few of the sessions which turned out to be really good...I thought it actually works really well if you've got colleagues doing the CPD for you...as opposed to having external people coz...sometimes external providers, sometimes they will led according to what they've prepared and not necessarily according to our needs, whereas the, our colleagues, they have the same students that we have, they understand where we are located...they understand the challenges we face...they understand that sometimes maybe a computer doesn't work...their CPD was brilliant, I really enjoyed their CPD, I felt it was very relevant to me.

- In your view what makes a CPD activity or event *in*effective? Can you give any examples of *in*effective CPD you have experienced?

Sometimes the sessions may not be directly linked...I'm gonna speak from experience on what's made some of the days ineffective and given some of the reasons are not really directly linked to the CPD itself...it's maybe the context around the CPD...I start with the first...held just before Christmas where the attitude going in there was already kind of dampened a bit because...do I have to go in like a couple of days before Christmas...even if the activities were beneficial, the attitude going in you're already negative...I have sat

in some where the content is more suited to a particular teacher who may teach, say, English or another subject and not so much the subject I teach...so it's kind of subject specificity sometimes...I can't see how this relates to what I do.

There was one...we were in a room with different members of staff from different areas and we had to get into groups and discuss...something...because I wasn't in with my team I didn't find it as useful... it wasn't relevant to what I do.

- What informs the planning of CPD that takes place in the College? Are you involved in the planning or leading of CPD activities? How are CPD events and activities in the College planned?

I'd like to know....in terms of who does it I'm not actually sure. I assume it's the senior leadership team...I think at times they have involvement from different departments...they rope in who they feel is best suited to meet a particular need that they have identified...but I don't know how they identify those needs. Based on the wider college data, maybe with non-attendance they bring someone who's an expert on how to improve attendance...me thinking that, I have no proof.

- How is CPD evaluated following CPD events or activities?

I've been doing a lot of evaluation with my other course, so...in my area anyway, I haven't...I do not recall being asked to evaluate the CPD or give any feedback necessarily...my colleague did send an email once to, to give feedback on...it was because we were asked...because we felt strongly about something...that was after discussion with our manager. In terms of any kind of systematic review or feedback, I'm not sure.

- Do you take part in CPD activities not planned or led by the College? Does the college support you in any way with these separate activities?

[In reference to the CMI course] *that would be considered part of CPD wouldn't it...I don't see it as such but when I think about it I have to because it is, you know, part of that...it goes back again to what my perspective of CPD is...my perspective, like I said, has been this kind of whole college wide event where, you know, you have different sessions going on and not necessarily what, things that I do outside college or things that are dictated or set up by the college. The more we're talking about it its making me realise because there's a few things that I've done, um, courses online like COSERA which is to do with teaching and learning which I haven't thought of it as CPD...it's like a 12 week course where you just follow it online...being a teacher I'm always trying to streamline what I*

do...is there something I can glean from here to help me to be a better practitioner...you have to continuously be learning...online learning platforms can be very useful...I can be doing something from Harvard university for free for like 12 weeks, which has a lot of research behind it, and I like doing that kind of stuff...or listen to TED talks...on subjects linked to my teaching...I subscribe to quite a few different places.

- Other salient comments

In school…with CPD, everyone...there's more of a buy-in into the CPD, a lot more than I have found in FE...you have to really force people to turn up, if there wasn't a log in when you arrive at CPD, it feels like the majority would not even bother going...I'm inclined to think that sometimes it's to do with schools have their CPDs on INSET days...which staff feel it's fine to be there, whereas sometimes in college staff may feel actually I'm being dragged in on a day I could...so maybe there's less buy-in.

I don't think it's down to the content, necessarily, it's just changing the attitudes of staff...it's the attitudes toward the actual CPD itself, there isn't much of, oh I can maybe gain something, it's more like, oh, I'm obliged to be here...the mind-set is not very positive toward CPD day...the food at CPD days, it definitely helped...after lunch everyone seemed to be a little bit more enthusiastic...it's like an encouragement...encouraging staff to want to participate...to feel like there's a benefit to them, to what they're attending. We do turn up, and we sit down and we listen and, oh yeah, told to do something and we do it...it may be helpful to have some kind of input even if it's not leading...maybe there might be much more enthusiasm because you've contributed something as to what you want in that CPD...that has been the biggest difference between school and FE, in terms of attitudes…in school I could choose…I would go a number of weeks...that I would be looking at that...we had meeting every two weeks or something...you did individual stuff you were interested in and at the end you present to your group that you were divided into and the uptake was brilliant...in my mind, thinking of something like that being introduced in FE...I can almost see them kinda thinking, oh but why are we doing this and not really seeing the value...there's definitely a different kind of mind set. Maybe it's getting buy-in from lecturers, getting them on board to actually see the relevance and the importance of that.