Putting Practice First: Teacher-led professional development in action (2017-2021)

Celia Geen

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Abstract

There is limited published research by practitioners in Further Education into competing models of change and improvement in educational practice, including how and how well they operate. This thesis contributes to the discourse in the underdeveloped area of educational research related to Observations of Teaching and Learning (OTL) and models of educational change and improvement. Drawing mainly on the work of Carr (1995); Coffield (2009, 2010, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017, 2019); Dunne (1995, 2005); Fielding *et al* (2005); Gregson (2020); Kemmis (1988, 1995); O'Leary (2012a, 2012b, 2014, 2017, 2020); Sennett (2009); and Wiliam (2007, 2013, 2014, 2015), this thesis examines the concept of practice, what makes a practice educational and how models of change and improvement may create or inhibit conditions to support the development of professional learning and the improvement of practice in educational contexts. Moral and ethical aspects of educational practice, which seek to develop students to be parents, citizens and consumers, as well as workers and fulfilled human beings are also discussed.

This research study is essentially a study of college managers' and teachers' experiences of the model of change and improvement adopted by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED) in its inspections. It is set in the context of a General College of Further Education in England. The purpose of the thesis is to explore understandings of subjective lived experience. It is therefore primarily an act of interpretation, working on a small-scale, in detail, using qualitative methods that include, case study, observation, field notes, structured and semi-structured interviews to gather data about people's experience of inspection and other performance improvement measures, including their ideas and evidence concerning what helps, and what hinders, the improvement of educational practice. In this thesis, I attempt to make sense of data through interpretive schemes, as in this form of social research the researcher and the participants in the research are mutual interpreters of social phenomena. As the research is concerned with interpretation, co-construction of meaning and illumination, it is based on a constructivist ontology coupled with an interpretive epistemology and an inductive methodology, which focuses upon and begins in social practices. Data are

subsequently analysed to develop recommendations for change and improvement which it is hoped may inform educational policy and practice in the future.

Data from this thesis suggest that, in the college which forms the focus of this study, observation of teaching is beginning to incrementally move away from a top-down model toward a more authentic model of educational change and improvement in a form of collaboration and cooperation in which relationships of trust and empathy are developing on both sides in situations when an observer of teaching acts an equal and a critical friend. Using the observation process as a catalyst for change as part of a shared endeavour, the thesis offers glimpses into how a more democratic model of educational change and improvement, which recognises and respects the professionalism and experience of the teacher, leaving blame, shame and top-down relays of power out of the action, might operate in practice. My research finds that the more collaborative, democratic observation model of educational change and improvement currently being adopted, refined and developed by the college is beginning to bring about a stronger sense of shared responsibility and mutual accountability for educational change and improvement. These are reflective of factors of Joint Practice Development (JPD) reported by Fielding *et al*, (2005) who with Sennett (2009) reminds us that real changes in practice take time.

Data from the study also suggest that the use of the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP), essentially a personal development plan, has been a useful stimulus and helpful focusing device for the self-improvement of teachers. It is important to note that this new model of educational change and improvement reported in this thesis is itself in the early stages of implementation and will undoubtedly require incremental change and improvement as we gain more experience in its use. What is significant however, is that there is a growing sense of ownership of and commitment to, the new model of change and improvement from teachers themselves.

A key recommendation emerging from the thesis is that academic managers and education leaders require and deserve dedicated training and support in deepening their understanding of educational practice, including how practice actually changes and improves in real-world situations. A further recommendation is

that extending the use of JPD across the college may be useful in building a stronger and more cohesive sense of community in which teachers and education leaders can mutually engage in the shared endeavour of improving educational practice together, in a spirit of collaboration and cooperation based upon the foundations that have been laid thus far in the conduct of this thesis.

A final recommendation lends support to the work of Dunne (1995) where he reminds us that the expertise of teachers as context-sensitive, insider-researchers could and should be harnessed to greater effect in the pursuit of educational change and improvement, instead of the commissioning of external consultants who, as outsiders, are often unfamiliar the context and ethos of the college and are not therefore well-positioned, either as agents of change, role models or catalysts for sustained self-improvement in education.

Key words: Further Education; OfSTED, Concepts of Practice; Observation and Grading of Teaching; Professional Standards; Models of Change and Improvement: Joint Practice Development (JPD)

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List of abbreviations

ACER	Association of Colleges, Eastern Region
ADP	Accelerated Development Plan
AST	Advanced Skills Teacher
ATS	Advanced Teacher Status
BBC	The British Broadcasting Corporation
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CertEd	The Level 5 Certificate in Education
CET	The Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training
CIF	Common Inspection Framework
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CTE	Collective Teacher Efficacy
CTLLS	Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DET	The Level 5 Diploma in Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DoE	Department of Education
EIF	Education Inspection Framework
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
FAVTE	Further Adult Vocational and Technical Education
FE	Further Education
FE News	Further Education News
FENTO	Further Education National Training Organisation
FETL	The Further Education Trust for Leadership
GDPR	General Data Processing Regulations
GFE	General Further Education
GTC	General Teaching Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationery Office
HoF	Head of Faculty
HRO	Human Resources Officer

IfL	Institute for Learning
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
INSET	In-Service Education and Training
IOE	Institute of Education
IPDA	International Professional Development Association
IPFREC	International Practice Focused Research in Education Conference
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance/Assurer
IT	Information Technology
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
JPD	Joint Practice Development
LBGTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer and Ace
LEA	Local Education Authority
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
LoC	Lack of Capability
LSRN	Learning and Skills Research Network
MA	Master of Arts
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NEU	National Education Union
NHS	National Health Service
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
OTL	Observation of Teaching and Learning
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PIAP	Post Inspection Action Plan
PM	Programme Manager
PRP	Practitioner Research Project
QIA	Quality Improvement Agency
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills Status
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RCN	Royal College of Nursing
RDF	Research Development Fellowship
RI	Requires Improvement
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
SAR	Self Assessment Report

SCIF	Strategic College Improvement Fund
SDT	Staff Development Team
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SET	The Society for Education and Training
SHMI	Senior Her Majesty's Inspector
SMT	Senior Management Team
SUNCETT	University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teaching Training
TDA	Training and Development Agency
T & L	Teaching and Learning
TES	Times Educational Supplement
UCU	University and College Union
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Chapter 1: Context and Problem

Context

This thesis presents the findings of a small-scale, practitioner-research enquiry into different approaches to educational change and improvement in the Further Adult Vocational and Technical Education (FAVTE) sector in England. It examines the potential of an alternative model of collaborative, continuing professional development (CPD) in generating improvements in educational practice in a college of Further Education (FE). It compares this approach to educational change with the dominant model currently used by the Office for Standards of Education (OfSTED) in England and the education system which it supports. The consequences of the current model of change to the improvement of educational practice are discussed in a number of FE college contexts in some detail and with reference to a range of case studies and practical examples. It is important to note that, in this thesis, I am critical of the educational system and the model of change and improvement currently employed. I am not in any way critical of any situation, individual or institution. Across the board, this thesis finds policy professionals, education leaders and teachers across the sector generally doing their best in difficult circumstances, in the face of a model of change and system of FAVTE in pressing need of improvement.

The moral purpose of education

Why is improving educational practice FE colleges vital? Following on from their initial teacher training (ITT), maintaining and building on the quality of teachers' professional learning are important factors in bringing about educational improvement, which not only influence the quality of the learning experiences of students, but also their achievements. DfE (2016), cited by Baker (2020) draw attention to how providing high quality professional development not only develops staff but also contributes to their recruitment, retention and wellbeing. Timperley, (2011) cited in Colquhoun & Kelly (2014, p. 55) defines 'professional development', such as initial teacher training, as something that has now become widely regarded as being 'done' to the often passive recipient, whereas 'professional learning' suggests active engagement and agency allowing the teacher to focus on how they can meet student needs and support them. He makes the perceptive point that this active engagement and agency derives from, '*their need to know rather than someone else's desire to tell'.*

Whilst governments often think about learning in business and commercial terms, teachers make moral judgements about what to teach and how to teach it. Teachers share a moral enterprise to show their students a world in a way they can understand (Pring, 2005). Many scholars including Carr (1995), Pring (2005), Wiliam (2014) and Coffield (2015), concur regarding the importance of moral and ethical aspects of education. Gregson (2021) describes the difference between morals and ethics. She notes how the character, qualities and values of the teacher inform how ethical their decisions are, their understanding of correct actions and how they judge their learners using their understanding of both individual and group needs. She points out that in contrast, morals are related to shared societal norms regarding how people should act.

Coffield considers the moral aspect of education and its impact on society when he maintains,

> *'The main purpose of education is not the wages students will earn but the quality of life they will lead as parents, consumers and citizens as well as workers.'*
>
> (Coffield, *et al.,* 2014, p. 12)

FE plays an important part in society, and feeds into the moral purpose of education as identified by Carr (1995) who draws on the Aristotelian tradition where ethical and political activities, including education, are considered forms of practice. From an Aristotelian perspective *praxis* (practice) is directed towards outcomes but not only in a physical sense. Here the focus is also upon a moral 'good' pursued not in terms of self-interest but in the interests of others. For these reasons, improving educational practice cannot merely be reduced to students achieving high examination results, but to develop them more broadly into the successful adults leading fulfilled lives that Coffield (ibid) identifies. Rothstein, (2010) cited in Wiliam (2014) finds that benefits to students taught by the best teachers do not end with leaving school or college but continue for at least three years, suggesting a more rounded education than one based on achievements in examinations alone. In other words, the best teachers appear to develop qualities of mind, character and other capabilities in their students that are not captured in simple outcomes-based measures of achievement in end of year examinations and tests but more subtle and complex aspects of being human which appear to be important for long-term success in life. Wiliam also recognises the moral aspect of education, writing,

> *'It is the moral imperative – that when teachers do their jobs better, their students are healthier, live longer, and contribute more to society – that should drive teachers to improve'.*
> (Wiliam, 2014, p. 30)

'Teaching is largely moral and ethical', agrees Petty (2019, p. 16), who suggests that that teaching can and should be studied; that there is considerable knowledge about how we can teach, as well as which strategies are likely or unlikely to "work". While such recipes for "what works" may be useful, they are, however, mere generalisations without reference to context. The teacher's intuition, practical knowledge of their students, expertise and experience are also required to plan a lesson. In short, lessons simply have too many variables to fit into neatly into a pre-designed plan. To reiterate, teachers have a higher moral purpose than merely passing on knowledge. They are pivotal in improving their students' lives, life chances and helping them flourish (Petty, 2019). Biesta (2010) describes a three domains or purpose of education. The first being *Qualification* - the knowledge and skills needed to do something well in the world; the second, *Socialisation* – the norms, traditions and values framing how a practice is done and how it is done well; and finally, *Subjectification*, which is the impact that education has on the capacities of the individual for independent and critical thinking which influences how someone develops as a human being. Such experiences of education which may empower or disempower, enhance or diminish them depending the quality of the experiences as well as on social and cultural influences.

The focus of educational reform is frequently upon coursework, competency tests and raising standards. However, a focus on ethical and moral issues in education reaches out to the heart of teaching. Grappling with key questions of moral and ethical practice is a way of focusing teachers on the teacher as a person, who they can be, not only what they know or can do. Initial teacher training and subsequent CPD contributes to the role of developing teaching as a vocation (from the Latin *vocare* invoke or call someone to do something well in the world for its own sake) - not just as a profession pursued solely for monetary gain (Schwarz, 1998).

How does practice develop and improve?

Coffield (2014b) notes that it is a common recurring theme in educational research is that it is very difficult to change teachers' classroom practice. However it is imperative that teachers work individually and collectively to develop and improve their practice for the benefit of students. CPD budgets in colleges of FE are frequently under strain as education leaders and managers struggle to balance competing financial demands during times of considerable cuts in FE funding (OfSTED, 2022b). Under such financial pressures funding for CPD is sometimes sacrificed to support other activities. Keeping an organisation financially viable, Coffield (2014a) states, becomes the main priority for FE colleges at the cost of providing excellent further education for students which, he suggests, if done well would bring with it more secure income streams, enhanced institutional reputation and subsequently stable financial prosperity. Admittedly, the financial stakes are high. Most colleges have at least two 'Training Days' for this purpose and the college, which forms the focus of the study, offers lecturers up to five Study Leave days per year to complete professional qualifications, return to industry or undertake vocational or pedagogic upskilling. The previously available funding for professional qualifications, other than initial teacher training, has long since ceased. In these difficult circumstances ensuring that the limited funding made available for teachers' CPD in the college, and more widely, is put to good use is essential.

But what constitutes 'good use' in the provision of CPD? Wiliam (2013) believes that the only way for teaching to improve is to create a culture of continuing improvement. He suggests that every teacher needs to improve, but support is usually only provided to those considered poor performers. This is not always a successful strategy, as pressures to improve due to, for example, poor inspection reports or achievement rates, do not provide much incentive to change and may results in subtle resistance (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). *Continuing* Professional

Development suggests that everyone should engage in development, whatever their current performance level or time in the role. Gregson (2021) observes that experienced teachers in difficult situations may make better practical judgements in context than less experienced teachers, who may require support and mentoring. Sharing experiences and collaborating with others to support and learn from each other often assists teachers achieve good outcomes for learners. The key to this is knowing what CPD activities or strategies generate improvement and development.

Trying to replace existing staff with better teachers does not work, says Wiliam (2014), who also rejects the idea of raising entry requirements for teachers, suggesting that as our education system would have existing staff teaching for many years before any impact, this strategy would be very limited. Wiliam (2014) proposes that the only way to improve student success is to improve teacher quality, working with your existing teachers – a strategy he names, *'Love the one you're with',* but he admits that how to achieve this is not always clear. He notes the difficulty of identifying appropriate professional development; the range of skill levels in teachers with the same length of service; the difficulties in measuring the skills in a valid way and the competitive nature of rewards, such as senior lecturer or promotion to manager. This complexity suggests a systematic and clear structure is required to enable all teachers to improve practice throughout their career (BERA/RSA, 2014).

Hattie (2009, p. 59) echoes Wiliam (2014) where he recognises the impact of teachers, stating, *'Teachers are among the most powerful influences in learning'.* Hattie's (2009) successful book *Visible Learning* explains his scientific approach to teaching strategies that have a quantifiable impact on learning. His research in synthesising data from meta-studies of thousands of individual research investigations involving millions of learners, enables him to infer the impact of teaching strategies or approaches, which he refers to as 'effect sizes'. These are calculated for the purposes of informing educational policies as well as framing potential educational interventions, including factors such as class size, homework and the use of technology. His research continues, and he now uses data from over 1500 meta-studies. Hattie's (2009) decades of research into improving student achievement have determined that among the top factors are those related to the expertise of teachers, which he suggests arises from regular self-evaluation and critique and this contributes to the incremental improvements they make in their practice. Hattie (2019) acknowledges critics of his work, who say that teaching is too complex and situated to respond to his statistical approach, but he insists that he is not offering off-the-peg teaching strategies but expects teachers to apply their expertise to use the effect sizes to develop meaningful, research-informed, context specific and creative interventions towards educational improvement.

Finance features in Visible Learning research, demonstrating clearly that budgetary investment in education should be used to increase the expertise of teachers to maximise their impact on students, instead of changes to, or increases in, the number of physical buildings, which have lesser impact on students (Hattie, 2019a). Young (2010, p. 1) quotes Professor Dylan Wiliam where he admits that, *'I know of no studies that show changing the environment has a direct impact on student achievement.*' Yet governments still pump funds into school buildings, as the response to the Covid 19 virus by the British Government shows,

> *'Mr Johnson [Prime Minister] will promise to "lay the foundations" for a Britain where "everyone has the opportunity to succeed", beginning with investment in schools and colleges to put children "front and centre" of the policy.'*
> (Raynor, 2020, p. 1)

A £1billion 10-year programme to rebuild the schools' estate and £560 million for school repairs in one year. No mention, however, of any funding for teaching or teachers in a period of exceptional challenge for education, just what could be construed as politically calculated, headline-grabbing funding for the buildings.

Several writers (Coffield, 2015, Wiliam, 2014, Petty 2019, Pring, 2005, Schwarz, 1998, Gregson, 2021) identify and position at centre stage the moral and ethical dimension of education. Yet is this moral and ethical activity supported and developed by current CPD approaches, and more generally by guidance supplied by Government departments, such as OfSTED's Quality of Education in the Inspection Handbook (GOV.UK, 2022)? It is clear that safeguarding has become a priority in recent years and is carefully monitored, but this is a minimum expectation and an instrumental lawful requirement, rather than ensuring a genuine life enhancing activity for every learner. Considerable research into CPD has been conducted in schools but far less in FE (Coffield, 2014). It is hoped that this study, which explores how CPD can inspire teachers to improve the lives of their students, may make a contribution to models of change, improvement and research in FE in the future.

The Impetus for the Research

In January 2017 a full inspection visit by the Office for Standards in Education, (OfSTED) awarded the General Further Education College, which forms the site of this study, a Grade 3, 'Requires Improvement' (RI), in all areas except Apprenticeships.

Comments from the report include:

- *Too much teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes and adult learning provision requires improvement.*

- *Leaders and managers have not improved weak provision swiftly enough.*

A subsequent Support and Challenge visit in June 2017 found limited improvement in teaching and learning in the college. A return visit in February 2018 found greater improvement but still identified inconsistent teaching quality. Possible contributory factors to the improvement during this period was that the college implemented its Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) which included employing a former OfSTED Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) as a consultant on teaching and learning. Their work focused on several periods of observations and feedback and feedforward to the management. They worked with experienced observers who were able to benefit from their experience and knowledge of the Inspection expectations.

A positive change for teachers was that in September 2017 the college moved from a Graded Observation process, which incorporated individual feedback and action planning, to one which was designed to bring about cultural change and remove the pressure of graded lesson observations on both observers and particularly on those observed. O'Leary (2014) draws attention to how cultural changes require shifts in focus in order to harness the potential for the development of teachers' capacities for self-improvement. O'Leary, a strong opponent of graded lesson observations, questions their value in achieving of high and consistent standards in the professional practice of teachers.

O'Leary completed a report (UCU, 2013) following a national survey into lesson observation which identifies graded observations as a major cause of stress and anxiety, and negatively impacting on the self-esteem of some teaching staff. Removing grading was a major step forward in the college which forms the focus of the research, where objection to the graded system was strong from many teachers and particularly from members of the University and College Union (UCU). A key finding in the UCU (2013) report into the lesson observation process is the widespread discontent towards what many teachers considered a form of surveillance assessment, with links between observations and appraisals with, in some cases, formal, high stakes capability processes. Observation still has an important role to play in improving the quality of teaching and learning, according to O'Leary, (2015), however, only if there is a significant move away from the practice of graded observations linked to performativity and performance management, towards one which brings about engaging, supported and sustained professional development.

Adopting approaches to teacher observation based upon models of change and improvement that are more collaborative and cooperative are no less valuable, nor do they have less impact than performance management models. Indeed, as data from this study suggest they in may in practice be more useful and helpful in realising real and sustainable improvements in educational practice (See Chapters 4 and 5). O'Leary (2014) continues that they may yield sustainable improvements, due to the focus on development of staff, rather than as a performance management tool. However, the conditions for the on-going professional development of teachers, self-reflection, action research, peer coaching, experiential learning and feedback, suggested by O'Leary (2014), were not available to staff in this study during the period September 2017 to July 2018 as no individual feedback was provided from the ungraded observations. Research by O'Leary, (2014) finds that educational organisations that incorporate and prioritise feedback and feedforward stages, rather than focussing on the observation are often successful in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning and a culture of continuing improvement in their teachers. Profession discussion following the observation process is vital, according to O'Leary (2014). In addition he draws attention to how enough time and planning must take place early in the academic year for this to occur. Teachers' experiences and issues related to this phenomenon are described and explored in Chapter 4 in the form of a Case Study.

A further inspection by OfSTED took place January 2019, and the college was Graded 2, Good. The report recognises that changes in the process of observing the quality of teaching and the provision of feedback has led to improvements. In Leadership and Management, the Inspection Report states:

> *Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have improved the arrangements for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observers provide feedback to teachers that helps them to identify for themselves the actions that would most improve their teaching. Professional development for teachers focuses on addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection and the areas for improvement identified during frequent learning walks. This leads to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment. However, not all of the weaknesses identified at the previous inspection have been addressed. Teachers do not always plan and teach effectively to meet the needs of different students.*

The changes in observation processes that led to the improvement noted are discussed in greater depth in Chapter 4.

Questions Framing the Research

The following research questions are framed in an attempt to understand the nature of the problem more carefully and to begin to identify and explore some ways in which key issues might be addressed.

- What is a practice and how does a practice improve?
- What makes a practice educational?
- What interventions, methods and models of change and improvement might create conditions to support the development of teachers' capacities for professional learning and self-improvement?

- What are the strengths and limitations of alternatives to traditional approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the improvement of practice including Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005)?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the extent to which methods of collaborative Continuing Professional Development (CPD) might support the development of teachers' capacities for self-improvement and bring about improvements in educational practice, as identified by OfSTED and by teachers themselves.

The thesis investigates, examines and evaluates the methods used by the college which constitutes the site of this research. Data from OfSTED Inspection Reports, the College's CPD policies and methods, statistics from the college's Session Observations over time, extracts from Personal Development Plans (called Accelerated Development Plans (ADP)) and interviews with teaching staff are used to collect data in this study. Interviews with key staff responsible for the implementation of quality processes and the management of staff are also analysed.

As Head of Teaching and Learning at Royal College (pseudonom), which forms the focus of this thesis, I have ready access to both the research population within and beyond the college as well as appropriate sources of data. In addition, as a member of the management team at the college I potentially have the opportunity to influence the implementation of alternative approaches to educational improvements for the benefit of the college. My professional qualification in Human Resource Development, completed some years ago, kindled my interest in professional learning and improvement, and this has been further developed in my role, where I lead a team of Staff Development lecturers and Teacher Trainers.

There is a wealth of research into CPD by respected academics and this is drawn upon and discussed in Chapter 2. However, the requirements of Department of Education and OfSTED are constantly changing, and lecturers' time is stretched due to funding pressures and student demands as previously stated. In-service Education and Training budgets (INSET) are being reduced due to financial pressures, making external speakers rare in colleges and visits to external training events or even off-site team meetings less frequent. It is timely therefore for a fresh and critical consideration of current methods and approaches to CPD and how they are used in the college which forms the site of this study to discern how these may inform a new approach to staff development and improvements to educational practice.

Occupational standards

Eraut (1994) reports that many professions do not have stated occupational standards, which, he suggests, create difficulties in understanding what qualified people are competent to do and to judge the soundness of their assessment systems. Occupational standards, such as those for teachers, have been developed since Eraut wrote in 1994 and these are discussed below. However, it is still the case that unless someone is familiar with the ways of a profession it is difficult to know what constitutes competence in a newly qualified person, compared to a more experienced colleague. Gregson & Hillier (2015) note that the introduction of professional standards and their enforcement through a programme of testing, measurement and inspection is one of the main methods used for the development and monitoring of professional practice. They suggest that standards across a profession not only provide clarity about what is expected of practitioners but also how well that they are expected to do at a given stage in their career. While this addresses the deficiencies identified by Eraut (1994) that result from a lack of occupational standards, the implementation and monitoring of professional standards does not come without its problems. Gregson & Hillier (2015) recognise the different role of beginner teachers, who may focus on the immediacies of the techniques of their educational practice, whereas more experienced teachers may take on new and extended roles and responsibilities, often within wider aspects of educational leadership, which will present different challenges.

O'Leary (2020) details the development of professional standards for teachers, which he suggests was one of two key policy developments in the past two decades that have increased the use of observation in schools and colleges, the second being the creation of the Common Inspection Framework (CIF). In 1999 the Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO, 1999) introduced standards for all teachers in addition to mandatory Initial Teaching Training (ITT) qualifications for FE teachers. In 2003 OfSTED made recommendations for a key Department for Skills and Education (DfES) report, *Equipping our teachers for the future: Reforming initial teacher training for the learning and skills sector* (DfES, 2004), which included the judgement that FENTO standards were not a suitable foundation for teachers in FE at the early point of their careers. The FENTO standards did not regulate the use of observation, nor specify how often and for how long an observation should occur. The DfES (2004) report considers this a particular weakness of ITT programmes, with few trainees receiving sufficient observations, related feedback and mentoring.

As a result of this report, Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) revised the FENTO standards for use from September 2007, with the new overarching professional standards (LLUK, 2006) to address the perceived deficiencies. Observation took centre stage now, in contrast to the FENTO standards, with trainee teachers required to have a minimum of eight observations, totalling no less than eight hours. O'Leary (2020) suggests that the increased requirement for classroom observation was an attempt to address the lack of standardisation of practice for trainee teachers that OfSTED had identified, as well as demonstrating their increasing influence over FE policy.

Although the Education and Training Foundation (ETF, 2014) did not claim to replace the LLUK standards with their Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in 2014, effectively they did. Because they do not have the weight of legislation behind them, their recommendations are advisory and provide a framework for self-appraisal. They are embedded in ETF's course provision and in many ITT programmes, for example, the University of Huddersfield Consortium's Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE).

> *'The new Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers [2014] in our sector are at the heart of everything that we do, and are reflected in the design of every programme through which we support the sector and its workforce. The Standards emphasise the importance of professional reflection, of practitioners developing and refining their own expertise and*

judgement in applying theory to practice, and of identifying where practice needs to improve in order to ensure best outcomes for learners.'
(Russell, 2015, p. ix)

Whilst the ETF Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is very positive about the Standards developed by his organisation, he recognises that for practitioners, including trainee teachers, to achieve what he describes as 'demanding standards' they need time and support from managers and peers. The ETF offer practitioner-led programmes, which provide opportunities for supported, systematic collaborative educational research, reflection, sharing challenges and learning from peers as well as the principles of the Joint Practice Development (JPD) programme, offered through the University of Sunderland. Teacher training qualifications, such as the PGCE offered by many universities, are now mapped to the Standards. They are also used by the college in this study in their personal development plan for new teachers which are also mapped to ITT qualifications. The Professional Standards were updated and revised in 2022 (ETF, 2022). Funded by the Department of Education (DoE) the ETF Professional Standards set out expectations for teachers, yet these are not the criteria used by OfSTED when observing teaching. This suggests disunited working on the part of two Government funded organisations, both apparently committed to improving teaching and learning.

As OfSTED have been criticised for their lack of research, particularly recent research, before the introduction of the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) (Powell, 2019, Coffield, 2019) it is surprising that their fellow Government department, the ETF, does not provide research for OfSTED. Their recent review on the Professional Standards (ETF, 2022) offered practitioners the opportunity to contribute to the research via interviews or submissions, ensuring that the research experiences of the practitioners and education leaders who do the work are heard. The ETF practitioners' professional body, the Society for Education and Training (SET) issue a regular magazine and research supplement *Intuition* featuring articles from educational practitioners. Linking the expectations of Professional Standards to the Inspection Guidance would signal a more united approach, providing clarity and raising the profile and amplifying the practitioner voice. The ETF already fund practitioner research projects (PRP) in collaboration with the University of

Sunderland, via their SUNCETT courses, supporting and developing research in the FE sector. Research emerging from the PRP is a potential source of systematic educational research grounded in the experiences of research-practitioners which could be used by OfSTED.

The OfSTED Model of Inspection

Politicians, policy professionals and education leaders generally subscribe to the view that inspection plays a necessary role in the accountability systems of education, which are publicly funded, (Coffield, 2017). Drucker (1994, cited in Coffield, 2017, p. 32) argues, *'…education has become much too important and much too expensive not to be held accountable'.* The inspection function is currently performed by OfSTED, which is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, which reports directly to Parliament. The role of OfSTED is to be independent and impartial, but as a Government department, this almost inevitably presents challenges and conflicts of interest. The remit of OfSTED is to inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages to ensure that education of a high standard is being provided for students. To this end, they carry out hundreds of inspections and regulatory visits to educational organisations throughout England. Their reports are published online (GOV.UK, 2019).

According to Coffield (2017), when OfSTED started in 1992, as the Office for Standards in Education, commentators queried whether their purpose of accountability and improvement could be effectively combined, and in 2007 their remit expanded to include children's services work relating to social care. At the same time their funding was severely reduced, creating an even greater challenge to the effective discharge of these roles. The Commons Education Select Committee reported in April 2011 that it believed that a single inspectorate was too large to function effectively and more elements of specialism were required to restore confidence in the quality of inspections. They proposed a split into two new organisations, but this did not occur (Politics.co.uk, 2011).

Coffield (2017) suggests that OfSTED's standard method of reading previous inspections reports and reviewing exam results leads them to prejudge the establishment before it is inspected and then seek and select evidence that supports their view. Before inspections, OfSTED submit their ‘Lines of Enquiry’ to the establishment, which sets out their areas of interest. These Lines of Enquiry are based on information provided to them in advance through the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and achievement data produced by the organisation to be inspected. Coffield (2017, p. 22) asks*, ‘Why have test and exam results become the main criterion for judging quality?’* He suggests that this is partly because this data appears more objective than subjective observations. Coffield (ibid) notes that, *‘…OfSTED Inspectors have been consistently criticized for presenting even their subjective impressions as if they were objective information’*. Coffield, (2017, p. 18) observes *‘Inspection is based on subjective judgements that are then turned into seemingly objective data’.*

OfSTED have now acknowledged that education has been too focused on exam results, which has caused concern. The Ofsted Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said the emphasis on performance data has impacted on and narrowed what is taught in schools with too much weight given to exam results (Richardson, 2018). From September 2019, a revised Educational Inspection Framework (EIF) is in use, which placed the emphasis on the quality of education. The inspection category ‘outcomes’ was replaced to reflect this, with a new inspection area of ‘personal development’. Although this is lauded by a number of politicians (Damian Hinds, Education Secretary for England, Angela Rayner, Labour’s Shadow Education Secretary and the Children’s Commissioner for England), educational commentators are guarded. The National Association of Head Teachers argued that there was nothing in the proposal that would increase the reliability of judgements (Adams, 2019). A letter to The Guardian (Richards, *et al.,* 2019) from eleven distinguished academics, including Professor Frank Coffield and Professor Colin Richards, in response to the new guidelines, gives a cautious welcome to the new inspection framework but argue it is *‘…doomed to fail unless OfSTED drops its flawed four-point grading system’*. The letter suggests that schools and colleges will remain fixated on grades, with those graded ‘outstanding’ determined to keep it, stifling innovation, and those graded ‘requiring improvement’ or ‘inadequate’ will be undermined and lose staff, pupils and funding or even closed. A single number, states the letter, can create *‘…personal and professional casualties’.*

Coffield (2017, p. 22) insists that the increasing use of data and the '…*regime of numbers'*, which has increased the reach and impact of surveillance, ignores the value of everything that cannot be measured, but creates a fulfilling education, reflecting the moral aspect of education, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

> *'… for instance, the morale, motivation, creativity and commitment of teachers and all those activities and facilities that enrich the quality of education – music, sport, libraries, dance, art and drama.''*
> (Coffield, 2017, p.22)

Despite the promised quality of education category, those activities that enrich education are sadly missing from the final document, which states in the Impact,

> *'All learning builds towards an end point. Learners are being prepared for their next stage of education, training or employment at each stage of their learning. Inspectors will consider whether learners are ready for their next steps.'*
> (GOV.UK, 2022, item 245)

So education continues to be a vehicle propelling students towards economic ability and contribution, without the elements of citizenship, fulfilling their potential, or making a contribution to society, that it could develop. What gets measured tends to get done, so colleges narrow their curriculum to mirror the inspection regime. This issue is covered further when discussing the impact on providers later in this Chapter.

Grading by OfSTED

The Grade given by OfSTED to an educational institution, observe Richards, *et al.,* (2019), will impact upon the success of the new inspection framework, indeed, they say it will fail if the four-point grading system continues. An inspection Grade 3 or 4 can affect opportunities to bid for projects and reduce applications for courses, and impact upon engagement with local employers, both for potential students and for work experience placements. Reputation is important, and its reach considerably beyond the campus. It can take years for educators to raise the reputation of an FE college in its community, but it only takes one OfSTED Inspection visit which labels the college as 'inadequate' to destroy or at least seriously damage the reputation overnight. Coffield (2017, p. 29) queries how the complexity of a large FE college with many academic and vocational departments can be reduced to one word? He suggests that if OfSTED made just one change, *'…it must drop this overweening pretension to exactitude'.*

A low grade with a reinspection pending will place principals and managers under pressure from Governors to make improvements quickly. This places even more pressure on those on the frontline – mainly teaching staff, whose time has been stretched due to the increased work that political imperatives regarding problems in the wider education and social system place upon the shoulders of FE staff. Maths and English achievement, more students presenting with mental health concerns and the demands to embed Prevent and British Values within sessions has created and compounded concerns for teachers and diluted their ability to stay resilient (Scott, 2018). The Covid pandemic has created even greater pressure on teachers, many of whom switched to online or hybrid learning (some learners in class and simultaneously some online); more students experiencing mental health concerns, (with recent research mainly focusing on university students). In place of externally marked examinations teachers have provided data for Centre Assessed Grades and Teacher Assessed Grades. Staff shortages due to Covid are continuing and the student absence for the same reason make sustained, continuous learning challenging.

Evaluation of teaching and learning by OfSTED does not necessarily bring about changes in performance of individual teachers or result in improved achievement rates, and can be viewed quite negatively by staff, managers and education leaders. To counter this, Coffield (2017) insists that Ofsted's practices must change in order to be force for good.

> *'Those in power already know, for instance, that the inspection system, for all its positive features, is flawed, dysfunctional and damaging …'*
> (Coffield, 2017, p. 69)

Shain & Gleeson, (1999, cited in Gregson & Hillier, 2015) suggest that the increase in cultures of inspection and audit activity leads to increased managerialist cultures, bringing greater demands for compliance from lecturers and moving further away from concepts of lifelong learning and staff autonomy. A far cry from being a catalyst for improvement. The thesis returns to the subject of the development of teacher expertise later in this Chapter.

The impact of inspection on providers

When the public consultation on the Education Inspection Framework was launched, Coffield (Belgutay, 2019) expressed concern that no research had been conducted on the impact of inspection grades on educational institutions, despite being used for over 20 years. Daniel Muijs, OfSTED's deputy director for research and evaluation, said in response to Coffield's enquiry,

> *'I can confirm that OfSTED has not conducted any specific research into the effects of inspection grading on schools; consequently, we do not hold any evidence of the impact of grades on school performance, pupil attainment or teacher morale in relation to this specific topic.'*
> (Belgutay, 2019).

Professor Muijs confirmed that as part of the consultation process responses have been received from parents and staff. An OfSTED spokesperson said that parents report that they like the clarity of the four grades, which helps them make informed choices (Belgutay, 2019). Despite the Government insisting the grade plays a key role in parental decisions, a YouGov poll conducted in 2021 found limited support for this view, with almost two-thirds not reading OfSTED reports before choosing a school. Even fewer parents are influenced by performance tables with nearly three-quarters not reading them. OfSTED's Annual Parent surveys present a slightly different view, stating that eight out of ten parents know the grade of their children's school, and found OfSTED a valuable resource about education (Hazell, 2021). However, knowing the grade, which would often be publishing in local newspapers, is not the same as choosing a school based upon it, with many factors in play in choosing a suitable school, and some children not able to attend the parents' first choice with ninety to ninety- five per cent only receiving a place at one of their three choices (Buchanan, 2022). This suggests a lottery, rather than informed choice for parents.

A further consideration is the currency of the OfSTED report, often with many years between inspections, particularly those graded Outstanding, who were exempt from inspection for ten years, a situation only changing in September 2019 (Hazell, 2021). The surveys relate to school parental choices, but it is doubtful that parents who do not access reports for their child's school would do so for their college education. Location, choice of courses, finances, and parent and child aspirations are likely to be considered ahead of OfSTED reporting on FE.

Coffield (2017) acknowledges the importance of involving stakeholders, such as parents, governors and the local community in inspections, but at a time of significant change (allegedly) to the focus and style of inspection in the new inspection framework, surely OfSTED should consider and research whether a key, controversial aspect – the four inspection grades – should be retained or discontinued. It is concerning that over twenty years ago, Fitz-Gibbon & Stephenson-Forster queried the lack of research to inform the inspection regime and wrote,

> '*It is doubtful that business or industry would permit an inspection regime, centrally imposed, that was based on opinion about how the business or industry should be run, not on sound research. This is what is being imposed upon schools in the public sector…'.*
> (Fitz-Gibbon & Stephenson-Forster, 1999, p. 4)

They continue that OfSTED have had a negative impact on education through using their energy, money and time unproductively on inspections. An inspection system without checks on the adequacy of its methods, and with, *'The pretence to unlikely levels of wisdom',* (ibid) should have its role and methodology considered by an expert panel. Unfortunately, many years later this has still not taken place, and despite changes to the OfSTED Inspection regime it is still not based on sound research.

> Writing for the teaching profession, Muijs (2019, p.8) argues, *'Becoming evidence-informed is a moral duty. As a sector, we should make use of, and develop, the best possible evidence for what we do…Being evidence-informed is a social justice issue.'*

This suggests that if we do not use the best possible evidence to inform our practice, we are doing our learners a disservice and potentially reducing their life chances. The article is about informing our practice as educators, rather than discussing the issue of OfSTED grading, but none-the-less it is striking that in one arena research is not required but in another it is our, 'moral duty'. It is even more surprising as Professor Muijs was OfSTED's Deputy Head of Research and Head of Research from 2018-2021.

Coffield (2017, p. 26) refers to a survey published in 2015 by Altrichter & Kemethofer, to investigate whether inspection promotes improvement. This study involved 2,300 principals of schools in seven European countries. It found that the principals who experienced more pressure during inspection admitted to *'…discouraging new teaching methods and narrowing both the curriculum and instructional strategies'.* However, Coffield (2017) identifies the limitations of this research, which exclusively used questionnaires completed by principals, with no in-depth interviews with principals, teachers, governors or students, and suggests that caution should be applied to the findings. He also questions the expense of the survey for such a low response rate, providing limited results.

Stress was apparent at all stages of an inspection with research findings revealing that many staff feeling the need to 'recover' from the trials of inspection (Ouston & Davies, 1998, cited in Coffield, 2017). High absenteeism has been a factor in some schools and some teachers suffered from *'…severe stress, serious illness and sometimes the abandonment of a teaching career'* – all due to an OfSTED inspection (Fitz-Gibbon,1996, cited in Coffield, 2017, p. 28). FETL (2019) refer to research by the Institute for Government (IfG) into institutional failure, which found that being labelled a failing organisation is traumatic for the organisation and employees. Naz (2021, p. 13) notes the impact of OfSTED grading,

> *'Grading practices have financial and social implications, and the label 'inadequate' exemplifies how an organisation can be treated with subliminal contempt that does not resolve any problems; in fact, it leads to more problems by creating further inequality as a result of the financial implications for a college that is graded as 'inadequate'.'*

In the college of this study, anxiety was generated in many staff as inspection approached, and while it was taking place. Feelings of dismay abounded when the college was Graded 3, Requires Improvement – feelings which continued until the reinspection confirmed Grade 2, Good. This impacts on the relationship between teachers and OfSTED, Coffield (2017) states, which is on a downward spiral with resentment on one side and recrimination on the other. The lowest grades, 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' are crude and stigmatising, says Coffield (2019, p.1) which makes it more difficult to retain teachers or recruit students and teachers. Being graded thus pushes colleges to prioritise teaching to the test (Coffield, 2017) and raises teachers' stress levels, reducing the quality of education and putting students off learning. This also goes against teachers' values and professionalism, which creates further stress.

However, a different view emerged in a survey conducted by OfSTED into the impact of inspection on schools which found that 82% of school leaders who responded agreed that, *'the benefits of inspection outweigh the pressures'* and the *'demands of being inspected were reasonable and that the judgements were fair and accurate'.* (Harford, 2015, cited in Coffield, 2017, p. 19). Apparently, respondents reported the most helpful aspect was professional discussion with the inspectors, which were more helpful than recommendations for improvement or feedback, which poses questions about the mode of inspections, where reports are less effective at generating improvements than discussions with inspectors. However, as Coffield (2017) points out, providing feedback regarding your views of inspection to the organisation who will return to inspect you, suggests that a distribution of power may be at play here and help explain the high percentage of approving comments. An independent survey would make an interesting comparison.

Observational studies have found that the impact on student attainment from inspection is far from clear and criticism has been aimed at OfSTED's methodology, according to Coffield (2017, p. xii), *'…which has been shown to be invalid, unreliable and at times unjust'.* Unintended consequences of the Inspection regime are that teachers shy away from trying new curricula and teaching strategies concentrating on the OfSTED standards. All of which do not encourage a joint and ongoing search for continuous improvement (Coffield, 2017). Increased monitoring and surveillance of teachers through inspections, self-assessment, appraisals and observation as well as through student and employer evaluations are threats to lecturer autonomy and signal preoccupations with power and control of the teaching process, according to Shain & Gleeson (1999), who also note the increased management control and the change of quality measurement from process to outcome, based primarily on enrolment, retention and achievement rates, rather than any drives towards improving the lives and life chances for their students.

Coffield, (2017) describes a new model that encourages a self-improvement system, where inspectors model the culture of learning they promote in others. He suggests that the literature providing evidence of inspections' reliability and validity tend to be descriptive personal accounts with few empirical studies. However, he reviews three studies and draws our attention to an overview of empirical studies by researchers who are also members of the Netherland's Inspectorate, which identified *'…intended strategic behaviour and gaming'* and *'…unintended strategic behaviour'* taking place in response to inspection, and found that the undesirable effects sometimes undid the intended effects (Coffield, 2017, p. 25).

Intended strategic behaviour, according to the researchers, includes poor teachers being absent to avoid observation; deception, such as excluding weak students from examinations and feedback influencing the establishments' policy. Unintended strategic behaviour includes teaching to the test; focussing on short-term improvements; reluctance to innovate and excessive emphasis on exam results. Side effects identified are stress, good schools failing to innovate or stretch themselves and the adverse impact of public league tables creating market forces.

Coffield (2017, p. 26) expresses some reservations about this overview, which he suggests that using

'…pretentious, scientific sounding terms', should be resisted, as this

> *'…unintentionally reinforces the hierarchy where researchers and inspectors have the power to relabel the activities of teachers.'*

A further reservation is the lack of discussion of the impact on pupils who witness the deceptions employed by their teachers, which may suggest tension between the role of university researchers who are also part of the Inspectorate.

Scott's (2018) doctorial research into CPD found that there was a gulf between teachers' usual practice and the performance they gave for inspection. Some respondents gave accounts of CPD provided to them explaining how to put on a show for inspection and how to produce a Grade 1 session. She queries why the emphasis has shifted to how to teach, to the detriment of knowing what needs to be taught and when,

> *'using a well-considered scheme of work has been neglected in the rush to evidence teaching tricks and skills that will score well in lesson observations.'*
>
> (Scott, 2018, p .20)

Teachers want to discuss their practice issues, with colleagues and managers who are interested, found Scott (2018), and are less concerned about learning how to perform in order to be graded Outstanding. Her thesis argues that more authentic practices are likely to develop if teachers are able to resolve their own issues, and that the manager's role is key in making time and space for this to happen. Scott (ibid) continues that developing professionally to improve one's usual practice will improve the student experience much more than putting on a show for lesson observations. Scott (ibid) asks why, when CPD budgets are squeezed through financial pressures, the knowledge and experience of the teachers is not used to improve their practices to, *'… collaborate and resolve issues of practice?'* She suggests it is time teachers were trusted to solve their own issues and benefit from collaborative approaches with the experts within their own organisations – the teachers themselves. Many academic writers (Eyre, 2016, Lemov, 2016, O'Leary, 2017, Wallace, 2017) agree with this view so why are collaborative approaches to practice not more widely used? This is explored later in this Chapter.

Behaviours designed to address inspection issues are recognised by OfSTED. Under the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) schools that remove less able children, known as 'off rolling', which OfSTED explain thus, will be penalised,

> *'(there is no legal definition of 'off-rolling'; however, we define 'off-rolling' as the practice of removing a learner from the provider's roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the provider rather than in the best interests of the learner – off-rolling in these circumstances is a form of 'gaming')'*
>
> (GOV.UK, 2019b, p.12)

Another behaviour, teaching to the test to improve results and league tables, will risk punishment from OfSTED's inspectors (Adams, 2019). This has had a cautious welcome from some commentators (Raynor, Labour Shadow Education Secretary, Hinds, Education Secretary, Longfield, Children's Commissioner for England). A key question here is, how possible is it to identify this within the limited time of an observation?

Commenting on the OfSTED draft educational inspection framework Coffield (2019, p. 1) draws attention to *'OfSTED's most objectionable and damaging practice – the four-point grading scale to which it appears wedded. This* *is an example of unintelligent accountability.'* Coffield (ibid) continues that using this scale may nullify advances of the draft framework because teachers will recognise the *'…iron fist behind all the gentle talk of taking a rounded view of the quality of education'*. This appears a lost opportunity to improve education through focusing on examining the quality, but retaining the punitive, subjective judgements that have such a detrimental impact on an educational establishment, its staff, its students and the local community to date.

A further concern about the Education Inspection Framework is the lack of recent research (Powell, 2019, Coffield, 2019), and what appears to be selective exclusion of excellent empirical research, for which Powell (2019) offers examples. Research that is critical of OfSTED's methods is also sparse, despite OfSTED stating,

> *'Through the use of evidence, research and inspector training, we ensure that our judgements are as valid and reliable as they can be.'*
> (GOV.UK, 2017 p.2)

Powell (2019) notes that some of the research OfSTED have consulted is from the last century, with sixteen percent over twenty years old. He also comments that only two research papers relate to FE, although he suggests one of these is actually about school education. OfSTED have reported results from their own research into wellbeing in schools and colleges, although Powell notes these are not included in the reference list. The queries that Fitz-Gibbon & Stephenson-Forster (1999) raised about the lack of research into OfSTED's method are unaddressed two decades later. Ignoring research, questions and feedback from respected academics and practitioners in the field of education does not create trust in or the confidence and belief that,

> *'Ofsted exists to be a force for improvement through intelligent, responsible and focused inspection and regulation.'*
> (GOV.UK, ibid)

Politicians, policy professionals and education leaders generally subscribe to the view that inspection plays a necessary role in the accountability systems of education, which are publicly funded, (Coffield, 2017). Few teachers would argue that some form of assessment of classroom teaching is required, suggests O'Leary, (2020), not only because of the impact of their teaching upon students but also because conscientious teachers are accountable for how the public funds which pay them are spent, and that is one of the reasons why they have to demonstrate their commitment to CPD.

Coe *et al.,* (2014) refer to research findings that teachers and principals found an external observer's feedback has spurred change, but they note that the research is unclear whether the change is actual and sustained or not. Faubert (2009), cited in Coe *et al.,* (2014) reports on an evaluation of an external mentoring programme which found a lack of support and training to act upon external observation feedback in an effective way resulted in negligible impact on student results and negative impact on teacher motivation. OfSTED assure us that their inspection role meets its remit by focusing on minimum standards of education and the use of public funds and checking that safeguarding is effective, which seems to be a monitoring and measurement function. This lacks responsibility for stimulating improvement – ironically a force for improvement, which is how they positioned themselves in 2017 (Ofsted 2917).

> *Inspection provides assurance to the public and to government that minimum standards of education, skills and childcare are being met; that – where relevant – public money is being spent well; and that arrangements for safeguarding are effective.*
> (GOV.UK, 2019, p. 1)

Teachers are paid from public funding to provide education, but the amount of accountability and external control has varied over the years. In the 1960s and 1970s authoritarian forms of professionalism were targets of the emancipation movement, which resulted in the professions, particularly healthcare and psychiatry, being challenged to become more equitable, transparent and democratic. As the public purse mainly funded the professions they became more accountable and less authoritarian. This set standards for other areas of work, including education (Biesta, 2015).

In the 1980s the Government the prioritised the views and influence of 'consumers', identified as parents and employers, although not students, reducing the influence of 'producers' such as teaching unions and administrators to shape educational provision (Gregson & Hillier, 2015). The Conservative Manifesto of 1987 under the premiership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher proposed four major reforms for education, which Edwards (1989, p. 211) suggests *'…is the application of market forces to education, which is now being treated as a commodity …*' Synonyms for education, such as edification, instruction and learning go far beyond the mere economic customer-supplier transaction. Education is a profession and very different from a manufacturing or commercial enterprise. Drawing on Friedson's work, Biesta (2015, p 81) defines professions:

> *'…special areas of work because they promote human wellbeing; they need highly specialised knowledge and skills; and they function in relation to authority and trust',*

Continuing the focus of the Conservative Government's move to use market forces in education, from the late 1990s the New Labour Government emphasised performance management systems. OfSTED contribute to this by having responsibility for the national inspection system in England. Shain & Gleeson (1999, cited in Gregson & Hillier, 2015, p. 329) show how the development of *'…cultures of audit and inspection',* are supporting the managerialist cultures and causing strategic compliance in teachers, suggesting that the notion of increasing professionalism for teachers in FE are idealistic rather than real. Biesta (2015) recognises this rise of accountability, and suggests that while democratic accountability focuses on the qualities of good educational practice, the actual focus is on bureaucratic accountability, which uses data to check against standards, moving the question of what is good in education away from the centre of the process. He questions whether we are valuing what can be easily measured, rather than measuring what we really value.

In order to access funding or to continue the same level, performance data are extremely influential in informing educational establishments' policies and practices and are also central to accountability. Data can be interpreted in many ways and may be misleading, but Gregson & Hillier (2015) contend that all teachers and educational leaders must have a basic understanding of their establishment's data, their strengths and weaknesses to help them recognise what improvements need to be made. They continue that a balance is required between teaching and learning and data collection, to ensure the latter does not become too burdensome, but is used by all in the establishment for constructive discussion and decision-making surrounding improving teaching and learning.

As we have seen, teachers are accountable to their organisation, the wider public who pay the taxes that fund education, and the national systems that govern how they work and how they are monitored. However, as Gregson & Hillier (2015, p. 406) remind us, key stakeholders in educational accountability are our students, whose lives and life chances we may influence greatly. Biesta (2015) questions whether it is a good idea to consider students customers (even if the Government of the 1980s did not prioritise their views), and be driven by their voice? His answer to this question is that education is fundamentally different to the economic sphere.

Education, unlike economic transactions, does not start from the assumption that consumers know what they want and at what cost, but strives to move them beyond what they already know and want, and open up new possibilities for them. Using careful judgement, keeping the moral aspects of teaching to the forefront of our mind and maintaining our professionalism is vital to being able to act in *'…educationally wise ways.'* Taking every suitable opportunity for relevant CPD is one way for teachers to maintain or improve their professionalism, but Sennett (2009, p. 242) notes that in order to encourage individuals to aspire to high quality work, their '*…organisation itself has to be well crafted in form.'* This is also recognised by Eraut, (2004), Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) and FETL (2019) who contend that the organisation has to be supporting and committed to furthering opportunities for professional learning in which managers play a key role.

Problem

The problem at the centre of this study points to why research questions three and four are so relevant, where models of change and improvement are concerned.

- *What interventions, methods and models of change and improvement might create conditions to support the development of teachers' capacities for professional learning and self-improvement?*

- *What are the strengths and limitations of alternatives to traditional approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and the improvement of practice including Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding, et al., 2005)?*

Development of teacher expertise

The development of teacher expertise is a key question, to which there are many possible answers. If there was a simple, single answer all teachers would achieve it but the plethora of methods available (Rosenshein's Principles of Instruction (Sherrington, 2019), Bloom's Taxonomy (1956), Learning Styles (Honey & Mumford, 1995), Effect sizes, Hattie's (2009)) have not provided the answer that proves helpful in all contexts, with all students, with all subjects and for all teachers. Few would question this drive towards continuous improvement, as discussed at the beginning of the Chapter.

The Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) (2007, p. 5) have as one of its aims,

> *'The further education system continuously improves so that colleges and providers aspire to and achieve excellence, and no provision is unsatisfactory.'*

This is an aspirational aim, but in the end a very tall order. Given the nature and complexities of Further Education, with its financial challenges, inclusive student recruitment processes, the range of subjects offered, high workload demands on teachers, and the varying contexts in which teachers work, such as offender learning, SEND, adult education, as well as 16-18 study programmes, making continuous improvement in education a reality will be no mean feat. Coffield (2016,

p. 78) observes that pressures imposed by government have led to the development of aggressive forms of performance management, where teachers are constantly *'..surveilled, controlled, evaluated, and changed.'* Against this backdrop, teachers are expected to 'continuously improve' enabling their college to achieve excellence. However, QIA (2007, p. 7) do recognise some challenges, however these are not necessarily considered when promoting excellence,

- *'because of the many different types and sizes of organisation, a wide range of training provision, the large variation in the quality of provision and different success rates between different subject areas and learners from different backgrounds, a 'one size fits all' approach is not appropriate*

- *although there are many examples of good practice across the system, sharing that practice is not easy, as it takes time, can be expensive and requires particular skills'*

The lack of progress identified by OfSTED in Royal College that constitutes the site of this study could be a case of staff banding together or 'closing ranks' in difficult situations in which they feel beleaguered and under threat. Coffield (2017) suggests that creating a kind of *esprit de corps* to deal with an external threat could be a possible benefit of inspection. O'Leary (2014) refers to research conducted by UCU (2013) that respondents reported experiencing increased levels of stress and anxiety through OfSTED inspections, which also negatively affected self-esteem and self-efficacy in some members of teaching staff. Coffield (2017, p. 29, note 9) argues that some stress may be required to *'push the complacent to reform.'* Wiliam (2007) agrees, suggesting we cannot rely on experience alone or leave teachers to their own devices, as we know that they do not necessarily produce the greatest achievements for their students. Support is required for teachers to reflect on their experiences of educational practice in systematic ways, to build on their knowledge and, he suggests, most importantly, to learn from their mistakes.

In providing support, senior managers should not assume that teaching staff are aware of the needs of their staff or know how to address them (Fielding*, et al.,* 2005). In contrast FETL (2021) found that teachers do know what they need to do to improve, but suggest that they need a supportive environment and opportunities for collaboration with colleagues. This attention to the environment and the approach to teachers is recognised by Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) who suggest that professional development activities should be accessible and appealing to a wide range of teachers with different levels of ability, professional confidence and attitudes towards digital learning and self-efficacy, to maximise take up and impact on teaching. Eraut (2001) evaluates workplace conditions that encourage learning and recommends the,

> *'organisation of a suitable microclimate, characteristics of which include:*
> - *A blame-free culture which provides mutual support*
> - *Learning from experiences, positive and negative, at both group and individual level*
> - *Encouraging and talking about learning*
> - *Trying to make full use of the knowledge resources of its members*
> - *Locating and using relevant knowledge from outside the group*
> - *Enhancing and extending understandings and capabilities of both the group as a whole and its individual members.'*
>
> (Eraut, 2001, p. 111)

In current times, in contrast to twenty years ago, we have evidence from research that it is possible to improve teaching practice, and that regularly engaging in the activities the research indicates should assist teachers to improve their practice. For example Wiliam (2007), notes that the ineffectiveness of professional development in the past does not automatically mean we cannot improve this in the future by engaging in the activities that educational research has shown to be effective. The starting point in improving student outcome must be on the changes in teaching practice that make the most difference to learner achievement and then decide how teachers can make the changes to bring about further improvements – content first, followed by process (Wiliam, 2007). The workplace conditions listed by Eraut (2001) are still relevant in encouraging teachers to improve their practice.

What makes an impact on the speed of student learning is the quality of the teacher, according to Wiliam (2007) who suggests that professional development activities should increase understanding of effective teaching strategies and how to use these in practical classroom activity. Research confirms the teacher is the fundamental factor in the impact that pedagogic strategies have upon learning, so increasing teachers' collective confidence in the use of teaching strategies, and the belief that these will make a difference to students is, according to Hattie (2019), the most powerful factor affecting student achievement.

Wiliam (2007) explains how Aristotle's (384 BC-322 BC) perspective on intellectual virtue, or expertise may inform us. He identified three main intellectual virtues: *epistemé, techné*, and *phronesis.*

Epistemé (science) is the knowledge of timeless universal truths, such as the sun rising and setting every day. *Techné* (craft) deals with things that are variable. A craftsperson will vary an object to fit its function, not just create the same object for every purpose. For example, a bricklayer will know that bricks and mortar behave differently at differently at different temperatures and will adjust their practice accordingly. *Phronesis* (practical wisdom) is the highest virtue, according to Aristotle's view. He gave the example of leadership of the state. To do this, awareness of important principles is required but these must always be informed by the specific contexts.

This perspective is useful when considering the nature of expertise in teaching because Governments and their departments frequently look for 'what works', which Wiliam (2007, p. 288) considers should be rephrased as, '*Under what conditions does a particular initiative work?' Phronesis* (practical wisdom) is more appropriate to expertise in teaching rather than *techné* or *epistemé*, argues Wiliam (2007), which is why teachers find much educational research is already known to them but do not find it relevant to their context and therefore do not use it. Wiliam (2007) developed an approach to teacher professional development but found they lacked the knowledge and understanding to develop it into their classroom practice. This led to Wiliam (2007) adopting the view that teachers should not be told what to do, because knowing what to do does not enable someone to do it. Instead, much like the encouragement Eraut (2001) suggests, they need support to reflect systematically on their practice, because it is impossible to guide teachers for every eventuality in their classroom and therefore any strategy may not automatically work in that context. Wiliam (2007, p. 290) argues that *'Teaching is just too complex'.*

Gregson & Hillier (2015) agree that teachers do not always put research into practice, but suggest that research findings about effective practice are not always sufficiently accessible for teachers to develop themselves. Transforming ideas from research into practical strategies and talking through them with practitioners who have already used them successfully may make them more credible, attractive, accessible and useful to teachers and provide them with the confidence to take a risk and try them out in the arena of their practice. This strategy was at the heart of the work of Fielding, *et al., (*2005) who conducted research into improving practice through JPD, which is discussed further in Chapter 2.

A recent shift in education has been the use of the term 'evidence-informed' or 'research-informed' in place of 'evidence-based'; the latter a term that comes from the medical sciences' systematic experiments, with all factors under the control of the researchers. Education is very different, and the variables are many – the teacher, the students, their background, the environment, and we cannot provide a control group for comparison. Teachers often find that a session that works well with one group does not work with another, similar group. So, the evidence-based model of '…*this will work if you do it this way'* is replaced by evidence-informed '…*this could work most of the time if you take this and that into consideration',* Kirschner & de Bruyckere (2022, p. 4). I recall attending a CPD session where staff were told the latest strategy for teaching practice. When I queried if this would be suitable for Foundation (SEND) students I was told that it had been developed for students working at Level 1 and above, which is a (unconscious) recognition that context is vital.

> Kirschner & de Bruyckere (2022, p. 4) summarise these terms as follows:
> *'**evidence-based:** using scientific evidence to do what works*
> ***evidence-informed:** using scientific evidence to make choices in what could work, taking your own context into consideration*
> ***research-informed:** using scientific research to make deliberate choices in your own context, and to evaluate these choices'*

Research-informed teacher enquiry focuses on gaining a critical understanding of questions of practice which Morgan & Milton (2022) counsel takes courage and honesty with oneself. However, they suggest that the opportunity to engage with searching questions about practice tends to illuminate its complexity, and the learning the researcher gains is often equal to the value of the outcome.

Research ethics (BERA, 2018) must be considered, as with all research activities, and this highlights the need for teachers to keep ethical and moral issues at the forefront of their work. Naz (2021, p. 11) observes that OfSTED views FE providers' purpose as linked to the economy, aligning their work with market trends and disregarding *'…social, moral, ethical and political commitments.'* But teaching is much more than learning technical skills, Gregson & Hillier (2015) remind us, and refer to the moral dimension and obligation to work for the benefit of human good, linking back to the ethical and moral dimension of education discussed earlier in this chapter. However, they note that this dimension is often lacking in the standards of inspection regimes, which may encourage us to consider education from an economic standpoint, as Naz (2021) suggests.

A report into the role of research in teacher education finds that, (authors' emphasis)

> *'… successful professional learning is characterised by* ***collaborative enquiry and structured peer support****, especially the use of professional dialogue and reciprocal risk-taking as ways of opening up teachers' thinking and exposing them to new ideas and forms of practice'.*
> (BERA/RSA, 2014, p. 26)

This will come as no surprise to those familiar with the work of Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) in relation to JPD, where collaboration and structured peer support are key elements. The BERA/RSA (2014) report details successful initiatives from some other countries but acknowledges their findings indicate that teachers in the United Kingdom (UK) have a more fragmented approach available to them. Time and resources are also limited as the report states,

'… building individual and collective capacity for enquiry-oriented practice depends on the time and resources being available for teachers to explore options and to plan, trial and reflect on practice together, which may require additional funding and organisational provision.
(BERA/RSA, 2014, p. 29)

The lack of resources, both time and financial can impact upon potential researchers. Savage (2019) a doctoral researcher, did not receive support from her employer to take part in the Research Development Fellowship (RDF) sponsored by the ETF, as it did not perceive any benefit to the college, only to her. So she used annual leave and found teaching cover herself in order to attend the residential seminars. This demonstrates huge commitment on her part but is not an option for many potential researchers who wish to develop their practice, and does not expand the research completed by practitioners, for practitioners, which Gregson (2020) argues are underrepresented in published literature.

Time is frequently mentioned in connection with teachers' professional learning and funding for cover can be scarce. Being able to collaborate with a colleague can require substantial planning just to find a suitable time, which becomes much more complex if the colleague is at another campus or establishment. A project developed by the ETF and the Society for Education and Training (SET), working with the University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teaching Training (SUNCETT) to offer the Practitioner Research Project, originated in 2007 and currently runs to 2023. Participants join residential seminars, work collaboratively and complete research projects supported by the academic team from the University of Sunderland. Peer support is built-in formally and often occurs informally, providing new ideas and a network of support. The impact of the project can extend beyond the individual or collective group researching. Gregson (2020, p. 8) reports that, '*Several PRP participants report on how their college has changed their contract of employment so that their research is now contributing to their institution's research profile.'* This ETF supported project is available, according to David Russell, CEO ETF, because,

'… the dialogue, debate and improvement this generates is key to wider improvement. It helps us to show sector professionals ways to improve their practice in research-informed, systematic and structured ways, and raises the profile of our sector both nationally and internationally.'
(Russell, 2018, p. 2)

The success of this project, where participants gain MPhil and PhD qualifications, many following completion of the shorter threshold MA level programme, contributes to the development of theory and practice in the sector, by practitioners themselves, and builds upon the limited amount of existing peer-reviewed public research by FE practitioners. However, without a national approach and guaranteed funding, this can only be available to a limited number of teachers, yet, according to Muijs (2019, p. 8), *'Being evidence-informed is a moral duty and a social justice issue'.* He continues that practitioners should be producers, not just critical consumers of the evidence on effective practice. His article promotes the EFT's Research Programme, as mentioned above, and provides some low-cost resource ideas and suggests individual projects or mini-experiments as a possibility, but this raises the question of*, 'Is this sufficient to develop our profession into one that is evidence-informed?'*

Teachers critically reflecting on their practice, taking action and trying out new ideas with colleagues and students can promote the two aims that Gregson & Hillier (2015) suggest are key messages about teaching. The first refers to the moral aspect of education and the second is the professional practice that has responsibilities. However, again time is an issue when encouraging and expecting teachers to reflect, even if it is said that their teaching will improve, according to Gregson & Hillier (2015), who also comment that this assumes that teachers will have opportunities to put ideas formed through reflection into action. This process for teachers develops over time, through trial and error and reflecting on the impact of the changes they are making. Developing ideas into practice in a collaborative relationship, which Fielding, *et al.,* (2005, p. 5) find to be productive, takes time to try out and time to sustain. As they say of continuous educational improvement , *'It is not a quick fix'.* Perhaps, given the importance of the subject, it should take time, patience and care, but external and internal demands often overlook and override this.

Wiliam (2007) agrees that teacher learning and changes in practice are hard won and slow to realise and secure, so taking small steps when implementing a new model of professional development is vital. However, policymakers want headlines and quick changes to reduce inequities that they know good quality education can alleviate. But creating lasting changes, that are fully integrated into teachers' practice, take time. Wiliam (2007) suggests that many professional development tutors are familiar with the situation of seeing new ideas being put into practice but being discarded promptly and former practices being resumed. Wiliam (2007) acknowledges that changing educational practice is difficult, particularly for changes which are very different or contrary to their usual taken-for granted practice. As the above authors suggest, creating structures to make teachers accountable for developing their practice while providing them with support, could be achieved by the creation and support of teacher learning communities which are particularly suited to providing collaboration, cooperation and support through sharing experiences of practice, critically engaging with peer-reviewed literature, honest and open discussion and networking to develop their practice (Wiliam, 2015).

To understand a new practice requires preparedness to learn, perhaps through observation and subsequent reflection as Gregson & Hillier (2015) confirm. Adjustments to take account of and recognise the importance of context may be necessary and barriers and challenges can be identified mitigated where possible. The military maxim seems apt here, *Time taken in reconnaissance is seldom wasted,* and preparedness is likely to make the practice more successful.

> *… a gradual process of engagement with the new practice through developing some understanding of what it is like to teach that way, how best to involve one's students and what kind of a difference might it make to the motivation of one's class…'*
> (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 65)

Teachers can improve their learning through the way they think about, evaluate and try to improve their practice, which Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) call the *'meta-practice of improvement'*. This includes learning from experience, trying new practices and ideas and ensuring that they find time for a developmental aspect to their work. However, '…*despite its importance the profession's knowledge about this process is markedly under-developed.'* (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 79).

Professional development activities created by teachers, linked to their subject specialism, particularly experiments and action research, provide the opportunity to explore and use trial and error approaches, which Scales (2011/2012) suggests are likely to be more effective than imposed, imported training solutions. They also encourage teachers' professionalism and autonomy. Data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study is used by Worth, (2020) to compare autonomy, having discretion over one's own actions and decisions, through self-report from teachers with other professional occupations. Statistically adjusted to ensure they were as similar as possible, the data show that the average teacher has less autonomy than similar professionals. Levels of autonomy also differ in their areas of work, showing that classroom activities and teaching methods have higher autonomy than curriculum, assessment and their professional development goals.

The thrust of the argument here is that teachers should be encouraged to reflect on their goals and ensure they are part of regular conversations with their line managers. Worth (2020) suggests that schools reviewing the design and delivery of professional development take into consideration the views of teachers about its relevance and provide the opportunity for them to input into the content. Autonomy was strongly related to job satisfaction in the findings (Worth, 2020), and correlated with teachers intending to remain in post in the next twelve months. Whilst an intention is not an action, autonomy appears to have a positive impact on job satisfaction and retention.

Autonomy is rarely part of colleges' CPD, where activities are predominantly in-house and top-down. Approaches are mainly 'sheep dip' training, with all staff expected to attend, regardless of personal skill levels or evidence of need. As Scales (2011/2012, p. 3) states, '*Easily auditable: probably a waste of time and money'*, and continues that teachers are the best judges of their subject and their learners' needs, and their professional development is fundamental to improving student learning.

> *'Every teacher needs to become his or her own theory-builder, but a builder of theory that grows out of practice and has as its aim to improve the quality of practice. For too long, 'experts' from outside the classroom have told teachers what to think and what to do.'*
> (Wells, 1986, cited in Scales, 2011/12, pp. 3-4)

Scales (2011/12) wonders if the external 'experts' are the ones that develop 'best practice' materials, which are considered suitable for any learning context but may not be easy to transfer to a specific learning environment. James & Biesta, (2007) cited in Scales (2011/12) conclude that places of learning have their own unique context, which always require contextualised resources and precludes generic materials being used without modification.

Autonomy over their professional development goals is the factor most linked to higher job satisfaction as stated above (Worth, 2020), although he suggests that this does not always mean that teachers have complete choice over their development goals and activities. He refers to various authors (Kennedy, 2016, Maandag, *et al.,* 2017, and Cordingley, *et al.,* 2015) who offer mixed evidence on the effectiveness of individual choice. Wiliam (2007) agrees that autonomy is valued by teachers. In his work with teachers over a 10-year period he identified two important points: teachers need to choose what aspects of their practice to develop and they should work on their strengths to become more expert, in place of the more common emphasis on working on areas of weakness. Honey (2008) agrees that developing strengths further gives greater gains than working on areas of weakness. It is motivating and satisfying and likely to be more self-sustaining than focussing on weaker areas. From an organisational perspective, a culture that nurtures talents and develops them provides greater job satisfaction and productivity.

FETL (2021) concur that teachers know their own professional needs. The findings of their report show that teachers know what they need to improve in their practice and collaboration with colleagues is essential for reflection and testing new ideas to create meaningful and sustainable improvements. O'Leary agrees, stating,

> *'All teachers have a responsibility for their own CPD and they are likely to value this more highly if they feel they are given some ownership of the decision making process.'*
> (O'Leary, 2014, p. 283)

He goes on to argue that despite the individual nature of CPD decision making, collaborating in professional learning with colleagues may be valuable when meeting organisation objectives, course team meetings or themes that a department has chosen to develop.

FETL's (2021) research showed the organisational environment has an important role in improving teaching and learning through collegial interaction. In place of single CPD events through the year, FETL (2021) propose regular, informal activities that have allocated time – a vital element with time being an oft-quoted barrier to development activities. Baker (2020) is in agreement that the work environment and culture have impact, stating that support from managers and colleagues increases the transfer of training into practice, through encouragement and feedback. A further key driver improving the effectiveness of CPD activities is sufficient resourcing for individuals to practice and review. The final factor is an evaluation of what we mean by knowledge 'transfer'.

The notion of knowledge transfer is a contested term. Some academics reserve their strongest criticism for the idea that knowledge transfer can simply be transmitted by one person (who is assumed to know better) simply telling another person what to do. A research project led by Fielding *et al.,* (2005) used the term knowledge 'transfer' in a very particular way. The work of Fielding and his associates is helpful in it its implicit acknowledge of the existence different forms of knowledge identified by Aristotle (384BC-322BC). These include *techné* (knowledge of techniques and procedures) and *phronesis* (practical knowledge or practical wisdom) exercised in complex and unfolding situations in context. This framing of practical knowledge admits deeper understandings of the nature of practice and the processes through which practice improves to emerge, which goes well beyond simply telling people about techniques. Fielding and his colleagues use the phrase *'Joint Practice Development'* to describe the stages and processes through which a practice develops. These are discussed in some detail in Chapter 2.

Transmission, a term used by Cowley (2014), is the concept of knowledge and skills transmitted to the novice from the expert, in a one-way fashion, which results in inequitable power relations. This apparent technical-rational approach can only be used with what is 'known' - fixed and immutable, such as a list of monarchs of a country, or bodies of knowledge in medicine or law, which are considered mainly incontestable. Aristotle (384BC-322BC) termed this form of knowledge *poiesis*, where end are set, and this is supported by *techné*, the skills taught by technique. Cowley (2014b) accepts that learning can take place through this approach in the form of imitation. However she suggests that innovation and creativity are unlikely to result from it. Sennett (2009), recognising the apprentice/master focus and the importance of imitation as a means of vocational learning for centuries, also acknowledges the long apprenticeship period which develops the curiosity and imagination of the apprentice through identifying problems, solving them, and critiquing their work. This prepares them for the next stage after the apprenticeship where the journeyman has to demonstrate managerial competence and show potential as a future leader, sufficient to convince employers to engage him.

Eraut's (2004) research concludes that putting an idea into practice is much more complex than usually thought. He simplifies this through his use of the metaphor of an iceberg, where the 1/8 above water represents an idea or theory, and the remaining 7/8 underwater represent the new learning required to make an idea good in practice. His research suggested that two of the five stages below are rarely considered – stage 4, which is the visible 1/8, and stage 5, the hidden 7/8, required to transfer knowledge from educational context into the workplace and suggests the process is more complex than moving one form of knowledge to a different situation. Indeed Eraut (2004) argues that it requires different forms of knowledge. The first involving *techné*, - the techniques and the second practical wisdom, *phronesis*, to develop the new learning required to make an idea good in practice. These stages are:

1 *'The extraction of potentially relevant knowledge from the context(s) of its acquisition and previous use.*
2 *Understanding the new situation, a process that often depends on informal social learning.*
3 *Recognizing what knowledge and skills are relevant.*
4 *Transforming them to fit the new situation.*
5 *Integrating them with other knowledge and skills in order to think/act/communicate in the new situation.'*

(Eraut, 2004, no page)

Context is considered important by many writers (Fielding *et al.,* 2005, Dunne, 2009, Kirschner & de Bruyckere, 2022). Without knowledge of the context the transfer of knowledge cannot be complete, as Fielding *et al.,* (2005) found when the culture of the partner institutions in the study were not compatible, which led to some withdrawals of participant institutions.

> *'Learning takes place during use, and the transformation of knowledge into a situationally appropriate form means that it is no longer the same knowledge as it was prior to it first being used.'*
> (Eraut, 2004, p. 256)

Eraut (ibid) continues that it cannot be assumed that using an idea in one context ensures that it will work as well in another. Transferring to another context requires more learning and this process may transform the idea. Knowledge transfer in its pure sense – one person learning from another in order to be able to replicate their work does not include the morally informed action of education - *praxis,* according to Aristotle (1955, cited in Carr,1995), which is to achieve a moral good, rather than a fixed object or goal, which was discussed earlier in this Chapter.

Players or Pawns?

Motivation plays a key role in teachers' will to develop and sustain the improvements. Intrinsic motivation is thought to be linked to job satisfaction and wellbeing. Deci & Ryan, (2014, cited in Worth, 2020, p. 7) outline three psychological features that support intrinsic motivation, echoing discussions earlier in this chapter,

- *'competence – skills to perform well in one's job*
- *autonomy – direction over one's decisions and actions*
- *relatedness – connection with, and support from colleagues'*

Extrinsic motivation can also drive performance, but it can undermine feelings of being trusted to do their job. Ball, (2003, cited in O'Leary, 2020) suggests that the New Public Management which emerged in the 1980s and expanded into the public sector, has a central assumption that workers could not be trusted to work effectively and efficiently and that their work should be monitored through audit and accountability action to monitor performance and output. This extrinsic motivation can create pressure and anxiety. Wiliam (2014) suggests a solution that may be acceptable to stakeholders in education. He proposes that teachers' contracts should state an expectation that they focus on improving an aspect of their practice that may improve outcomes for students. This aspect should be provided by the teacher, who is responsible for providing evidence that they had improved their practice, thus providing them with some autonomy.

Pink (2009) suggests that management, a human invention, has changed little in the past century. Its purpose remains control, linked to extrinsic motivation. Not only does this not synchronise with the agile abilities required for today's fast-moving economies, but does not with human nature either (Pink, 2009). Managing people makes assumptions about the people being managed; that they need to be pushed into taking action; that without rewards or punishment they would not take any action at all. A further assumption is that when people are doing as required by management, without firm guidance that would go off task. Pink (2009) queries whether this is our true nature, the 'default setting' which he refers to? Are humans passive and inert by nature? Or by nature active and engaged? Pink (2009, cites

Deci, 1995, p.8) who said that human beings have *an …'inherent tendency to seek our novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise their capacities, to explore and to learn.'* However, Deci, (1995, cited in Pink, 2009), found that intrinsic motivation, the third drive, as he named it, was less robust than the biological drive and the externally based extrinsic motivation, and requires a suitable environment to survive. Most employers do not provide the most suitable environment for intrinsic motivation, *'…our innate need to direct our own lives, to learn and create new things, and do better by ourselves and our world.'* (Pink, 2009, p. 10) to flourish and still use outdated assumption about individual performance based on technical-rational approaches, using target setting, appraisals, and output comparisons, and the sense of being judged in different ways, with different criteria (Ball, 2003).

Summary

Developing (mainly) young people's knowledge, skills and behaviours and those human attributes that enable them to contribute to society is a reason many people become teachers, although they may not articulate it as such. As we have seen, many renowned academics in education (Coffield, 2015, Carr, 1995, Gregson, 2021, Wiliam, 2014, Petty, 2019) consider the moral and ethical aspects of education. The same authors underscore the influence of teachers to develop qualities of mind and character in their students to enable them to become fulfilled and successful adults in the broadest terms, not just to achieve qualifications or be economically successful, but to actively contribute to society as citizens. Yet, this aspect of education is not always acknowledged as being important in Government initiatives. For example, many are premised upon the values of the market and business models, while others reflect the monitoring and auditing regime of OfSTED, which focuses on students being prepared or 'trained' to be economic contributors as being the primary goal of education.

Developing practice has a financial dimension and takes time to trial and review new strategies. Teachers using collaborative learning, sharing experiences and supporting each other are effective ways of improving practice (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). This is explored in more depth in Chapters 2 and 5. That the improvement of practice takes time is acknowledged by many (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, Wiliam, 2007, Gregson & Hillier, 2015, QIA, 2007) and this is often given as a reason why teachers do not use research, or try out new ideas and review them.

Teachers' autonomy and choice over their professional learning has been shown to be strongly motivating (FETL, 2021, Worth, 2020) and organisational support and encouragement is also essential for teachers to thrive and develop. Despite this, management control has increased (Shain & Gleeson, 1999, Coffield, 2016), with most employers not providing the optimum environment for the development of intrinsic motivation (Pink, 2009, Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). The development of intrinsic motivation, these authors argue, is thought to contribute to greater wellbeing than extrinsic motivation (Worth, 2020). Simply expecting teachers to improve through being told about the 'best practice' of others in CPD sessions, or the mindless implementation of the latest strategies, Learning Styles or Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction for example, ignores the role of context, which is so vital in making a good idea from research good practice in everyday educational contexts. This thesis examines role of practice and the conundrum and dilemmas involved in creating genuine communities of research and practice in education in FAVTE contexts a reality in quality programmes of CPD.

Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature in this field of study. It builds upon and extends the above discourse surrounding models of change and improvement in education through an in-depth critical exploration of the works of the above authors, to provide a background to previous studies and approaches.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

> *'A practice is a coherent and invariably quite complex set of activities and tasks that has evolved co-operatively and cumulatively over time. It is alive in the community who are its insiders (i.e., its genuine practitioners) and it stays alive only so long as they sustain a commitment to creatively develop and extend it – sometimes by shifts which may at the time seem dramatic or even subversive. Central to any such practice are standards of excellence, themselves subject to development and redefinition, which demand responsiveness from those who are, or are trying to become practitioners'* (Dunne, 2005, pp. 152-153)

The above citation serves to helpfully frame the literature review which forms the main focus of this Chapter. It foregrounds the importance of recognising teaching as a practice and the moral qualities that accompany and go beyond that practice. Professionalism in teaching, its definition and how it develops and evolves are discussed.

Here Dunne encourages us to note how the commitment of practitioners to creatively develop their practice and extend standards of excellence in their practice (or form of life). How standards of practice are set and measured matter, because these are the means through which a practice is kept alive and in which a practice develops and improves. All of the above are linked to the role of OfSTED, approaches to session observation and the model and change and improvement employed to support the improvement of teaching and learning. Key contributors to this field of research are discussed in some detail in this chapter including the work of Dunne, (2005), Carr, (1995), Kemmis (1995) and Fielding, *et al.,* (2005)

Relevant literature was sought using a keyword search of the University of Huddersfield Online Library. This was supplemented by work studied on my ETF-SUNCETT MPhil course and literature suggested my PhD supervisor. Search terms were: professional; professionalism; performativity; practice; lesson observation; OfSTED; standards; teacher training; continuing professional development;

professional development; professional learning; and models of change and improvement.

Searches of government websites such as OfSTED, HMSO, and organisations such as the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) provided policy and relevant inspection reports. Website searches of teaching unions and professional associations, including the University and College Union (UCU), the Society of Education and Training (SET) and its former incarnation, the Institute for Learning (IfL) provided archive and current information. Online news and magazine sites, including FE week, TES, *InTuition*, BBC news and national newspapers were also searched.

What is practice?

Addressing the first and second questions posed in this thesis*, What is a practice and how does a practice improve?,* and *What makes a practice educational?* we turn firstly to the work of Kemmis (1995), followed by Carr (1995).

Teaching practice, improving practice, educational practice and other uses of the word practice abound in education. Practising teachers might consider that educational practice is just their work; it is what they do. An alternative view, Kemmis (1995, p. 1) suggests that practice is *'something made by people'*. As a form of power, educational practice is a force for social change, and this power is largely held by teachers. In the course of his training as a Behavioural Psychologist in the 1960s Kemmis was taught that human activity needed and could only be scientifically understood 'from the outside' through detached, systematic observation Kemmis' (1995, p. 3). He describes how he was encouraged to accept that this 'scientific' method would reveal the 'truths' which the psychologists could reveal and write up. Human action was thought to be controlled by a mechanism, in much the same way as are the movements of planets and stars.

Behavioural psychology deemed that individuals had poor understanding of the reasons and significance of their actions, and that they would rationalise them or that they misunderstood their own actions much of the time. Scientists could be misled if they were aware of and took into account the individuals' intentions or views of their behaviour. So it was considered best not to know. This enabled the scientists to interpret the actions of others and make meaning from them in order to and contribute to deeper understanding of the social world and social life. The participants in the action were treated as objects to be studied, voiceless and uninvolved in the outcome. It was believed that the role of the scientist to was to explain the reasons for human action, potentially sharing the findings to influence, control, predict and direct future actions. Despite current thinking that theory and practice develop reflexively and together, Kemmis (1995) observes that many research projects continue to study social practice (and in this case the practice of education) 'from the outside' without reference to intentions and values of teachers, believing that their findings will stimulate changes in their educational practice of teachers, regardless of their lack of involvement in the research process.

The Rise of Technocracy

The hierarchical gulf that has arisen between those who research and those who practice is noted by Schön (1984) and Kemmis (1995). Kemmis (ibid) describes the distinctions that began in the early twentieth-century between social scientists, the objects of their studies, and the social policy-makers who sponsor the scientists through funding. This enabled the scientists to develop their role as technocrats, increasing their power relationships with governments and policy-makers. Kemmis (ibid) invites us to consider whose interests are served by this in a democratic society? Kemmis (1995, p. 9) observes that those who are theorising, largely accept the notion that theory guides practice and is the precursor of practice, have widely become viewed as*,*

> *'…hierarchically and managerially superordinate to those whose tasks are practice; on the other side, it demeans (and deskills) practice and practitioners as sources of ideas (theory)*.'

This divide is evidently the current conception of an educational theorist, or academic, as being distinct from and intellectually superior to a practitioner. The former provides ideas about how education can be effective, and the latter is expected to learn and simply apply them in practice. This relegates the role and status of the practitioner as a mindless foot soldier following orders and mechanically and unproblematically implementing theories and ideas gained from research conducted by others. This ignores the experience and first-hand knowledge of practitioners, considering them poorly informed, while considering theorists well informed, even though they are not practising – removed from the practice of teaching by the very division of labour they have created. This mirrors Kemmis' (1995) experience as a behavioural psychologist, and although writing in 1995 we can still see this division of theory and practice, academics and practitioners, policy-makers and institutions today.

Positivist Science and Technical Rationality

Viewing human and social life as mechanical, as the early psychologists were trained to do, derives from the nineteenth-century scientific tradition, when searching for mechanisms to explain the nature of natural phenomena and where physical science was the dominant activity. Positivist science was an idea developed in the nineteenth-century by Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who set out the three principal doctrines. The first was the conviction that empirical science was the only source of positive knowledge. The second was the intention to remove mysticism and superstition from people's thinking. The third was the extension of scientific knowledge and technical control to society to make technology political and moral (Schön, 1984).

This philosophical doctrine grew as a result of the advances in science and technology and became a social movement which contemplated applying their achievements for the benefit of human progress. Technical Rationality, which considers that*, '…professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique'*, is the Positivist epistemology of practice, according to Schön (1984, p. 21), who maintains that it became institutionalised in the modern universities of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century when Positivism was very influential and had become the dominant philosophy. The professions of medicine and engineering had dramatic success becoming science based, and technical practice replaced craft and artistry, which had no place in the rigour of the practical knowledge offered in Positivist epistemology. The apparent success of the engineering and medical models attracted the social sciences in the 1940s and 1950s and in education, planning and policy-making and social work scientists attempted to replicate the success. Its use of terms such as controlled experiment, clinics and measurements nodded to its origins and showed its attraction for the original models.

Practice did not fit particularly well into the Positivist doctrines; it cannot be reduced to logic and mathematics and it is not a type of descriptive knowledge of the world. The Technical-Rational model or world view requires a specific goal. When this is clear and fixed, making decisions can be an instrumental problem, but when it is conflicting or fluid there is no problem to solve, and practitioners use a type of inquiry that it outside the model to resolve it. Its flaws and limitations became apparent to professionals, and the public, from the early 1960s, who saw the need for actual practice, with its complexity, instability and uniqueness, which do not fit the model. Despite this, Technical-Rationality remains embedded in our institutions, including in professional education according to Schön (1984), who asserts that although practitioners, teachers and researchers question the model, they are part of the institutions that maintain it.

Turning to the third research question, *What interventions, methods and models of improvement might create conditions to support the development of teachers' capacities for professional learning and self-improvement?,* Dunne's (2009) discussion of a model of teaching he was introduced to, which has the hallmarks of technical-rationality is helpful.

The Behavioural Objectives Model of Teaching

In a philosophical conversation Dunne (2009) explores the Behavioural Objectives model of teaching. He describes how this model was introduced in the teacher training college in which he taught in the late 1970s. Informed by Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives (Bloom, *et al.,* 1956), lessons were planned as a sequence of instrumental steps towards very specific goals. Clear-cut criteria would enable evaluation of success in achieving the objectives. It appeared attractive as it provided an efficient basis on which teachers could be accountable for their teaching and also supported the view that teaching constituted a rational practice.

The origins of the model are the attempts to develop a science of education *'…that would replace the mixture of rhetoric, traditional lore, and the practical know-how that had constituted the old pedagogy',* (Dunne, 2009, p. 2). An influential work derived from the new model in 1956, came to be called 'Bloom's Taxonomy' and this is widely used in educational establishments today – so well-known it is usually just called 'Bloom's'. Popham (1969, cited in Dunne, 2009, p. 2) declared,

'We are at the brink of a new era regarding the explication of instructional goals, an era which promises to yield fantastic improvements in the quality of instruction'.

Few reservations were expressed at the time of the introduction of Bloom's Taxonomy to teacher education, and enthusiasts for the model proclaimed it to be the royal road to efficiency in education. Any reservations held by teachers and school systems were seen as barriers to educational change and improvement and few issues were raised about,

> *'… the nature of teaching as a practice or the type of rationality, or relationship between knowledge and action that may be appropriate to it',* (Dunne, 2009, p. 2).

The Behavioural Objectives model required that objectives set should be verifiable by a detached observer, who may not have any shared contextual understanding of the lesson. The objectives were to be precise in order to preclude misinterpretation, on the grounds that if they did not require interpretation they could be assessed accurately and replicated. Dunne's (2009) issue with this is how the teacher can know that the objectives set are appropriate? The suggestion that objective-based evaluation provides '*empirical evidence'* creates further concerns. If objectives were not met, they may have been inappropriate or too difficult for the students or they may have been distracted on that day.

Dunne (2009) suggests that the difficulties with the model arise from the exclusive focus on the outcomes, neglecting teaching as a process and the experiential aspect of learning. He muses that it appears that analysis by the third person (observer) can solve any problems the first person (teacher) may have. It ignores the context of teaching and implies that teaching can be separated from contexts and traditions which may be present in teachers and students in tacit and nuanced ways. Carr (1995, p 68), in his discussion of educational practice and its definition, states that practice should not be considered as a type of technical expertise used to achieve an externally set end – which describes the behavioural objectives model very accurately. He informs us,

> *'To practice is thus never a matter of individuals accepting and implementing some rational account of what the 'aims' of their practice should be. It is always a matter of being initiated into the knowledge, understanding and beliefs bequeathed by that tradition through which the practice has been conveyed to use in its present shape'.*
> (Carr, 1995, p. 68)

Dunne (2009) compares the behavioural objective model with his own opinion of the constituents of teaching below, which reflects the traditions which Carr (1995) believes are always an inherent part of practice.

Dunne's description of the characteristics of the behavioural objective model of teaching.

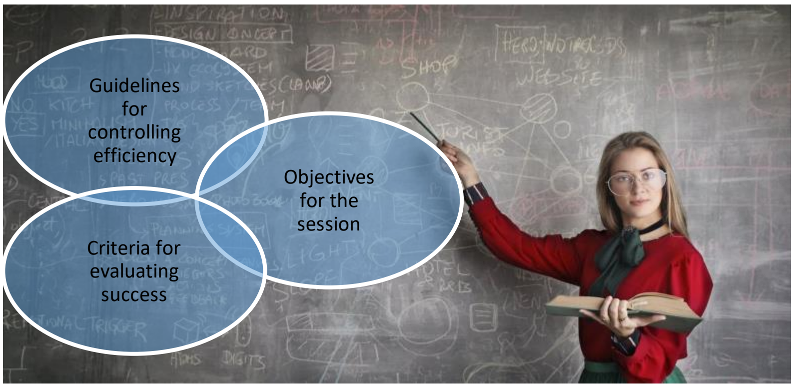


Figure 1, adapted from Dunne (2009, p. 5).

This contrasts with the far richer description of Dunne's (2009), which acknowledges that teaching does not occur in a contextual vacuum.

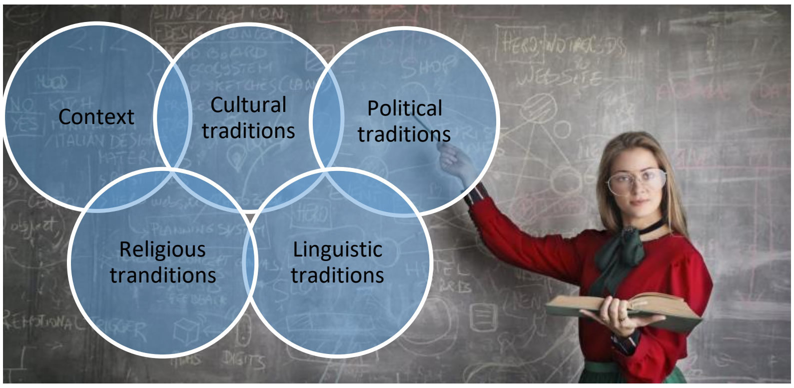


Figure 2, adapted from Dunne (2009, p. 5).

Dunne (2009) suggests that atomistic objectives may be suitable only if they develop over time into qualities of mind and character, such as being truthful, having a sense of justice, clarity of expression in writing and speech and the ability for independent thought and reflection. These are the significant achievements (or as he describes them the 'internal goods') of education. Dunne (2009) has little confidence that these will occur and be realised through the Behavioural Objectives (technical-rational) model of education, as these achievements are too vague, nebulous, and open to interpretation to be accommodated by the language and ethos of the model.

Adherents of the Behavioural Objectives (technical-rational) consider the model to be 'neutral' which Dunne (2009, p. 7) defines as,

> *'…to be at the service of different 'options' while not being itself an option at all – only because it appeared to them simply and incontestably rational'.*

In this way, the credentials of rational action had been established. Dunne (2009) notes how its adherents supposed and found their justifications for this, in the empirical sciences and through their applications in business and industry. Variants of the model were used in other fields, including management practices and political activity, showing that the model imported into education has quite general cultural significance. Dunne (2009, p. 8) argues that, *'the issue which it ultimately raises is about the nature of rationality and also at the same time the nature of practice, any practice'.*

Dunne (2009) wanted to be able to articulate the nature of this model and the severe limitations he perceived, followed by offering the basis of an alternative model. Several philosophers had already identified and reflected upon in different contexts the problem Dunne (2009) wanted to examine, which may be called 'technical' reason. He explored the work of five modern philosophers to guide us about technical and practical reason and they direct us back to Aristotle. In order to understand the function of theory and practice in educational practice we turn to Carr (1995) who informs us how 'practice' is now understood and how this understanding has developed from some very specific social and historical roots.

The Concept of Educational Practice

Carr (1995) argues that the older, more coherent concept of educational practice has, over time, gradually transformed and changed, and invites us to explore with him the history with a view to uncovering the nature and meaning of practice which is quite different to contemporary thinking. By examining why, we fail to gain understanding of educational practice through the analysis of practice and its relationship to theory. Carr (1995) argues that it is mainly due to the absence of historical critical interpretation of the concept of practice, which can provide an explanation of the historical philosophy, thereby providing a greater understanding of educational practice and offering a more satisfactory reason why education is understood as a practice.

In education the term 'practice' is used in various and sometimes incompatible ways. It can be used to describe an activity performed to enhance or acquire skills and to an activity to demonstrate that the skills have been mastered. Carr (1995, p. 62) suggests that usually the context enables understanding of the way the term is being used. However, there are confusions when practice is understood in its relationship to theory. Usually, theory and practice as understood as binary opposites, but education does not conform to the usual constraints of theory, which is about *'universal, context-free generalisations'*, and practice, which deals with concrete realities. Educational practice is more nuanced than these polarised notions and applying the criteria for practice to educational practice excludes too much, according to Carr (1995). If it is assumed that educational practice is non-theoretical and educational theory is non-practical, the assumption underestimates the extent of reflection on practice and therefore theorising about their practice that those engaged in educational practice do.

The response to this lack of consensus has been various accounts of educational practice which highlight its dependence, rather than independence, on theory. Based on philosophic arguments, these accounts suggest that as practice is based on assumptions and beliefs it is therefore guided by theory. Practice is not in opposition to theory, but the activities of practical work are structured and guided by a theoretical framework. This analysis suggest that all practice is based on theory, including simple practice, which presupposes that all practice has a conceptual framework. However, Carr (1995) recognises that there are occasions when more complex decisions are required so theory is drawn up to inform and guide.
The 'theory-guided' view, according to Carr (1995, p. 63), is too broad and he suggests that,

> *'... educational practice can be guided by a 'theory' that is nothing other than tacit, implicit and unarticulated common sense as well as the 'theory' that is produced through systematic disciplined enquiry'*.

He argues that this view ignores the point that educational practice cannot be guided by theory alone, as theory is based on generalizations while practice is always action within a specific context.

Is Educational Theory a Form of Practice?

Carr (1995) questions whether educational theory can be considered a form of practice and cites Ryle's view that practice precedes theory. Ryle's argument is that something cannot be known unless one knows how to do a number of things,

> '…*efficient practice precedes the theory of it' and that theorizing is a form of practice, which requires know how of various types'*
> (Carr, 1995, p. 63)

However, Carr (1995, p. 64) suggests that this argument narrows and restricts educational practice to much less that it is. He insists that,

> *'...a definitive feature of an educational practice is that it is an ethical activity undertaken in pursuit of educationally worthwhile ends'.*
> Carr, 1995, p. 64)

Therefore, educational practice requires know how, but know how in itself is not sufficient. Certain teaching methods, even if delivered well, do not necessarily constitute educational practice if they do not conform to the ethical principles of such practice. These principles are not necessarily required to be developed into a set of rules to guide practice, but they should be understood, in order that practice is undertaken educationally. A practitioner may practice in an educational way, regardless of the level of skill or know how, provided there is at least some tacit knowledge of acting educationally. However, a skilled practitioner in the Rylean mode, who knows how to practice will not be practicing in an educational sense (Carr, 1995).

As stated above, 'practice' has multiple meanings, which creates difficulty in finding criteria or definitive meaning for the concept of educational practice. Carr's (1995) arguments around three features of practice he identifies – the opposite of theory; its dependence on theory and its independence of theory – he suggests may be incomplete analyses, each limited by the false assumptions of the other two. He considers whether historical concepts can convey some of the early meaning, which will provide clarity to aid understanding of the current concept.

The Historical Context of Practice

Carr's (1995) view is that we cannot ignore the historical context of a concept as concepts are socially embedded and therefore change over time in the same way that social life changes. He suggests that one way to understand the concept of practice at a given time in history is to look at the rules about its use within the language and social life. This can be compared with our current culture's way of using the concept of practice.

Conceptual and social changes do not occur in a vacuum but through direct human interaction. Philosophical inquiry can also play an important part; when philosophical analysis uncovers a necessary modification or rethink it may influence its current use and understanding. The current usage of the concept of practice in social life may be linked to how past philosophers have analysed it historically. Therefore, any philosophical inquiry that limits itself to our own time will be inadequate and expanding the inquiry to include how the concept has been used and understood in the past will explain confusions and distortions in the current use of the concept. Carr (1995) suggests that the origin of the concept is from a very different and long disappeared social context and can only be understood in that way. Education as a practice will also be part of the social context and have changed over time. However, he is confident that vestiges of the original concept remain and will continue to emerge.

Aristotle's Insights into Practice

In place of the question, '*What is educational practice?',* Carr (1995) seeks a historical core concept of practice which is more fitting than our own and which has only recently waned in influence. Carr (1995) refers us to Aristotle's (384BC-322BC) account of practice to enable us to understand why education is considered a practice in the current day. In the Greek tradition, *praxis* was an approximation of the current term 'practice', but in the classical context practice was a way of life, the *bios praktikos* devoted to pursuing human good. In the Nichomachean Ethics Aristotle develops the tradition of *'practical philosophy'* which provided the *bios praktikos* with it main source of theoretical expression. He also develops conceptual distinctions which described beliefs about *'practice'* and distinguished these from beliefs which do not belong to this tradition (Carr, 1995).

Aristotle described the distinction between two forms of human action *praxis* and *poiesis,* which we can only translate from the Greek in a less precise way as, '*doing something'* and '*making something'. Poiesis* is action which creates some specific product which was intended, where the ends are known in advance. It is guided by a form of knowledge which Aristotle called *techné* - we would refer to this as technical or specific knowledge or expertise. *Poiesis* thus requires action to follow certain guidelines or rules. For Aristotle and the Greeks, examples of *poiesis* guided by *techni* would be craftsmen and artisans (Carr, 1995).

Although *praxis* is also action directed towards a specific end, it differs from *poiesis i*n several regards. The point of *praxis* is not to produce a product, but to achieve some moral good. Moreover, it is not a neutral means by which this good can be achieved as the good cannot be made; it can only be done. *Praxis* is a '*doing action'* because it can only be achieved through action and can only exist within the action. Carr (1995) insists that practice cannot be considered a form of technical expertise, used to create an externally related product. Nor can the result be specified before the practice begins. Practice is therefore morally informed or morally committed action and links to the Aristotelian tradition that all political and ethical actions were considered practice, as was education.

Carr (1995) explains that when deciding on an action, it is not 'right' in the sense of correctness but because it can be morally justified. However, more than one ethical principle may be apparent and without a guide to indicate which should be the primary one, Aristotle insists the collective decisions are always preferred to those of the individual. However, practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is a prerequisite for awareness of the ethical principles involved in order to make good decisions, which may be developed through experience. To practise cannot be a matter of individuals learning and implementing what the goals of their practice are expected to be.

> '*To practise, then, is always to act within a tradition, and it is only by submitting to its authority that practitioners can begin to acquire the practical knowledge and standards of excellence by means of which their own practical competence can be judged'.*
> (Carr, 1995, pp. 68-69)

Professionalism

Professionals are expected to be qualified and it is a feature that differentiates professions from other kinds of work.

> *'To be real, professionalism has to be something that people – professionals – actually 'do,' not simply something that the government or any other agency wants them to do, or mistakenly imagines they are doing. Above, I liken professionalism to service level agreement, but it is only such when it is accepted and adopted by the professionals at whom it is directed.'*
> (Evans, 2008, p. 27)

Abbott (1988) considers that the professions as we understand them were first developed in the 19th century. However he suggests that the English professions were unusual as, with the exception of accounting, they were not linked to the new commercial and industrial heart of society. They organised themselves in a collegial manner, seemingly working as if in a previous era. Abbott (1988) cites Carr-Saunders & Wilson's The Professions (1933) which was the first published work to analyse the professions and provided a historical background on each profession in England. They developed a list of features which later contributed strongly to definitions. These are:

- *'Professions were organised bodies of experts who applied esoteric knowledge to particular cases.*
- *They had elaborate systems of instruction and training, together with entry by examination and other formal prerequisites.*
- *They normally possessed and enforced a code of ethics or behaviour.'*

(Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933, cited by Abbott, 1988, p. 4).

Although Abbott (1988) states he has avoided writing about academic professions, these features are similar to the recent work by Tully (2021), demonstrating that professions share many characteristics in their organisation, if not their subject. Tully (2021) provided three dominant interpretations: *expertise,* which includes qualifications; *service,* applying their expertise, and *compliance,* defined as meeting external expectations, which, together with Ofsted Inspections and mandatory subjects such as safeguarding, also includes the ETF Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers (ETF, 2022). Biesta (2015) has similar definitions of professions, which are discussed below.

A key point that Abbott (1988) makes is that interprofessional competition is a fact of professional life. This leads to a control of knowledge and a rigorous exclusion of outsiders. Abbott (1988) refers to the merging of apothecaries with physicians and surgeons, and the lower branch of the legal profession, and observes that professions are constantly evolving to admit new occupations, for example, Human Resources professionals. This is not particularly the case in teaching as the march towards professionalism has been promoted by the Institute for Learning (IfL) and subsequently the ETF, who provide the Professional Standards. Teaching has not been merged or been in competition with other professions, although Labaree (1992, p.138) states that educational psychologists in the United States of America (USA) were taking hold of the, *'…academic high ground.'* However, there are still opposing views about teaching being a profession and a cursory internet search will bring up many opinions, both for and against. For example, LibreText Social Sciences (https://tinyurl.com/49aw3734) where Vasiliou (2022, p. 1) says: *'However, teaching as a profession is the question that remains to be answered clearly.'* Challen (2017) (https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/teaching-a-job-or-a-profession) has a different view, *'Teaching is the one profession that creates all other professions.'*

Labaree (1992), writing in the USA discusses the two major reports published by the Carnegie Task Force and The Holmes Group to address problems in their schools, which both argue that, *'… the quality of public education can only improve if schoolteaching is transformed into a full-fledged [sic] profession'* (Labaree, 1992, p. 124). This clearly indicates that teaching was not generally considered a profession in the USA in the 1980s.

Labaree (1992) states that the Holmes report argues that it is essential to professionalise teacher educators if teachers are to become professionals. However he says that this was already taking place before the reports were published, through a movement to professionalise teacher educators and to increase the scientific knowledge base that flowed from it. The position of teacher educators, who were often working in Universities, was a weak position, particularly as they were not usually involved in research, whereas educational psychologists frequently researched and published theories of child development and student learning. Labaree (1992) states that there is a fundamental need for a research base of knowledge about teaching to further the movement to professionalise teachers.

More recently, Tully (2021) researched the perception of professionalism in FE through a large online survey, primarily with staff in FE colleges (84% of respondents) but also from sixth-form colleges, adult education and independent training providers. The three dominant interpretations, (emphasising respectively the self, students and the organisation) were *'expertise'*, (the knowledge, skills and qualifications), *'service'*, (students and pedagogy) and *'compliance'* (meeting external expectations), the latter more often reported in senior manager responses, whilst more teachers responded *'expertise'*. Compliance was a controversial subject, where not all participants agreed about its merits, with some viewing it as a crucial part of professionalism, but for others it was a major area of concern, despite the term covering not only targets and inspection, but including health and safety, rules of conduct and conforming to organisational norms. These interpretations are very similar to Biesta's (2015) definitions of professions, particularly the 'expertise' and 'compliance' , while 'service' is not as strong as Biesta's promotion of human wellbeing, although it has similar connotations.

Many teaching respondents who participated in this study recognised that meeting targets was vital, but the strong focus on meeting OfSTED criteria demotivated them. Derived from research, Tully (2021, p. 32) offers a framework to develop teacher professionalism and institutional learning, one strand being, *'teaching circles', 'for teachers to share, diagnose, collaborate and solve common pedagogic issues',* which he argues,

> *'When run effectively, these can be powerful channels for improving the quality of provision. These are not management-enforced structures or quality-control exercises, but teacher-led systems that encourage exchange and professional*

dialogue. Teaching circles recognise the potential of colleagues working and learning together'.
(Tully, 2021, p. 33)

The focus on employee-led development finds common ground with business, where traditional approaches to development have been changing in response to a different generational attitude to work, affording employees more responsibility for their development, facilitated by their employers, providing it aligns to the organisation's goals (Coomber, 2011). MacDonald's approach to development enables the employees to take control of their career progression, taking, *'…ownership of their development, individually and in small communities of like-minded people'* (Coomber, 2011, p. 21), which O'Leary's (2017) research also identified. Collaborative learning is discussed later in the chapter, through the work of Fielding, *et al.,* (2005), O'Leary (2017) and Lucas (2017).

Initial Teacher Training

Teachers in FE are often described as 'dual professionals' (Green, 2021, GuildHE, 2018) referring to their industry or professional subject specialism, such as hairdressing, or business, and their teaching profession. GuildHE (2018) warn that because people have achieved well in their profession or industry does not necessarily make them good teachers. A benefit to dual professionalism is the credibility they have with students and the opportunity to act as a role model for the job the students aspire to. Teachers in FE usually have a degree in their subject area or vocational qualifications or experience, or possibly both, but the introduction of The Further Education Teachers' Qualifications (England) Regulations 2007 made it mandatory for teachers who did not hold a Level 5 teaching qualification to achieve one within five years (Zaidi *et al.,* 2018). The Regulations led to an expansion of the existing provision for the following five years to meet a major increase in demand. The qualifications were based on defined standards of excellent practice, the new overarching professional standards for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sector, Lifelong Learning UK, 2006 (LLUK).

The Regulations engendered a drive towards a greater sense of the status of professionalism in FE teaching alongside an aim to ensure that the workforce was qualified to at least a reasonably high level. However, the statutory requirements for prescribed teaching qualifications for specific roles in delivering learning in the sector were rescinded in 2013, following the publication of the Lingfield Review on Professionalism in Further Education (Department for Business, 2012). The Review states that education providers across the sector could decide the qualifications they required for entry to specific teaching posts. It seems an extraordinary *volte-face* in the space of eight years from a Government Regulation to require every teacher to hold a qualification at a specified level, to leaving the decision to the employer, who could decide which qualification is required or none.

This change in the requirements was one of the factors impacting upon demand and there was a major decrease in enrolments to Teacher Training provision in 2012/13. This decline has continued with Level 5 Diploma/Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)/Certificate in Education students for 2015/16 at 10,760 students compared to a high in 2011/12 of 16,170. The decrease was most apparent in FE providers, compared to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Recruitment to the Certificate in Education and Training Level 4 (CET) has seen a similar decline from a high in 2011/12 of 8,600 students to 2015/16 when only 3,470 students enrolled on course. Although an overall decline, this was an increase on 2014/15 when only 2920 students enrolled (Zaidi, *et al.,* 2018). In addition to the lack of a statutory requirement, the decrease in demand for Initial Teacher Training provision in FE has been attributed to:

- '*A well-qualified existing workforce, due to the 2007 Teaching Regulations.*
- *Rationalisation of the workforce over a period of years, leading to lower demands for new teachers;*
- *Changes to funding, which placed the financial burden to pay for training on the individual or their employer.'*

(Zaidi, *et al.,* 2018)

The deregulation of entry qualifications for teaching has led to a wide variation in the professional qualifications held by teachers most in FE colleges. In the Eastern Region, where colleges share information at Association of Colleges Eastern Region (ACER) Workforce Network meetings, it is apparent that there is no commonality of requirement. The majority of respondents require teaching staff to have either the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education Level 7 (PGCE), Diploma in Education and Training Level 5 (DET), or the Certificate in Education Level 5 (CertEd) as a minimum standard, with a small minority accepting Certificate in Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS) or the Certificate in Education and Training (CET), which are both at Level 4. All respondents reported that they deliver the qualification that they require their teaching staff to have, either at no cost or part cost to the student. The recent introduction of the Learning and Skills Apprenticeship has provided funding for Level 5 and Level 7 qualifications nested in the Standards, which are a substantial saving to the employer, despite the requirement for off-the-job training and an option for student who would previously self-funded. However, the requirement for a minimum of Level 5 qualification has been removed from the revised Apprenticeship in 2022, diminishing its value.

Initial Teacher Training qualifications (Qualifications at the same level have parity)		
Level	**Qualification**	**Acronym**
4	Certificate in Education and Training	CET
4	Certificate in Training in the Lifelong Learning Sector	CTTLS
5	Diploma in Education and Training	DET
5	Certificate in Education	CertEd
7	Post-Graduate Certificate in Education	PGCE
5 and 7 nested	Learning and Skills Apprenticeship Level 5	

Table 1

The Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training is not universally accepted for the full teaching role, nor was it designed for it, and, *'…may not be enough as a standalone qualification to gain employment …',* according to College Jobs, (College Jobs, 2018). But whereas some colleges require a Level 5 qualification, such as PGCE, or the CertEd as the minimum for a full teaching role, as stated above, others only require the CET, which may be a contributing factor to the challenges faced by colleges regarding the quality and delivery of teaching. Skills tutors, who do not have a full teaching role, or teachers who lack the academic skills to join a CertEd course may take the CET as a bridging qualification, intending to progress, but may not have the opportunity or funding to do so as payment is now required from the employee or employer as noted above by Zaidi *et al., (*2018). Most colleges require a full Level 5 qualification for managers, so this is a further restriction on their potential progression.

Seemingly unaware of the deregulation of requirements for teaching qualifications, Government backed organisations continue to suggest that teachers are qualified to a specified level. The Education and Training Foundation Report (ETF, 2016) cautions that where there is greater discretion in qualifications for teaching professionals, education providers should be aware of their responsibilities for ensuring teachers are able to work effectively with learners and they recommend that teaching staff should have, as a minimum, a Level 5 qualification. There is a demand from some teachers for training that leads to higher qualifications in education and training, such as (DET), Certificate in Education (CertEd) and PGCE, found recent research, Training Needs Analysis (ETF, 2018), conducted with Independent Training Providers, FE colleges and Sixth Form colleges.

ETF is, '*the sector-owned government-backed workforce development body for the Further Education and Training Sector*', and their Mission is,

> *'to support the continuing transformation of our country's technical and vocational education system by ensuring the sector has world-class teachers, trainers, assessors and leaders'.*
> (ETF, 2018, Mission)

So, despite deregulation from successive Governments, who consider it is appropriate for employers to decide the minimum standard they require for teachers employed from 2013, the Government sponsored ETF suggest to employers that teaching staff have a minimum Level 5 qualification.

There may be a vested interest for the ETF in teachers attaining Level 5 and higher, as they explain that their role is to improve the quality of leadership, teaching and training through providing the Professional Standards, awarding Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and, since September 2017, the Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), which since 2018 has conferred Chartered Teacher Status. Both QTLS and ATS require fees payable to the ETF for conferment and ongoing membership fees. The opportunity to engage with and achieve QTLS is dependent on having a Level 5 qualification (or through a portfolio and experience route) and the Associate status, which was available to those without a Level 5, has been withdrawn. ATS is a yet higher-level qualification, equivalent to Level 7, and is only available to those who already have QTLS. Whilst it appears appropriate that attainment of high-level status in teaching should require a high level of teaching qualification, there is a vacuum for those who have not attained Level 5 qualifications and no evident path for them to progress.

As the onus for decision making about qualifications has been shifted to employers, who may choose to take the cheapest route due to policy, or financial restraint, and employ unqualified staff, or accept or offer low qualifications, rather than take a quality approach. The option to require the same nationally recognised level of qualification for FE teachers has gone, making relocation to a different provider far from straightforward. The parity of QTLS with QTS enabled FE teachers to transfer to the schools sector, but without the requirement of QTS, schools may prefer to employ cheaper unqualified teachers. Royal College, which forms the focus of this study provided well qualified teachers for A Levels to a local school for some years on a contract basis, but after deregulation the school did not renew the contract and employed unqualified teachers in at least some of the subjects.

College mergers can find they have different minimum standards for teacher qualifications, which may create a two-tier system. Husbands (2014), writing for the Institute of Education (IoE) says deregulation of the teaching profession is taking place at speed. Academies do not have to appoint teachers who have achieved qualified teacher status (QTS). Schools are encouraged to become providers of teacher education and possibly responsible for the award of QTS. Husbands (2014) suggests that a teacher can be anyone the head teacher designates thus continuing that apparently no other country deals with its teaching profession in this way, which is hardly surprising. In no way does this support the ETF's Mission (2018) *'ensuring the sector has world-class teachers'.*

ETF guidance (ETF, 2016) recognises the need for subject specialist mentors on initial teacher training programmes, which was originally highlighted in the report *Equipping our Teachers for the Future* (DfES, 2004) and having a mentor is a requirement on CertEd/PGCE courses. A subject specialist mentor can provide relevant advice and information on the successful teaching of a specific subject and may be working for the same educational provider and be familiar with their requirements and processes. The mentor may be trained, and in Royal College they are always trained in the awarding university's mentoring process and supported with regular meetings. They are expected to complete some assessed teaching observations, focussing on the subject specific elements of the session, but most observations are completed by the teacher training team. Mentors are expected liaise to with the teacher training team so that the support and monitoring is a shared responsibility and, in some awarding universities, to provide an end of year progress report in conjunction with the student.

Working with a mentor can be valuable for new employees. Being new in any field requires knowledge, adaptation into the role and the information about, *'how we do things around here'*, be it the dress code or using a red pen for Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) sign off. Having a mentor helps the new member of staff bridge the gap between being new and unsure and becoming more confident and included. Having a mentor in the same field or department is particularly valuable for all new staff and this is provided by the Staff Development Team in Royal College. Gregson & Hillier (2015, p. 384) list main strengths of mentoring as an approach to CPD, such as, *'Potential to provide individualized and flexible support'* and '*Focus on the development of day-to-day practice in context',* but also list main limitations of this approach, including, *'Relationships usually hierarchical'* and, '*One-way flow of influence and expertise from mentor'.* Clearly mentoring must be carefully considered and attention paid to the selection of mentors and clarity of their remit.

Professionalism and the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

> *'A characteristic of professionalism is the obligation to remain up to date in areas of professional expertise. Most professional bodies acknowledge this and require their members to undertake regular relevant continuing professional development (CPD). Unfortunately, CPD struggles within a context of intensification of work, pressure of time and economic restrictions and if the perceived benefits of CPD under such conditions become outweighed by the costs, then CPD can become tokenistic for both the individual and the organisation. Comprehensive research and an evidence base determining which approaches to CPD are more effective and efficient have been sparse.'*
> (Crowley, 2014, title page)

It is not sufficient for professionals to rely on their initial teacher training or degree to support them throughout their career. Most professionals expect and are expected to regularly update their skills and knowledge and respond to changing practice and legislation. Doctors, osteopaths, nurse and human resource professionals, for example, are required by their professional bodies to submit details of their professional development, usually on an annual basis. Osteopaths must complete 90 hours of CPD over a three-year cycle to remain members of the General Osteopathic Council (General Osteopathic Council, 2022). A random selection takes place each month to look at evidence of their CPD. This is also true of other professional bodies, such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD). However, Wiliam (BERA/RSA, 2014) informs us that this is not required in all professions. Post-qualification, solicitors and accountants are expected to keep up to date but there is no requirement to improve their performance. What drives teachers to improve, suggests Wiliam (ibid) is the moral imperative; the impact teacher makes on their students' lives and their contribution to society. This takes us back to the discussion in Chapter 1 regarding the moral purpose of education.

The option of professional learning after initial teacher education is available through the ETF's programmes. Originally The Institute for Learning (IfL) were responsible for conferring the status of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) through a process called ‘Professional Formation’, and this was a requirement for newly qualified teachers to achieve within 5 years (Colquhoun, 2008). However, with the demise of compulsory membership of IfL in 2012 this requirement ceased and became voluntary.

In a similar way, all school teachers were required to join the General Teaching Council for England (GTC) from 2000 to 2012. Unlike the Bar Council or the Law Society that control professional qualifications and practice for legal professions, the GTC was a government body in all but name. The governing council comprised mainly teachers who draw up a code of ethics and hear misconduct proceedings. However, it is only able to *advise* Government regarding educational policy leaving ministers to make decisions (Beck, 2009). There was such resistance from teachers to joining the GTC and paying a fee that the Government resorted to deducting the membership fee from salaries, adding the amount back in national pay settlements.

In both cases – the IfL and GTC, the Government sought to control teachers under the guise of professionalisation, but failed to make them more palatable by allowing professional self-government and both organisations have ceased operations, and their successors operate differently.

As stated above, Professional Formation become under the management of the ETF, the successor to IfL. For those eligible, attainment of QTLS status is rated highly for career progression in a survey by the Society of Education and Training (SET) the member section of ETF, (Straw, 2017). It was cited by a respondent as essential to moving to the qualified teacher pay scale in a school, (members of SET with QTLS have been recognised as qualified to teach in schools since April 2012). However, it should be noted that the survey participants were all Associates or Members of SET which promotes and awards QTLS, and it was a small-scale survey (796 respondents) so it may not be representative of the profession. QTLS was offered at no charge for some years but now incurs a cost of £486 to complete and registrations have substantially reduced. As Crowley (2014a) advises above, CPD is often at risk from workplace demands, time and funding priorities and employers sometimes do not see the benefits of Professional Formation, despite completion requiring a substantial research study, which is usually based on the teacher's practice or subject specialism.

The importance of teachers maintaining knowledge and skills was recognised by The Further Education Teachers' Continuing Professional Development and Registration (England) Regulations 2007, which required teachers to provide evidence of 30 hours of CPD per annum for a full-time teacher and pro-rata for part-time. CPD was defined as, *'any activity undertaken by him [sic] for the purposes of updating his [sic] knowledge of the subjects he [sic] teaches or developing his [sic] teaching skills…'* (Legislation.co.uk, 2007). The emphasis on shifting the responsibility from Government, central and local, to provide and monitor CPD, to the individual having responsibility for completing and recording CPD, is considered by Broad (2015) to be the most significant aspect of the 2007 legislation and her paper raises questions about the ability of the teachers to meet these requirements given funding and time constraints, which is also a theme of Crowley (2014), stated above.

Individual registration by all teachers with the Institute for Learning (IfL) was required by 31st March 2008, for the purposes of recording their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) annually. However, in a study of engagement with CPD in 2009 and 2010, (Broad, 2015) found that teachers interviewed reported the actual recording of CPD was onerous and completed mainly to fulfil the bureaucratic requirements of IfL. Teachers said that they completed considerably more hours than they recorded, so their aversion was not to undertaking CPD, but to the mechanical and instrumental recording of it. A third of teachers in the study did not provide a record to their employers, despite this being a requirement within the legislation at the time, because their organisation did not require it. Employers may have used other methods, such as registers of attendance at employer sponsored training events, but individual and external professional development was not being captured.

When membership charges for IfL commenced, there was concerted resistance from teachers to maintaining their membership. The Government responded to the pressure and removed mandatory membership, funded by individuals, and from September 2012 IfL registration became voluntary and with it the requirement to record CPD with IfL ceased. Employers could however continue to request annual records of CPD. The removal of the mandatory recording of CPD occurred close to the reduction in the level of formal qualification required for teachers in 2013, which would suggest that CPD activities would gain a greater imperative for teachers, particularly those less qualified. These changing requirements of the profession threaten to reduce the professionalism and the status of the role.

Rather than government decreed CPD, Lemov (2016, p. 11) considers that teachers should take greater responsibility for their development and believes that teachers have a crucial role in,

> *'…the study, evaluation and development of effective teaching practices underpinning their professional status and in driving the profession forward'.*

> *'Members of professions participate in developing the body of professional knowledge and practice in their field, and this enhances the status of their profession and their status as professionals'.*

This is the ideal situation, but teaching demands impinge on time available and, as Gregson (2020, p. 1) observes*, 'Rising to the demands of academic writing, scholarship and research is challenging for many practitioners in post compulsory education.'* He continues that a small number complete their research, which limits the work published in the field of educational research.

Standards of Excellence

> *'Such standards of excellence (the ability and disposition to act in the right way, at the right time for the right reasons) are moral acts and can therefore be closely related to the growth and development of a person's character.'* (Gregson, Spedding & Kessell-Holland, 2020, p. 218)

I return to the moral aspects of teaching that runs like a thread through this study. This suggests that there are many ways teachers can engage with standards of excellence, as they cannot be absolute and unalterable, as the above citation makes clear. Every situation is different, but the learning that takes place is within the teacher. The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in England 2014 (ETF, 2014, p. 2) start with listing The Professional Values and Attributes section with the subtext, '*Developing your own judgement of what works and does not work in your teaching and training',* followed by six Standards. Given that this can only be established by the teacher reflecting on their practice, trying new ideas and reviewing them, it cannot be a checklist for every situation and every individual teacher. However, general guidance provides the occupational standards that Eraut (1994) deems essential to ensure that people know what level of competence is expected of them and how it can be assessed. Gregson & Nixon (2013, p. 5) define aspects of 'good argument', including that it offers space for the examination and re-examination of judgements made, in the light of new information and situations, enabling adaptations to future actions, which develops the subtext clearly.

Where Dunne (2005) refers to standards of excellence, Sennett (2009) speaks of Quality-Driven Work. He observes that pursuing higher standards can result in conflict within organisations, because we do not all agree what higher standards are. Coffield *(*2014b) identifies the difficulty of sharing *'best practice',* as it creates psychological resistance in those who are expected to adopt and use it. It suggests their current practice is inferior, and can create insecurity and self-doubt in their own practice.

The British National Health Service (NHS), its biggest employer, is given as an example by Sennett (2009) of the conflict arising in organisations between doing good work and getting work done. A source of national pride on its creation in 1946, the NHS now struggles to provide the excellent care promised at its birth. Since Sennett (2009) wrote that NHS staff were still learning the changes proposed ten years before, the pace and rate of change continues. As Sennett (2009, p. 243) remarks,

> *'Who demands quality can also be divisive'.*

The Covid pandemic, from March 2020 brought substantial praise to the NHS for their unstinting and often personally dangerous work with Covid patients. However, the directive to the NHS management from central government to clear all possible beds sent hundreds of elderly residents back to their care homes without testing them for the Covid virus, resulting, subject to a formal inquiry, in many avoidable deaths. The High Court has ruled the policy towards discharging hospital patients care home England was illegal (Booth, 2022), which has tainted the reputation of the NHS for following the policy, despite their having no choice in the matter.

Who Sets the Standards?

'The standards of good work must be clear to people who are not themselves experts', was the view of the GoodWork Project quoted in Sennett (2009, p. 249). The GoodWork Project, launched in 1995, is now part of the broader The Good Project at Harvard University. The project studies the nature of good work by professionals and how they succeed or fail. Sennett (2009) draws our attention to the project's research on the problem of hoarding expertise and strategies to overcome it, enabling knowledge transfer. In a notable example, researchers state that, in their view, the New York Times was at fault for not communicating their standards explicitly, in a manner clear to all employees. As a result, there was a breakdown in standards resulting in unscrupulous reporters becoming corrupt.

'Operating within the guiding principles of your organisation is the core of operating ethically' says Yiannis Koursis, Principal and CEO of Barnsley College, quoted by Holmes (2021). This requires an employee handbook, a code of conduct for staff and students, standards and expectations for teaching and learning that are linked and representative of the mission and values of the organisation, which are available to all staff and regularly disseminated. Gregson & Hillier (2015) agree that standards are helpful as they provide clarity about what professionals are expected to do at various stages in their career. They also state that standards can be enforced through inspection, measurement and testing. Standards indicate what constitutes good practice, which at best should support reflection and encourage good judgement and values in education. However, Gregson & Hillier (2015) contend

that in England, educational standards have mainly been developed in a top-down way, and used to reduce creativity and judgement. In place of the definition of good practice, encouraging teachers to develop their practice as they advance in their career, they are likely to be restrained by the standards for education, rather than guided by them.

The Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England, first published in 2014 (ETF, 2014) and relaunched in 2022 (ETF, 2022) provide a national reference point for professional development and guidance and are an integral part of initial teacher training qualifications at Level 5, where they must be evidenced within the portfolio. A self-assessment tool against the Professional Standards is available to everyone on the website and assists in identifying areas of strength and areas for development. The ETF's membership section, the Society for Education and Training (SET) has a Code of Professional Practice, which sets out their expectations of members. Although a national body, as previous mentioned, membership is voluntary and fee-paying, apart from student teachers who have free membership, so the understanding and use of the Professional Standards is inconsistent, making an educational establishment's own standards vital.

Sennett (2009) agrees that standards that anyone, including non-experts, in the organisation understands, will raise quality in the whole organisation. However, this is often not the case in practice. Sennett (2009) observes that the current day expert does not have the strong rituals to link them to colleagues or the community, as the earlier civic and religious expectations that maintained the social bonds of master craftsmen have lost much of their power and prestige. With the weakening of the power of professional associations observed by Krause, (1999, cited in Sennett, 2009) and the lack of community, some experts seek to make themselves indispensable, immune to redundancy or the threat of others taking their place, by isolating themselves and being the only person capable of doing their work. We may see this increasing as a result of the Covid pandemic when working together was not possible for most people. Other pressures may result in professionals working in unethical ways; Gardner, Csikszentmihalhi & Damon (2002) found that many of the New York Times journalists they interviewed for the GoodWork Project had become disillusioned by the feat of balancing commerce and ethics to the detriment of their work.

So, what are standards, and specifically standards for teaching? At opposite ends of the spectrum standards may be presented as broad principles to describe good work, which can be good or good enough in various ways from a pragmatic, democratic point of view, or a detailed checklist that must be followed precisely to attain perfection from the technical rational viewpoint.

OfSTED – Its Role in Assessing Standards

While internal assessment of teaching performance is important and discussed later in this chapter, the less frequent but powerful external role of OfSTED must be considered as a key driver for improvement. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OfSTED) inspect organisations providing education and skills, publishing their findings and informing policymakers about the effectiveness of the services (OfSTED, 2022a). OfSTED provide an Educational Inspection Framework (EIF) which explains how they will inspect education providers, but some head teachers (Hayes & Corbett, 2022, pp. 8-9) think they could do far more to make it developmental and supportive and develop the expertise to advise. OfSTED lack responsibility for improvement, only reducing the process to one of four words and leaving the provider to cope with the difficulty of attracting high quality staff to a school which *'requires improvement'*.

Coffield (2017, p. xii) describes the benefits of OfSTED inspections as:

> *'…monitoring the quality of education nationally, regionally and institutionally; reporting on general themes such as the quality of maths teaching; setting and raising expectations; providing feedback and checking to see if it is acted on; involving parents, governors and the local community in the process; and challenging unquestioned assumptions, poor practices and incompetent teachers in their search for improvement.'*

Certainly a demanding remit and with potential civil service budget cuts, OfSTED may struggle to address this. Whittaker & Noble, (2022) report OfSTED have had more funding from the Treasury in 2022 to accelerate their inspection activity, but its funding is at the 2010-11 level which in real terms is at least twenty five percent lower. They contract inspectors to visit and produce a structured report on all the establishments under their remit on a regular basis. Those not considered providing education to a suitable standard will be re-inspected within a specified period. Their strongest sanction is to place a college into ‘special measures’, which may result in support or alternative leadership (Gregson & Hillier, 2015). However, this requires large numbers of employees. Her Majesty’s Inspectors (HMI) are direct employees but OfSTED Inspectors are usually practitioners contracted for specific inspections. Many OfSTED Inspectors returned to their educational establishments during the pandemic, with none employed from January 2022, so there is now a recruitment drive to replace or re-engage them, and to address increased staff turnover, which reached fourteen percent in 2022, up from nine percent in 2020-21 (Whittaker & Noble, 2022).

Despite the wide range of monitoring and reporting activities, research studies (Jones & Tymms, 2014, cited in Coffield, 2017) have concluded the evidence of the impact of inspection on outcomes for learners is limited. OfSTED’s methods have been criticised for being unreliable and sometimes unjust. Educators can be uneasy about bringing in new, experimental curricula and modern methods of teaching as they always have the spectre of OfSTED looming large. The involvement of parents and stakeholders is discussed later in this Chapter.

The pressure of an inspection can lead to staff placing institutional need before the needs of the students by, for example, withdrawing weak students or planning external trips to mask poor behaviour or attendance – ‘gaming’, as identified in Chapter 1. Staff either tend to respond with resentment at the attack on their professionalism they feel inspection brings, or annoyance at the distraction from their work with students when they have to provide information required by inspectors, while others accept the ‘*latest set of chains’* all too willingly, (Coffield, 2017, p. xvii).

Coffield (2017) points out that positive elements of the current model should be incorporated into a new approach, while avoiding the damaging elements. The underpinning principles of the new model replace the fear of the existing system with trust; encourages students to become lifelong learners; balance challenge with support to increase the likelihood that improvements will be acted upon; dialogue between inspectors and senior managers is used in a challenging but constructive way and it builds on strengths, while minimising weaknesses. There are nine components to the model, which, Coffield (2017, p. xiii) suggests, *'…make up a collaborative, formative and open-ended system:'*

Whilst well-considered proposals for reform may create discourse, a key question is, are they likely to shape future inspection frameworks? Coffield (2017) acknowledges that they challenge the culture and traditional way of working of OfSTED and have to gain support from senior Government personnel. However, he suggests they are likely to be welcomed and promoted by the teaching profession and would greatly increase OfSTED's impact on student outcomes, while reducing its power.

Who Checks the Standards?

A central question is how are the standards monitored and the need to improve established? When standards are set, particularly from external sources such as OfSTED, there follows a monitoring process, with recommendations for improvement.

> *We are required to carry out our work in ways that encourage the services we inspect and regulate to improve, to be user-focused and to be efficient and effective in their use of resources, as set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006.*
> (GOV.UK, 2019, p. 1)

OfSTED, whose role in the FE sector policy-making is the principal hegemonic force behind the emergence of Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) as a main element in Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes for FE teachers, argues O’Leary (2012). New managerialism refers to a set of systems, attitudes, values and processes, which, according to Randle & Brady, (1997, cited in O’Leary, 2012), emerged in the early 1980s in the UK and spread slowly through the public sector.

Taking management techniques considered successful in the private sector have been applied to the public sector to improve performance and productivity and to increase workforce accountability. As we have seen, teaching does not conform to the processes of creating a ‘product’, and cannot be reduced to ticking off boxes as the work is done, but it is audited and monitored in the same way as, perhaps, factory output.

Jones & Moore (1995) cited by Beck (2009, p.3) drew on Bernstein’s (1996) work to analyse what they term, *‘…the characteristics of a novel form of pedagogy that emerged in Britain in the 1980s.’* This was in response to the unprecedented levels of unemployment, particularly amongst young people. They argued that this was constructed by agencies such as the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ), which they termed recontextualising agencies. Bernstein’s (1996, p.47) cited by Beck (2009) developed this term, for the governing recontextualising principle, *‘…which selectively appropriates, relocates, refocuses and relates other discourse to constitute its own order.’*

The MSC and the NCVQ worked in two primary ways. Firstly, by filtering academic discourses for methods and ideas which fitted their own policy objectives and reassembling them for their own purpose. Secondly, incorporating into this revised discourse versions of everyday life, which was an essential part of their remit. They created their own rules for assessing performance and sometimes accrediting it (Jones & Moore, 1995, cited by Beck, 2009).

Whilst positioning the innovations as progressive vocational education, which the agencies claimed were theory free because they were linked to normal work experience and the real world, Jones & Moore, (1995), cited by Beck (2009) identify them as a competency approach, using a form of behaviourist psychology with function analysis that reduced work performance and workplace cultures into discrete tasks that could be delivered through training and then measured.

This approach was also used the in Professional Standards for [School] Teachers (TDA, 2007), although Beck (2007) points out that this is not the narrow behavioural psychology used in youth training in the 1980s, but a selective choice of management theory, such as teamwork, shared commitment and collaboration. Beck (2007) suggests that teamwork often involves strong forms of managerial pressure and how collaboration can be disguised as the less effective consultation. He notes that these 'standards' have an emphasis on developing particular capability and dispositions, which can be measured, and define what is relevant for teachers. This Beck (2007) argues, supresses debate about alternative approaches and develops a professional teacher with the competences and expertise the Government prescribe.

So, in its stated aim to professionalise teaching, the agency has narrowed the development of trainee teachers to align themselves with the competencies the Government requires, and for them to accept that they will continue to be trained throughout their career. But implementing the aims as defined by the Government is not the primary way teachers develop their practice, but it is using the'*…knowledge, understanding and beliefs…'* that teachers have developed through tradition to the present to bring about change in students' lives (Carr, 1995, p. 68). Biesta (2015, p. 10) suggests that measurement has become the desired outcome rather than achieving a good education.

> '*The slightly more recent demand that professional practices should be based on scientific evidence about 'what works' rather than on professional judgement entails a similar distortion of professional practices such as education.'*

A major belief within new managerialism was that workers could not be trusted to work effectively and efficiently, (Robson, 1998), which led to the use of audit processes and methods to monitor performance and output (Ball, 2003, cited by O'Leary, 2012). This is despite teachers being professionals and not 'workers'. Yet a key part of this new culture was the monitoring of teachers' productivity and performance, and this resulted in

Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) becoming an important vehicle for acquiring evidence for quality systems and data for OfSTED inspections. OTL is usually completed regularly by the establishment and, during Inspections, by OfSTED, who measure and report on the Quality of Teaching and Learning,

> *'...in recent years it has come to be viewed quite narrowly as a performance tool of managerialist systems fixated with measuring teacher performance rather than actually improving it.'*
> (O'Leary, 2014, p. 281)

This places huge significance on one measure of performance, teaching, which is conducted in establishments by a range of staff, perhaps due to their job role or through training, using a variety of criteria, which frequently change, and which may or may not be fully understood by staff, let alone demonstrated.

A full range of OTL was researched in O'Leary's paper (2012b) but discussion is restricted to the practice of graded observations, which are observations of teachers' classroom performance, usually conducted once a year and graded between 1 and 4, based on the OfSTED 4-point scale which mirrors the grades given to organisations. The grades go into the college Quality Management Systems, where they provide data for inspection purposes and are also used to inform performance management of staff (O'Leary, 2014). However, for a key indicator of performance assessment, there has been sparse research within FE about its effectiveness as an assessment method and its impact on teaching and learning in colleges, and the learning and development of FE tutors, although there is a considerable amount of research for schools (Wragg 1999, West-Burnham *et al.,* 2001). Recent research argues that educational establishments using graded lesson observations, following OfSTED's 4-point scale, has counterproductive results as system of performance measurement reduces the likelihood of professional development in teachers (O'Leary, 2014).

The University and College Union Report

The University and College Union (UCU) commissioned Dr Matt O'Leary, who has been one of the few voices critiquing lesson observations in FE, to complete a research report on members' views on lesson observation; the largest survey on the subject ever undertaken in Further Education (FE) with just under 4000 respondents. A main finding of the report, which was published in 2013, was the high level of discontent and dissatisfaction felt about lesson observation as a method of assessment. This was strongest about graded models of observation, which have been usual practice in most colleges.

Dr O'Leary would appear to be an obvious choice due to his many publications on the subject of lesson observation (2012a, 2012b and 2012c) and his is a familiar name to many teachers for his views on the subject. UCU (2012, p. 1) had been running an 'observations campaign' and refer to a, *'Win at City College Brighton and Hove'* with *'significant improvements to their observation scheme.'* It is possible that this could influence members whether or not to respond as they may think progress is already happening and they have no need to take part.

The report states that, *'… all participants involved in this study felt very strongly about [lesson observation].'* UCU, 2013, pg. 6, which may suggest that those who did not hold strong views were less likely to respond and therefore the respondents are possibly not representative of the entire teacher membership.

As stated above, almost 4,000 UCU members working in further education responded to the survey for the report Developing a National Framework for the effective use of lesson observations in further education (UCU, 2013). Such members numbered approximately 32,000 at that time, giving a response rate of 11%. In addition to the survey focus groups and interviews were chosen using a purposive and/or convenience sampling strategy, which the report recognised has some limitations.

666 (17%) of respondents, mainly middle managers, had a dual role of observer and observee, and their responses to the question, *'I believe that graded lesson observations are essential for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning',* gave higher levels of agreement than observees, which the report suggests shows a, *'…significant difference in interpretations to the value attached to graded observations in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning by senior managers, observers and teaching staff.'* (UCU, 2013, p. 44). However the report states that, despite the differences in views between senior managers and observees, the majority of responses

indicated an *'…overwhelming discontent'*, (UCU, 2013, p. 46, with graded observations for quality assurance purposes.

Respondents agreed that poor teaching required identification and remedy but expressed concern about the validity and reliability of assessing performance during a brief period in the classroom, particularly when many teachers teach over 20 hours every week. OTL is often the sole method of assessment – a once per year observation. Practitioners reported that lesson observations used for performance management purposes had limited relevance to their professional needs and did not contribute to improvements in their practice. They considered that these models were used to provide quantifiable data for OfSTED and senior managers about the quality of teaching and learning. They also reported that they were a major cause of stress and anxiety and reduced feelings of self-esteem and self-efficacy of some teaching staff. The very small number of managers who took part in the survey, due to the composition of UCU membership and therefore the population surveyed, expressed less antipathy to graded observations than teaching staff, but they are less likely to be observed themselves and more likely to have responsibility for the overall quality of teaching and learning and the establishments results.

At a time when OfSTED were still grading observations, O'Leary (2014, p. 38) commented that the *'OfSTED fear factor'*, kept most FE providers using graded observations, as they were reluctant to be seen unfavourably, particularly those with previously graded 3 or 4 and awaiting further inspections. However, O'Leary (2014) speculates that some providers' reluctance to change is due to their view of observation as a way of performance assessment. This view is not shared by respondents in O'Leary's research, which indicated that lesson observation is no longer fit for purpose and based on an approach to performance measurement that encourages counterproductive consequences that inhibit professional learning and improvements in teaching. O'Leary observes that,

> *'...maximising teacher ownership of the observation process is an important feature of facilitating professional learning that is likely to endure. All teachers have a responsibility for their CPD, and they are likely to value this more highly if they feel they are given some ownership of the decision making process.'*
> (O'Leary, 2014, pg. 283)

A significant finding of O'Leary's (UCU, 2013) research was the paucity of feedback provided to the teachers being observed despite being considered the most important part of the process. Less than a third of the respondents in a national survey reported that feedback following observation was well-managed in their establishment, with long delays or insufficient time allocated to the meeting. That clear areas for improvement had been identified in the feedback was strongly agreed or agreed 37.1% by respondents, with the remainder reporting they disagreed or strongly disagreed, which creates questions about the value of observations and feedback to bringing about improvements to teaching practice. O'Leary (2014) states that his research found that providers who invest in quality feedback and feed forward, in place of lip-service, are often those who achieve the most success in improving the quality of teaching and learning and foster a culture of continuing improvement. Gregson & Hillier (2015), when addressing new teachers, mention the value of feedback from colleagues, which can provide encouragement and support. Collaboration with colleagues in open relationships can help each other in their development. This is valuable advice for teachers at any stage in their career and if this is a practice of observers it may boost the likelihood of teachers gaining a great deal from observation feedback and using it for their professional development

Following the publication of the UCU Report (UCU, 2013) and substantial pressure from UCU upon OfSTED, a decision was made in June 2015 to discontinue grading observations, bringing FE colleges into line with schools, where grading had ceased the previous year. Many colleges have ceased grading internally, but it is a management choice, and as stated above, some providers are wary of moving from observation as a method of assessing performance and not confident what method could replace grading (O'Leary, 2014). Other providers have developed new or alternative ways of assessing the quality of teaching and learning and Royal College initially continued with grading but chose to review its observation process and remove grading of lessons from September 2017. This change is described in detail in Chapter 4.

Despite OfSTED no longer grading lessons, staff in those establishments that continue to grade report stress and anxiety. An example is the dispute following the merger of Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and Shrewsbury College in 2016. Shrewsbury College used a graded observation policy, and it was proposed that this was adopted by the newly merged college. In an interview with a National Education Union (NEU) representative for Lead, the NEU magazine, the representative explained why staff felt so strongly that, as a last resort after months of talks, seventy members took strike action for eight days, and threatened to strike for three days per week for the rest of the term, before the college management dropped plans to grade staff.

> *'Staff told us that sometimes the graded lesson observations affected their self-esteem. Some people got a bad grade and then left in shame the following day because they knew there would be some capability things to follow.'*
> (Gillen, 2019, p.17)

A shocking outcome from one event, surely. But unfortunately, not rare, as shown in this response to criticism of the UCU report (UCU, 2013), O'Leary comments,

> *'But let us also acknowledge its [session observation] limitations and accept the grading of performance is little more than a pseudo-scientific practice that gives rise to some very serious counterproductive consequences for the well-being of staff.'*
> (O'Leary, 2014, p. 8)

Certainly, counterproductive consequences arose for the Shrewsbury merged college, where the impact of the strike is likely to be felt by staff and management for some time, and affect trusting relationships at a time of considerable change for them, due to the merger.

The rationale for many colleges grading was to replicate the OfSTED model and produce their own grade profile, providing management information. To continue grading when OfSTED have discontinued seems perverse and unnecessary. There are other methods of checking the quality of education provided and these are considered.

Other methods of assessment

OTL comprises the main performance indicator for many teachers and is a key measure of quality for OfSTED. Other key indicators may be used to assess the quality of teaching and learning, such as achievement rates, Awarding Body reports from External Verifiers or Moderators and student voice, although all have their disadvantages if used in instrumental ways and as a main or sole source they can be limited. Achievement rates are a key indicator of the success of a course, but less so of individual teachers, as many courses have multiple teachers. They are also available too late in the year to address any issues that have arisen in a timely fashion. This is also true of Awarding Body reports, which commonly arrive after the end of the academic year. The current EIF has increased the opportunity for feedback from parents, students and employers, which provides greater insight into the performance of the college, but whilst this is a positive step in gaining different perspectives, this is not suitable for assessing an individual teacher's performance.

Student voice is often obtained through surveys after induction and at set points in the academic year, usually reporting on a course and therefore as a means of assessing individual teachers, have the same disadvantage of multiple teachers. However, they provide useful in-year feedback, which teams can act upon. Student voice methodology should be fair and transparent, according to UCU (2018), but one respondent to the UCU Report on Lesson Observation said their students had been asked to grade them from 1-10 on a Post-it note, which is demeaning and inappropriate and does not value the relationship between the teacher and student. Other respondents reported students being asked 'loaded' questions about them, (UCU, 2018). It is completely unacceptable to ask students about their teachers in this way, and cannot form a valid and reliable source of information. For a professional approach, UCU suggest that methods for evaluating teaching and learning must:

- *'meaningfully support the professional development of teachers*
- *respect the professionalism of teachers*
- *value the relationship between teacher and student*
- *use appropriate methods'*

(UCU, 2018, p. 1)

A model produced from responses to the UCU Report suggests the following key indicators, which provide a much wider picture of practice:

Figure 14 – Multi-dimensional model of teacher appraisal

Figure 3 (UCU, 2013, p. 69)

Models of this nature are used by some colleges, who produce a 'balanced score card' using a number of measures to assess teacher performance, although it is a time-consuming practice. Using most of these categories would be usual for the Programme Manager or Head of Department when assessing their area's performance but not necessarily drilling down to individual teacher level, as it has the same disadvantages as mentioned for student voice.

Observations of practice have had a relatively recent development, which has become widespread practice in colleges. In addition to lesson observation, the 'Learning Walk' or 'Walk Through', which is based on the OfSTED model of,

> *'…short, focused visits to lessons or workshops. These will usually last between five and 15 minutes and may have a specific focus, … Inspectors will not normally give feedback to individual members of staff following these sessions.'*
>
> (OfSTED, 2018, p. 21)

UCU guidance for members states that the Walk Through observations should not be graded or trigger feedback or provide information about an individual. Its purpose is to provide information about a team or department or a specific issue, such as Health and Safety procedure compliance. UCU suggest this provides valuable information for colleges about themes and areas and it more effective than graded observations, (UCU, 2018). However, it still leaves the question of individual performance assessment and the improvement of teaching unanswered and therefore colleges are likely to continue to depend on the results of OTL. A positive aspect of Walk Throughs, providing the UCU guidance is adhered to, is that it is less demanding on teachers, and provides *ad hoc* information to managers, who can see what is happening in any session, not one that may have been planned for observation. Royal College adopted this method and its advantages and disadvantages are discussed in Chapter 4.

Building on Existing Skills

Keeping loyal staff, whom the employer has invested in and developed, is essential when competition from trades and educational establishments, including schools, is strong. Colleges report difficulties in attracting staff in some subject areas, with a reduction in FE staff of almost 20,000 since 2010 (Savage, 2018). Some FE colleges who responded to the Training Needs Analysis (ETF, 2018, p. 28) survey reported a link between their training and retention of staff:

> *'Staff training is prioritised in order to minimise turnover: if you can up-skill the workforce that you've got, you're going to then be more able to promote them in your organisation, keep them in your organisation. We place emphasis on funding and supporting qualifications for teaching and learning staff'. (FE College)*

> *'It is important to develop our staff so that they continue to move up and progress within the college. We develop our staff so we aren't constantly having to go into the market for new staff. It's important to us because the learner's experience is only as good as the staff'. (FE College)*

Retaining good teachers is vital to the success of the students. Wiliam (2013) states the quality of the teacher is the single most important factor in most education establishments, which is also the view of Hattie (2019a, p.3), whose research shows that, *'… the greatest investment needs to be directed towards the expertise of the educators to maximise their collective impact on students …'* Focussing on removing poor teachers or raising the bar for entry, which Wiliam (2013) suggests policymakers do, is ineffective and time-consuming. Employment law ensures that teachers are treated fairly if they are underperforming but Wiliam (2013) says they often move to another provider before dismissal, continuing the problem. Trying to establish in advance of employment who may be a strong performing teacher, he says, does not work as academic achievement is not a reliable indicator of a good teacher. The only way to improve the quality of teaching, he argues, is to invest in professional development of existing teachers.

FETL (2019) agree that it is easy for college leaders making improvements to performance to assume that changing staff is a solution and also agree with Wiliam (2013) and Hattie (2019a) that this is not the answer. They suggest that creating a stable environment with purposeful, authentic engagement with colleagues has the potential to bring about improvements in performance, particularly if they are led by focussed middle-managers. Wiliam (2013) refers to research findings that most teachers improve in the first two to three years of practice but then improvement progress slows down. To continue this improvement, continuing development should become part of the culture with self-assessment a key feature.

Colleges have In-Service Training funds (INSET), which can be used where costs are incurred, for example, on external training events or conferences, or for industry specific training but these funds have often been reduced due to financial pressures on colleges. Broad's (2015) research found that when CPD was funded, it was usually influenced by organisational need rather than the professional needs of the teachers. Concern was expressed by some teachers that they have limited control over the decisions made on their behalf about organisation-funded CPD activities. Staff found that funding was difficult to source for self-identified external CPD activities, which ignores the teacher's identification of their own development needs.

In addition to teachers' personal satisfaction, building on existing skills may also increase loyalty to the organisation, which as mentioned above the modern economy requires to retain competent staff when funding and policy directions frequently change, and to avoid the leakage to other organisations or a return to industry where higher salaries may be available. Sennett (2009) considers that training can create loyalty to the employer and willingness to put in more effort.

> *'Workers who have been retrained by an institution are much more bonded to it than are in-and-out workers. …workers will stay the course, work longer hours … rather than desert'.*
> (Sennett, 2009, p. 266)

In summary, investment in training staff may increase their loyalty and motivation, but the training must be relevant to them, the environment conducive to development and managers leading and supporting the activities. Such actions may reduce staff turnover, creating a more stable learning experience for students.

Employer Provided Training

Most colleges have two or more 'Training Days' per year for the whole workforce. These typically have a number of sessions on offer for staff to choose from. Eyre (2016) is critical of whole college events to staff development and considers the best approach is for senior managers to discuss training needs with teachers and for teachers to take greater responsibility for their own development.

Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), reported by Eccleston (2012) found that some traditional methods still dominate employee training, despite being considered ineffective. As discussed earlier, one method mentioned was the 'sheep dip' approach, where all employees train on the same subjects, regardless of need or relevance. In a survey (ETF, 2018) a substantial minority of respondents reported that mandatory training, such as Prevent and Child Protection training, often provided to meet external or organisation requirements, are of limited value. However, these subjects occurred in both the most valued and the least valued, so delivery modes may be more important than the subject matter, which, in any case, must be provided to staff to meet legal requirements. It appears that 'sheep dip' approaches are suitable for some mandatory training, even if staff do not value it. Many of these subjects, such as Manual Handling, General Data Processing Regulations (GDPR) and Fire Awareness are now provided in online packages with built in assessment, negating the need for large group activity and acting as confirmation that an employee has completed mandatory training.

The CIPD report (Eccleston, 2012) suggests that collaborative and connected learning are far more effective and that employers should reconsider their approach. Coffield, (2009) agrees that the menu of training that is frequently offered on training days could improve teaching and learning more if Senior Management Teams (SMT) change the pattern to teachers learning in their teaching teams and using 50% of their CPD time to pursue their individual development goals.

Detractors of school or college INSET days, with planned activities for the whole cohort, would be wise to take into account Fielding, *et al.,* (2005, p. 77) recommendation,

> *'…that senior staff should ensure that both the content and promotion of professional development programmes take account of a wide range of teacher identities. They should not assume that teachers know what they need or that they will go out and get it if they do',*

This supports Coffield's (2009) suggestion that time should be spent on pursuing individual developmental goals requires careful planning to be effective. Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) state that the process of planning and agreeing activities for transfer of practice creates more likelihood that this will occur, as there will be greater ownership of the activity.

Exploring with colleagues how to develop ideas and knowledge about your practice and working with them to critically review practice and taking action to improve practice in an exploratory way is a fundamental part of being a teacher (Gregson and Hillier, 2015). O'Leary's research (2017) finds that teachers want to improve their practice through working with others and notes the growth in 'teachmeets', where individuals from a group of colleges meet to exchange ideas, and online communities, which have increased substantially due to the pandemic. The growth in 'teachmeets', noted by O'Leary (2017) does provide an opportunity to work with others, rather than *'…trying to disseminate some stranger's 'good practice'',* (Coffield, 2009, p. 64).

Lave & Wenger, (1991, p. 27) propose that learning as a situated activity takes place through a process of participation they term *'…legitimate peripheral participation.'* They contend that learners invariably participate in, *'…communities of practice'* (ibid) and that newcomers have to progress towards full participation in the practices of a community, and legitimate peripheral participation describes the relationship between newcomers and existing members of the community.

This work developed through their studies of apprenticeship, which had become a term given various definitions, which Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 29) say, '*It was evident that no one was certain what the term meant.'* Their previous research into tailors' apprenticeships led them to the notion that the learning was legitimate peripheral participation, where they observed most apprentices becoming master tailors, *'…without being taught, examined, or reduced to mechanical copiers of everyday tailoring tasks …'* Lave & Wenger (1991, p. 30). This is similar to Sennett's (2008) descriptions of the medieval guilds and apprenticeships, which provided an education and progression opportunities through working with a master craftsman. The guilds could reasonably be likened to a formal community of practice, maintaining standards and admitting qualified craftsmen.

Hanks (1991) in his Foreword of Lave & Wenger (1991) assumes that when referring to craft learned through hands-on legitimate peripheral participation, the learning would develop as the ability to perform tasks. But, he suggests, a training programme divorced from the actual performance of the tasks would tend to split the ability to perform the skill from their ability to manage the learning situation. However, he notes that this does not arise in the apprenticeship model as the learner is performing regularly.

Wenger (1998) further illustrates this with reference to the new recruits in the claims processing centre, where he studied how a Community of Practice (CoP) develops. He suggests that the organisational training programme does not integrate the recruits in the same way that their working in the department does. He argues that the difficulties some reported when entering the community of practice was due to the existing staff being very busy and therefore unable to give sufficient attention to the recruits, rather than the training being too short, as was commented to him. More effective than lengthening the training, Wenger (1998) argues would be recognising the effort the recruits are making, encouraging them and providing support. This would draw them into the community of practice. This observation sounds a logical and effective way of inducting a new member of staff but Wenger's (1998) CoP concept goes far beyond induction, through to education.

The idea of what a CoP is has changed over time, according to Tummons (2023), who nonetheless says the core ideas about what it is and how it works have continued, based on the work of Lave & Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998). All CoPs are about something, although they may run differently and have rules and regulations, or none at all. The members will decide what is important; what needs to happen and what can be discarded. Since its inception, CoP has been built on and there is now a substantial body of empirical research and this has resulted in a wide literature, which refutes the critique of being based on insubstantial research. It is vital that this research and theory work continues if CoP theories are going to keep their current standing (Tummons, 2023).

Tummons (2023) suggests that deciding if a group of people are a CoP is not hard, as one of the ways to do so is to note if there is a specialist way of talking and possibly writing. In terms of identifying what is CoP, Wenger's (1998, p. 73) criteria remain the benchmark:

1. mutual engagement
2. a joint enterprise
3. a shared repertoire

Membership in a CoP is mutual engagement, which defines the community. A team or group does not automatically constitute a CoP, nor does a network. What differentiates a CoP is the dense relations of mutual engagement, which connects individuals to each other in complex and diverse ways, with the full complexity of being together (Wenger, 1998). Members all have their own views and do not have to agree with each other but, says Tummons (2023, p. 6), *'…so long as everything that is being done/written/said/made, all links to the **joint enterprise** of the CoP.* [original emphasis].

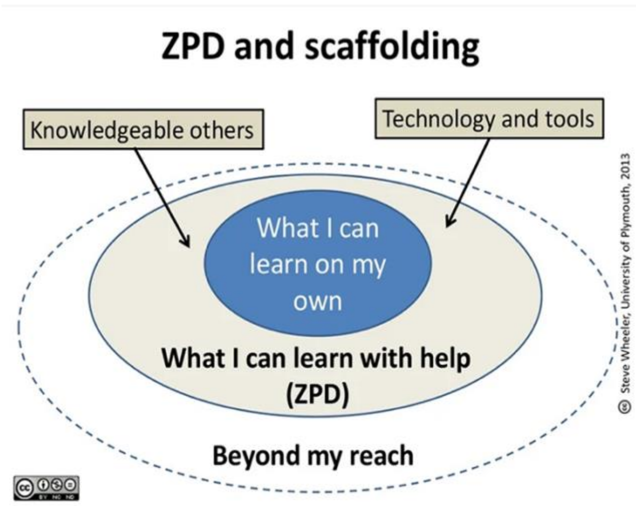
The shared repertoire is a characteristic of the CoP and Wenger (1998, p. 83) lists the many ways communities produce or adopt as part of their practice. *'Routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts …'* and Tummons (2023, p. 7) states that, *'…any or all aspects of the shared repertoire of the CoP need to be made available to any and all of the CoP members who might legitimately need to make use of them.'* The shared repertoire is probably the most observable characteristic of a CoP but all three are required to be present to confirm it is a CoP.

Lucas (2017) has developed Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), inspired by the work of Etienne Wenger (1999) on Communities of Practice, where groups of people with common interests interact regularly to learn to improve an aspect of their practice. Lucas (2017) cites Straw's research (2017) which found that creating subject specific CPD support removed a barrier to career progression for many participants. Although workload and time constraints are acknowledged by Straw (2017) and Lucas (2017, p. 27), who has seen in her own organisation how PLCs save time by*, '…succinctly sharing the key learning in their community meetings so that everyone benefits in a timely way.'*

PLCs are also valued by Stoll (2015, p. 1), who uses them to collaborate and make use of evidence to develop teacher practice and argues that PLCs provide the *'…ideal home for evidence-informed practice, and that they are what brings evidence to life'.* She suggests that an increasingly important aspect of high quality professionalism requires evidence collecting, analyse, carrying out research and evaluating to inform practice, in addition to external research findings. However, she contends that this is often done in a superficial way.

Stoll (2015) refers to Vygotsky's (1978) social learning theory where the learner uses existing knowledge to make meaning of new learning through talking with others. Hammersley, *et al,* (2001, p. 240) refer to the term 'socio-cultural' when writing about discourse analysis and informs us that this has been associated with the work on developmental psychology of Vygotsky (1978). In his approach language is thought to be a cultural tool for learning, which parents in society model to improve the *'…cognitive and social development of its children'.*

Vygotsky's (1978) work formed a foundation for subsequent research in cognitive development. His well-known theory is the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which was developed through his work as a psychologist with a particular focus on children's development, and the role of culture in learning. Vygotsky's approach is a form of social constructivism, based on the notion that cognitive functions are formed from social interaction. His work highlighted the role that language contributes to shaping thought. His ideas have moved from children's learning and incorporated into learning generally, such as his view that. *'…higher mental ability could only develop through interaction with more advanced others.'* Mcleod (2023, p. 1).



Vygotsky (1978) proposed that the ZPD is the distance between the current development of children (determined by independent problem solving) and the potential development with adult guidance or more capable peers. Vygotsky (1978) states that ZDP defines functions that have not yet matured but are in that process. He found that the new learning must be built on the old, as teaching beyond that embryonic ability was not successful. This has become a cornerstone of education today, where work is ‘scaffolded’ to make the link from the existing ability to the next step, either with guidance from the teacher, or from a peer who has this knowledge.

Stoll (2015) suggests that a natural way to learn is with others, and from them, and relates social constructivism to adult learners where coaching or mentoring from a more experienced colleague. However, Stoll (2015), like Fielding *et al* (2005) found, learning can be more effective between equals, such as in Joint Practice Development, which is discussed below. She acknowledges the value CoP, but proposes PLCs are drawing together social constructivism and socio-cultural theories of learning used in CoP to develop social learning. Stoll (2015, p. 3) defines PLCs as, *‘…collaborative cultures within which evidence-informed practice can be seeded, nurtured and flourish*.’ A common theme running through ways of practice (CoP, JPD, PLC) is the need for time to take part and practise the development and Stoll (2015) recognises this and makes a plea for the time and space for teachers to develop crucial skills

Dunne (2005) also recognises that practice develops through collaboration and cooperation by its practitioners, its insiders. It does not ignore or dismiss teacher judgement, as do the research projects conducted by outsiders, which are decontextualised and designed for teacher to absorb into their practice.

Joint Practice Development

A major contributor to the concept of collaborative learning was the report of the research project funded by the DfES, in schools working in partnership with other schools, conducted by Fielding, *et al.,* (2005), which developed the guiding principles and practices of Joint Practice Development (JPD) as a model of improvement, which is included in the fourth research question, *What are the strengths and limitations of alternatives to traditional approaches to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)* *and the improvement of practice including Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding, et al., 2005)?*

Originally named 'transfer of practice', the research team found this implied to participants the delivery of pre-formed packages of practice which were recommended and transmitted to teachers, in place of the opening up of spaces for collaborative and cooperative working needed to make a good idea from educational research 'good' in practice. To better explain the concept and underscore the mutuality of sharing practices with others, these principles and practices came to be called 'Joint Practice Development' (JPD). JPD was further developed by Gregson & Hillier (2015) enabling its use with reference to FE.

Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) research project's aim was to identify factors aiding or thwarting the transfer of good practice in schools at individual or school level. Data were gathered from 120 practitioners and a number of schools, although the report notes that some schools they contacted refused or ignored the offer of being involved. The researchers suggest that this may have led to schools in advantageous circumstances, rather than those in areas of social deprivation, having more input to the project. Where partnerships had failed previously it was harder to involve these schools. Classroom practitioners were under represented, due to the research team having greater access to senior managers. The report relies on accounts of teaching and practice sharing, in place of observations, due to timing clashes or reluctance of teachers to be observed. Despite these cautions the research identified, it is now widely regarded a seminal work in the field of the sharing or transfer of practice in all sectors of education.

The researchers recognise that *'..spreading good practice remains very difficult',* Fielding, *et al.,* (2005, p. 3). Some practitioners thought collaboration was the latest trend; some thought it time-consuming; the skills involved had to be developed and competitive practice had to be reduced. Some head teachers were resistant too. The report notes that the question, '*What is good practice?'* (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 6) can be a problematic issue, as it raises the question of knowing if something is good and if it can be transferred. Governments do not seem to have recognised this difficulty, although academics are more familiar with this issue.

> *'Indeed, successive government initiatives have assumed that good practice can be identified and transferred, while some more recent initiatives have been designed with a more explicit transfer purpose. Meanwhile, many academics involved in developing and researching 'good practice' have a greater sensitivity to the complex variables involved in its transfer to other cultures and contexts.'* (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p.2)

Many respondents cited relationships as a key motivator for collaboration; more so than the content, the individual concerned was more important. Researchers found the range of relationships that were considered contributory were very wide – from former colleagues, to their families, to professional contacts and governors. Having trust in the relationship was a key feature, despite the variety of contacts. So, creating new partnerships, as this project did, required considerable investment to develop them. Just because collaboration may be seen as a good thing, does not mean it is easy to establish. Those in the project who made their initial collaboration one with quick wins were able to build upon that and develop momentum, although this could be expected. A few respondent schools were expecting to benefit financially from their practice or join the conference circuit, but the majority contributed for altruistic reasons (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005).

Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) recognise that teachers are people orientated, perhaps more than other professionals. Learning from others is a key part of who they are. The research found that how teachers view themselves and others in the transfer of practice was very influential in their approach to learning collaboratively. Those tasked in the project with being the originators – the ones whose practice was to be transferred – were keen to share their credentials, which might legitimise their school or individual ability to transfer good practice. That they considered good practice leads to high achievement was noted by the research team, who also noted that respondents often acknowledge that OfSTED Inspections require specific preparation and an element of playing the inspection game. Respondents also recognised that many factors other than good practice influence achievement, as had the academics referred to above.

Levels of self-belief among teachers in their abilities and the open recognition that they were equal to a partner they were working with was found to be an important motivator. Yet others felt isolated from other schools and did not have formal channels of communication. Not all the teachers were the confident, assertive people who valued autonomy, which Fielding, *et al., (*2005) consider is the idea of much current [2005] CPD policy, which they suggest is aimed at the self-directed professional, confident about their development needs and aware of how to achieve them. They caution that this assumption is open to question. The researchers met many teachers who did not fit this model and contend that this must be considered carefully when formulating new policy.

A significant finding in the report (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005*)* was that that the collaboration was advantageous for the originator school, who were not always aware of what they were doing well; partners provided the sounding board which helped them recognise their strengths. Partners who did not have the opportunity to become originators sometimes felt inferior and did not always talk about their strengths, and some became quite passive. The report mentions new programmes which were more inclusive in approach. Such is the rate of change in education that these programmes have disappeared. A key point from this aspect of the research is the role that labelling plays and how setting up one establishment as the expert in best practice ignores elements of good practice from the partner they are working with and can negatively impact upon working collaboratively. The Government programme Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF), which had a similar role in 2019, pairing a Grade 1 college with one awarded Grade 3, had similar elements of the expert and the apprentice, and the experience of Royal College is discussed in Chapter 4.

Differences in culture, such as a school with hierarchical management paired with one with more flexible management, caused some participating schools difficulty in collaborating and their partnership eventually failed. This returns us to the issue of context and how what works in teaching in one establishment may be quite unsuitable for another.

What the report termed ‘learner engagement’ was found to be the single most important feature of a successful transfer process. Individual partners agreeing and preparing for the work they would do together – owning the activity.

'Where teachers have themselves identified gaps in their practice, and actively want to make changes, they often really welcome input from teachers from other schools, especially when their assistance is personalised and customised.
(Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 22)

Where teachers were under pressure from others to address 'failings' that had been identified, they often did not benefit from practice transfer, not surprisingly, the researchers reported (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). They contend that for transfer of good practice to be successful the teachers themselves need to be aware of the areas of practice they need to develop, and identify a partner to work with. Another important aspect was permission to fail – the blame free culture that Eraut (2001) identified; to be treated as an individual who wants to improve. This depends on the management and team support and were this is lacking working together may be less than successful.

The Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) where used in the project seemed to be very successful, as they were seen as equals, being friendly professionals who also taught and could be trusted. Their ability to communicate with others and their ability to coach and demonstrate and willingness to engage as equals made their work acceptable to partners (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005).

A major barrier to transferring practice, the report found, is time.

'Time here has a number of dimensions:

- *The time to create what a practitioner sees as 'good practice'*
- *The time to learn to transfer these practices*
- *The time it takes to learn and adapt a new practice, including building trust and relationships that are conducive to learning from others.'*
  (Fielding *et al.,* 2005, p. 25)

Lack of time is regularly given as a reason for not taking part in CPD or developing new learning into action. The respondents were keen to take part in the project but stressed that time should be made available for them to do so, particularly as visiting other establishments could be involved. Some schools were more accommodating or able than others to provide cover for teaching, enabling their staff to take opportunities. However, some senior staff were concerned that in order for their teachers to improve their practice, existing pupils would be receiving cover sessions, perhaps from a supply teacher. The report also notes that providing resources – funding, cover etc., does not guarantee that the transfer of practice will result. There must be an aspiration to maximise opportunities in the whole school.

Respondents frequently cited very long periods for sharing their practice, which Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) suggest is not quite how policymakers expected it to work. The report contends there must be a realistic view of how much time the transfer of practice takes, which for effectiveness, needs to be sustained over time and ideally engaging in more advanced development. Referring to a specific activity within the project, a respondent reports that funding was an issue when speaking about the time required.

> *'You need a good amount of time to make a project work. This one has two years' guaranteed funding, but it takes you a year to get together, and then it takes you a year to make progress, then just when you feel you might be getting somewhere the funding stops.'* (Secondary teacher)
> (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 34)

Learning to work with others was another aspect that took time to adjust to, as teachers are usually working alone in classrooms and do not always articulate about their practice. The report (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005) suggests that many aspects of teaching practice are tacit, which as Sennett (2009) reports can be difficult to pass on. Working alongside other teachers can allow this knowledge to become apparent through practical ways in place of descriptions. The notion of universal good practice was challenged by some participants, who recognised that they were developing ideas that would work locally but would not necessarily work in other contexts. Usually, the new practice was an extension of the existing practice, and participants saw themselves as having grown in their work. Again, this makes it unlikely that good practice can be passed on as a discrete system, when tacit knowledge and experience forms the basis of the new practice. The teachers judged what elements they would adopt or adapt from suggested innovations, based on how they might work with their students.

Partners working together in the project commonly involved one having a claim to be a better teacher, often through external judgement, and was considered the one whose expertise the partner could draw upon. Coffield (2014 b) recognises this as a weakness when disseminating best practice. It may create resistance in those receiving the information, as it suggests that their current practice is in need of support, when they may consider it is perfectly satisfactory. When working with teachers from other schools symmetrical partnerships occasionally occurred, which the report (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005) argue provide opportunities for more teachers to develop their own practice and support colleagues. Equity appears important in the relationships surveyed, and the report shows that the expert does not always expect to learn from their partner, which does not make easy relationships and may cause friction.

During the project, schools receiving Beacon funding were informed this would not be available in the future. This affected the ability and will of heads to continue with the project work and shows how dependant such a project is on central funding to enable schools to sustain them over the time it takes to bed in and become productive. Despite receiving funding for some time, the project found some heads blocked collaborative working, sometimes through resentment of sharing, sometimes due to not understanding the purpose, or not passing on information to relevant staff. However, most heads were very positive about the transfer of practice where change and innovation would be encouraged and a willingness to work with others to improve ideas (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). Colleges are usually much larger than schools, and frequently have more than one campus so to relate this to colleges would suggest that the role of the Heads of Department or Programme Manager would be the level involved with such projects. The advantage of this is that they would be considering the needs of a smaller group of staff, or at least a group sharing broad subjects, rather than the whole curriculum. Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) contend that there are advantages in a group of teachers from a department, providing continuity of the three or so years that some practice take to develop and embed.

How to measure impact is a question posed by the researchers (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005) who suggest that the changes transferred were usually small, and would not necessarily show in the students' achievements. Comparison between previous student cohorts and current ones receiving different practices are very difficult, they contend, as the work may be different, the students certainly are and time will have passed while the teachers and students become familiar with the new practice. Issues such as the enthusiasm of the teachers trying new ideas are impossible to measure but may contribute to increased learning and motivation by the students as much as the ideas themselves. Teachers in the project did little evaluation of the practices transferred, which prevents the school being able to claim success or otherwise. A number of reasons were offered for this, including the need for sensitivity when different schools were involved and the very regular requirement to submit data on many subjects, which often are not connected to their practice.

To summarise key points from the Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) report relevant to this study, notwithstanding the cautions the researchers state and the time that has elapsed since publication, there are significant points to learn from this project in how collaborative learning can take place and what the barriers may be. The project was developed with schools, which have different structures to FE but the participants were mainly teachers and their experience may inform us, even if their roles and professional circumstances are different.

The schools in the project were chosen as originators or receivers, with the former receiving funding for partnering with the latter, who they were expected to transfer practice to. The funding caused some resentment as the funds were not always spent on the project and the receivers did not have any financial support. Power relationships were also present as the originators were usually considered good teachers through external opinion, which suggested the receivers were not, and they did not have much opportunity to share their practice, or receive much interest in it. As the project finds, relationships, formal or informal, were a key component of the transfer of practice, so this inequity was not helpful. Some partnerships floundered through logistical issues, where working across schools proved too challenging for senior staff to manage cover, or where there was some resistance from heads, who did not wish to share. Some schools were facing challenges which made the project a distraction, and withdrew, which could result in the report findings representing the more confident establishments.

Time was frequently raised as a barrier, whether for meeting up for one session, or a peer observation, or the long-term engagement required for successful engagement in the process and this was often linked to finances. This period was long before online expertise was developed, which may have alleviated some of these concerns but as the report notes, policymakers often expect quick results and do not understand the complexities of educational practice and its improvement.

The AST role was key in many participants' experiences. Even though they gained their roles through demonstrating good teaching, they were seen as equals and participants could observe their teaching and the AST could work with them in their classroom. Their role allowed time for this work, so the time barrier was overcome when working with them. There were no criteria to meet, no checklists to tick, just working together to do what they considered good work. These successful partnerships show the importance of joint endeavour, which is the essence of JPD – the working together without the superior/inferior dimension; the practice undertaken jointly through team teaching. In many cases they were within the same school, so the context would be familiar, and the AST role was to work across the school. With the power invested in the practitioners in place of a top-down approach, this model has a flat power structure, resulting in a democratic relationship working on a mutual endeavour, which is pragmatic epistemology in practice.

Learner engagement was the key indicator of success, where enthusiasm and willingness to take part overcame some of the barriers. Conversely, teachers who had been pressured into taking part, due to perceived deficiencies in their practice were less engaged and less likely to benefit or even continue. This is not surprising as no-one would wish to be labelled in this way and 'volunteered' for a project, which would be scrutinised by external researchers.

Participants sometimes voiced that the Government had amnesia – that such work had been trialled before, and some thought it was another trend, or engagement with a pre-formed package of techniques of best practice, which can be mechanically inserted into one's practice. The teachers recognised that their practice was informed by their context, and when they made changes these were usually an extension of their current practice and linked to knowledge of their own school and pupils. Tacit knowledge played a part and some partners could not articulate what they did, but through observations, followed by reflections, their partners were able to grasp some notion of their practice. The research team did not find it easy to make observation part of their research as many of the teachers were not used to being observed and thought they might be judged.

The findings of Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) show that a lack of time was a significant factor in taking part in the research project and sustaining involvement. This is borne out by a survey (ETF, 2018b) which found time is a key barrier to training, for organisations and individuals, with a high level of respondents also citing lack of funding for staff cover, which makes releasing staff for training difficult.

Although the term JPD is often bandied about, coherent and authentic JPD does not seem to have been adopted by many establishments. This was a funded project for some participants and the Local Education Authority (LEA), now dissolved, played a role, which may be a factor. It is recognised that time was an issue both for initial development but also for the long-term nature of the work. Some inequities were identified, both between establishments, and between individual participants, which affected some participation but these could probably be avoided or overcome if there was the will to do so. The lack of evaluation and evidence of impact reduces the likelihood that it will be used more widely, given the logistical planning and expense it entails. Referring to a national system being developed and promoted, Coffield, (2014b) contends that governments can always find funding for what they want to do, but suggests that education ministers intend to tell teachers how and what to teach, in contrast to JPD, which restores and gives back judgement to the teachers and uses collaboration, not competition. It values the professionalism of teachers, rather than seeking to remove those considered ineffective.

Lucas (2017) has found greater interest and benefits to staff from forming like-minded communities of professionals, who work on key shared targets which may have more opportunities due to the development and use of online communication programme, such as Zoom and Teams. My personal experience is that a number of these take place out of office hours for those who are willing to join them (Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN), East Anglia, informal networking for SUNCETT PhD cohort, International Professional Development Association (IPDA), but many, such as those provided by the ETF for example, T Levels, take place during working hours, with some provided online. With no travelling time or costs, and greater expertise in working online, such meetings can be an effective way to get together.

The approach to JPD, whereby the group seeks to improve collectively, frustrates Lemov (2016, p. 11), who considers this is a feature of '*perverse collectivism'*. He asserts that teachers who reject the notion that some teachers may be outperforming others or consider it a threat, are flawed in their thinking. He refers to the jobs and professions where pride in standards and craft are key and believes that teaching should be seen in the same way to drive the profession forward. He believes that the

> *'… study, evaluation and development of effective teaching practices by teachers plays a crucial role in underpinning their professional status and also in driving the professional forward'.*
> (Lemov, 2016, p. 11)

His emphasis in his books - Teach Like a Champion and Teach Like a Champion 2.0, appears to be about the individual rather than a collective approach which is a different style to one which encourages joint practice. This is at varience with the findings of Hattie (2019) whose research shows that 'Collective Teacher Efficacy' (CTE), has the second largest mean effect size on student achievement.

> *'A school staff that believes it can collectively accomplish great things is vital for the health of a school and if they believe they can make a positive difference then they very likely will.'*
> (Hattie, 2019, p. 4)

A vital finding for individual improvement was that,

‘*A stronger collective teacher efficacy seems to encourage individual teachers to make a more effective use of the skills they aready have’.*
(Hattie, ibid)

Gregson & Hillier (2015, p. 79) building on the work of Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) provide a model of practitioner-centred development suitable for FE, which is a powerful way to harness different perspectives on an issue. The four guiding principle of JPD for practitioners are:

1. *Make space for trust, openness and honesty.*
2. *Work to establish a shared understanding of the education problem and how it makes educational sense for it to be addressed.*
3. *Share the experience of trying out interventions/innovative practices.*
4. *Critically review overall progress together.*

How elements of this are used in Royal College are analysed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Reflection

Teacher training courses routinely include reference to Kolb’s learning cycle, developed in 1984 and updated in 2014, which Crawley (2017) explains has at its core the assertion that people learn best through their experience. Building upon the work of Dewey (1933) an essential part of the four stage learning cycle is have the experience, to reflect on the experience, followed by discussion with others to compare and consider whether it is new learning. The fourth stage of the cycle is to intentionally apply the new learning and then start the cycle again.

The value of engagement with reflection and self-assessment activity is a view shared by others. Wallace (2017) encourages teachers to explore questions through structured enquiry and suggests it is an essential part of professional practice. Indeed, the Professional Standards (ETF, 2014, 2022) place high value on, *‘Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners’,* and continues with, *‘Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs’.* ETF have enhanced QTLS since September 2016 to link it to the ETF

Professional Standards and introduced the requirement to demonstrate evidence of reflective practice in place of a portfolio addressing a checklist of requirements.

As already discussed, reflective practice is part of teacher training courses and encouraged through the ETF Professional Standards. It is not essential to use a model of reflection, but it does provide structure and prompts. There are many models, including Brookfield's Model of Reflection, Kolb's Reflective Cycle, described above, Gibbs Reflective Cycle, which all encourage reflective thinking to learn from our experiences and take action based on our reflections. The cyclical nature of the models assists the process of trying new ideas, reflecting on them and refining them; taking action, having the experience and then critically reviewing it and taking action again in the light of our review. Discussing our thinking with our mentor, coach, critical friend, manager or colleagues enriches our thinking. The Reflection Toolkit of the University of Edinburgh highlights the benefits of reflecting in conversation with others (University of Edinburgh, 2022, p. 1).

- '*Others may ask us questions we cannot think of ourselves*
- *Others may challenge us in ways we do not challenge ourselves. This may help us identify assumptions we have and circular thinking we have where we are not progressing beyond our own thoughts.*
- *Others can help us with perspective taking*
- *They may be able to help us reflect on an experience by imagining the other participants' perspectives on a situation, thereby gaining a deeper understanding.*
- *Conversations with others can switch in and out of reflection*
- *Not all conversations are reflective throughout. Being given feedback can result in reflection but if you do not review the feedback and plan actions based on it, it is not a reflection, it is purely information.'*

Beyond teacher training courses, reflection forms part of teachers' professional learning and working with the Professional Standards (ETF, 2022) encourages the commitment to educational practice. Gregson & Hillier (2015) argue that teachers can address their educational practice and their professional practice through critical reflection and working collaboratively with colleagues and students.

Collaborative and cooperative reflection forms a key part of JPD, as discussed above and is a vital element of continuing professional development.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter begins by presenting a brief rationale for the thesis. It then discusses the ontological and epistemological positions underpinning the approach to this study. This chapter also explains these terms in the context of this thesis. It then justifies the methodology and methods adopted in the research in relation to the research problems and the research questions posed. A discussion of ethics and how they are addressed is also discussed.

Coe (2017, p. 6) underscores the importance of researchers understanding and being able to justify their ontological and epistemological positions where he states,

> *'… it is important for researchers to understand their own and others' views about the nature of reality (ontology), how we can know about it (epistemology) and the different values (axiology) that may underpin enquiry….'*

The Research Problem Revisited

Chapter 1 describes how the research problem, which became the focus of this study, emerged from a critical incident in practice in a context where a College of General Further Education (GFE) was awarded a Grade by OfSTED of 'Requires Improvement' (RI) in January 2017. It explains how the college's response was to create a Post-Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) to address the reported key Areas for Development, primarily around the delivery of teaching and learning. It goes on to Illustrate how subsequent 'Support and Challenge' visits by OfSTED did not find the expected improvements. The above description highlights how this was a troubling outcome for the college because it signalled that existing quality improvement measures and processes had failed to bring about the desired improvements in practice. The closing section of Chapter 1 explains our dilemma when faced with the situation that despite our best efforts, the interventions we had chosen had not been realized in the forms of actual improvements in practice. We did not know why this was this case and this dilemma subsequently lent impetus to this study, The following research questions are framed in an attempt to set out the nature of the above problem carefully and in some detail. They also help to begin to identify and explore potential ways in which the problem might be addressed.

1. *What is a practice and how does a practice improve?*
2. *What makes a practice educational?*
3. *What interventions, methods and models of improvement might create conditions to support the development of teachers' capacities for professional learning and self-improvement?*
4. *What are the strengths and limitations of alternatives to traditional approaches to continuing professional development (CPD) and the improvement of practice including Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding, et al., 2005)?*

Discussion of the nature and purpose of education and the ways in which educational practice is understood is presented by Carr (1995) in his seminal work concerning the philosophy of education and methods and methodologies in educational research. He invites us to examine the nature of educational practice with some care. He asks us to compare historical the understandings of practice with those more recently and widely accepted. Carr challenges conceptions of practice which separate it from theory, and which claim that practice can be understood only with reference to the methodology employed in the natural sciences.

For Carr (1995), contemporary concepts of educational practice are the end product of the historical process as discussed in some detail in Chapter 2. He argues that attempts to analyse the concept of practice which focus on its relationship to theory fail to furnish us with the satisfactory understanding of what an educational practice is.

Carr (1995) traces how the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970) advanced understanding of the development of new ideas in science through the introduction of the concept of a paradigm to describe a specific way of seeing the world within the social community of scientists. Kuhn (1970, cited in Coe, 2017) argues that as new scientists join the community some dominant paradigms are replaced by new ones, which offer very different ways of understanding the world and therefore cannot be absorbed by the existing paradigms or co-exist with them (Coe, 2017). Kuhn's ideas were seen as challenging the established approaches and assumptions to understanding the ways in which science develops and moves forward. Naughton (2012) writes that many people were angered by Kuhn's description of most scientific activity as merely 'puzzle-solving'. However, a puzzle is something which seeks to find a solution. Kuhn (1970, cited in Naughton, 2012) maintains that competing paradigms are 'incommensurable'; that there is no objective way of assessing their relative merits. Naughton (2012) contests this position on the basis that it appears to suggest that scientific revolutions may be based partially on irrational grounds.

Methods of natural science

During the 1960s and 1970s the primary view of educational research in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA) was from a perspective grounded in the natural sciences, with research based on statistical, experimental and hypothesis-testing approaches (Nisbet, 2005, cited in Coe, 2017). Other writers in the field of research methods point to how the methods of natural science have contributed to the research training of many educational researchers and social scientists and are often considered to be the most important influence on the way in which educational researchers have conducted their research and continue to do so (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001) . Some of the methodological features common in natural sciences are:

- *Testing claims against empirical evidence, which includes observation and the documenting of patterns and behaviour following experiments.*
- *Providing detailed accounts of testing methods, such that they could be replicated.*
- *Quantitative measurements of phenomena.*
- *Experimental or statistical manipulation of variables to test causal hypotheses, that is, to determine if a change in one variable causes change in another.*
- *Focuses on facts, not values.*
- *The maintenance of objectivity and avoidance of bias resulting from personal preferences.* (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 10)

However, Usher (1996) argues that researcher cannot follow logical rules in the form of a technical process to examine the social events and processes found in educational research, which may be located in a historical, cultural or social setting and may not therefore fit into the rigid methods used for the natural sciences.

The pre-eminence of positivist-empiricist epistemology has had two major consequences. Firstly, the production of knowledge based on the collection of facts and the formulation of theory has come to be prized in the social sciences. Secondly the growth in the use of the language, methods, and the adoption of quantification of the natural sciences in educational and social research. The ontological assumption arising from this model is that the nature of the world is predictable, which, Usher (1996) contends, it is not.

When Kuhn's work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970, cited in Usher, 1996) was published, it was instrumental in reforming the understanding of research and scientific method. Kuhn (ibid) argues that his theory of scientific revolution was not relevant to the social sciences as they are characterised by the lack of agreement on different procedures, theories and assumptions and therefore may be viewed as an immature science in a 'pre-paradigm' period (Bird, 2009, cited in Coe, 2017). However, the term paradigm is still commonly used for groups of philosophical and methodological perspectives and choices in education research (Coe, 2017).

Although much educational research has to date been based largely upon quantitative or 'scientific' methods, which seek to discover reality and truth through objectivity and detached observation, some researchers in the social sciences and several philosophers of education have questioned the validity and authenticity of quantitative methodology and methods in the study of social phenomena including a range of ethical and political issues (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001). One example of these dilemmas in action can be found in experiments conducted by Piaget with children, where critics have suggested that the results are flawed because the children may not have understood the instructions, or have been unwilling to engage in the experiment, rather than unable to complete the task under 'laboratory conditions'. In addition, in social situations, where interpersonal communication occurs, the results are unlikely to be fully replicable as each child may respond differently to those previously tested.

Criticism of psychological and educational testing includes questions of the extent to which the researcher can anticipate and interpret the behaviour of experimental subjects without reference to their intentions and awareness of the researcher and the research situation. In short, social scientists argue that social life is often more variable and complex than quantitative research can accommodate and represent (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001).

Quantitative educational research methods have their critics, which have encouraged researchers over the past four or five decades to use more qualitative approaches to reach more interpretive ways of understanding reality and truth in social situations. This interpretive turn can take several forms, such as case studies; participant observation; unstructured interviewing etc. However interpretive ways of understanding the social world usually have the following features:

- *'An emphasis on examining the nature of educational phenomena, in place of testing hypotheses.*
- *Working with unstructured data, which are not collected against a set of analytical categories. For example, data may be collected by video or audio recording or writing up an interview consisting of open-ended questions.*
- *Research is based on a small number of cases, which are examined in detail, in place of the substantial number more typical of quantitative research, such as social surveys.*
- *The data analysis involves interpretations of the meanings of human actions and statistical analysis plays a less significant role.'*

  (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 14)

These features, used in social research, provide the opportunity for *'…interpretation, meaning and illumination*.' in place of the *'…generalisation, prediction and control…' (*Usher, 1996, p. 18) of the positivist-empiricist epistemology. As human action receives meaning through interpretive frameworks, it suggests that as researchers engaged in social research we use these frameworks to enable us to understand and give meaning to what or whom we are researching (Usher, 1996).

Naturalism, which is a belief that the social sciences can replicate the reasoning of natural sciences, such as Astronomy, Chemistry and Physics, is often quoted in academic work on educational research, while the alternative interpretive view, which considers that social action is intentional and governed by rules and therefore cannot be studied in a scientific way, is used to provide a philosophical rationale for the methodological positions which put a sharp divide between the natural and social sciences (Carr, 1995).

Interpretive approaches to educational research do not therefore accept that their main task is to construct scientific theories that can be tested through experimentation as in the natural sciences. The study of educational research aims to offer interpretive accounts which represent the coherence and lucidity of social action by showing the meaning that is has to those involved with and within it.

Carr (1995) highlights how the discourse surrounding the philosophy of the social sciences has neglected to examine whether educational research is indeed a social science. He suggests that preoccupation with a debate about the philosophy of the social sciences ignores the question of whether educational research is a social science. Another preoccupation is with the debate, in which it is taken for granted that scientific findings and interpretive accounts are mutually exclusive. Here he points out that such standpoints do not address the task of assessing the effects of this assumption on the scientific aspects of research activity on a practical subject like education.

Carr (1995) invites us to consider the question of the nature of educational research. He states that this question is usually answered in textbooks by descriptions of research aims and the methods used by educational researchers to meet them. But is educational research a discrete form of research at all? The distinctive nature of this activity must be examined to see if it is a specialised form of research. The distinctive features, Carr (1995) proposes are initially answered by making two points about the nature of human activities. Firstly, human activities can only be described and understood by referring to their intended purpose and a research practice can only be accepted as a practice of the activity by viewing it as a contribution to the purpose. Secondly, the purpose of any human activity can be understood as practical or theoretical by reference to its aims, which may be to learn something or to bring about change. Most research studies are theoretical, which a view to learning new knowledge.

However, education itself is a practical activity, with the aim to change those being taught in ways which enhance and enable them to achieve their potential and to lead fulfilled lives. This suggests that educational research takes place within a framework of practical aims. So, educational research is not different from other research in that it investigates and seeks to solve problems, but it is different from theoretical research as it is always studying practical issues, which cannot be solved simply by the generation of new theoretical knowledge.

Carr (1995) maintains that educational problems are practical problems and are not therefore subject to the rules of theoretical research but take place when the practices used in educational settings are in some way unsuitable for the purpose. Therefore, they occur when the educational practices do not meet the expectations of the practice. This expectation would be held by the teachers, and this suggests they have some prior knowledge, which informs and justifies their expectation, which functions as a theoretical framework for their practice. Therefore, if the practice is not adequate, the validity of the theoretical framework is questioned. This suggests that the educational problems, and the concepts of theory and practice, gain meanings different than those usually used in educational research.

Carr (1995) suggests that the gap between what practitioners understand is happening, and what is really taking place, results in educational problems occurring. He suggests that there are significant differences between what teachers and schools are doing and what they think they are doing in their educational practices. Therefore, research must involve practitioners, rather than treating them as research subjects, as their interpretations provide the research data and are able to test out findings of the research.

Carr (1995) posits that neither naturalist nor interpretive accounts of educational research are incorrect, but they only offer an incomplete, one-sided appreciation of the philosophical account that is appropriate for educational research. Therefore, it is necessary to recognise that those aspects of the methodologies advocated by both of these views of science that are relevant. Research in education investigates a practical and moral activity, which is intentionally and purposefully undertaken, which has particular and contextual meaning to the 'insiders' who practise it.

The term ontology is concerned with the nature of reality; the form and nature of the social world (Waring, 2017). Coe (2017) illustrates how ontological positions in research can be viewed along a continuum from realism on the left, where it is assumed that there is a singular objective reality that exists outside of individuals' perception, to constructivism on the right, where it is assumed that reality is neither objective nor singular but constructed of multiple realities created by individuals (Waring, 2017). Within a realist ontology, positivism claims to achieve direct knowledge of an objective world through detached observation or measurement of the phenomena being studied. At the opposite end of the continuum, they point to how interpretive methodologies reside in a constructivist ontology, which does not consider detached direct knowledge of the world a possibility, but values accounts of experience and observations of the world that provide indirect indications of phenomena. From this perspective, knowledge is developed through interpretation (Waring, 2017).

Coe (2017) stresses that in addition to recognising and reconciling different paradigms and approaches, it should also be acknowledged that research occurs for a wide range of reasons, and that one study often has a mixture of aims of different types, which should be viewed as a separate dimension from its methodology, values and assumptions. Coe (2017) offers a typology of different aims for educational research.

Scientific

'It is probably unusual for any educational research not to include some scientific aims', Coe (2017, p. 9) notes; this could be simply a search for knowledge or to discover or create new knowledge. The aims for this research set out to establish why existing processes to improve educational practice in the contexts within which this study is set have not been successful and to gather data to test out the assertion that it has not been successful in the arena of practice. Further research focuses on gathering data to explore what impact the new changes in processes have made and whether they have been more successful than the original ones.

Political

There is an expectation from the funders that this research study will have impact, which Coe (2017) identifies as a political aim. Data from this study suggest that the technical-rational approach to improving practice as endorsed by Government through the model of change and improvement employed by OfSTED is not fit for purpose and contributions from the Literature Review support this view. The aims of this study are to identify different, more helpful and useful approaches to improving educational practice through collaboration, as well as through analysis of the lived experiences of those involved in the practice of education in the contexts in which this study is set. It is hoped that dissemination of the findings of this research, could lead to real and sustainable improvements in educational practice, which could be construed as a political aim.

Therapeutic

Coe (2017) defines this form of research as one that aims to help individuals who are participants in the research. The study is strongly aligned to this aim as the current process of inspection, followed by the imposition of a flawed model of change and improvement which expects individuals to improve on demand, without specific instruction how to do so and without any accountability or responsibility for supporting or securing the improvements demanded. In the context of this research, as data from this study reveal, this model of change and improvement has had a detrimental effect on staff morale and not raised individual or collective performance significantly. Research methods such as action research that offer more pragmatic approaches to individual and collective improvement may bring about changes within the organisation that will assist individuals and groups of staff in improving their practice in meaningful and useful ways.

Aesthetic

This final category of research aims may have a poetic or literacy quality, according to Coe (2017) or set out to tell a story to reach out to readers on an emotional or spiritual level. This study tells the story of a college and its staff and their journey to change and improve over a period of four years. Readers may recognise some of themes from this study as being relevant to their own situation.

Coe (2017, p. 9) offers other ways of classifying different types of educational research and describes applied vs. basic; empirical vs. theoretical; nomothetic vs. idiographic and intervention vs. descriptive.

Applied vs. basic

Considering applied vs. basic educational research, applied education research is concerned with practice and policy and intends to inform or improve some part of them and usually contains explicit recommendations. Reports, according to Coe (2017) are often available to the public and may be written for a lay audience. Such research is sometimes commissioned by a specific agency, with an agenda and governed by a contract with the researchers.

In contrast, basic research is for the advancement of knowledge, without necessarily concern about its usefulness. It is typically conducted within the academic community, written mainly for other academics and is less likely to have pre-determined outcomes. This research project is a mixture of applied and basic. It is concerned with policy and practice and how educational the policy which frames the model of change and improvement employed by OfSTED impacts upon educational establishments more widely, not just in the institution which forms the focus of the study. This thesis also intends to make recommendations which it is hoped might inform future policy and practice in education. This research is partially funded through Government, but it has no pre-determined outcomes. Its primary aims are to advance knowledge and practice for the benefit of the education community.

Empirical vs. theoretical

Empirical educational research is based on observation (Coe, *et al.,* 2017). At its starting point it takes phenomena, or our experiences and perceptions of phenomena and seeks to make sense of them as data, which can be analysed, to represent, describe and understand particular views of the educational field. Theoretical research focuses on ideas and may result in a philosophical argument or a methodological advance. This research study uses empirical research methods based on first-hand experience of the researcher and accounts of experience and perceptions provided by participants in the research, to describe and understand the educational problem.

Nomothetic vs. idiographic

Nomothetic aims are less likely than the previous aims to appear in the research study. Nomothetic educational research seeks to understand the general case and to make generalised predictions about other cases. Although this study looks at a single subject in great detail, the small scale nature of the research does not allow generalised predictions to be made. Idiographic research aims focus on an individual case and looks at what is unique about it and this is what occurs in this research. It is worth reiterating that it is hoped that the findings of this study may resonate with the experiences and perceptions of others to the extent that they may be applicable to other establishments, with adjustments made to contextualise them.

Intervention vs. descriptive

Intervention educational research intentionally introduces some change and studies the reaction. It may include research methods not traditionally used together, such as action research and randomised controlled trials. Descriptive research aims describe the current situation, without making changes and may also use diverse approaches. While this research intends to bring about change in the educational field of study, as Coe *et al.,* (2017) caution it is wise to remain vigilant of the distinction between the two, which emphasises that we should not underestimate the difficulties of transferring recommendations for changes from research that itself has not changed anything. This research study includes descriptive research aims and intends to bring about changes within a small area. However it is hoped that through publication this study may resonate with the experiences of others in order to invoke change beyond the original area/context. In summary, the research study includes aspects of applied, basic, empirical, idiographic and descriptive research aims.

This research study is therefore essentially a study of teachers' experiences of OfSTED and their experiences of approaches to educational change and improvement. As such, the purpose of the thesis is to explore understandings of subjective lived experience. As the research is concerned with *interpretation, meaning and illumination',* (Usher, 1996, p. 18) it is based on the interpretive epistemology, which focuses on social practices. The motivation for the study is also pragmatic, in that I hope through insights gained in the conduct of this thesis will inform me how to improve my own practice and that it may help others improve theirs.

This thesis is primarily interpretive working in a small-scale in detail using qualitative methods that include case study, observation, field notes, structured and semi-structured interviews to gather data about people's experience of inspection, performance improvement methods and their ideas and evidence about what helps and what hinders the improvement of educational practice. As the researcher, I am trying to make sense of the data through interpretive schemes, as in social research the researcher and the participants in the research are both interpreters (Usher, 1996). Kemmis (1988) states that interpretive research views education as a lived experience for practitioners, which aims to offer findings to enable practitioners to decide whether to adjust their practices, and I include myself in this. It assumes a mutual relationship between practitioners and educational researchers. The data are subsequently used to develop recommendations for change and improvement that may inform educational policy and practice in the future.

Methods

As explained above, the ontological position adopted in this study is constructivist while the epistemological position underpinning is essentially interpretivist and not positivist. The motivation for the research is pragmatic in that it aims to understand human experience more fully to be able to admit and address real problems encountered in practice. However, the overarching interpretivist paradigm framing this thesis does not preclude the possibility of a mixed-method approach. Quantitative and qualitative methods can work together, for example, using the former for before and after tests, examining statistics and looking at frequency of occurrences. The latter can be used to reveal the finer details of how change occurs in day-to-day activities and the significance of the experience for the participants (Coe, 2017).

Coe (2017) points out that qualitative research usually has the following main features:

- *A focus on natural settings.*
- *An interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings.*
- *An emphasis on process.*
- *Inductive analysis and grounded theory.*

In contrast to setting up artificial experiments, qualitative research studies life as it is lived, events as they happen, and situations as they are constructed and occur moment-by-moment. The research involves lived experiences in real situations. Research methods should therefore be unobtrusive and non-distracting to attempt to ensure that their presence does not significantly influence what is happening.

However, natural experiments, such as the introduction of a new curriculum, new teaching methods and institutional changes can be studied to see what happens, as it occurs. Key attitudes for the researcher are to be open to what occurs and to avoid accepting established norms. When using qualitative methods to explore the perspectives of the research participants it helps if the researcher *'makes the familiar strange'*, by not taking things for granted and questioning the basis for actions (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 50).

'Methodologically, a focus on natural settings means, firstly, maintaining a certain openness of mind, not pre-judging the matter, or necessarily settling for first or even second appearances. As in all research, curiosity should be fostered, in this case to see beneath the various layers'
(Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 51).

Insider research, which is discussed at greater depth later in this chapter, has the advantage of knowing how the establishment being studied really works and does not have to work through the *'public face'* that is presented to outsiders and is more able to *'lift veils'* (Bulmer, 1979, cited in Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 50). Trust is more likely to be present and therefore less time may be required to 'permit entry into innermost arenas and confidences' and develop rapport between the researcher and subjects (Hammersley*, et al.,* 2001, p. 51).

However, the researcher cannot be totally unbiased and objective as they will have to choose what to observe; create interview or survey questions and may only have volunteer participants, who are unlikely to be representative of the entire establishment. Being clear about selection, focus and making reasonable claims in the research report can guard against inappropriate weight being given to the findings of the study.

Qualitative research seeks to uncover the meaning that participants attach to their behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on specific subjects. The researcher must acquire knowledge of the social life under study if they are to understand participants' view of the world and *'… appreciate the inconsistences, ambiguities and contradictions in their behaviour'* (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001, p. 53) and to be able to appreciate the culture of the groups being studied and not interpret it solely through their own perspective. Subjects may use the same words as the researcher but with very different meanings and the researcher must be aware of attributing their own meanings to words and actions of participants. The researcher's role is to uncover as many meanings as possible through discussion with participants.

Qualitative researchers place emphasis on understanding the layers of meaning and to become aware of the range and depth of events and perspectives that apply, and this has been termed ‘thick description’. Denzin, (1989) cited in Hammersley, et al., (2001, pg. 55) described it thus,

> *‘It goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience or sequence of events, for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions and meanings of interaction individuals are heard’.*

My task as a researcher is to make strenuous efforts to understand what I am seeing and hearing and query when I do not understand. I must faithfully record what I learn through my interactions with participants to ensure they are heard. I am describing the background information about Royal College and its position in the locality and the culture of those working there, to ensure that readers are able to have the best opportunity to understand the research. Gillham (2000, p.19) refers to the work of Clifford Geertz, an American social anthropologist, who emphasizes the importance of describing in some detail any culture you are studying at the beginning of the research. *‘He calls this thick description; as process which makes you pay attention to the fine grain of what you are observing, and reflecting on it’.*

Thick description provides context, which Gillham (2000) considers essential in understanding human behaviour, thoughts and feelings, which are at least in part, a product of their context, and should be studied in their context. The researcher’s role is to understand not only what they see, but what they see in context. New ways of seeing interpretive research increases our understanding and as an insider researcher (RCN, 2014). I have the advantage of working in the college and being familiar with the context.

Qualitative researchers rarely start with a theory they wish to test and prove or disprove although this could be achieved. In some cases, they aim to generate theory from data and in others to build on previous work, such as developing a theory using different settings. Theorizing emerges, according to Gillham (2000) as one cannot theorize in the absence of data or limited data. My data may generate theory in the settings in which it is collected and analysed .

Insider research

The pragmatic nature of this study means that it is not only naturalistic in that it is set in the context of my own practice, but also that as a piece of insider-research it can throw light upon aspects of research that an outsider might miss, underestimate, or dismiss as irrelevant. This also means that in the conduct of this research I need to ensure that its naturalistic and insider aspects do not leave it open to charges of this study being in any way unsystematic or insufficiently robust. I am mindful that the demands this places upon me as a researcher are high. I will endeavour to make the decisions regarding the design of this research and the ways in which I collect, analyse and interpret the data as transparent and as open to scrutiny as possible.

Why do researchers choose their own community or organisation to study? Labaree (2002) gives examples of researchers who seek a greater understanding of their social identity and who conduct research into marginalized or disempowered communities. Sometimes research such as this aims to bring to light issues of inequity and bring about social justice. For other researchers, the aim is to explore understandings of culture and identity. This is a common theme among anthropologists, sociologists, and feminist scholars. For researchers engaging in research in their own workplaces in education contexts may involve researching the experiences and lives of marginalized groups, whether students, teachers, managers, or other employees. Research of this nature is usually focussed on the culture, power structures and practices of the organisation. This is clearly exemplified by Coghlan (2007 p. 294) where he examines the phenomenon of professional and practitioner doctorates, where research is undertaken in the workplace. He lists suitable subjects for insider research as,

> '*Issues of organizational concern, such as systems improvement, organizational learning, the management of change … they are real events which must be managed ... they provide opportunities for both effective action and learning...'*

Brannick & Coghlan (2007, p. 66) discuss the role of insiders investigating *'real problems in social systems within organizations'*. My research is about changes and improvement to educational practice, which is an organisational concern and the model employed for the management of change and improvement.

The concepts and protocols of being an insider, participant-observer have changed and evolved greatly since the early debates initiated by Merton in 1970 when he proposes that insiderness and outsiderness are, *'... exclusionary domains of understanding within the realm of the sociology of knowledge',* (Zinn, 1979, cited in Labaree, 2002, p.101). Later academics extend this discussion to critically consider the legitimacy of this dichotomy in terms of positioning each at polarized extremes on a continuum, although it is worth noting that this argument was not universally accepted. Deutsch, (1981, cited in Labaree, 2002), argues that this explanation is not adequate in addressing the more subtle complexities of social life. Perhaps more importantly, critics of the extreme positions on a continuum argue that the positionality of the researcher is a key factor influencing the phenomenon being studied.

Mercer (2007) points to a wealth of literature concerning insider and outsider research in fields such as anthropology, ethnic studies, family research, feminist studies, management and ethnic studies. However, she suggests that conducting insider research in educational contexts is a methodological issue that is under-researched, yet relevant to an increasing number of researchers in education. She observes that small-scale practitioner research projects have proliferated over the past twenty years, with an increased and increasing provision of Masters and Doctoral programmes being offered and the emergence and increase of Doctorates in Education (EdD). During this period, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) have developed their Practitioner Research Programme, specifically with this in mind.

With this greater activity, Mercer (2007), suggests that more literature on the methodology of insider research in educational contexts could be expected. However, she does not find this the case. As discussed above, literature on this topic is available in many other contexts. She suggests that researchers are poorly supported by the lack of literature to navigate, what Labaree (2002, p.109) calls, '…*the hidden ethical and methodological dilemmas of insiderness'*. Hidden, because the researcher may assume that they have a measurable advantage as an insider with their own perception of access and their interpretations of participants. Brannick & Coghlan (2007) in their spirited defence of the insider researcher state that they are sometimes charged with being too familiar with the setting and unable to be sufficiently objective to present valid research. This theme runs through other literature, with Teusner (2016) suggesting that validity (perhaps more aptly framed as authenticity, credibility and trustworthiness) is complicated by the relationships between the participants and the researcher.

Mercer (2007) states that many students continue with their jobs while studying, with their own establishment becoming their research subject, undertaking an, *'explicit research role in addition to the normal functional role',* (Coghlan & Holian, 2007, cited in Teusner, 2016, p. 1). Coghlan (2007) suggests that role duality can become confusing and the dual burden of researching as well as the role of continuing to be a practitioner in their own right, is demanding and can create conflict, even when the approach to conducting research is overt. He also reports that researchers' links with individuals and groups may influence their relationship with others, possibly negatively impacting upon the collection of data. However, Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, (2013, p. 160) consider that,

> *'Much valuable practitioner research is generated by the process of the practitioner reflecting upon their practice and the term 'reflective practice' is often used to describe this method of carrying out work based research.'*

For several years, the Education and Training Foundation have offered their Practitioner Research Programme, (PRP) – (The Education and Training Foundation, 2021) in conjunction with the University of Sunderland, specifically for teachers to develop teaching and research skills by conducting insider research into their own practice, which suggests that researching in one's own establishment with the aim of improving educational practice in context is becoming more widely accepted.

My study began as a PRP working in my own establishment while I was working. I was able to progress to the MPhil and subsequently transferred to PhD in 2021. My study continued to be insider research.

Timeline of study							
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Programme		Practitioner Research Project	MPhil	MPhil	PhD	PhD	PhD
C1 Context and Purpose						Revision and update	
C2 Literature Review						Revision and update	
C3 Methodolgy and Methods							
C4 Data Collection and Analysis							
Interviews							
C5 Findings							
C6 Recommendations							
Leave of absence					May - October		
Write up						June	January
Thesis submission							February
Viva							June
Ofsted Inspections	January Grade 3			January Grade 2			
Oservation model 1	to September 2017						
Oservation model 2	from September	to September 2018					
Oservation model 3		from September		Observations suspended/reduced due to			

Issues of Access

Referring to the perceived value of being on the inside, Labaree (2002, p. 102) provides examples ranging from popular culture television shows in hospitals or police conducting a drugs raid, which he suggests reflect a *'…near obsession with seeking an unseen 'reality' in virtually every corner of American society'*, to academic historical research throwing light on previously hidden truths. He argues that the relative position of a researcher who is a participant and an observer can uncover new insights, hidden meanings or unique knowledge that would not be possible for an outsider. This suggests that to be an insider privileges the researcher. However, the shortcomings of insider research also need to be kept in mind, tempered by the aims of the research project and levels of access available to potential participants. Labaree (2002 p. 103) categorizes advantages cited by other researchers into,

> *'...four broad values: the value of shared experiences; the value of greater access; the value of cultural interpretation; and the value of deeper understanding and clarity of thought for the researcher.'*

However, despite these apparent advantages, he notes that each one also has challenges that must be overcome or circumvented by the researcher including queries regarding whether it is possible to maintain objectivity and accuracy as an insider, operating as an observer, who already possesses knowledge about the community and have their own assumptions. Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, (2010, p.55) agree that there can be difficulties and insist that in all research, the researcher must, *'…pay particular attention to alternative values, views, meanings and explanations while remaining alert to biases and distortions',* and that these may be more pronounced for the insider researcher. Labaree (2002) suggests that access is almost universally considered the main advantage for insider researchers, providing initial levels of trust and easier access to information, through key contacts, which would be far harder for outsiders, even if they knew what information was available.

My positioning as an insider researcher

I am aware that in my role, as Teusner (2016) found, that the distinction between being an insider and being an outsider is not a finite position. This is very different from the view of Olson, (1977) cited in Labaree (2002) who consider them to be mutually exclusive positions.

As Head of Teaching and Learning at Royal College and an employee for twenty years, I could consider the advantages of my position as an insider, as being aligned with the *'...intimate knowledge of the context of the organisation, both present and historical....'* (Teusner, 2016, p. 1). I have access to policy and procedural documents and my own historical knowledge of past processes. I was, and am, instrumental in setting up and managing some of the processes being studied and, as such, probably have the widest knowledge of them in the college. I am responsible for the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities for academic staff, which is one of the foci of my study. However, am I an insider when I conduct interviews with teachers? I am a teacher, but for many years I have been a manager and therefore I am not regularly teaching and having the day-to-day experience of being in the classroom. Many of my colleagues, who might be participants, will not remember me teaching at all. Will they consider me a fellow teacher? Other participants report to me and, as a small team, we have many shared experiences and have worked together for some years. Do our shared experiences provide, *'...a privileged means of establishing a rapport between the researcher and the informant',* that Labaree (2002, p.103) suggests? Or do other pitfalls await? I interview my line manager and other senior managers, but I do not belong to their 'community' - or do I? The only group within the college I belong to is the managers at my level.

As Mercer (2007, p.4) points out,

> *'Some features of the researcher's identity, such as his or her gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation are innate and unchanging; other features, such as age, are innate but evolving. These features provide one dimension to the insider/outsider continuum. Other dimensions are provided by the time*

and place of the research (at both a micro and macro-level); the power relationships with which the researcher and the researched co-exist; the personalities of the researcher and specific informants; and even the precise topic under discussion.

In his development of a framework for understanding some of the '*hidden dilemmas'* of being an insider participant observer Labaree (2002, p. 97) suggests that the professions, which include teaching, create their own distinctive subcultures that use status and work identity as the basis for interpreting reality. This organisational life is very different from insider research in sociological and anthropological settings, with its more usual forms of insiderness related to race, ethnicity and gender. Labaree (2002) notes that this is largely unexplored and in need of further analysis when used in qualitative research. While I draw upon later authors (Coghlan 2007; Mercer 2007; Teusner 2016) I find the literature on insider research within the professions quite limited and quite different in feel to those researching themselves, their family or community culture (Chmielewski & Yost, 2013; Foster, 2009) where their 'insiderness' is more explicit and based on specific features.

I briefly comment above on these issues when interviewing those I report to and those who report to me. I expand on the power dimensions which operate when participants are employed in various levels within the organisation below and in Chapter 4. As Nias (1998, cited in Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001) points out, sensitive issues can emerge when researching in one's own instititution. Nias (ibid) cautions researchers to ensure that ethical procedures are always followed, in order to demonstrate to others that researchers are aware of their responsibilities and the possible consequences of their research.

The Power Dimension of Insider Researching

Despite following the BERA (2018) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research by making potential participants fully aware that participation in the research is completely voluntary and they do not have to take part and, if they choose to do so, they may withdraw at any time, I am aware that some staff in the organisation may feel ‘obliged’ to me in some way to become a participant. For example, those people that I manage may feel uneasy about expressing negative or contrary views about the college processes which I have been involved in developing and promoting, in case it creates discord or potential conflict. In addition, asking participants who are senior to me probing questions about the value and impact of our working practices and asking if, and how, they can be improved, may also prove to be difficult for me, although approaching the later stages of my career will encourage me to be bold in my questioning and less concerned about ‘rocking the boat’ than I might have been at an earlier career point.

Another factor potentially influencing the study is that I am passionate about my subject, and this may also be a barrier in securing authenticity in the research. Although I have not discussed my research topic widely, my role is to implement and promote our observation process and the resulting development plan targets and it has often been assumed that I am fully in favour of these, which is not always the case. Labaree (2002 p. 98) refers to his *‘deliberate dual purpose’* when participating in work activities, where he is working as usual in his employment but is aware that he is looking at ways to create links with potential participants when he starts his data collection; learning as much as possible about the organisation’s structure of influence and its culture. In his study he approached this very quietly, with the intention of protecting his ‘insiderness’ and sharing his research objectives with very few colleagues. I can relate to this, and it has made me think about my own approach. Knowing my research subject keeps me alert to potential participants, as Labaree (ibid) finds, and I look at procedures and minutes of meetings in a different light, as they may be relevant to my research as well as integral to my work.

> *‘Interviews are a sensitive and powerful methods; they are, in themselves, neither ethical nor unethical, neither emancipating nor oppressing’*
> (Kvale, 2006, p. 497)

Mercer (2007) reports that pre-existing rapport had impact on the power dimension when interviewing senior participants, with those she knew well, professionally or socially, being different from an interview conducted with someone she had not previously spoken to. Teusner (2016) observes that the issue of validity for the insider researcher is affected by the relationship between the researcher and participants, which must be addressed to reduce the threat of researcher bias to the data. Labaree (2002) questions if an insider researcher can provide a unique perspective that could not be noticed by an outsider, or whether the conclusion would be significantly different if the research were undertaken by an outsider.

Outsiders have an advantage of detachment from the participants and the subject; insiders must manage the position of being in the position of being both the researcher and the researched (Chavez, 2008). Insider researchers often concentrate on gaining access, understanding participants, and developing rapport but Chavez (2008) argues that this should be reversed, and insider researchers should first consider how alike they are to their participants and in which ways they are not alike; which of these positions are an advantage and which may be a disadvantage.

A further complication can arise when researchers expect their insider position to remain static and provide the advantage of being part of a group, but social reality may of course change this situation. In this study, I may have similarities to a research participant, however I am finding that during our discussions our views diverge, or we find that our similarities are merely superficial, and our rapport lessens. I also find that my understanding of a process or situation may be very different to the interviewee. Coghlan (2007) claims that when managers are involved in research in their organisation it may be confusing and awkward, and they may experience role conflict and challenges to their loyalties. This may result affect the participants they choose and the data that they wish to generate.

Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2010, p. 93) state that,

> '*Interviewing is a widely used research technique that can be adapted to work in a wide range of situations to gain information about people's perceptions, experiences of preferences.'*

A key question here is whether it is appropriate to raise the issue of power in relationships between the researcher and the participants within this discussion about insider research and to what extent. Davison, (2004, cited in Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010) states that the methodological literature on qualitative research focuses on the advantages of having a close relationship with research participants as this will increase rapport and benefit research findings. However, the methods chosen for any study may result in revelations that the researcher did not anticipate, and through showing interest, Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2010) suggest that the insider researcher may be in ethical danger of being assumed to be in the role of a friend or confidante, or the opposite.

Quantitative and Qualitative data analysis

Denscombe (2014) provides us with a detailed description of the two main kinds of analysis used in social research, but he cautions that, when undertaking real research, the distinction between them may not fall so neatly into the two categories. The two main kinds of analysis used for social research are ‘quantitative’ and ‘qualitative’, which have come to represent opposing styles that suggest incompatible approaches for social research, and they are described in this Chapter. The primary distinction between them is,

- ‘*quantitative research uses numbers as the unit of analysis;*
- *qualitative research uses words or visual images as the unit of analysis.’*

(Denscombe, 2014 p. 245)

Quantitative research is usually considered to link to positivism and qualitative research with interpretivism, and whilst not always the case, is an appropriate initial working assumption about their stances. Quantitative research produces numerical data that are objective – that is, they are independent of the researcher, are valid and reliable, and could be reproduced by another researcher if the research were replicated. In contrast, qualitative research places emphasis on the role of the researcher and the context in the production of the data and therefore could not be replicated precisely by another researcher. Standardised research instruments are rarely used but rather it is recognised that the researcher is the crucial ‘measurement device’ and that the researcher’s background, values, identity and beliefs might have a significant bearing on the nature of the data collected and the analysis of that data.

Denscombe (ibid) summarises the differences in the role of the researcher in each of these approaches,

> ‘*In essence, this means that:*
> - *‘Quantitative research tends to be associated with researcher detachment;*
> - *Qualitative research tends to be associated with researcher involvement.’*

Quantitative and qualitative research usually differ in size, scale, focus and design of the research to be undertaken. Large-scale research with greater numbers and quantities leans towards quantitative analysis, where statistical procedures completed by computers can equally cope with small or large numbers, and results are more likely to be statistically reliable with large numbers and suitable for generalisation. In contrast, qualitative research tends to be small-scale and involve a small number of people or events. Concentrating on depth and rich or ‘thick description’ is only possible with a small-scale project. In order to conduct the analysis, researchers must be totally familiar with the data, particularly as the analysis of words or images cannot be completed in the same way as computers analyse numerical data. For the qualitative researcher, time taken for analysis increases exponentially as data increases.

Differences in breadth of focus is usually distinctive between the two approaches. Quantitative research tends to focus on specific variables, whereas qualitative research usually prefers to see things in context and stresses the interrelationships between the factors in the setting. It operates on the basis that context is vital to understanding. Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2013, p. 98) confirm that,

> ‘*Part of its [qualitative data] value lies in the context in which the body of data was generated, so it cannot be detached from who, when or where it was produced without losing some it its meaning.’*

Research design usually differs between the approaches, with quantitative research using precise research design, separating data collection and data analysis. Questions or hypothesis are developed at the start of the research.

Qualitative research questions are not usually developed precisely in advance of data collection or even data analysis as they occur throughout the time of the research project. As stated previously, Denscombe (2014) argues that the distinction between these two categories is too simplistic and that researchers may use a mixed method approach, combining the two. He also reminds us that the terms relate to the treatment of data and are not types of research. Thomas (2009) concurs and notes that sometimes researchers consider whether to use quantitative or qualitative types of research first, but stresses that the research approach should always follow the research question, not precede it.

The use of power in interviews to obtain knowledge, Kvale (2006) claims, is a legitimate and useful way of researching. However, he cautions that without acknowledgment of the power dynamics of the process, the validity of the jointly constructed product of the interview may be seriously impaired. The ethics of qualitative interviewing include considering power dynamics in research interviews but Kvale (2006) finds this is a subject rarely broached in the literature on qualitative research. To address this potential impact on the validity of my research in this table, based on Kvale's (2006, pp. 484-485) work, some of the power issues in qualitative research interviews are explored and considered in relation to my research.

Table 2 **Potential power issues in qualitative research interviews**

The interviewer rules the interview. The interviewer usually has a specific subject to explore, with open or semi-structured questions prepared. They may ask follow-on questions and close the conversation. Their research study is the basis for the interview and defines the interview. My research follows this model where the interviewee is aware, through an explanatory document and consent form, that I will be asking questions relating to my research interests. **The interview is a one-way dialogue.**

The expected format is that the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee answers. Elaboration and further discussion may occur, but the interviewee is not expected to ask questions of the interviewer.

This is my expectation but, given my role in managing the process under discussion, questions could arise. I will try to answer these but will steer the conversation back to the questions, which does confirm the previous dynamic that the interviewer rules the interview.

The interview is an instrumental dialogue.

The interview is an instrument for the interviewee to provide the interviewer with information, perceptions and descriptions which will, once analysed, contribute to the interviewer's research. It is not a conversation with equitable outcomes for both parties.

This is an important consideration when asking people to participate. What is in it for them? As my research topic is part of all the participants' working life, I hope that they will think that taking part in an interview will enable their voice to be added to the research, even in a small way – an option not usually available to them.

The interview may be a manipulative dialogue.

Kvale (2006, p. 484) suggests that the interview may have a hidden agenda, and that interviewers can make use of '…subtle therapeutic techniques to get beyond the subjects' defences and obtain the information they seek'.

Not surprisingly, I do not intend to be manipulative or thought of as such, but it has caused me to examine my motives and agenda for the interviews. Although a work-based subject, self-improvement for teachers is a value-loaded topic, where participants may not feel they have made sufficient effort, or progress and therefore feel uncomfortable. My research aim is to examine the procedures in place, so participants will be on a continuum of engagement and understanding this is a key issue. Being aware of this potential, negative use of the interview will ensure that I study my questions and am transparent with participants as to the aim of the interview.

The interviewer's monopoly of interpretation.

Briggs (2002), cited in Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2013, p. 42) describes this succinctly, *'…the interviewer has control over what is said, how it is said, how it is recorded and how it is subsequently represented and encoded as knowledge'.*

I can relate this to my research, so I understand that the interpretation is mine alone. Teusner (2015) note that the presentation of the interview should not be distorted to ensure validity. This requires the researcher to investigate and be aware of their own preconceptions about the project throughout the study period, and I will be using a journal to examine my own views during my research. Being constantly aware of the possibility of bias and preconceptions should reduce the incidence.

The power imbalance in the interview may be addressed, by Kvale (2006) who suggests, by the use of the countermeasures below.

Counter control.

The interviewee has the option of not replying or not replying fully or deflecting the question. They may also offer the answer they think is expected in place of their true views, which is unlikely to be obvious to the researcher. They may answer a different question, as frequently occurs in interviews with elite interviews with politicians and celebrities, who have their own agenda. They may also terminate the interview and withdraw from the research as all participants are entitled to do.

My research participants potentially could take these countermeasures and whilst not elite interviews, I will be interviewing staff senior to me, who may have their own agenda.

Membership research.

Providing the interpretation to the interviewee for checking and agreement may reduce the dominance of the interviewer but Kvale (2006) cautions against this, saying that there are limits to bring the roles into balance and possible barriers which prevent the interviewees agreeing with the interpretation. He finds that few researchers involve their participants in this way. Mercer (2007) agrees, finding that the perspectives of the interviewees may change over time and may even contradict previous information provided.

It is not my intention to share my interpretation with the interviewees but at the close of the interview to clarify my notes and check that key points are accurately captured, and any discrepancies addressed (Teusner, 2016).

Interviewing

The most common method of data collection in qualitative research is the interview in a variety of forms, such as semi-structured, unstructured, and labelled as exploratory or depth interviews, according to King (2004), who maintains that all these approaches have common characteristics. A crucial feature of the interview is the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee, which forms part of the research process. The interviewee is viewed as a 'participant' in the research, unlike a quantitative research project using structured interviews where the interviewee is viewed as the research 'subject', and little different to how they are viewed when taking part in an experiment. (King, 2004, p. 11).

To avoid a rigid set of questions to be asked in order, which would not provide the flexibility required for qualitative research, an interview guide can be used, listing topics which ideally should be covered. This can include probes to follow up responses to gain more detail. This can be prepared from several sources: relevant literature from the review; the personal knowledge and experience of the researcher and previous information gained during the research from other discussions. The guide can be modified following use in interviews, adding questions on topics that have emerged and changing questions that do not elicit relevant responses (King, 2004). For the small-scale study, which is the subject of this thesis, a guide would be useful as interviews will be conducted with participants with different levels of engagement and responsibility in the organisation and one set of questions would not provide the depth of information sought. The area of questioning in the interview is sent with information about the study and the consent form. This enables the participants to consider the research subject. The selection of participants is informed by the study's aims and on its methodological position.

The time and resource available are a critical factor, according to King (2004, p. 16), who notes that*, '…even an experienced transcriber is unlikely to be able to transcribe more than two one-hour interviews in a working day.'* He continues that analysing the transcripts in suitable depth will take a further two or three days' work, so the sample size must take this into consideration. Transcribing each interview personally affords a fuller insight into the detail of the data and enables a reflective reliving of the interview and I started with this method, which was as time consuming as King (ibid) suggests. However, a pragmatic approach means that researchers may choose to use an electronic system, such as TEMI.com, which provides a full transcript in minutes, which requires minimal correction. Using data analysis tools such as TEMI.com allows a slightly larger sample size, although the subsequent analysis and the time taken, as described above, is roughly the same. I changed to this system and found the transcripts mainly accurate but I also had the recording to check if necessary. The saving in time was substantial.

Due to the restriction posed by the Covid 19 virus, some interviews were conducted using the Zoom or Teams platform, which use a camera on the interviewee and interviewer. With the subject's permission interviews are recorded, as are the face-to-face interviews. Both are subsequently transcribed. Body language and gestures are less apparent and sometimes not recorded in some interviews. This can reduce some of the visual clues for the interviewer. However, in Zoom and Teams modes of communication the face is usually more visible than is customary in an interview, where such closeness could be seen as an intrusion. This is an advantage of data derived from Zoom and Teams interviews as the visual clues such as facial expression, tone of voice and other aspects of body language can be captured and analysed.

The main data collection method in the study is through interviews, which Gillman (2000, p. 59) states, '*…are indispensable in case study research.'* The reasons for using interviews and their advantages, disadvantages and suitability have been detailed in this Chapter. Other evidence is provided though official documents, internal college communications, copies of interviewees' action plans and observations records, which create multiple sources of evidence, contributing to the chain of evidence (Yin, 2005). This principle of Yin (2005, p. 106) is to show the reliability of the data in the case study. It should enable a reader to follow the evidence, from research questions to conclusion, which addresses, '*the methodological problem of determining construct validity, thereby increasing the overall quality of the case.'*

Nowell *et al.,* (2017) remind us that to be recognised and valued, qualitative research must be conducted in a rigorous and methodical way if it is to produce meaningful results. They argue that data analysis must be conducted in a consistent manner and recorded accurately and methods of analysis need to provide sufficient detail to convince readers of the authenticity and credibility of qualitative research. This study is guided by the criteria and procedures advocated by Nowell *et al.,* (which itself builds on the original work of Lincoln and Guba,1985, cited in Nowell *et al., 2017)*.

From this perspective, consistency and accuracy in the recording of data and transparent methods of analysis are used to ensure that sufficient detail is provided to the reader to enable them to judge the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative research studies. The research is planned and documented in accordance with these principles. All original interview data, such as recordings, questions used, and initial and subsequent correspondence are retained. Other documents, such as internal procedures, emails and official reports are also retained. All research methods are carefully and accurately described. A reflexive research journal is used to reflect my own experiences of conducting the research and my reflections as it progresses. Keeping these records serves to strengthen the trustworthiness of this research in creating a clear audit trail of decisions and judgements made in the conduct of the research (Halpern, 1983, cited in Nowell *et al.,* 2017).

In view of the above, the study uses thematic analysis as a research method to provide rigor and trustworthiness together with a clear audit trail. Despite Koch, (1994) cited in Nowell *et al.,* (2017, p. 3) arguing that, with the *'same data, perspective, and situtation could arrive at the same or comparable, but not contradictory, conclusions',* this is unlikely in the contect of this study, as my experience and participation is a key part of the research, but the reader will be able to follow my research journey and understand how I analysed the data and the decisions I made to arrive at my findings.

Triangulation is used in the study as a method of increasing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. A common approach to triangulation is to combine interviews with observation (Hammersley, *et al.,* 2001). Although my research does not use direct observation as a method, I am able to triangulate data from interviews and informal observations to records such as observation reports and the individual's Accelerated Development Plan (ADP). Gillham (2000, p. 13, emphasis in the original) observes that, *'A common discrepancy is between what people say about themselves and what they actually do. In an interview people can be very convincing, because they are sincere'.*

As interviews as a key source of evidence, to increase authenticity, credibility and validity this study collects data and employs several methods in order to triangulate. These include:

- *Summaries of key documents relating to relevant procedures, particularly those created and implemented by interviewees;*
- *Data from interviews with a range of staff involved at various levels of responsibility for the procedures;*
- *Data derived from field notes and informal observations;*
- *Interviews with managers from another college, which uses similar procedures;*
- *Extracts from interviewees' observation reports, where permission is granted;*
- *Extracts from interviewees' ADPs, where permission is granted.*

Research sample

The research sample for interview is designed to include a representative of those involved at all levels in the processes being studied. The majority of the sample have been in post for a minimum of four years and have experienced the range of observation and staff development processes in use during the period of the study. The exception is the number one senior manager, and one teacher who was chosen to represent staff new to the processes. Semi-structured interviews are used with the following:

1. The senior manager who developed and implemented the use of the Accelerated Development Plan;
2. The senior manager who subsequently become responsible for the quality management of observations and the use of the ADP. Two interviews to provide a picture over time;

3. An external senior manager, whose college used one observation process, which was recommended and taken into use by Royal College;
4. An external middle manager, based at the same college as person 3, who is responsible for the training and monitoring of observation and staff development. Two interviews have taken place to provide a picture over time;
5. Two line managers who have worked with all the observation processes within the research period, and who are responsible for target setting and signing off completed actions on the ADP;
6. Three Advanced Practitioners who are observed and observers. They use the ADP personally and also contribute jointly to them with observees, during the professional discussion and subsequent continuing professional development meetings.
7. Four members of teaching staff who are observed and use the ADP. Two staff interviews took place early in the study and two staff were interviewed later to understand the 'bedding down' of the self-development model.
8. An employee who is a University and College Union Representative.

My own contributions through my field notes and contemporaneous communications provide additional data. In my role as Head of Teaching and Learning I am responsible for: the implementation and refinement of procedures, training and standardisation of observers; the monitoring of observation practice and written reports for quality assurance purposes; reporting to senior management on the quantity and quality of observations conducted and the quality of teaching and learning observed; the use of the ADP and the extent of managers' involvement in them. By choice I use the ADP as my personal development plan, although this is not a requirement for managers. I direct and monitor the APs' work providing continuing professional development to staff through one-to-one meetings, group events and wider college events, such as providing sessions on Training Days.

Research strategy

Multiple methods are used for data collection, including document and record analysis, semi-structured interviews, meeting notes, records of observations and ADPs and field notes. The research strategy employed is offered as a case study, to investigate and answer specific research questions. Hartley (2004) advises that a case study is very suitable for research questions that examine social or organisational processes that require detailed interpretation and understanding of the rich data that is collected in context.

> *'Case study research consists of a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context. The aim is to provide an analysis of the context and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied. The phenomenon is not isolated from the context (as in, say, laboratory research) but is of interest precisely because the aim is to understand how behaviour and/or processes are influenced by, and influence context'.*
>
> (Hartley, 2004, p. 323)

'The case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing', according to Stake, (1995, p. 2). He continues that the real value of case study is to know it well, not to learn how it is different from others but to highlight its uniqueness and to thoroughly understand the case. For this Stake (1995) says we place an interpreter in the field [metaphorically] to observe how the case works and record it objectively but also examining its meaning and changing observation to confirm or refine those meaning. Stake (1995) suggests case study should be non-interventive and empathic, avoiding disturbing the normal activity if possible.

Yin (2003) warns that the case study has been stereotyped as a weak form of social science methods, with insufficient precision, objectivity or rigor. However, he notes that they continue to be used in social science research, including education. The method is also a frequent mode of thesis research. He queries why, if case study is a weak method, why this obvious broad reach and regular use by many disciplines occurs? He includes distinguished scholars' case study examples in his book, and continues that the stereotype may just be wrong.

> *'In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events*

and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.'
Yin (2005, p. 1)

My research fits well with this definition, which studies the how and why of observation, CPD, and models of change and improvement in an educational establishment over a four year period. My research questions are 'what', which Yin (2005) suggests can be conducted as an exploratory case study. It is contemporary and I have limited control over the key changes that occur during my study, such as changes to the observation process and Ofsted's new inspection regime, although as a participant and manager of the observation process I am involved in some decision-making. Yin (2005) argues that the how and why questions contend with operational links occurring over time, rather than incidents.

The research takes place over a period of four years and is presented as a narrative following the chronology. It considers and evaluates the successive models of observation and the resulting staff development, operating across three campuses and one satellite campus. These are considered within the wider context of OfSTED Inspections and how they create pressure and influence organisations to make changes. Hartley (2004, p. 325) points out how case studies can be used for examining new processes or behaviours, to understand, *'…everyday practices and their meanings to those involved',* which would not be apparent if studied more briefly. As this research compares and contrasts practices over time, this research may contribute by bringing to notice what the processes contribute to the college.

Ethics

Ethically informed research should be the aim of all social researchers, according to (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001), who suggest that all social research presents a range of ethical challenges around confidentiality, informed consent, being truthful and the aim and value of the research, whether documents, surveys, forum, interviews, computer-mediated communications are used.

All research in this study is conducted in accordance with BERA (2018) guidelines for educational research. In guiding researchers on their conduct within this framework, the Association sets out its guidelines under the following five headings:

- *responsibilities to participants*
- *responsibilities to sponsors, clients and stakeholders in research*
- *responsibilities to the community of educational researchers*
- *responsibilities for publication and dissemination*
- *responsibilities for researchers' wellbeing and development.*

(BERA, 2018, p. 4)

This thesis has been approved by the University of Sunderland Ethics Committee. The Senior Management Team (SMT) at my employing organisation has also approved it. This enables me to conduct ethical research with colleagues and external participants.

Responsibility to participants

The research participants in the study will all be employed by education providers and have responsibility for the provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or take part in CPD. The research population consists of college lecturers, teaching and learning managers, quality officers and managers, and the SMT member responsible for quality at the principal college in the research project. A former senior manager, still employed in education is also a participant. No minors or vulnerable adults are involved in the research.

In keeping with the BERA (2018) expectations I work within an ethic of respect for anyone, including myself, involved directly or indirectly with this research. I endeavour to treat people fairly, sensitively and with dignity and freedom from prejudice. I am mindful of the impact of structural inequalities, such as those associated with race, gender, LBGTQ+ issues and socio-economic status on social relationships, particularly those formed as part of the research. I am aware of those who are part of the context, such as colleagues, but who are not the focus of the research, and obtain informed consent or provide information as appropriate.

Social media and online communities are not part of the research, although I keep up to date with changes in data use regulations and advice and I recently received training on the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations (Information Commissioner's Office, 2018).

The preliminary outcomes of the research were disseminated at the ETF National Conference in July 2019 and subsequently placed on their website under Practitioner Research. At the completion of the research participants are invited to a presentation where the findings are shared. The researcher's college SMT will receive a similar presentation and recommendations.

Consent

Participants will be asked to sign a consent form for their participation to be used for this study. This will give the option to discontinue at any time. No participant is a minor or a vulnerable adult. However, I am aware of insider research. As a manager in the establishment, some participants may feel obliged to take part or may temper their responses. Risk or harm to participants is not expected but throughout the research I consider how to maximise benefits and minimise any risk or harm.

Participants are asked at the start of the study to provide voluntary informed consent to be involved in the research and are given the option to withdraw their consent, without explanation, at any time. Participants are provided with full information about the study, its aims and purpose and what any participation they have will be used for and with whom it will be shared. Participants are also kept informed about progress of the research.

Data storage will be explained, as will the period of retention of any documents or information. All information will be held on an encrypted laptop or secure desktop computer and stored and retained for the minimum period necessary.

> *'An important consideration is the extent to which a researcher's reflective research into their own practice impinges upon others – for example, in the*

> *case of power relationships arising from the dual roles of teacher/ lecturer/manager and researcher, and their impact on students and colleagues'.*
> (BERA, 2018, p. 13)

For this study, I investigate practices within my own establishment and as a manager, which could be perceived as a power relationship with participants, particularly with lecturers and this is discussed earlier in this chapter. This is addressed by making my role as the researcher very clear and by emphasising that confidentiality is maintained throughout the study. As the research has SMT support, it may be desirable to include their endorsement when carrying out the research. Other participants are from external establishments where it is unlikely that a power relationship will arise.

Husband, (2020), critically reflects whether pre-interview information and consent forms are sufficient to cover the ethical aspects of research. The spur for this was his qualitative-based study with post-graduate teachers about their experience of training, its potential impact on their engagement with continuing professional learning and their views of the effectiveness of the training programmes for their career. The research was finalised and completed. However, subsequently the researcher received three communications from interviewees, which was unexpected. In each of these, the interviewees shared their reflections post-interview. These were positive and detailed the reflection that had occurred after the semi-structured interviews and the subsequent action the individual had taken – in each case to undertake further professional learning. It seems that the interview had a least in part been a catalyst. Husband (2020, p. 206) considers that even positive communications can be problematic and raises issues about *'…the concept of truly informed consent'.*

Research conducted through Universities and other institutions are expected to adhere to ethical guidelines, such as BERA (2018), and carefully consider the potential impact of the research on participants and seek approval from the relevant institution's ethics committee to undertake the research. Participants are informed of the purpose of the study and asked to sign a consent form which details how their responses will be used, stored, potentially published and possibly shared with other researchers. All data is anonymised unless this is waived. Participation may be withdrawn at any time. This appears to be adequate for the duration of the study but Husband (2020) received communications beyond the study which were sharing the impact of reflection on the interview. All three had indicated they were intending to engage with further learning opportunities. As a result he advocates a broadening of the discussion around informed consent and the potential impact of '…*participant engagement in research interviews.' (Husband, 2020, p. 208),* to inform researchers and members of ethics panels. It will also be relevant for those managing or developing research projects.

Being ethical, say Brinkmann & Kvale, (2005) *'… means being open to other people, acting for the sake of their good, trying to see others as they are, rather than imposing one's own ideas and biases on them.'* They argue that the Aristotelian virtue, *phronesis,* or practice wisdom is relevant, with its aim of making us good people. Therefore, their phrases above show how the researcher should conduct themselves in relation to research participants. They continue that:

> *'Our moral reality is a practical reality where truthfulness is more important absolute truth, and where practical wisdom – the skill of clear perception and judgement becomes more important that theoretical understanding and the ability to use abstract procedures.'*
> Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, p. 175.

Husband (2020) confirms that all requirements for ethical informed consent were followed and University approval gained, yet interviews can have unintended impact as described in his article, demonstrating that using abstract procedures may not be sufficient, and clear perception and judgement are needed to address this impact, and this is the purpose of Husband's examination of the phenomena though Critical Incident Analysis.

Clear perception of the power relationship – termed by Brinkmann & Kvale (2005, p. 163) as, *'…the inevitable power plays inherent in the interview…'* is an important consideration for any research and this is discussed in the table based on

Kvale (2006). in this chapter. informed by Kvale (2006). Acting for the sake of their good clearly does not only extend for the duration of the research, even if there is no subsequent communication. The researcher has a moral duty to protect participants' data and to present it accurately and fairly.

Reading the three responses in Husband (2020) it appears to me that they sound contrite and perhaps embarrassed that they had not undertaken any professional learning for some time, and they wanted the researcher to know that they had taken action following the interview and time to reflect. Husband (2020) queries whether researchers should be more aware that their questions may elicit deeper responses from the participants? Reflective practice has been a feature of initial teacher training programmes for over 20 years and the participants in Husband's (2020) research had all qualified within this timescale so possibly the interview was a catalyst for reflection.

Husband (2020) says that the setting of interviews, possibly between strangers, with respondents asked to provide answers to specific questions in a limited time, can create methodological and ethical problems that should be considered by researchers. The responses in the article show how an interview can bring out a greater amount of engagement and reflection than expected. Husband (2020) refers to the inequitable power between researcher and participants, which has been mentioned above, and suggests that it should be acknowledged that more than just data can be generated from interviews. He suggests that the highlighting of these issues about ethical research practice have implications for participants and similarly responsibilities for researcher post-interview and that it is possible that further study of the links between participants and researchers using informed consent as an active and continuing feature for the duration of their relationship, in a similar way to a coach or counsellor. This suggests that researchers could be aware that they may gain deeper responses from interview participants, resulting in richer data, and see the greater possibilities for co-produced knowledge rather than working to standardised ethical guidelines, and therefore should ensure participants are aware of the potential impact of the interview. Bassey (1999, p. 43) says: *'Interpretive researchers recognize that by asking questions or by observation they may change the situation which they are studying.'*

I considered this in relation to my own study. I followed the BERA guidelines and my work was approved by the University Ethics panel and also by the Principal of my college. My participants were informed and signed consent forms, so I was confident I had covered ethical consideration through these actions and through a thorough discussion on ethics in my thesis. As an insider researcher, most participants were colleagues and even the external participants were known to me quite well. Despite the power imbalance in interviews and it being a one-way dialogue (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005, Kvale, 2006), I chose to see my interviews as more of an exchange of views as we sometimes strayed from the planned questions to topics unrelated to the research. As stated elsewhere, I endeavoured to keep my opinions to myself to avoid influence, but I still felt it was collaborative and a two-way dialogue, although I agree with Kvale (2006) that the interviewer rules the interview – or as I prefer, manages the interview. Working with a research subject of interest to, and familiar to, all the participants further increased the sense of a shared experience, creating data about their lived experience.

Even though I know my participants, it had not occurred to me that any of them might contact me to share their reflections. However, I would not have been surprised if we had met at work and had an informal conversation which touched on reflection following the interview, but due to the pandemic, and changing to working practices, such as working from home, I have rarely seen colleagues to have any conversation. My contact details haven't changed so I assume that my participants have not wished to contact me.

Having read and reflected upon Husband's (2020) study of informed consent stretching beyond the study itself, I consider myself better prepared in future, *'to act for the sake of their good'* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005).

Transparency

As an insider-researcher I endeavour to remain open and honest with participants and stakeholders. It is unlikely that data will be reused by other researchers, but this will be covered as a possibility in the initial consent. However, the data are anonymised, and identification of participants is not possible.

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) are sponsoring the first three years of the research and I am then self-funding, and this is made clear within the final document and in the consent form and any information provided. There is no conflict of interest in the research and no commercial gain which could impact upon the objectivity of the research.

As stated above, participants can withdraw consent at any time, without providing a reason, and they are informed of this before completing the consent form, and this is made explicit on the form. For this purpose, a copy of the consent form is provided, which includes the researcher's contact details. It is unlikely that any participants have a contractual obligation to take part so any decision to withdraw will not be contested or recourse to others made. No incentives, financial or otherwise will be offered to participants to encourage them to take part.

Harm arising from participation in the research

I have considered the potential risks to participants and I do not consider there are likely to be any significant risks in the course of this research. However, any distress or discomfort arising in the course of the research will require me to rethink my actions to reduce or remove any risks of harm. There are limited advantages to participants taking part and others are unlikely to perceive that there is. If such a perception arises, information about the project will be provided and consideration will be given about how to address this at the end of the study. Participation in the research requires time and effort and this is made clear before participation is confirmed. However, the time and effort required is over a brief period of time and is unlikely to have a substantial negative impact on workloads of participants.

Privacy and data storage

Participants are offered confidentiality and anonymity, and this is explained fully from the outset. However, if participants waive their right to this they may be identified in the research if they wish, provided this does not impact on the confidentially of other individuals or institutions. Research is conducted, in part, within a small team, so other employees may become aware of the research and some details about it through discussion with them. I am aware of possible consequences of being identified and I take all reasonable precautions to avoid this through fictionalising or changing identifying features. Video recordings and photographs are not planned to be used within the research. Should a change of circumstances arise that affects anonymity that requires renegotiation of the consent, I undertake to raise the fact with the University of Sunderland Ethics Committee and seek clearance.

The requirements of GDPR are met and my organisation's data protection policy are adhered to. The use of the organisation's secure computer system for data storage complies with GDPR and uses password protection and encryption, as do the entire organisation's laptops and those private computers and laptops authorised to be used by the college.

Chapter 4 Data Collection and Data Analysis

This chapter describes the data collection and data analysis processes used in the thesis. It discusses the research design; implementation dates and contexts of events; and describes the research population; individual and groups of research participants; the duration of the research and the processes of data analysis.

According to Denscombe (2014) analysis of data is undertaken in research in order to gain a fuller understanding of something. For example, a detailed investigation of the subject the analysis might be:

- *To be able to describe its elements; or*
- *To be able to explain how something works; or*
- *To be able to interpret the meaning*

In this study, rich description is used as the starting point for the research in order to provide a summary of the background to the research problem and the context in which it emerged. These are introduced and discussed in some detail in Chapter 1. The research problem is described with reference to internal and external documentation regarding institutional responses to national and institutional policies surrounding approaches to/models of educational evaluation and improvement in Further Adult and Vocational Education (FAVTE) in England. Discussion includes accounts of what happened and when, and responses to critical incidents. Individual roles and organisations are presented and details of the demographics of the research population are given.

This data analysis chapter interprets data collected regarding practitioners' experiences of a number of approaches to/models of educational evaluation and improvement in the FAVTE sector in England from 2017-2021. It looks for patterns and regularities that lie behind the occurrence of these social phenomena. It frames data analysis as a way of providing insights and understanding, rather than the means of pursuing objective truth. From the ontological and epistemological perspectives adopted in this thesis, it is neither possible nor appropriate to provide explanations that claim to be totally objective. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, this analysis does seek to describe and offer insights into how and why different models of change and improvement and approaches to CPD impact upon/influence the mindsets and practices of education leaders, managers and teachers in the ways that they do.

It is to some extent inevitable that ideas and theories about the nature of the social world and how we can know it reflect the historical and cultural context within with a research study occurs. This research is no different. However, care has been taken in this study to acknowledge these influences whenever and wherever possible. Theories that are generated from studies of social phenomena such as this are also affected by the personal values and experience of the researcher and therefore also vulnerable to criticisms of being ‘value-laden’ rather than objective. In this respect, I have been guided by criteria for trustworthiness and credibility advocated by Nowell *et al.,* (2017). It follows, therefore, that for interpretivists, the goal of the data analysis is to focus on the how and why, the who, the when and the where of the data analysis process and to explore the alternatives (Denscombe, 2014).

The Process of Data Collection

Documentary analysis, textual analysis and interrogation of records form a major aspect of the data collection and analysis processes employed in this study. The last two OfSTED reports for Royal College are reviewed to examine their recent experiences of OfSTED Inspection and where they are currently placed in relation to the OfSTED Grading system. This are also placed in context with data produced by the OECD and Office for National Statistics relating to the catchment area in which they are situated, the employment demands and economic profile in each area.

General data from OfSTED’s website and reports are examined to establish the Inspectorate’s approach to educational evaluation, change and improvement (including the assumptions about the nature of educational practice which underpin it). The recent change in the Inspection Framework is then compared with the previous Framework.

- Internal policies for the college’s observation processes are reviewed and the chronological changes are identified and explored and used to inform and refine interview questions asked of the participants in the study. Data from these sources are analysed and used to contribute to the research question*, What interventions, methods and models of change and improvement might create conditions to support the development of teachers’ capacities for professional learning and self-improvement?*

In Royal College, three systems of observation have been employed in the past four years. Statistical information regarding graded observations and more recent ungraded observations are examined to further understand the role of these evaluation and improvement processes and their impact. The development plans, called Accelerated Development Plans (ADPs) of staff members are also examined, and structured interviews are carried out with members of staff who have fully engaged with this process regarding their experience and perceptions of this initiative.

Having examined official documents and internal policies, interview questions are developed for each of the sample group to explore the research questions about professional learning and self-improvement. Interviews provide the rich information and personal experience and perception, and this is a key feature of the data. Interviews are conducted face-to-face where possible to provide the opportunity for establishing rapport, which Thomas (2009) suggests is helpful for a successful interview.

However, the Covid 19 pandemic from March 2020 has restricted face-to-face interviewing considerably. Use of video links, such as Zoom or Teams, have become widespread across educational organisations, and interviewees are familiar with their use. Although conducting interviews via these platforms does lose the option to observe body language, it provides the opportunity to closely observe facial features and reactions in a way that would be intrusive in person. Additionally, some interviewees are more comfortable as they are in their own home.

Recording the interview, including video recording, provides a complete record without the distraction of the interviewer taking notes/writing during the interview. All interviews, however conducted, are electronically recorded and transcribed word-for-word by the researcher or through an online transcription service, TEMI.com. Where possible, an additional means of recording is used to provide a backup in case the original recording fails. Data protection issues are addressed through the use of an encrypted laptop for the recorded data, which is deleted after immediate transcription when the interview is completed. All participants are asked in advance if they are willing to be recorded on a virtual platform and all have agreed and provided written consent.

Interviews can take various forms – structured, where the questions are set out and worked through systematically, semi-structured, where additional, probing questions may be added, or a completely new direction followed by the interviewer based in the answers received, and unstructured, where topics are introduced, and interviewees given free range to speak. All have advantages and disadvantages, so the choice is dictated by the research questions, the data the researcher requires and, possibly by the mode of analysis employed.

The usual format of a structured interview is framed by a proforma with space for the interviewer to record short answers, tick yes/no boxes, numerical responses or multiple-choice answers. Structured interviews, Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2013), suggest, can be described as a verbal questionnaire and their design is similar. Compared to a questionnaire, a benefit of a structured interview, they point out, is that the interviewee cannot see later questions and the interviewer can branch off to a different direction depending on the answers. However, the latter benefit is now available in basic software such as Microsoft Forms, which provides the option of branching created by the author of the questionnaire, enabling more complex data gathering and narrowing the gap between a questionnaire and an interview. The ease with which these data can be collated and analysed is an obvious advantage, but the questions can be inflexible and will not provide the rich information and perceptions of interviewees that is sought for an interpretive study.

Unstructured interviews are not ideal as they are unlikely to cover the key areas of the study and may have information missing, which diminishes their value. Costley, Elliott & Gibbs (2013) caution that the direction of an unstructured interview may be influenced as much by the interviewee as the interviewer, limiting their value. On the positive side deep information may be obtained, but unstructured interviews are time-consuming to conduct and analyse, which, with the other disadvantages mentioned, make them unsuitable for this study.

Therefore, semi-structured interviews are judged to be the most suitable type for this study, with the interviewees being advised in advance of the purpose and subject of the study and the broad topics to be covered. Gillham (2000) suggests that this style of interview is the most important one in case study research, which forms part of this study, as, done well, it can be the richest source of data. He suggests the flexibility of this method makes it productive, but stresses that this relies on having a clear, carefully developed structure and a skilled interviewer, who has practised (Gillham, 2000) and is knowledgeable in relation to interview techniques.

To ensure it meets the criterion of a clear, carefully developed structure, question sets are prepared for each interviewee role – Lecturer, Advanced Practitioner, Quality Manager, Middle Managers and individual sets for the Senior Managers to reflect their responsibilities and depth of participation in the observation and improvement process. The questions are reviewed for effectiveness following each interview. These question sets cover the key issues in the study and are best answered in a face-to-face interview (Gillham, 2000). I am already a skilful interviewer having been trained in investigative interviewing in previous employment.

The research population for this study has been chosen to provide a wide spectrum of views of the observation processes and staff development activities that followed from them. The research population is constituted as follows (pseudonyms are used for first names and a college):

Matthew – a Senior Manager with responsibility for Quality, including the observation process. Matthew regularly observes teaching.

Sandra – a Senior Manager, temporarily with Royal College, who developed the most recent observation process.

Mark – a Senior Manager, with many years' experience of observing teaching.

Paul – a Senior Manager at City College*, with responsibility for Quality, including the observation process. Paul leads a team of Advanced Practitioners and regularly observes teaching.

Jane – a Middle Manager, with many years' experience of observing teaching.

Annie – a Middle Manager at City College*, with responsibility for the Advanced Practitioners. Annie trains observers and observes teaching regularly.

Lucy - an Advanced Practitioner for six years, who trains observers and regularly observes teaching. She is observed in her own teaching role.

Clare - an Advanced Practitioner for six years, who trains observers and regularly observes teaching. She is observed in her teaching role.

David - an Advanced Practitioner for four years, who trains observers and regularly observes teaching. He is observed in his teaching role.

Sarah – a Lecturer with many years' service. Sarah has been observed in all the observation processes discussed in this thesis.

Susan - a Lecturer with many years' service. Susan has been observed in all the observation processes discussed in this thesis.

Rose - a Lecturer with many years' service. Rose has been observed teaching in all the observation processes discussed in this thesis.

James – a Lecturer who recently joined the college and has been observed teaching in the most recent process.

John - a Trade Union Representative in college for five years. Also observers teaching and is an observee.

The Process of Data Analysis

> *'In order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a qualitative researcher must engage in active and demanding analytic processes throughout all phases of the research. Understanding these processes is therefore an important aspect not only of doing qualitative research, but also of reading, understanding and interpreting it.'*
> (Thorne, 2000, p. 68).

Data generated, even in a small qualitative study such as this, can be substantial, and the analytic processes require careful planning within the project to ensure sufficient time is allocated. Data must be collated into a form that can be analysed by theme, while retaining the ability to analyse it by individual or context (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2013). Thorne (2000) suggests that nurse researchers have taken a lead over researchers in other disciplines in establishing a formal way to judge the quality of a piece of qualitative research, and states that many nurse researchers,

> *'…have concluded that systematic, rigorous and auditable analytical processes are among the most significant factors distinguishing good from poor quality research'.*
> (Thorne, 2000, p. 70)

Being aware of bias should reduce its appearance and,

> *'…researchers must be self-critical and should scrutinise their own assumptions, methods of inquiry and analysis and ways of presenting their findings…'*
> (Hammersley *et al.,* 2001, p. 144).

This view is shared by Nowell *et al., (*2017), who consider it imperative that to create useful results that are accepted as trustworthy, qualitative research must be conducted using systematic rigorous and methodical methods, and their article provides guidance for researchers on using thematic analysis, which they suggest contributes to qualitative research as a method. Identifying that there is much written about how to conduct qualitative research, Nowell *et al.,* (2017, p.2) comment that there is insufficient literature that outlines how to conduct thematic analysis. Their practical process aims to guide researchers to, *'…create sensitive, insightful, rich, and trustworthy research findings'.* However, there are disadvantages compared to other qualitative research methods, caution Nowell *et al.,* (2017), who note that the limited literature on thematic analysis may create uncertainty in early researchers about conducting a rigorous thematic analysis, so receiving guidance from more experienced researchers may be invaluable. King (2004, p. 257) goes further and suggests that using templates in the thematic analysis of text has merit and, *'…works particularly well when the aim is to compare the perspectives of different groups of staff within a specific context.'*, and so this may be appropriate for my study.

This research uses a systematic and methodical approach to data analysis to address the issues of rigour and trustworthiness considered imperative by Nowell *et al.,* (2017), and the active and demanding analytic processes Thorne (2000) insists are essential to generate findings, and the creation and interpretation of new knowledge. The following table has been adjusted from one designed for a team to one appropriate for a single researcher, and the study data analysis process follows the six phases suggested by these authors (Nowell *et al.,* 2017).

Phases of Thematic Analysis	Means of Establishing Trustworthiness
1 Familiarising yourself with the data	Prolong engagement with data Triangulate different data collection modes Document theoretical and reflective thoughts Document thoughts about potential codes/themes Store raw data in well-organised archives Keep records of all data field notes, transcripts and reflective journals
2 Generating initial codes	Reflexive journaling Using a coding framework Audit trail of code generation
3 Searching for themes	Diagramming to make sense of theme connections Keep detailed notes about development and hierarchies of concepts and themes

4 Reviewing themes	Test for referential adequacy by returning to raw data
5 Defining and naming themes	Documentation of theme naming
6 Producing the report	Describing process of coding and analysis in sufficient detail Thick descriptions of context Description of audit trail Report on reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices throughout the entire study

Adapted from Nowell *et al.,* (2017 p. 4) Table 3

Case Study 1

Stake (1995, p. xi) described case study as*: 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances.'* and this primary case study provides detailed information about the background of the case, which is a General College of Further Education. It expands on Chapter 1 to provide more context and describe the changes that occur over a four year period. Three further case studies illuminate the use of the Accelerated Development Plan.

Royal College (pseudonym) has maintained a good reputation, despite a decline in OfSTED grades, and many local parents consider the college a natural choice for their children, particularly if they attended themselves. The provision of Higher Education (HE) courses has expanded to meet the needs of students who aspire to gain a degree or enter a profession. Many wish to live at home to study or cannot meet the challenges of travelling daily to distant Universities. Royal has a creche and nursery, which is popular with staff and HE students.

External visitors comment on the welcoming environment at the campuses and one of Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) commented, when a student held open the door for her and a manager, '*That's never happened to me before'*. However, it is quite common at Royal where students and staff enjoy their time together. The 2019 OfSTED Inspection report states that:

> *'Students and apprentices enjoy coming to college and many describe the welcoming, inclusive and supportive college environment as being like a big family in which they feel safe, make friends and develop a wide range of skills and knowledge.'*

Through mergers in 1998 and 2006 Royal College comprises three campuses and one satellite campus located within a 45-mile radius. Two offer General Further Education (GFE) and two offer specialist educational provision. A mainly rural, sparsely populated catchment area feeds the two larger campuses and satellite, which cater for students with prior attainment slightly lower than the national average, particularly for English and mathematics, and a relatively high proportion of students with significant health and educational needs. The 2019 OfSTED Inspection report notes 238 High Needs Funded learners, which is a substantial increase on the previous report of 113. Royal College therefore has a challenging remit to meet local needs and prepare students to enter the workforce or Higher Education.

As a casualty of Government austerity, two planned campuses did not materialise, and the existing buildings required substantial updating to meet current needs and provide the environment staff and students expect. Through property sales, loans and Local Enterprise Partnership funding, and support from the local authority, buildings are now fit for purpose and, in the case of HE, purpose built and extremely attractive. However, this has required the college to reduce discretionary spending for many years and there have been a number of restructures and redundancies. The college has been classed financially by the FE Commissioner as 'Requires Improvement', which has resulted in further restructures and staff redundancies, although it has returned to 'Good' in 2021.

Despite the challenges of austerity, which have impacted on staff pay and changes to conditions, such as reductions in sick pay and very modest pay rises, many staff choose to remain at Royal, with a number expressing the wish to work there until retirement. Recognition is given to staff serving for 25 years and every year there are a number of members of staff who reach this milestone.

Local economy

The main campus is in a small town with an economy historically based on a thriving port, shipbuilding, and related industries, but this has declined substantially, only retaining a fishing industry, dry bulk cargo and timber imports. Other industries of note are light engineering, food processing, linked to the local agriculture production and fishing, and chemical works. Recently there has been a major European investment in the paper production industry. Employment is higher than nationally and for many people is within factories. In the 2011 Census, Process, plant and machine operatives comprised 10.8% of the occupations at the main campus, whilst the second campus had a higher proportion at 14.4%.

The catchment area for the main campus has been described in a report, commissioned by the local Council, as having a workforce with a low skills base and the town providing a poor lifestyle offer. Despite high employment, average earnings are well below regional and national levels. Many jobs in agriculture, leisure and the small tourist industry are seasonal and have fluctuating employment needs. Education and workforce qualifications are below the national average and the borough ranks in the bottom half in terms of national deprivation. However, many people living in the area enjoy the pleasant countryside and access to the coast and might not recognise the place referred to in the report.

The area of the second campus was originally a busy port and agriculture centre, later attracting investment from other industries, such as timber manufacturers and food canning works, which used the local railway for distribution. In recent years, these industries have declined, the rail link lost, and the main employers are chilled food processing plants and a cold store facility, which through automation require less employees. The town has experienced substantial changes to its demographic since the arrival of immigrants from Poland and Eastern Europe since 2004, attracted by the unskilled and semi-skilled work which does not require good English language skills, and the availability of low-cost accommodation. Over five years ago a BBC news programme reported that more than a third of the town's population are European immigrants. Despite this report referring to 'growing tensions', there is little evidence of this, and it does not impact negatively upon the college. Indeed, students attend feeder courses in English language and progress to vocational courses, with many progressing to higher level courses and some to university. A number of Polish and Eastern European former students have returned to work at the college, some after completing degrees in the college or elsewhere. In 2019 this campus' local town was reported to be particularly affected by child poverty and the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for the Borough Council show the town being in the lowest quarter with four of the most deprived areas of the town being in the top 10% of national deprived areas.

By contrast, the smallest campus area's 2011 Census data has as the top occupation Professional 30.5%, with Process, plant and machine operatives not listed. The nearby prosperous town has thriving Science and Information Technology industries. This requires a vastly different offer to the other campuses, and this is provided by the college through a higher proportion of courses offered at degree level and specialist professional qualifications.

OfSTED Inspection history

Over the past ten years Royal has experienced three OfSTED Inspections. The earliest was graded ‘Outstanding’. Four years later Royal was graded ‘Requires Improvement’ (RI). At the latest OfSTED Inspection, Royal was graded ‘Good’. Urgent action was required when the RI grade was given, and a Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) was developed to address the key weaknesses identified. One of these areas to be addressed was the Observation process, which the OfSTED report found:

- *Despite using observation of teachers’ practice as a performance management measure, findings are not used sufficiently to improve teaching.*
- *Observers judge a high proportion of teachers’ practice to be good or better when insufficient learners do not achieve or make good progress.*

College observation and action planning process

For many years to July 2017 the college observation process was based on a one-hour graded observation by one or more trained observers reporting against an internal set of principles based on OfSTED criteria, followed by an individual feedback session of thirty minutes to one hour. From this, an action plan was created and reviewed at the annual appraisal with the line manager.

The college procedure for observations, dated 2016, states that the purpose as follows:

> *The focus of the Session Observation Scheme is on individual development leading to improved teaching and thereby improved learning. The emphasis of the scheme will therefore be on observing, and grading, the teaching and learning experience; enabling the college to make judgements about the quality of that teaching and learning experience, but above all to help colleagues improve their professional practice, overcome any identified weaknesses and to share good practice.*

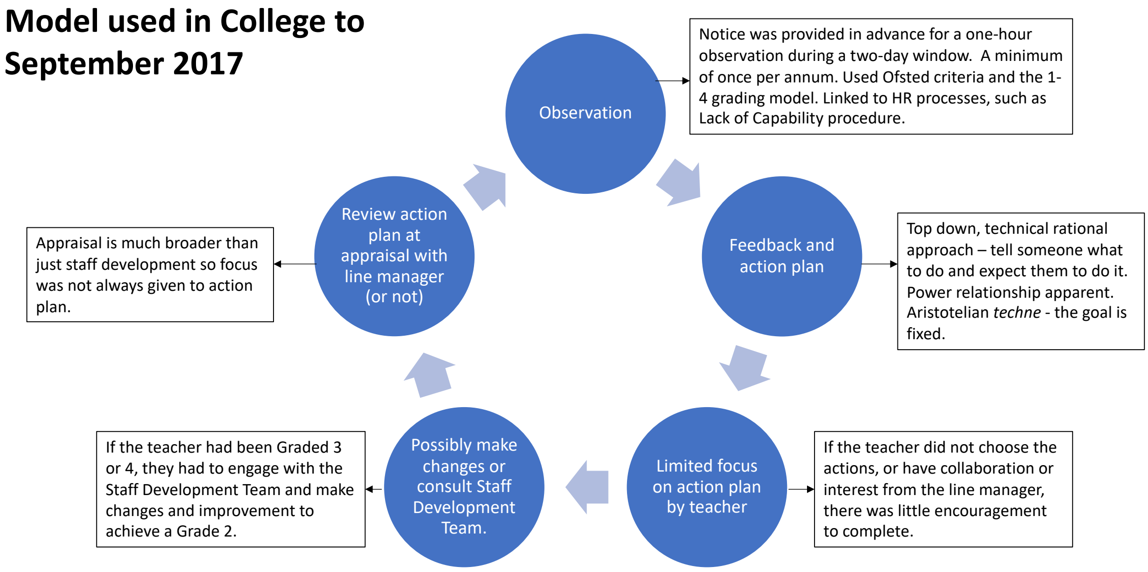


Figure 4

Observation of teaching was part of the academic line managers' responsibility and senior managers were also part of the Session Observation team. Training took place annually and was compulsory in order to continue to observe as part of the team. Training sessions reviewed the previous period and discussed current issues and areas to concentrate on in the forthcoming year. New observers attended training and were moderated for at least two sessions before observing alone. Moderated observations were also common for experienced observers, which ensured they were working to the same standards. Standardisation meetings took place annually where groups of observers read through anonymised reports and decided the grade they implied. It was rare that the reports did not match the assumed grading, and this was considered to show that reporting and grading was sound. It provided observers the opportunity to look through other observers' reports and consider their own reporting style. Comments were required to be factual and not make suggestions or mention 'missed opportunities', and moderation was used to quality assure the process.

Members of the college's Staff Development Team were also observers of teaching and delivered the training. The Manager, the Head of Teaching and Learning, was responsible for ensuring all staff were observed and for the quality of reporting and feedback. The role was also responsible for reporting statistics to the Senior Management Team (SMT) and for liaising with line managers and HR when sessions were Graded 3 or 4.

The observation report was based on criteria in the college Learning Strategy; ten principles developed in 2013, with later updates, which covered all aspects of teaching and learning. College training was linked to the principles, as were induction programmes for new academic staff and internal Continuing Professional Development (CPD), and therefore they were familiar to most staff. Examples of principles are: Active Learning, Assessment Feedback, Crisp Starts and Effective Ends.

As was usual in the observation process of the time and mirroring OfSTED, sessions were graded. Grading matched the OfSTED criteria as follows:

1 Outstanding
2 Good
3 Unsatisfactory
4 Inadequate

Although grading was considered in some ways a hinderance, it was noted that it did follow the OfSTED model and the breakdown of observations by Grade was required information for the Self-Assessment Report (SAR,) so at the time it was deemed suitable by SMT.

Notice of the observation was provided up to two working weeks in advance, with a two-day window advised. For example, an observee was notified that an observation would occur in any session on Monday or Tuesday in two weeks' time. For some staff this resulted in a flurry of activity; creating detailed session plans of great length, bringing their mandatory Teaching Record Book up to date, advising their students and any support staff working with them. Some lecturers and their managers commented on the stress this created. Others considered this an advantage, providing time to prepare. At this time I did not have many concerns about the observation process, where I had been observed as a lecturer and now led the process. I had previously worked in stockbroking and accounting roles and for many years I was a volunteer Special Constable, so my background was very much a rule-following one, where everything was set out. However, I was increasing concerned about the impact of observation on individuals. In my role as provider of notice for the observation, I was aware that some teachers found this stressful and, for this reason, I used my discretion and did not give notice before a holiday period and rarely on a Friday. This resulted in observations not occurring in the week after half term, for example, but this did not create any difficulties and hopefully reduced stress.

Following a series of observations carried out in a short period to replicate the OfSTED experience, termed a Mocksted, the senior manager said that he wouldn't do this again in the same contracted period as planning had deflected staff from their roles. Yet, what planning usually took place? Why was observation considered so demanding that it required far more preparation than was done for the students' other sessions? Observers did see some excessively long, detailed session plans, which would not usually be created as they would be too time-consuming and had limited value. Students rarely commented to observers that the class was not the usual offering, but observers sometimes heard later from Learning Support Officers (LSO) that the session was very different from the usual style, and reverted to the usual teaching mode immediately the observer left.

Other staff, often experienced teachers, dusted off their 'observation' session and relied on this to work yet again, and observers sometimes referred to this – saying to others in the observation team that they have seen X's 'observation session'. This resistance, suggests Cockburn, (2005, cited in O'Leary 2020, p. 28) can result in '*artificiality*' in an observed session, where teachers have adopted an *'orthodox style of delivering lessons',* in order to achieve a successful outcome. Experienced teachers can use rehearsed sessions, or one delivered previously, to *'play the game'* as they know what is expected (O'Leary, 2020, p. 29). This begs the question that if they believe that are delivering what is considered good teaching, why this is not their usual mode?

Another form of resistance, or possibly a lack of confidence, is using revision and working on assignments in observed sessions, when the Scheme of Work shows a taught session was planned. The losers in this scenario are the students, who are not receiving the teaching to which they are entitled. Using these strategies sees the process as a potentially negative, disruptive event, which is unlikely to bring about the further development and improvement of teaching. It was frustrating for the observer, who had to decide whether to report on what they had seen or complete a further observation, which would be at least two weeks later, due to the notice required.

This suggests that observation was not viewed in any way as a developmental process or one leading to improvement, but one to be endured from time to time and batted away, if possible, through manipulating the teaching strategy or topic of the session or as mentioned above, using a tried and tested session. Carrying on as usual with their teaching was the strategy for more confident staff, or those who did not consider it necessary to make any changes, as they saw little value or purpose in the process.

This disconnect between the management of the college and the teaching staff was not facilitating performance improvement and could potentially drive a wedge between the two groups. Views expressed by teaching staff in the UCU Report (UCU, 2013) on observation, although relatively small-scale, was the largest survey completed and made clear the lack of developmental activity that followed observation and the resentment of those who felt they were subjected to it. The feeling of something ‘being done’ to teachers was common and indicates the way the power relationship between management and teaching staff was perceived.

The college management were aware of the views of some staff around observations, but also viewed observation as a necessary evil and something required by OfSTED. As the process was robustly followed, with regular training and moderation, it was assumed to be part of the continuing professional development of staff. However, this was the area most neglected, as the action plan was routinely ignored until the annual appraisal when it might receive scant examination.

Feedback was given a high priority in the process and was provided individually, by appointment, as soon as possible, although rarely directly after the observation in order to give both participants time to reflect. When making the appointment, some observees said, *'Can I just have the grade?'* and did not wish to attend a meeting. Such a response suggests that observees were dismissive of the process, or the observer, or fearful of the meeting, which indicates an extremely negative view of the process of observation and its value. However, the meeting was a mandatory part of the process and much consideration, including speaking to other observers for guidance, went into the creation of a factual and fair report, and the action plan was intended to be a joint activity, gaining 'buy in' from the teacher. Observers reported feeling disconcerted when observees did not wish to engage as they usually felt they were taking part in worthwhile process in performance management.

Most observees engaged in a discussion about their session and a sizeable minority said they enjoyed or benefitted from the discussion through thinking about changes, improvements or training activities. However, the majority either did not value the discussion or found it difficult to engage with it. Some saw it as something to get through and I was told*, 'I will listen to you',* knowing that this person had no intention of taken any subsequent action. As an observer, it was very dispiriting when you had spent time considering the session and writing it up as well as you could.

In my role as quality assurer for the process I rarely received complaints from observees but those I did tended not to query the grade given, but to say that they felt 'patronised' by the observer. This was usually by a relatively new observer, who had taken a 'top down' approach of telling or suggestion what the observee could have done in their session or could do in future. As observers were not always subject specialists the assumption that they could make suitable suggestions could be very irritating, Cockburn, (2005) cited in O'Leary (2020, p. 28) argues that, '…*the observer is commonly perceived as possessing greater power'*, which, *'…is legitimised by organisational arrangements'*, which impacts negatively upon the likelihood of the discussion leading to any development, and addresses more the performance management purpose of observation. This returns us to the perceived power relationship in observations where you are told what to do and how to improve, without the support and joint working required to do this as collaborators. Following any concerns expressed by observees, I would discuss them with the observers and stress that the meeting should take a coaching approach. I would moderate their next observation, which would be with a different observee.

Staff Graded 3 or 4 would be offered a further observation, with a different observer, within a week if they felt there were circumstances affecting their teaching in the observed session, although few chose this option. Those Graded 3 would be offered support from the Staff Development Team or their manager and a further observation would be completed within four weeks. This usually resulted in a session Graded 2 ‘Good’, which was the end of the matter until their next annual observation. Some managers routinely Graded their staff 2, ‘Good’, perhaps to avoid any stigma of having a poorly performing member of staff. This would end any support meetings and rarely brought about improvements, and in the next observation the original concerns were often seen. As this could be up to a year later any poor practice was likely to have taking place during that period. It is unclear whether managers were concerned about their staff’s feelings when faced with making improvements or whether they themselves felt under pressure to have a high-functioning team. So, during this period the teacher continued to teach in a less than optimal ways but did not receive any support to makes changes.

If staff were Graded 4, a meeting would be held between their manager, the Human Resources Officer (HRO) and the Head of Teaching and Learning, to devise an action plan for improvement. This could include support from the central Staff Development Team, peer observation, support from the manager or self-improvement activities. The manager would consider whether there were health issues affecting teaching, or other concerns about the staff member’s performance, such as timekeeping or late marking, which would indicate to them that the Lack of Capability (LoC), often shortened to ‘Capability’, process should be used. This is a formal process with targets and support provided.

The action plan, with or without the link to LoC process, would be discussed with the member of staff at a meeting with their manager. Deadlines would be given for four to six weeks when another observation was scheduled, which was expected to be Graded 2, ‘Good’. Those in the LoC process would have a regular, minuted, review. Consideration would be given to extending deadlines and this commonly occurred. The LoC process was used infrequently for several reasons. Few staff were Graded 4, perhaps indicating a reluctance from observers to award this grade or a limited number of poor sessions seen.

Staff whose teaching was of concern to managers were often passed to the Staff Development Team to observe, possibly resulting in a lower grade profile awarded by the SDT than other observers in the college, which could make staff anxious if they were being observed by them. Managers often voiced concerns that staff Graded 4 would '*go off sick'* with stress and they would have to cover their work, or that it would impact on a good working relationships and create more work in the team, which created pressure to avoid giving the grade. Occasionally staff did take sickness absence, particularly if there was already a health problem, but most staff worked on their action plan and attained a higher grade, although this was not always sustained. For the very few who did not demonstrate improvement, the endless round of support meetings, informal observations, followed by formal observations still Graded 4, either resulted in them voluntarily leaving or being dismissed by a member of the Senior Management Team.

Qualitative comments on graded lesson observations
I don't know if it was a box ticking exercise to see the session folder was up to date and the session plan was there. Putting it [session plan] down onto a bit of paper was the worrying part of the observation. Grading? I do think it's useful to have the grading. I do think sometimes we get stuck into doing something and not realise we have dipped. I think it's nice for someone to come in and just say, actually, this is not quite right. And have you thought about changing this and how we could improve things? I think too many people think the observation team is there to trick us or trip us up. (Rose, Lecturer) I think when a session is graded, all the person receiving the feedback is interested in is the grading. When staff have notice, I don't think it is ideal because they can plan for it. (Jane, Middle Manager)

I think observation is absolutely nerve wracking if I'm really honest. And I think the majority of people do. I actually found the grading method very stressful. I definitely felt like there was this stigma – what your number was, what your grade was. (Susan, Lecturer)

An observation, once a year, a judgement of a lecturer was not really reflective of how that person performed typically. It was a fairly artificial process. It was quite stressful for the individual. Therefore, it didn't tell you much about their performance overall, or in fact, the learning of their students overall and the fact it was graded tended to restrict the discussion, because when people are given a grade, they tend to stop listening. (Mark, Senior Manager)

The system of dropping in once a year lacks validity. (Paul, external Senior Manager)

[Following the OfSTED Inspection] We recognised some of the limitations of our previous approach towards observations. The more punitive aspects that had grown into a level of anxiety that staff attributed to it and the feature at that time of graded observations, the ramifications of the outcome if the grade wasn't right and where it left them. (Matthew, Senior Manager)

From a personal response, I quite liked the grading. I knew where I was and what needed to improve. The grading part felt like a measurement. I don't think it is a true reflection of your teaching throughout the year. So therefore, what is the value of it long term in improving the teaching? But it was then the case that you were matching what was going on with inspections. (David, Advanced Practitioner)

I had to change the paperwork because in those days we had to prepare sessions plans and course files. It wasn't affecting me a huge amount because I am quite used to be observed, but people around me were especially anxious and nervous about it. Perhaps they feel they are being judged but observation is a way of judging the quality of T & L (Teaching and Learning), but it depends on the individual how they feel. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner)

> The notice had advantages and disadvantages and some people were really stressed by that. Some people like that as they know what to expect and they normally could prepare a bit better. As an observer my expectations were higher. I expected to see the documentation and prepared materials. If the lesson was well-prepared, I would have more knowledge of what's going on, what the teacher planned … I think a lot of people had a sense of comfort as it had been going on a for a long time and it was easy to predict what to expect. (Lucy, Advanced Practitioner)

A recurring theme, particularly from managers, was the perception that grading was not a reliable indicator of the quality of teaching and learning but a snapshot in time. Whilst recognising this, some observees liked having a grade to indicate how they were doing and what improvements to make. The sample includes three Advanced Practitioners, who are recruited on evidence of high performance in teaching and learning and it is possible, or even likely, they are speaking from the experience of receiving high grades, which may influence their views. They also have a strong commitment to improvement, and so value feedback, a view which is not necessarily shared by all lecturers. However, receiving Grade 1 was not necessarily the experience of all the lecturers in the sample for every observation.

Although, as stated, staff were rarely given low grades, particularly Grade 4, there was a culture of fear about this. There was not a management culture of *'trying to catch people out'* yet some staff had serious concerns about an observed session and a number were very resistant to anyone, including their manager, entering the class. A few staff who taught Higher Education (HE) courses encouraged their students to express the view that anyone coming to their class disrupted it and they did not expect that to happen. Typical concerns from teachers were*, 'What if a student swears?'; 'The IT often plays up – will this affect my grade?'* The observation team, particularly those from the SDT who completed most of the observations, were seen as 'judges' and decision-makers about how teaching should be. The observation proforma was seen as a checklist that must have everything covered. This was not required, but it was a commonly held view.

Others took a more positive view of their work and considered that previously being Graded 1, Outstanding, was sufficient to ensure that they would continue to be seen favourably. A suggestion received from a Union member was that only those graded lower should be seen, which totally ignored the change in performance that can occur over time and circumstances, and questions of equity and confidentiality.

Bizarrely, being awarded a Grade 1 for a session could be divisive and it was several years before I realised this. In many staffrooms observees were pounced on by colleagues when they returned from an observation and asked their grade. In one department a highly esteemed colleague received a Grade 3 for lack of planning and a poor session. He put a poster up in the staffroom, saying, *'Grade 3 and proud'* and referred to it frequently. As a result, others who received a higher grade were extremely uncomfortable and felt unworthy, even when they had been observed by their Head of Faculty jointly with a SDT member. A new member of staff, when congratulated on her Grade 1 observation said, *'It did me no favours in the staffroom'*, which obviously diminished any pleasure in her achievement and made her feel uncomfortable with her peers. I hadn't realised how pervasive the negative effect of even a Grade 1 was within our college, but when I attended a conference about observations, informal conversations with delegates from colleges which had discontinued grading confirmed that this had been an issue for them, and had become an unexpected advantage of not grading. This phenomenon was recognised in Susan's interview, where she spoke about the 'stigma' of grading, which based on my understanding could exist at both ends of the grading spectrum but would impact more on an individual if a Grade 3 or 4 were given.

When grading was discontinued the link to LoC became blurred and identifying teaching that was not of the expected standard was difficult. Other measures, such as low achievement rates, student dissatisfaction or non-compliance with quality procedures could all indicate performance that required improvement but observing teaching had always been the key confirmation.

Response about the LoC process

Without grades, trying to decide at what point somebody goes into a capability process is a little more tricky. And because it's not, '*This is an inadequate session or requires improvement',* when we don't explicitly say that. Although it should be obvious from the report that there are significant areas for improvement, somebody might argue that when they that they do not know that their teaching was unsatisfactory. So, I think that we need to work through this a little bit as a process with people. It's not as clear cut. I actually think it's better to be honest because there's a discussion going on about improvements right from the start, but I think it's a little blurred. (Mark, Senior Manager)

OfSTED were concerned about the value of observation and discontinued grading individual sessions from September 2015, with a later report stating, *'…owing to concerns around the reliability of single observations, we have moved away from grading lessons of individual teachers to focus observation at the school level',* (OfSTED, 2018), however due to this announcement being published late in the academic year the college decided to continue grading, only discontinuing from September 2017.

A key area to be addressed by the college, identified in the OfSTED Inspection Report, was the grading of sessions as Good or Outstanding, which was not borne out by student progress or achievement, nor OfSTED's observations. A suggestion for the small number of staff Graded 3 or 4, thereby inflating the grade profile at the time of the OfSTED Inspection in 2017 was offered by one interviewee:

Response about Grading 3 or 4

I remember when OfSTED grading changed. 3 had been 'Satisfactory', which was changed to RI (Requires Improvement), I noticed that although the number was the same, the judgement attached to the number was RI, therefore it was more severe and for years people who had 3 didn't worry about that, it wouldn't put them into capability or anything like that. The moment it changed to RI, I noticed, I did have any evidence, that suddenly 3 was not given that often. I remember sitting in a meeting where it was said we have many good and outstanding lessons, I personally thought that I don't think that is the situation. That Is not what I am seeing on a daily basis. (Lucy, Advanced Practitioner)

It is not possible to validate whether this practice was adopted, even unconsciously, when many observers were contributing to grades, however, it is apparent from the statistics below that Grades 3 or 4 were rarely given and the percentage of Grades 1 and 2 was above the college expectation of 85%.

Session observation grades for years 2015-16 and 2016-17					
	Outstanding	Good	Requires Improvement	Unsatisfactory	Total
2015-6	64 (47%)	58 (42%)	14 (10%)	1 (1)	137
2016-7	44 (29%)	85 (57%)	18 (12%)	3 (2%)	150

Table 4

Nerve-wracking, stressful, anxiety, nervous – words used to describe how many teachers felt about their observations, even with the comfort of familiarity and long usage. It seems extraordinary now that this was known and accepted as a norm in this college, and most others, as will be discussed in Chapter 5. A senior manager described the *'more punitive aspects'* contributing to anxiety, yet my knowledge and experience of the college is that its culture, on a continuum of supportive and punitive, is firmly in the supportive zone.

Hindsight and contrasting with different, non-graded approaches to assessing the quality of teaching and learning may have encouraged interviewees to question and challenge the appropriateness of grading, and its value, but as stated in interviews, it was used to mirror the OfSTED method. The familiarity of the procedure, and that it was annual for most staff, created little management appetite for change until the OfSTED Inspection in 2017 destroyed the notion that the process was providing valid and reliable information.

Feedback following graded observations

Feedback was provided to all participants when they were observed. The targets could be agreed with the observer, who if not their line manager may not have any contact with them subsequently. Therefore, it was not always clear to the observee who was responsible for the follow up and they recognised that there was usually no true follow up, other than a discussion at their appraisal and that they were not required to demonstrate meeting the targets in any formal way.

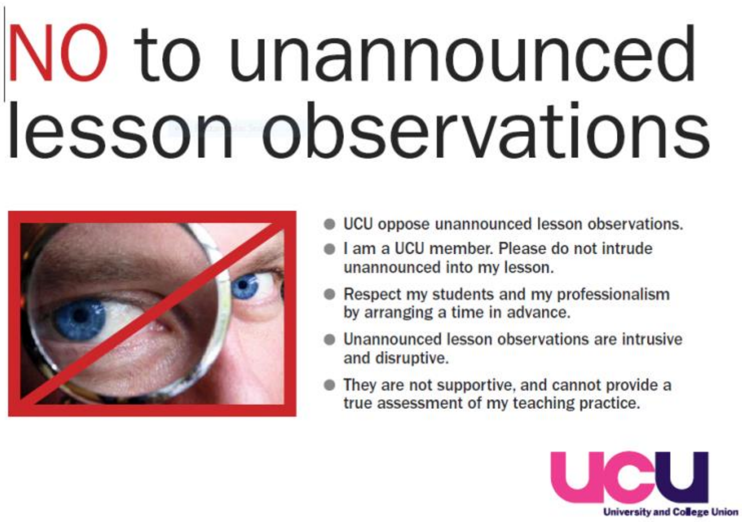
Qualitative comments on action plans created following graded observations (interviewees are denoted by pseudonyms)
I remember us having to work to ensure those targets were met on the action plan, but I think sometimes they weren't necessarily a real focus for the member of staff. (Jane, Middle Manager) I think some observers were good at giving feedback and they would get some of my views and we would agree on targets, but my personal experience was that they were not particularly followed up. Personally, I took on board the feedback and I would work on that, but I don't think that I would formally demonstrate how those targets were met. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner) Not much was happening with the targets. I was confused who was supposed to be reviewing these targets. I know in my role I wasn't reviewing the targets with teachers. I think it was more the manager's role, but I haven't seen any evidence of this. (Lucy, Advanced Practitioner)

The lack of clarity around the responsibility for the targets of the action plan diminished the potential for improvements to practice. Those who did not feel the need to improve, or did not know how to, had no clear path to support, and little encouragement. Those who did work on their targets rarely had the opportunity to discuss them until their annual appraisal, where it would be part of a much wider discussion. UCU (2013, p. 51) participant responses show that 71.8% (2526) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that*, 'I believe that lesson observation feedback is the most important part of the observation progress'*, but only 37.1% (1304) respondents strongly agreed or agreed that*, 'I believe that lesson observation feedback given during graded observations has identified clear areas of improvement',* showing a yawning gap between the expectation of staff and the experience. This raises the question of the extent to which this is connected to the observer not necessarily having knowledge of the subject area and therefore being less able to agree suitable targets with the observee?

Interestingly, the credibility of the observer is not questioned by any of the respondents and has not been raised with me over the period of years I have been responsible for the process. The exceptions is staff teaching HE who have, on occasion, queried the credentials of the observer, particularly their HE qualifications. UCU (2013) cite Cockburn's study which found a contested issue is the credibility of the observer, particularly their experience and suitability for the role. The expectation was that observers were currently teaching to be credible observers. The same report (UCU, 2013) cites O'Leary's research where the observer's knowledge or experience of the subject area were key to credibility. Without specific responses, I can only make assumptions why this has not been an issue within the college. It is widely known that observers are trained annually, and many staff would be aware that new observers are required to complete joint observations before going 'solo'. All observers are managers, or from the SDT who deliver initial teacher training. Managers are required to have a first degree, and many have higher degrees. Most managers teach regularly, if only a small number of hours, or to provide teaching cover, but do not cover all the teaching subject areas they observe. Is this due to observees being polite or do they consider it is not acceptable to raise this? This could be a subject for further study to improve the integrity of the process.

Observers who were reporting and providing feedback on Grades 3 or 4 were often uncomfortable about the post-observation meeting and were able to discuss it confidentially with another member of the observation team before the discussion. A few observees could not cope with the feedback, particularly with a Grade 4 and left the room in distress, which would also distress the observer. Some staff went off sick following a poor grade, but this was usually someone who had a health problem which was affecting their teaching, although the observer was unlikely to be aware of this. Looking back on this it seems extraordinary that this was a process in use for some years. There was stress for observers and, obviously, more so, for observees. Observers would dread giving someone a Grade 4 and sometimes the line manager defended the teaching, despite not having been present. But Grade 4 was only for the direst teaching where students were not learning at all, when it was considered necessary. I have had experienced teachers getting up and leaving the room when I was talking to them about their session, regardless of how sympathetically I delivered it so I understand it can never be palatable to have such a judgement on your work. That this was in response to the requirement to provide OfSTED with data demonstrates the impact such a demand can make and the decisions and their consequences that arise from it.

The perspective of several members of staff, particularly members of the University and College Union (UCU), was that session observation was ineffective and created unnecessary pressure on teaching staff. Following the publication of the UCU report, Developing a National Framework for the Effective Use of Lesson Observation in Further Education (UCU, 2013) a number of staffrooms displayed the poster below, which was also provided by UCU as a card to be passed to an observer entering a classroom. I am not aware of the latter use but there was considerable discontent from UCU members, some of whom spoke to me in my role in leading the observation team. The influence of UCU's viewpoint appeared to be strong and probably shared beyond the membership.



A cultural shift

The college was shocked when OfSTED said it was over-grading and sought a new, more rigorous method, which at the same time worked to change the culture around observations. Due to the lack of focus on the targets, the impact of the current process on teaching and learning was considered minimal, with only a few staff working on improvements discussed at the post-observation meeting. Therefore, it was not considered a good method to address the rapid improvements required to satisfy OfSTED, the college Governors and Senior Management Team.

As the Support and Challenge visit by an OfSTED Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) in June 2017 could not discern much progress in improving the quality of teaching or its assessment of quality, a decision was made to move away from reliance on a graded lesson observation process. The college would undertake more 'learning walks', which were a form of brief observation, described below, which would focus on the student experience. There was no individual feedback provided and no form of grading or other measure of quality.

In August 2017 Royal changed to the new process, launched at a Building Better Learning Conference. Led by an external consultant, who was working successfully with a number of colleges, this was a radically different approach. At a stroke grading, notice and individual feedback were removed. It required collaboration to put learning at the heart of the college and for teachers being prepared to reflect and focus on their practice, with support. The consultant explained the purpose of learning walks thus:

> *'Learning walks are full of potential to support awareness of the quality of learners' experiences, provide opportunities for reflection, and get teams excitedly making they improvements they seek… Many providers talk about how they'd like learning walks to create more of an open-door policy, helping teachers feel less pressure to perform, or to identify what learning is like on a day-to-day basis'.*

Intensive training commenced for all observers with theory and practical sessions provided by the consultant. Senior managers were also involved in the training. This was introduced to managers and observers by the Principal as follows:

> *'The emphasis of the work with managers is about developing our understanding of the learners' experience and progress in order to collaborate with teaching and teaching support staff to build a positive improvement culture. I have asked managers to make time to develop their passion for and genuine interest in learners' experiences and learning, teaching and assessment practice.*
>
> *As an outcome from the conference, we have decided to move away from a reliance on a graded lesson observation process and spend more time undertaking learning walks. This will enable us to regularly look at the student experience in a range of learning environments. The focus of learning walks will, therefore, not be on the teacher, there will be no individual session feedback and no grades will be formed. Our aim is to open up a regular dialogue with staff to support our collective understanding of learners and how they are experiencing their learning and, ultimately supporting each other to drive improved learners' experience, progress and outcomes.'*

During the training, the system in current use was denigrated by the consultant on a number of occasions. An example from my field notes was the comment (paraphrased), *'You know how it is – you haven't been able to see the person for feedback, so you end up speaking to them in the corridor*'. I was surprised at this comment as this practice did not occur in Royal College. We had specific requirements for the delivery of feedback in pre-arranged, private meeting. At no time had any observee said that their feedback had been delivered in a public area. Due to our four teaching sites, delays sometimes occurred and occasionally this was addressed through an arranged telephone call, but this was used rarely and never used for sessions Graded three or four, where a face-to-face meeting was always required. Belittling the current system, with extremely limited knowledge and no experience of it, in order to enhance the view of the new system, felt very unprofessional and unnecessary. I felt this keenly, as I had always striven to provide a professional experience for teachers.

As stated above, training was intense and small groups of observers would go into classrooms for no more than ten minutes and look around, speak to students if possible and leave quietly. The process did not allow any notes to be taken, so after three of these visits, the group would repair to an empty classroom to discuss what we had seen. Without making notes, even seeing only three classes could challenge the memory. The lack of writing was seen to be a less formal approach, just a *‘walk through’* rather than an observation, but it was a college requirement to record the session.

The consultant, without explanation, was very much against us saying we were doing a learning walk, so when we entered the class, some staff asked if they could help us. This disrupted the class more than saying why we were there, so it seemed counterproductive and eventually we sometimes just said why we had come into the room.

We were guided what to look for, such as students sitting alone, unusual groupings etc., but we had no opportunity to ask the tutor why that was, but only the option to use the standard report form which had a box for, *‘I noticed’* and a box for, *‘I wondered’*. As we didn’t provide individual feedback and therefore did not meet the observee, we had to continue to wonder, as possibly did they.

One of the difficulties with the process was the lack of clear guidance as the consultant did not give us anything in writing. She was excellent at asking students questions which were very revealing about their progress but, although asked by me three times, did not provide any training on this or exemplar questions. As the college employed the consultant, this lack of guidance was extremely challenging to deal with in my role as the quality assurer for the process, but not the initiator or manager of the relationship. Apart from comments from the consultant about OfSTED inspections, which were usually negative, there was very little background or explanation about the process or any links to research.

The consultant was recommended by another college, Graded 3 Requires Improvement, by OfSTED. It was an interesting and costly approach, which used an external consultant to deliver a system not based on rigorous, robust, peer-reviewed research, to SMT, many managers and other observers. Time was pressing with OfSTED knocking at the door and a change in culture desired. Getting staff onside was crucial and the move to no grading and no feedback to individuals, after the bruising OfSTED Inspection, was presumably attractive to senior managers.

Qualitative comments about the implementation of the new process
I know it could be very helpful to remove the anxiety and understand some of the barriers that we'd grown into. It left a number of us requiring quite a lot of training in the mindset that the different approach was taking, but they had a value to it. It also had a challenge to us around how we are able to articulate, in a quantitative style that approaches that we are taking and the impact of those approaches, certainly for external stakeholders like governors. (Matthew, Senior Manager) We had a quite lot of training and it was seen as a positive way forward…I'm not sure that it was great really. You couldn't really say anything overly, not negative, but you couldn't pick up on things that you felt needed improving. I think I noticed this, and I wondered that, was a bit woolly really. (Jane, Middle Manager) When I heard about it, I thought, Oh, I don't like this. [But] I went round with one of the APs and dropped into classes for only a few minutes. It was very, very beneficial. It was not judgmental but actually was more beneficial to the person walking round. It was very enlightening. (Susan, Lecturer) …was really good at building up trust and confidence in the teachers, because they didn't feel threatened when people came to their sessions. It led to a fairly open discussion about the session where the observer was asking genuine questions that were of interest, about the learners, why they did or didn't participate, why things were organised in a particular way. I think having some sort of judgement is good though.

And it doesn't mean that people stop listening and the discussion with a member of staff can still focus on development. (Mark, Senior Manager)

What we worked hard on was enabling and upskilling the heads and leads in each of the areas to know what learning looked like and to be more involved and get closer. …learning walks, it is them doing it, kind of insider research almost. That's where a kind of confidence comes from, we know what is happening more. (Paul, external Senior Manager)

I think initially staff were a bit uneasy about no notice. I've got some staff who would really get themselves in a bit of a panic thinking I'm going to have an observation, but I don't know when they're going to come in and that would cause a lot of anxiety. Now it's here they are they're going to be in for 10 or 15 minutes, and they were that much happier with that and there wasn't the focus on the grading which was just a pain, and this is what I notice, and this is what I wondered. So, I know some staff did find it better and actually for be as a manager just being able to drop in it gave me a more rounded picture of the teaching that was going on. And I do think for some staff the notice things and wondering should make them think and give some thought to your opinion. (Jane, Middle Manager)

People were disturbed as they didn't get feedback. So, in the meeting they didn't know if it was about them or somebody else. They didn't like that. Some feedback from members was they found it quite relaxing, even with no notice. Real life account of what's happening. No difficulty with the union position on No unannounced observations. (John, Union Representative)

Observers completed learning walks regularly and generally teaching staff responded well. Not having notice was stressful for some but less so for others, who found the previous process required great preparation. Not receiving feedback was unsatisfactory for some teaching staff, who found observers coming in and leaving without them having any idea what they thought rather unnerving, whilst others, knowing that there was no feedback, felt more comfortable. The removal of grading, both high and low, reduced tension and fear from staff, who ceased to feel they were a number.

A major task for observers was seeing at least three teachers from the same department in a short time, in order to anonymise the report to the manager, but still provide some value. It also relied on the timing of the meeting and the ability of the manager to discuss the findings and agree next steps with the team. This was variable, with some meetings only occasional, when the reports might be irrelevant to the current sessions.

Principal's email - Report on new observation process

After the first term of the new observation process, a report to the Governors' Performance Review and Quality Committee informed that:

- *Data collected through the process confirms OfSTED findings;*
- *An external consultant and former HMI agree with the findings identified by the Staff Development Team;*
- *Faculty Management meetings discuss findings;*
- *Programme Areas hold discrete meetings to discuss LAT, with a member of the Staff Development Team attending when possible to offer guidance and training opportunities on themes emerging from learning walks;*
- *Lecturers are becoming familiar with having regular visitors to their classes;*
- *Some lecturers would welcome individual feedback, seeing it as a development opportunity. They have been offered an informal observation with individual feedback.*

This was a more positive report than the previous academic year, which had not produced the required focus by teams on teaching, learning and assessment. The addition of the view of a consultant, a former Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) added credence to the findings and the new Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT) meetings replaced less focussed, more operational meetings. However, it was not possible to provide detailed insights, and this lack would become more apparent, and less tolerated, as the year progressed.

All appeared to be going well and it was certainly true that staff were becoming very familiar with visitors to their sessions, establishing the desired open door policy, but within months the college SMT and Governors found a lack of comfort without the familiar grading. Wading through the free text reports, with *"noticings"* and *"wonderings",* completed by many observers, all new to the process, made my task of summarising for the SMT particularly challenging and time consuming and did not provide the assurance that teaching was improving.

Some staff were unable to accept that they were not being reported on individually and were suspicious of the process. Others were disinterested, and some could not, or would not, relate the observation information at the Learning, Assessment and Teaching meetings to themselves. Some programme areas used the information to agree team targets. As the months passed without individual feedback many staff felt,

> *'…unsure whether we are doing enough, doing the right thing, doing as much as others, or as well as others, constantly looking to improve, to be better, to be excellent', replacing the positives of no grading and the increased confidence of classroom visits, with, … a high degree of uncertainty and instability'*
> (Ball, 2003, p. 220)

With the substantial number of observers there was bound to be some divergence of practice, but our training had been clear and was backed up by internal quality documents stating:

> *'Observers shall directly feedback (notice/observable facts and 'wonderings') practice and forward it to relevant Faculty Managers, who will be encouraged to share it with staff of the curriculum area …'*

So I was surprised when a senior manager shared that they found it too difficult not to say anything when leaving the session and therefore provided brief feedback. This went to the core of the difficulty with this process, denying a discussion of good practice, as well as what could be improved, but the college had bought into the process and trained us to use it. I was taken aback that one of the decision-makers did not follow the process. Providing feedback to a limited number of observees lacked equity and created discord when staff learned that some had received individual feedback, even if very brief.

During the 2017-2018 academic year, Royal College employed an individual consultant in each Faculty for a month or more to focus on teaching and learning, reporting back to the Head of Quality. The consultants completed session observations and gave feedback to observees and shared their findings with Faculty Heads. This created some tension, as the college observers were still adhering to a different process of learning walks without feedback, despite some staff asking for this.

Comments from an anonymous survey conducted by the Interim Senior Manager in June 2018, when the process had been in place for an academic year.

- *Staff need to introduce themselves to students - students are often put on 'edge'.*
- *There have been occasions where personnel have entered the room with little or no introduction. It would be beneficial to both lecturers and students if those entering the room, could introduce themselves.*
- *Got used to people coming in and out of sessions, reminder of always having an objective for every session and clear structure.*
- *Teacher to be able to show what has been missed – to reduce the need for wondering! Would not need to wonder if they were asked!*
- *Individual feedback please with a structured action plan/interventions.*
- *Really liked the previous formal observation very clear process and positive/negative with clear actions.*
- *A definite need for 1:1 where improvements required, enjoyed the comprehensive feedback from QSM [consultant].*
- *Staff have requested more detailed feedback; during the early part of the year feedback was generic and staff felt they needed more specific feedback. This has improved but not in all cases.*

- *Feedback has been most useful from the QSM [consultant], not so much from the Staff Development Team [who were unable to provide feedback within the college process]*

Having differences within the observation/learning walk process was causing confusion, particularly as the consultants provided feedback and reported to the Faculty Management about individuals, whereas the college process did neither. The survey was conducted to inform the new Interim Senior Manager, Sandra (pseudonym), how to develop the process to make it more developmental and provide information about the quality of teaching, although the college had already taken some steps towards this based on our work with our Strategic Colleges Improvement Funds (SCIF) partner, Marine College (pseudonym), which predated Sandra's arrival.

SCIF bid

In December 2017 Royal submitted a bid for funding from the Strategic Colleges Improvement Funds, which was developed for colleges that were Graded, 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' at their most recent OfSTED inspection.

> *'Applicant colleges will work with a higher-performing partner college as they prepare their application and as they undertake the programme of work that the application describes. This peer-to-peer support will enable the applicant college to deepen its understanding of its quality challenges, develop a rigorous and costed programme of work, and use the experience and know-how of the partner college to put its quality improvement programme in place.'* (HM Government, 2017, p.1)

The bid was successful, and the partnership with a college Graded 1, Outstanding, Marine (pseudonym) commenced in January 2018. Marine was considered a good strategic fit, with similar levels of deprivation and experience of supporting a coastal community and a strong record of good student outcomes and staff satisfaction.

The first part was a full diagnostic of Royal's quality issues identified and compared with Marine's practice to develop an improvement programme. Senior Marine managers, including the CEO, visited Royal and held meetings with managers at all levels to discuss current practice and the quality of teaching and learning. A key part of the strategy to improve this was for Royal staff to visit Marine to experience outstanding practice. Marine staff would visit Royal to provide staff development. Reciprocal visits took place by many Royal teaching staff on one or more occasions. Marine shared their practices about their expectations of learners and staff and the two colleges generated an implementation plan, which Marine would monitor. Further actions would be jointly agreed as necessary.

Marine had benefitted from substantial investment in buildings and used them innovatively internally and externally. Promotion of the college was visible everywhere. Chats with teaching staff were not usually possible as the visits were tightly planned and therefore few Royal staff spoke with Marine staff. Information was usually given by senior managers, particularly those responsible for Quality. Royal staff who reported back on their visits were extremely impressed with the vibrant atmosphere, colourful displays celebrating student work and successes, music in the Arts Faculty and the upbeat feel to the campus. A positive atmosphere was commented on by a number of Royal staff. Some sessions seen did not provide evidence of outstanding teaching and some comments were made that Royal teaching and facilities in some areas were superior to that seen in the short visits. Inspiration to improve practice was not felt, although some assessment and administrative practices were praised. Some reported the visit was reassuring to them as it confirmed that their practice was comparable, perhaps a valuable result. It was noticed on some visits that students had greater freedom to listen to music, use mobile phones and have drinks in class and did not adhere to dress code in areas where it is required, such as hairdressing. Some students smoked outside the designated area, which would not be allowed at Royal. However, it was noted that there was a relaxed and more positive feel in the public areas. The use of IT was considerably more advanced than Royal, and some functions were completely paperless.

I was disappointed that I wasn't able to speak to staff or students as we ploughed through classroom after classroom like a herd. I felt as if I was window shopping, seeing the gloss and dazzle without the depth I would have liked. I wanted to know if students valued the environment, which I personally found distracting and noisy. I wanted to know if staff found the Induction programme, which was predominantly online, useful, as I managed ours in a classroom workshop. Our culture seemed different, and this was interesting to me. They had a strong achievement culture for staff and students, which was not so apparent in our college. However, I wondered if this was at a cost and created pressure, particularly for staff, but I was not able to discover as I did not have the opportunity to talk to any lecturers. It was difficult to learn from the experience and consider how to incorporate the best aspects as it was limited to my observations on brief visits and presentations from Quality Managers.

The Quality Managers were open with information and shared relevant documents. They appeared confident in their processes, which, after all, OfSTED agreed and awarded them Grade 1 in their recent Inspection. This has echoes of the DfES project on the transfer of knowledge, subsequently called JPD, conducted by Fielding *et al.,* (2005) where schools were matched with those deemed more successful to learn from them as an establishment and as individuals. Some of the barriers to the success of the project were issues of inequity between organisations and individuals and the financial aspect, which were not equal. The notion of the expert and the novice or apprentice was part of these projects, which do not encourage collaborative learning. However, there were aspect of the SCIF project that the college was able to learn from and one of these was their observation process, which is discussed below.

Fieldnotes from my visits record comments from Marine staff where they refer to a '*robust approach to staff development'*, which includes their Support to Improve Programme, designed to enhance performance of curriculum teams through intensive intervention; their Induction programme for new staff which was available via self-study online; and the emphasis on staff addressing their own targets, often through online study with some individual support. In this, systems and infrastructures at Marine were further advanced than at Royal, who did not have a well-developed online induction programme, or learning options. Royal's approach to teachers' induction was through a two-day face to face programme, delivered by the Staff Development Team, which, in addition to classroom essentials, explained the available teaching qualifications and introduced the teachers to their mentors from the team. It offered the opportunity to request support immediately if required. Similarly, IT support and development was mainly delivered in person, supported by a comprehensive technical support online library. Marine's programmes did provide food for thought and were useful is seeing how IT could be used successfully to induct staff. Their focus in placing the onus on teachers to be responsible for their development and the resulting reduction in providing training sessions was something we took away to discuss.

At the time of this visit Marine's observation process was not shared in detail, although it was made clear that staff who did not meet the expected standard were issued a *'Requirement to Improve'* notice and observed again within a short period. Staff at Marine also referred to their process as being *'robust'* and found that improvements were generally made promptly. Following this visit, decisions were made during the SCIF to follow aspects of Marine's observation process and I was part of a team who subsequently worked with Marine Quality staff to achieve this.

As Head of Teaching and Learning, I was asked to explain to Marine's Vice Principal and Executive Director, Quality, our performance management process. My manager was also present. We explained the new process we had used since the previous September for Learning Walks when we had discontinued formal, graded observations. Staff at Marine were shocked that we did not provide individual feedback and queried how staff would make improvements. This was not unexpected as the same concern was expressed during the FE Commissioner's visit and by the former HMI consultant we employed. Several of our own managers struggled with the lack of information to support improvement by individuals. However, I explained the process to Marine without disclosing my own views on this matter. I found it challenging to defend a process which did not appear to stimulate improvement. This was not helped by the lack of research-based evidence for the value of the approach.

A new Observation Process and the Introduction of the Accelerated Development Plan

Marine had a quite different approach to observation, although not dissimilar to Royal's original process. Judgements were linked to impact seen, providing clear information to the observee on the impact of learning. Observations led to detailed professional discussions and actions plans for all teaching staff. Royal decided to adopt this approach and training was provided by Marine's Quality Managers to the Staff Development Team, who were assessed and issued a 'licence' before being approved to train the wider college observation. This took place over a period of weeks in group workshops, followed by joint sessions.

Learning this procedure did not seem very different from the original, graded observation, although the link of judgement to impact created more informative reports and reports based upon pure description were reduced. There was substantial training for this, and it was a different approach for observers to link impact to their judgement. For example, previously I might have said, '*Your PowerPoint was well prepared and illustrated'.* In the new system I would say '*Your PowerPoint was well prepared and illustrated which helped the students to understand the subject under discussion'.* This reduced the narrative aspects of the report and created more focus. If the observer could not discern an impact, then no judgement could be made. The return to making judgements was revising the technical rational approach – very top down. However with the focus on the actions arising, rather than the observation itself it did not appear to be received negatively.

A number of teachers had expressed that they wanted feedback in the recent survey mentioned above. As well as discussing the session, this could provide opportunities for arranging coaching, peer observation or for discussing further development. At the time most of the training took place, action planning and targets were not discussed in any detail. By the time training was completed at the end of the summer term 2018, an interim senior manager (Sandra, pseudonym) joined Royal. Sandra had experience of turning an underperforming college around and in Royal's case, ensuring it was prepared for OfSTED's return. She had a clear view about the value of the observation process we had been using – 'bonkers', which she said to me when I attended an SMT meeting, later saying, as an interviewee,

You can't aggregate feedback and expect people to understand how they can improve. A common theme when I spoke to staff was that the individual feedback was lacking, but they also lacked direction from what purpose observations were adding. I knew if we got all the ingredients and used them properly, I knew you'd have a good OfSTED.
(Sandra, Interim Senior Manager)

Sandra accepted the observation process we had completed training for, which did provide individual feedback, and wanted the term *'professional discussion'* used. Her requirement for the action plan was a document called the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP). The process was due to start in September 2018 and the necessary individual folders and blank ADPs were created ready for the start of term. There was no template for these, so I created a simple form based on one from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (Appendix 1). Staff new to teaching were given a more detailed development plan (Appendix 2). Each teacher was provided with an online ADP, with access for the line manager, senior manager and Staff Development Team. Owing to the short time available, it was an Excel sheet, which did not allow for any aggregation or reporting, which was a negative aspect to the system. A monitoring report was provided to managers to display when observations were planned and finalised, and this was successful as a visual aid.

The new process was introduced in a very short time scale just before the summer break. I was concerned that many teachers did not know about it and due to my raising this concern a short document was issued explaining the process. The new regime and its ethos was briefly explained by Sandra at the teachers' conference held early in July 2018. Managers had been informed about the process and were expected to reiterate this with their teams. However later informal research showed that some teams were not aware of the expectations and did not engage with the process because of this. Observations of teaching were not new, but this process was very different from the previous one, which was a brief visit to the class and no individual feedback. The action plans developed in the original OfSTED model of observation were theoretically developed between the observee and observer but rarely actioned or monitored. There were different expectations of the

ADP, which were considered a vital tool in the improvements we were required to make.

There were two types of observation. A Learning Walk which was approximately ten minutes with feedback provided by the use of a postcard (Appendix 3) which set out very briefly strengths and areas for consideration. If there was a concern, it would be touched on lightly and a suggestion made to have a meeting; however, this was rare as a further walk could take place or a longer observation, as below. Staff varied in their response to the postcards. Due to the number of learning walks they could accrue a large number and quite a few kept them in their teaching file or put them on their notice board. Others did not value them and would throw them away. The main intention of the postcard was to acknowledge the observer had been to the session, in contrast to the previous system, where the teacher received no information or acknowledgement. The second type of observation was a no-notice, 30-minute visit to a class, followed by a professional discussion and a report written by the observer.

Sandra set the timescale of all teachers to be observed by October half-term, which was a challenge to complete, but it was done, mainly by the Staff Development Team. Teachers worked with the observer to set targets for themselves during the professional discussion. They could add to the ADP at any time. However, some staff later commented that they did not really understand how to complete it and use it.

Responses to the ADP
We were introduced by our line manager in a team meeting and encouraged to add some targets. (Susan, Lecturer) I think the teachers themselves are taking much more ownership, driven by the manager and senior managers. But a lot of the drive is coming from teachers wanting to improve. (Jane, Middle Manager)

Removing the grading makes the relationship more equal because you can have a professional discussion. The observer doesn't know everything; they don't know the students; they may not know the course, the syllabus, the whole thing so you can have a discussion about it as equals and agree areas for development. So, the more equal that is the better but there are times when the person being observed can't agree or can't see or doesn't want to change in which case you're back into a sort of power relationship because you change the process slightly towards some of the college's management processes like capability where clearly the power relationship is back. (Mark, Senior Manager)

Immediately it felt more incisive, more deliberate and developmental. From a personal perspective, if you are not responsible for capturing anything it doesn't feel if you are doing very much. If you are writing a report, having a meeting, doing an ADP it felt much better. (David, Advanced Practitioner)

So, I think the observation process is the catalyst really for the discussion and for the sort of commitment to doing an action. That commitment is really important, but the actual development and the support tends to be elsewhere. So, it's a case of steering that individual towards the most appropriate form of support. And then the action would usually involve a commitment to trying something else in practice and usually an offer someone coming in to have a look. Particularly where someone is a new member of staff or there's an issue that they want some more feedback on. (Mark, Senior Manager)

The term *'feedback'* was replaced by *'professional discussion'* to indicate the mutuality of the post-observation conversation, and although observers did sometime revert to saying feedback from habit, the new term did create a different expectation. I always used the term when setting up calendar events with observees to underline the purpose of our meeting. College observers' training had constantly stressed the value of having a discussion when providing feedback, even though the term *'feedback'* has connotations of advice, opinion and criticism, so this practice was not completely different. The main difference was removing the grading, and this made meetings much more relaxed and productive and enabled a discussion to take place.

> *'The heart of all listening skills, though, lies in picking up on concrete details, on specifics, to drive a conversation forward'*
> (Sennett, 2012, p. 20).

Listening is a vital skill for observers and the change to a *'professional discussion'* implies that the observer will listen more than when providing *'feedback'*. There is a role for forensic and thought-provoking questioning during the professional discussion, to establish what the observee considers has occurred, and to encourage each teacher to reflect carefully on their practice. Merely saying, *'What do you think about the session?'* was found not to enable useful reflection, particularly if a member of staff was feeling anxious, and it was advocated that questions should be as neutral as possible to avoid indicating the observer's views.

My personal choice is to go through the session chronologically and ask questions such as, '*The first activity that you did, how do you think that went? What was your intention for the activity and was it achieved? How do you think the students worked through that activity? Is this a regular activity for you to do?*' and listen very carefully to the answers. Apart from agreeing with some points made by the observee, I would not usually share my own views until the end if they have not been raised already, putting the emphasis on the observee's reflection. This style of discussion, which does not, as a primary aim, seek to find common ground, is termed 'Dialogic', coined by literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. Sennett (2012, p. 6) describes dialogic skills as, *'...listening well, behaving tactfully, finding points of agreement and managing disagreement, or avoiding frustration in a difficult discussion',* which he refers to as *'skilled cooperation'*. Whist Sennett (ibid) recognises that this may belong to an ideal realm rather than reality, even using some of these concepts and skills can develop an effective discussion. Sennett (2012) underlines that the process of exchange is key and may allow people to reflect own their own experience and increase their understanding of others. To achieve the required questioning and listening skills and to share this in training sessions with observers, I take as my role model the programme, *The Great British*

Menu TV series, where the experienced chef/judge reviews the dish created by the chef competitor, giving no judgement at that point but asking a series of questions to prompt the competitor to reflect. An example of Simon Rogan's questions:

> *'Happy with the cooking of the crab? Do you think the brown crab emulsion comes through? Are you happy with the amount of apple compared to the crab?'*
> (BBC, 2021a)

And Angela Hartnett's questions:

> *'Is there too much fish? Seasoning of the broth for you? Do you think this will take you through [keep you in the competition] to the main course?'*
> (BBC, 2021b)

Unlike *The Great British Menu* TV series, college observations are not competitive, so the observer is free to agree with or add to a reflection, or praise an aspect of the session, and a dialogue takes place leading to the discussion about the next steps. This approach to questioning provides more information about the context than any observer could learn in a brief observation. It also obviates the need to ask some questions and allows for change in the comments the observer intended to make. The discussion became a cooperative event for most observers/observees, where the observee could reflection openly on their session and think of areas they might wish to change or improve, which may or may not emerge from the session.

Responses about Professional Discussion
The important thing is the discussion and the action that is done. If the feedback has been around questioning not being effective in the sessions, and therefore getting some training and support on that and then they're observed again and the feedback on questioning is really good. So, it improves the quality of the sessions and actually some of those things stay. I think with questioning technique, for example, if

someone becomes aware of that as an issue and thinks about the type of questions they ask to get feedback from their students, then it becomes a normal practice; they tend to do it all the time; they don't suddenly forget how to do it and go back to asking general vague questions but they tend to keep that practice, so I have seen it having an impact. (Mark, Senior Manager)

Of course, the important thing is the have the discussion with a member of staff really quite quickly after the learning walk because if not you forget things and they forget things, but I do like the no notice. As time is going on they're being more open in their discussions and tending to be a bit more evaluative and reflective. (Jane, Middle Manager)

Accelerated Development Plans

The new process entailed a shift of responsibility for personal development following observations from the college or line manager to the individual, although it was expected they would access support if required. This responsibility included the maintenance of their ADP and setting and completion of targets. The ADPs provided momentum and drive for many teachers, who saw a way to improve without risk. ADPs embody many of the factors identified by Fielding *et al.,* (2005) for JPD, as encouraging transfer of knowledge. Firstly, the practitioner identifies the targets usually with the observer. Secondly, the manager has responsibility for a mutual endeavour to drive forward the improvements. There are flatter power relations, which are essential for productive collaboration and a democratic approach to improvement, which is not solely the responsibility of the teacher. Thirdly, the Advanced Practitioners have a major role in collaborating with staff, as they are the main observers, and as the Advanced Skills Teachers in the Fielding *et al.,* (2005) study, despite having a wide remit in supporting staff, they are seen as equals. Fourthly, trust is a key feature in transferring knowledge, and these relationships are built on trust. The removal of the punitive aspects of the observation and the focus on change and improvement eased the line managers' focus on the actual observation and enabled a refocus on educational improvement. This created a way of collaborative working, in place of the performance management aspect being the first consideration.

A barrier to successful JPD, identified by Fielding *et al.,* (2005) is the different organisational cultures between educational establishments, which is avoided in the college as everyone worked in the same establishment. There can still be differences for example, between campuses, but the financial circumstances that affected participants and caused them to withdraw in the Fielding *et al.,* (2005) report did not occur in the college. Cover arrangement were also likely to be more equitable in one establishment, which was also a financial and cultural issue for some of the schools taking part.

Another barrier that was averted was the labelling of some teachers as poor performers, making engagement and motivation in JPD unlikely. As there was no 'label' on staff of this nature, they were able to side-step any suggestion that they particularly needed to improve – the ethos was that everyone could improve. This observation process, with the professional discussion and the focus on the forward-looking ADP and not the observation that had taken place, made the process much more successful than the previous versions.

Responses to the Accelerated Development Plans
My initial thoughts were that it was quite alien because I had been using the old college one. The targets were at the top and the self-reflection at the bottom. However, as I have gone on, I have found this an advantage. One of the disadvantages I found is that the line manager has to comment and sign off. But some of my targets have been picked up through observations, so it would be more appropriate for the observer to sign them off and now we have a shared document it is probably more accessible. (Susan, Lecturer)
I have come to realise that if we are going to keep it a fresh and alive process it needs to be incorporated into more discussions with their line manager. So, if a line manager never pays any attention, doesn't look the targets, then the person is going to lose motivation. Conversely, if it's regularly incorporated into discussions, appraisals and interim appraisals then it has a feeling of currency and life to it that's

likely to motivate the person to complete it. So, I think it is a good process, but it's only good if people take notice of it. I think what tends to happen when the ADP is working well is the person identifies what they're going to do. Then you see through learning walks evidence that it's improved. I have seen that through observations that I've done, and I've had feedback from other people. I can see that working not just in a few small cases but in probably the majority. (Mark, Senior Manager)

I think the ADP when it first came in was a little bit overwhelming. Because no one knew how to do it. No one knew what should really go on the form and what shouldn't. I was just trying to find out as I'm not even sure whether we're doing it right, but I think I got 80% right. (Rose, Lecturer)

The old appraisal form was basically just a list of CPD activities with some reflection. But I found this one much better. After my observation I said I wanted to train in a specific subject, and you sent me this form. When I looked at it, it was quite clear. So, these are your targets. So, what are you going to do to meet that target? I find this really useful because once it's written down you can see your distance travelled, your journey. It gave me focus – it really did help me focus. Nearly 18 months on I am still using it and I've set some new targets. I achieved my first big goal and I now have a smaller goal. It keeps me on track. Seeing what I have done empowers me. (Sarah, Lecturer))

I guess that's [varying engagement] a drawback, isn't it? That if an individual feels like they are busy with things that they have to do, then one of the potential pitfalls would be that this is left on the back burner until the last minute, unless you are in the habit of being a reflective practitioner, and then you find this a useful process. I think that because I am new, I want to show I am putting in the effort and because my line manager and senior manager look at this, that's why I'm putting effort into it and keeping it updated regularly. I am benefitting by keeping a record so that I can track my progress and then I don't forget what I've done, and students are benefitting because I'm constantly trying something new and testing it and seeing if it works and that the lessons more interesting and less predictable. Like just trying to get better than I was yesterday every time. (James, Lecturer)

As identified by some respondents, not all line managers were fully engaged with the process and this did impact upon some teachers, who did not feel recognised for the completion of targets and the improvements they had made. The Advanced Practitioners' role was to monitor the ADPs regularly and meet staff to work with them. They mentor all new staff, who have a different, more structured APD, linked to the Professional Standards, so that completed targets could be mapped to their teacher training qualifications, to avoid duplication of records. They have no responsibility for signing off the targets completed, as that is a line manager responsibility, but their input was invaluable to teachers as peers as well as mentors.

The use of the ADPs by teachers is illustrated by three Case Studies.

Case Study 2

This is a particularly good example of the change that a lecturer felt when comparing the original graded observation model and being observed following the implementation of observation process from September 2018.

An early observation in the new process involved teacher Rose (pseudonym). We knew each other well as I had been her line manager up to 2013, when my role had changed. Rose is an experienced and enthusiastic teacher, who has regularly taken development opportunities to enhance her practice. I have observed her on a number of previous occasions. I attended her session, without notice, in accordance with the procedure in November 2018.

The classroom was full, with students sitting in groups of four and six around tables. When not using the whiteboard, Rose circulated the room working with individuals. I noticed two students in the middle of the room sitting with two Learning Support Officers (LSOs). The students were constantly talking, and the LSOs' attitude appeared to be one of benign support and, if not approval, at least acceptance. During the thirty minutes I was there, the students swore a number of times, made little effort to do any work, and were disruptive through the constant chatting and comments to each other and to the class. At no time did the LSOs check their language, which I would expect to be an important function, and they did not encourage them to work. This was very puzzling and quite unusual in my experience, although I have not met these particular staff before. Perhaps they couldn't be bothered with their quite challenging charges, and it was easier to ignore their behaviour and even pander to it as they looked very cheerful, even with the poorest behaviour on show. However, it didn't support the teacher at all. Many LSOs support colleagues who are being observed as they recognise the importance of the situation. They may also want their own contribution to be noticed. It was evident to me that they were not engaging in their own role, which is to support and enable the students with their studies.

Rose spoke to the students a number of times but did not hear them swear on every occasion as her attention was elsewhere. The disruption affected other students, who were less able to hear and concentrate. It also contributed to a general lack of engagement. Several left the class to go to the toilet, even though the class had just started following a break. There was an absence of respect and lack of adherence to any ground rules, which would usually have been set jointly by the class and teacher.

Usually, observers do not intervene unless there is a Health and Safety issue with potential immediate harm. However, I felt a strong urge to speak to the students and did so on two occasions when one or other swore and Rose didn't hear. I felt quite resentful that the LSOs were not doing their job by picking up on this, which might infer that it was acceptable. I also felt that, as an observer, it could be construed that I was critical of Rose. As I left, as I always do, I suggested to Rose that we met at a specified time to discuss the session. She said, '*Yes, I would like to do that'.*

We met later and, due to our familiarity with each other, started by saying in unison, *'That was an awful session!'.* We discussed the session in detail, and I expressed concern that these students' behaviour was so poor, yet they were supported by the LSOs. I asked what difficulties they had which gave them access to one-to-one support but, despite asking their Course Director, Rose did not have the information. I urged her to obtain this as, firstly it is a requirement to share information with all relevant persons, and secondly, it could help her develop strategies to support their learning.

We continued discussing the session. The observer's role is to encourage the observee to reflect how the session when and what could be changed or improved in future sessions. Rose decided that changing how she showed the video, by breaking it down into smaller parts, with tasks to be completed during and after the showing might be more engaging. Despite the observer having a coaching role, as a manager and colleague, I urged Rose to speak to her Head of Faculty (HoF) as the behaviour of these students was not acceptable, and my report (extract below) supported this. I also explained the Cause for Concern process, which is a formal recording of difficulties on the student record, which is shared with them, and I confirmed that this is the correct approach in this situation.

The session was an isolating experience for Rose, with no-one on her side. The LSOs were not doing their job, let alone supporting her by showing a united front and dealing with the poor language and behaviour. Had they done so it may have encouraged others in the class to keep working. Rose was not supported when involving vocational staff and not aware of her right to query why such poorly behaved students were in her class or what behavioural issues they had, which required one-to-one support. It knocked her usual confidence in her teaching and resulted in her feeling powerless.

It can be difficult discussing a session which did not go well but Rose’s relief that someone had seen what she was experiencing and being able to discuss it in a supportive and developmental way encouraged her to be reflective and able to identify what the priorities for action were in a collaborative way.

November 2018 Extract from Observation Report Summary.

You are enthusiastic and bring your students' vocational area into your session, but this enthusiasm is not shared by all the students, most of whom are disengaged. Several students swore, although you may not have heard every occasion, and there were pings from mobile phones quite often. At least 4 students left to go to the toilet during the first 20 minutes I was there. LSOs did not support the behaviour management of the class. The students remained passive during the video and afterwards. One asked a question, which you did not answer as it was not relevant to the subject.

The completion of targets for the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) are the responsibility of the teacher following the professional discussion, with support from the observer if required. If nothing emerges from the observation, the teacher is encouraged to think of something they would like to work on. The ADP is reviewed regularly by the line manager, who will also view it with the teacher during interim and annual appraisals.

Rose's ADP entries following post-observation professional discussion, with action taken.

- *I have taken on-board the feedback about stopping and starting the video that is shown in class. I did this with my next groups, it worked well with them, and I am going to continue to try this method and see if it keeps the students focused.*
- *Cause for concerns are added and I have the support of HoF to speak to the students about their constant behaviour which is disruptive to others.*

Extract of February 2019 Interim appraisal comment on ADP from line manager.

- *Rose fed-back that LSOs are now providing better in-class support following recent training.*

When I interviewed Rose in February 2021 as part of my research, I asked her about the observation processes she had experienced over the past five years. We discussed the graded, with notice observation current when she started teaching.

'Cause the fear of dread that if you'd said we've got your observation and the fear of dread in me would be ridiculous for the week … '

I then asked Rose if she remembered this specific observation in November 2018. She did and commented:

'I think what I remember most was talking to you, when I spoke to you was just that sense of relief. To me it was just like a sense of relief that someone could just see what we were facing. …that fresh pair of eyes come in and you could just be honest with them.

You know, it's always too busy to get sorted, and actually someone say, now you can, you are in your rights now, this is going on, and this is going on, and it's not right. Cause I think I must have spoken about that group every week and then it's like, nothing gets done. And I think that was the nice thing was actually finally having someone else see it and talk through ideas, *suggestions, tackle what I've said, I think to managers and I think that's where it's becomes not even relaxed, but it's just that you could kind of let off and, listen to, advice and strategies, but like where you say in the old procedure, you would have fallen apart because you said it was a 4 and, blah, blah. Whereas this is, we know that didn't go right. What can we do? We support you.'*

At the time of the observation I felt that the focus was on the sharing of the experience and jointly identifying steps for improvement, and during the interview, over two years later, I was very pleased that Rose felt the observation process had made the substantial move from a process that could feel punitive and was dreaded by some, including an experienced teacher such as herself, and did not achieve effective improvement, to one where teaching staff could share their concerns without feeling at fault. This was the ethos the college wanted from the new process, and this was an early example of the change. The emphasis was on the professional discussion, which briefly reviewed the session but concentrated on next steps, which were added to the ADP. As mentioned previously the term *'professional discussion'* was an intentional move away from *'feedback'*, with its connotations of an 'expert' bestowing their opinion on the work of another. The professional discussion was designed to be exactly that – a sharing between equals, working together to bring about improvements in a collaborative, democratic way. I asked Rose what she thought about the power relationship in observations.

'Okay. So, the power in the observations, it was very much like a dictatorial approach, you know, it was, this is what you're doing. This is what's going to happen. This is what we're going to do so the power was very much, I think like one way, and obviously this new approach is designed much more as it's a two way process.'

I noticed that Rose didn't miss a beat before answering. I had naively thought that staff didn't consider power relationship and I was quite wrong with Rose, who had a clear view of the subject.

The comment Rose made about the original graded observations was from the perspective of an able teacher, usually Graded 2, Good, yet she found it stressful to have a notice period during which she would be fearful and in dread. With the possibility of a Grade 4 ever present, even to experienced teachers, Rose's comment above,

> *'Cause the fear of dread that if you'd said we've got your observation and the fear of dread in me would be ridiculous for the week … '*

> *'…but like where you say in the old procedure, you would have fallen apart because you said it was a 4 and, blah, blah. Whereas this is, we know that didn't go right. What can we do? We support you.'*

What other profession has staff who 'would have fallen apart' following a one-hour observation of their work? What other profession routinely gave staff a Grade for their work?

In summary, this case study focuses on the contrast between two observation processes, both ostensibly to provide the catalyst for improving teaching and learning. The first model, resulting in a plan and receiving a Grade, which was included in the reports provided regularly to the Senior Management Team (SMT), Governors and included in annual returns to OfSTED in the form of numbers of staff being Graded 1 Outstanding, 2 Good, 3 Requires Improvement and 4 Inadequate. The impact on staff of this observation process is drawn vividly in this case study. Without intention, the process was stressful and ineffective and driven by staying close to the model used by OfSTED, on the assumption that it would provide an accurate picture of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Sadly, it did not, which was an unexpected shock to the college and required rapid change. The impact of observation processes is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

The new process was seen very differently by Rose, who noted that the earlier process that power was one-way, whereas the new process is a two-way process, with the participants as equals and the responsibility for improvement a shared one. Being able to talk about a difficult session without blame, but with a focus on next steps and agreeing actions, using the principles of JPD, took away the dread of the observation and became a discussion of equals working together to bring about improvement. Her confidence about voicing how unsuitable the students were for her class had risen, and she felt empowered to pursue this conversation with her manager. Having an observation provided a fresh view of the problem and Rose felt relief and valued the discussion – an opportunity to be honest about the session, not defensive.

Whilst it is concerning that Rose's reports of the difficulties she was experiencing did not result in earlier action, it did confirm that observation can be a useful activity when viewed and conducted as a joint activity and shared responsibility for improvement.

Joint Practice Development in action

The discussion following the observation is a form of Joint Practice Development (JPD) in action. By identifying the next steps and taking action towards them creates improvement and avoids punitive, painful focussing on what happened, which cannot be changed. Without formally deciding to do so, we incorporated the early stages of JPD as shown below. The Six Step Cycle for putting joint practice development into action (designed to be used as six workshops): the steps and how our approach linked with them.

Step 1: Creating conditions for the collaborative improvement of practice	The post observation discussion was part of the process but was made easier by our existing relationship. Fielding *et al.,* (2005) found that relationships were key to the transfer of knowledge.
Step 2: Sharing experience of practice and making room for improvement	We both acknowledged that there was room for improvement in the session and saw it as an organisational problem, rather than

	an individual problem. We were equal participants in the discussion, freely offering ideas.
Step 3: Identifying improvement priorities	Some issues were more evident and were automatically priorities. Others, such as using processes like Cause for Concern, came up in our exchange of ideas.
Step 4: Developing and implementing improvement priorities	This was an individual, not a joint endeavour in this case as Rose developed and implemented the priorities we agreed. She discussed the difficulties with her line manager, which was not a function I could take part in, although my observation report supported their discussion.
Step 5: Interim evaluation of impact and adaption	This was through an informal chat, where Rose shared that her manager had been very responsive, and the main issue resolved.
Step 6: Final evaluation of impact and identification of the next priorities for improvement	This would occur through the APD, where a reflection and new priorities (targets) would be entered and reviewed with the line manager.

Table 5 (Gregson, Spedding and Nixon, 2015 p.269, Figure 16.1.1.)

Case study 3

The main feature of this study is the way the lecturer used the ADP as a source of planning, recording and reflection on her progress when starting professional training in a communication system. It also demonstrates that the ADP can be utilsed for short and long term targets.

The ADP can be used in a number of ways, as demonstrated by Sarah (pseudonym), who is an experienced lecturer. She is committed to improving communication with, and for her students, who have a number of barriers to speech. Sarah has used specific methods to aid communication and was considering taking formal training when she had her first observation under the latest process early in 2019. I observed with a member of SMT. It was an excellent session and during the professional discussion we mentioned the ADP. Despite the member of SMT being present, the conversation was one of equals discussing how to make improvements for college students, made easier by our prior relationships, which Fielding *et al.,* (2005, p. 8*)* state *'…found relationships are acknowledged to be the primary encounter from which choices about activity emerge,…'* Trust was also present and Sarah was confident that her ideas would be carefully considered when she explored with us attending training about the communication method and set herself targets on the ADP.

> *'You sent me this and I used it. When I looked at it is was quite, quite clear. So these are your targets, what are you going to do to meet these targets? And I find it really useful.'*

Sarah told her manager she was filling it in but said there wasn't much discussion, other than the formal updates at interim and annual appraisals. Sarah and I spoke informally from time to time and it was delightful hearing about her progress.

'I sort of took ownership of it myself and just kept using it week by week. And so, I've read this article now or I've done this or I've practiced this. So, this is towards my target and I'd write it down.'

Sarah continued using the ADP to record her progress over the following 18 months, and set new targets as she completed the initial ones. She completed several training programmes in the method and eventually became a qualified trainer. She addressed an SMT meeting to encourage the use of visual signage through the college, which are likely to have been facilitated by the member of SMT knowing about her work, which underlines the importance of relationships. She gave training sessions explaining the method to her department colleagues and other interested lecturers.

'But I find it really useful to put it on because even though you've done it, but then as you're writing and reflect on it, Oh my goodness. Yeah. I've done, I have done quite a lot.'

Sarah had an end goal in mind and needed no encouragement to work towards it once she started. She could see the value of the ADP not only for staff such as herself who could us it almost independently but for new staff as a planning aid, noting that in teaching there is so much to address it can be overwhelming without a plan. When asked about the observation process she acknowledged that the professional discussion was useful but suggested follow up meetings,

'So, I do think regular meetings help because it's encouragement because you can see, you know, and, and sometimes you think, am I doing this right? Is this, is this what they want me to write? Is this how I'm supposed to be using it [ADP]? Right. So, I think maybe some regular meetings and updates, even if it's five, 10 minutes. Right, let's review.'

Sarah, now working part-time, mentioned the ADP took time and it was usually completed at home. Yet she continued, as it gave her encouragement to see what she had achieved when she looked back at completed targets and could set new ones. Time is regularly mentioned as a barrier to CDP, as Fielding *et al.,* (2005,

p. 80) declare*, 'The most common response to our questions about obstacles to practice transfer referred to lack of time.'* Sarah's journey of developing new practices had taken 18 months from starting to the time of our interview and she was continuing to increase her experience and sharing it by training others. As a respondent to Fielding *et al,* (2005, p. 34) commented *'You need a good amount of time to make a project work.'* A benefit of the ADP was the flexibility of the targets, which allowed a step-by-step approach to a longer project, although the majority were short-term targets, as was initially proposed.

In Sarah's use of the ADP it is clear that she set her own goal, which FETL (2021) and O'Leary (2014) agree increases motivation and was encouraged by the professional discussion to take the first steps. She was sufficiently confident and motivated to pursue her goals once they had been discussed and refined, The following actions she took were not collaborative as she had a clear path to her goal of becoming qualified. However, the initial collaborative conversation with colleagues well-known and trusted, appears to have acted as a catalyst to take the first steps to an ambitious outcome.

Case Study 4

This study describes the way a new lecturer used the APD to set himself targets and as a prompt for his meetings with his line manager and his Advanced Practitioner mentor.

James (pseudonym) was a new, qualified employee to the college, teaching a fast-changing subject, when the latest observation process started. He learnt about the ADP from his Advanced Practitioner mentor but wasn't very clear how to populate it. During a progress review with his manager he was asked to update the document and he completed it very fully with past achievements. Referring to completing targets,

> *'So, the form, it says initially a target. So, I keep that the same. Then I expand on that. So, what my personal target is and then what prompted me to develop it to develop it. So, it might have been a personal reflection, something that I've realized like where I have a short come in and I need to improve…'*

James was keen to have his ADP reviewed regularly and as a new member of staff this would occur with his line manager and Advanced Practitioner.

> *'That's what a key thing that it is reviewed because otherwise, yeah, there might be some satisfaction in doing it, but at the same time, the idea is that someone does go through and, and have a look.'*

> *'As far as the process goes, this is checked by xxx [Advanced Practitioner] once a fortnight. She uses the bottom part of it [Record of meetings/Reflection] where she writes in the notes about the meetings that we've had.'*

James used the ADP far more than most teachers, adding to it every day and reviewing the week ahead on Sundays, and saw beyond the personal aspect of the record to a wider application through sharing resources, which has been tried and tested in the college context, to others in the department.

‘The benefit for me, for using the ADP is keeping a reflective log of my professional education, a regular log of any action that I've taken, which can then evidence my professional practice. So that's the benefit of it for me. I think the benefit of it for the organization is that if they see that an individual is looking for a particular course is that might be free or that might be of particular interest to one area like computing or English or something that they found online, then they could share that practice with within the department and say, Oh, hi team. Like we've found this, where this resource all benefit from this because then you've got evidence there to say how it was implemented, the action that was taken, what the impact was on learning. And it's only from one individual's perspective, but then that could be rolled out and tested in a department. And then if you've got all of the correlation of qualitative information from everybody's ADP, then you can take it away as a manager and reflect like a departmental of reviewers. How useful are resources?’

James’ use of the ADP was probably exceptional but demonstrates the flexibility and potential use of the tool as a personal development record at its minimum, to a tool that can be used to drive successful personal development and for sharing resources within a department. A key for James was the reviews with his manager and the more regular meetings with his Advanced Practitioner mentor, showing that even an extremely motivated teacher perceives benefit from the reflection and discussion such meetings can provide.

Summary

Using the observation process as a catalyst for change as a joint endeavour is a more democratic way of working, which recognises the professionalism of the teacher and leaves blame and power relationships out of the equation. Being able to talk about what actual happened, as Rose said, was a relief – someone was seeing how difficult it was to work under those pressures and wanting to work together to find solutions. Observation can move from a top-down process to a genuine form of collaboration, with trust and empathy on both sides when the observer acts an equal and a critical friend.

Chapter 5 Discussion of Findings

> *‘For me, teaching was always about helping young people come out of school being decent human beings; knowing the difference between right and wrong, showing acts of kindness. Yes, lessons are important but they’re not everything.’*
> (Brown, 2022, p. 28)

The above extract from an interview with Brown (2022), draws attention to how the purpose of education (not only for learners but also for their teachers) involves much more than simply being trained to perform a range of job skills to make them useful to employers. This study critically examines models of change and professional development to support teachers’ professional learning and the improvement of educational practice.

During the four-year period of this study, Royal College used three different models of session observation for quality assurance purposes and staff development. This was at a time when the drive to move the college from an OfSTED Grade 3, ‘Requires Improvement’, to at least Grade 2, ‘Good’, was paramount. Observation was considered a key indicator of the quality of teaching and a catalyst for teachers’ professional learning, improvement or development. Consequently, examination and description of models of session observation and assumptions about their impact form a key part of the thesis. These different models of session observation and approaches to educational improvement are described in some detail in Chapter 4 within the discussion of background and case study of the college. Experiences of, and issues surrounding, models of session observation adopted by the college also form a substantial focus for the interview questions employed in the thesis. It should be noted that interviews were conducted after the demise of Grading sessions by OfSTED in 2016, and after the college discontinued the practice in September 2017, so inevitably there may be comparisons with the later models introduced, which may influence participants’ perspectives. This chapter introduces and presents the findings of the study.

Graded observations

Respondents, whether managers/observers, advanced practitioners/ observers/observees and lecturers/observees were very similar in their views about the model the college had in place until 2017, which was based on the OfSTED model with four Grades – 1 Outstanding, 2 Good, 3 Requires Improvement and 4 Inadequate. It was familiar, and used in many colleges, so staff moving from one college to another found little change. In many colleges, as in the college which forms the site of the study, observation was conducted on an annual basis. Despite this being infrequent, every respondent referred to the stress and anxiety that this model of session observation created for many staff, even if they were not observed themselves or did not feel particularly anxious. This raises the question of what created this anxiety? Respondents referred to 'punitive aspects', such as the link with Lack of Capability proceedings, which could be instigated when a Grade 4, 'Inadequate', was awarded (and who would ever want their life's work described thus?).

Participants in the research also raised issues concerning the increased time and resources required for planning when notice was given two weeks in advance for a two day window, where any session could be seen. Further pressure was repeatedly related to ensuring paperwork was up to date, including scrutiny of the session plan, which the college only made mandatory for observations. Teachers worried about the challenges and the possible stigma of receiving a poor Grade for their reputation and identity as far as their manager and colleagues were concerned.

Receiving a Grade 3 or 4 would trigger an action plan with mentoring and coaching to improve as detailed in Chapter 4, which, although intended as a supportive process, was usually viewed negatively as it could lead to formal capability procedures. Schön (1983) observes that teachers are subject to similar controls to their students, such as marks, grades and through informal systems. He says that teachers have measures of performance imposed on them by their managers, who allocate rewards or chastisement dependent on meeting the measures or not. This was written almost 40 years ago, yet we can still recognise some truths in Schön's statement, which, with the findings of anxiety, stress and pressure stated above are unlikely to be surprising to anyone working in the Further Education sector over the past few decades. UCU's Project Report *'…explores one of the most widely debated and hotly contested initiatives to affect teaching staff in the FE sector in recent times, that of lesson observation'* (UCU, 2013, p. 6). The report identifies that graded observations are a *'major cause of increased levels of stress and anxiety amongst teaching staff'* (UCU ibid).

Whereas business values staff for their impact on the bottom line, Coffield (2010, p. 9) suggest that,

'We in education, however, have different values where we aim to treat people as full human beings and not as a means to an end, whether that is monetary advantage or better test results'.

This statement is not primarily about session observation, but I believe it explains how we in education aspire to treat staff and students. The classical concept of *praxis* is guided by ethical criteria – doing the right thing for the right reasons at the right time – and described by Carr (1995, p. 68) as *'… morally informed or morally committed action'.* Teachers' professional role is to help (mainly) young people to learn worthwhile subjects. Teaching is concerned with values connected to providing ways to understand the subject and is more than a prescribed curriculum or limited to certain actions, as exemplified by the opening quote to this chapter. The teacher is initiating their students into a way of seeing the world, experiencing it and relating to others. It links the impersonal world of ideas with the personal world of the student. It is the moral judgement of the teacher to decide which learning is worthwhile and what ways to teach it (Pring, 2005).

Teachers are constantly making choices and judgements about the best way to present information, reflecting on the effectiveness of past sessions and discussing individual students with their colleagues to better understand their needs. Teaching is, to say the least, a demanding role. Pring (2005 p. 204) suggests that if the language of education of and discourses surrounding it change to the business values of the market, framed in terms of hitting targets, increased productivity and improved standards *'…this essentially moral purpose and character of teaching will be lost'.*

It is therefore remarkable that a model of quality assurance should have such a negative impact on individual staff members and that this model has endured over such a considerable period of time in so many educational establishments and not worked well. Causing stress and anxiety can never be *'doing the right thing'* and it is unlikely that college managers would ever intend to do so, but it has been driven by an inspection regime which has been engineered to reflect a model that endeavours to match OfSTED's imperatives. Sarason, (1990, p. 17) is critical of those who author [United States] Government reports without any *'experiential basis for the task'* and continues that after reading reports he concluded that the writers had only the *'foggiest notion'* of classroom practice.

In 2012, OfSTED was shown to have unqualified staff leading inspections in schools and the Inspectorate was not aware of whether inspectors were qualified to QTS standards, as they did not hold Her Majesty's Inspectors' (HMIs) Curriculum Vitae (CVs) (Exley, 2012). Yet early in 2012 when Professor Dylan Wiliam challenged the integrity of inspections and requested an evaluation of their reliability, OfSTED seemed unaware that some of their inspectors were far from suitably qualified.

> *"As experienced teachers and headteachers themselves, inspectors know how to recognise lessons that fire the imaginations of pupils and give them the confidence they need to make good progress."*
> (Stewart, 2012, p. 1)

Unqualified inspectors have been presumably removed in the intervening years due to the backlash from schools and teaching unions and Coffield (2017) reports a purge of 1,200 Additional Inspectors in June 2015. Despite the purge (a number of years after the issue was identified), it demonstrates a surprisingly cavalier attitude and a troubling lack of responsibility in ensuring that those who inspect and judge the quality of education are qualified and trained to so do. Coffield (2017) draws attention to the imbalance of power between educational establishments and OfSTED, in circumstances where providing negative feedback to OfSTED, let alone public criticism could be construed as risky. He queries what damage these, apparently unsuitable Additional Inspectors, did whilst in post?

Education is the recipient of public funding and as such can and should be accountable to taxpayers and the state. It is also widely accepted that inspection plays a legitimate role in securing standards of practice, which Coffield (2017) concedes is generally accepted in the teaching profession. However, in place of stressful graded observations and links to capability processes, models of staff improvement and development can be quite different in their values (axiology) Coe *et al.,* (2014). These are discussed later in this chapter.

A recurring theme in data from participants in this study is the question of the validity (or perhaps more authenticity, trustworthiness and fairness) of the observation grades awarded in terms of how they were arrived at and the evidence upon which judgements were made. A single observation of one hour in an academic year is highly unlikely to be typical of a teacher's practice, particularly as some teachers…,

…compile a racy SoW [Scheme of Work] and resources for a two week window, which does not contribute to improving teaching in the long term. (David, Advanced Practitioner)

I would think the first sort [observation] once a year, judgement of a lecturer was not really reflective of how they person performed typically. It was a fairly artificial process. (Mark, Senior Manager)

O'Leary (2012 b) suggests that teachers feel driven to perform for observation and it has become normalised for some to apply a 'toolkit', usually provided by their management, designed to achieve 'good' or 'outstanding' grades when being observed. This action denies the teacher's experience and uses a mechanical means rooted in the technical-rational model of educational change and improvement , which provides a set of instructions to follow, disregarding the context, experience and knowledge of the teacher. It suggests that it is important to teach in a good or outstanding way only when being observed instead of aspiring to this for every session. The practice also raises questions about the validity and reliability of graded sessions as a way of assessing (making judgements about) the quality of teaching. So, this model of observation and approach to educational improvement fails to provide a credible or trustworthy measure of a shared understanding of what we mean by ‘good work’. Models of Quality Assurance, educational change and improvement largely predicated upon evidence collected in a ‘one off’ observation of a session, not only cannot be taken to be ‘typical’ of the usual practice of a teacher in their classes, but also fails to encourage future teacher improvement or development.

Respondents to the UCU survey (2013, cited in O’Leary, 2014, p. 282) report:

> *‘… performance management models of observation were of little relevance to their professional needs and failed to improve their practice. For them, such models existed purely to furnish senior managers and external agencies like OfSTED with quantifiable data that could be used to exercise managerial control over judgements about the effectiveness of teaching and learning’.*

Respondents are not alone in raising this theme. O’Leary & Gewessler (2014, p. 39) contend that there are:

> *‘… serious question marks surrounding the validity and reliability of assessments made during observation as there are inevitably a myriad of uncontrollable variables at play, e.g., subjectivity of interpretation and judgement across observers (i.e., there is lots of evidence of disagreement between observers as to what constitutes ‘effective’ teaching). The validity and reliability of judgements made during snapshot, episodic observations are something we have repeatedly questioned… [OfSTED]’*

Teachers were not considered able to decide their own professional development needs, despite their experience and intimate knowledge of the context in which they work. Teachers are tasked with making improvements, not of their choosing and without support and collaboration, shared responsibility or joint accountability for improvement. This does not work. O'Leary's (2012 a) research unearthed repeated examples of teachers encouraged to demonstrate/comply with/enact questionable models of 'good' or 'excellent' practice, often passed on by senior managers. This often led to mechanical, 'rehearsed' sessions where the teacher was reluctant to take risks, so 'played the game' during Graded observations.

As Coffield, (2010, p. 10) contends:

> *There is only one problem with the identification and dissemination of 'good practice': it doesn't work, because it is implicitly saying to those whom you want to adopt the 'good practice' that their current practice is bad or inferior and so resistance to learning is built into any attempted innovation'*

Rehearsing, bringing out the 'observation' session plan, and other strategies for gaming the system do not engender development because they do not allow teachers and education leaders to admit and talk about what is happening in experience and practice. Gregson & Nixon, (2009, p. 233) suggest that our *'ways of seeing'* impact in education is influenced by what is considered important, and what is not. They explain that the technical-rational approach, which is based upon a contested view of the nature of practice and the processes through which practice improves, has become popular in the past thirty years. It regards *'the means of measuring progress as straight-forward and unproblematic'*, which overly simplifies the problem and rationalises the solution into sequential steps, which it is assumed can be easily followed and readily observed. This results in targets and monitoring of progress against the instructions set. This model of change and improvement has been increasingly criticised by academics. Fielding, (2003), one of its strongest critics, who challenges the current method of assessing the impact of education, links this to the ontological and epistemological view of the seventeenth and eighteenth century where everything in the world could be seen and explained as mechanical. An alternative model of educational change is required, suggests Fielding, (2003), which recognises that teachers and students are not machines and that the blunt instruments used in educational policy have sometimes created very questionable measures of impact.

Rehearsing and gaming the system has led to teachers discarding observation as a catalyst for CPD, according to O'Leary (2012a, p.18) who observes that such approaches limits opportunities for development and improvement, compared to colleges who do not Grade or do not use it as a performance management tool,

> *'…as qualified teachers have come to experience a growing sense of disempowerment, increased levels of anxiety and general discontent in relation to its use.'*

In contrast to the findings of the UCU Report (UCU, 2013) and O'Leary (2012a), where graded observations were particularly discredited, criticised and seen as a box-ticking exercise, some of my interview respondents reported that grading in observations could be helpful. They liked to know where they are and welcomed discussion about what and how to improve. However, this could be because these respondents in the sample were mainly high performers, particularly the Advanced Practitioners, who were recruited based on excellent teaching, and therefore enjoyed confirmation that their sessions were outstanding. Although this was not the case for all the sample, some found an observer's perspective could encourage them to consider whether they could use new strategies. This may have been linked to the quality of feedback provided, which is discussed below. It is unlikely that this was a universal view across the college as the respondents made so many references to stress and anxiety connected to observations.

Managers, perhaps not surprisingly, were concerned that without grading it would be difficult to establish the quality of teaching, particularly for those where there were concerns. The grade awarded was regarded as a proxy measure by the college that improvement was needed on the basis that some kind of shared standard had been understood and used. Waiting for results at the end of the academic year was not countenanced for obvious reasons. Even so, observers in the study report finding it difficult to decide whether a session was good, and this was demonstrated as, despite nominally using the same criteria as OfSTED, the college was grading too high. Criteria, however clearly set out, are open to interpretation and sometimes interpreted differently by different people.

Who has the power?

Observations, particularly those graded, have a distinct element of inequity of power. As Sarason (1990) and Gregson & Nixon (2009) note, in this technical-rational world they are based on a model of improvement which is overly simplified and imposed from the top-down. There is no democracy in the process of determining what we mean by good work (Sennett, 2009) in education and how we can 'know' it. Instead, this is decided and judged by a hierarchical management approach where, *'Information is passed down the hierarchy to all appropriate levels and subordinates are expected to implement the decisions of senior management'* (Bush, 2020, p. 43). Power relationships are common in many social systems where power is shared unequally but justified by the need to ensure the goals will be achieved (Sarason, 1990). However, where those with less power are voiceless, this may have undesirable consequences for the system and individuals,

> *'When one has no stake in the way things are, when one's needs or opinions are provided no forum, when one sees oneself as the object of unilateral actions, it takes no particular wisdom to suggest that one would rather be elsewhere.'*
> Sarason (1990, p. 83)

This is apparent in observations and O'Leary (2012b) refers to the power distance based on hierarchical seniority in observations, where the observer is often seen as the 'judgement maker'. Yet, all the risk and most of the responsibility for change or improvement rests on the shoulders of the teacher. There is no expectation of support or continuing involvement or accountability from the observer, unless they are the line manager, when the involvement is usually more akin to auditing than a shared mutual endeavour between the teacher and the education manager/inspector. This was recognised by respondents,

The relationship where somebody comes in and makes a judgement and a grade feels disempowering for a lecturer. It doesn't really help them, whereas a discussion which is amongst equals … seems to me to be more sharing of power because it

belongs to the teacher, because they are the one who can agree or disagree or really commit to make a change or improvement. (Mark, Senior Manager)

The power in the observations was very much a dictating approach, it was, this is what you're doing. This is what's going to happen. The power was very much one way. (Rose, Lecturer)

Feedback

> *Receiving effective feedback is so important – we know that but, '…it is so very rarely done well'*
> Petty, (2022, p.1)

Surprisingly, given the negative view of graded observations, participants who were observed were generally satisfied with their feedback, finding they could discuss strategies and enjoy talking about their session. Managers commented that the Grade alone was what some observees wanted and that this was a barrier to discussion around change or development.

The provision of feedback was expected by the college to be timely, private, supportive and fair, and this was reinforced to observers during training and moderation and in the written guidance to observees. This is in sharp contrast to the over two thirds of respondents to the UCU Report (UCU, 2013), who considered feedback was not well managed in their educational establishment. The good management of the process in the college did not mitigate the concerns teachers had about graded observation, however, it did provide a good basis for later observation processes.

Where the post-observation discussion really failed to meet its objective was in the target setting, considered by the college to be the key driver of change and improvement. However, the inequity in the power relationships discussed above does not encourage mutual engagement in a democratic process of joint target setting and shared responsibility and accountability for educational improvement. Sarason (1990, p. 83) recognises that:

'…the sense of powerlessness frequently breeds reduced interest and motivation, at best a kind of passionless conformity and at worst a rejection of learning.'

This was expressed by many participants in the UCU Report who could identify with the tension between a top-down observation process and improvement and development and this sense of powerlessness and wanted to move away from the *'…current normalised models of graded observations driven by performance management agendas'* (UCU, 2013, p. 7). That there is tension between the role of session observation in staff improvement and development and its role in providing management information is widely recognised (O'Leary & Gewessler, 2014, UCU, 2013, Coe *et al.,* 2014).) Unless used as a development tool, rather than a management information process, observation does not improve the quality of teaching (Coe *et al.,* 2014). The college's next model of change and improvement removed the grading and the link to capability in an attempt to reduce animosity towards observation and encourage change and improvement. Management information was reduced, although not necessarily intentionally.

Learning Walks

Introduced in the summer term 2017, the second model of observation, change and improvement described in depth in Chapter 4, was warmly reviewed by the respondents, though with several caveats. Universally commended was the removal of grading leading to a reduction in anxiety, and the growing acceptance of others coming in and out of the teacher's space. This was recognised, by some, as an attempt to change mindset and culture in a rapid time frame, a process that would usually take time to create as respondents noted. However, there was insufficient to time to take a more appropriate pace due to the forthcoming re-inspection.

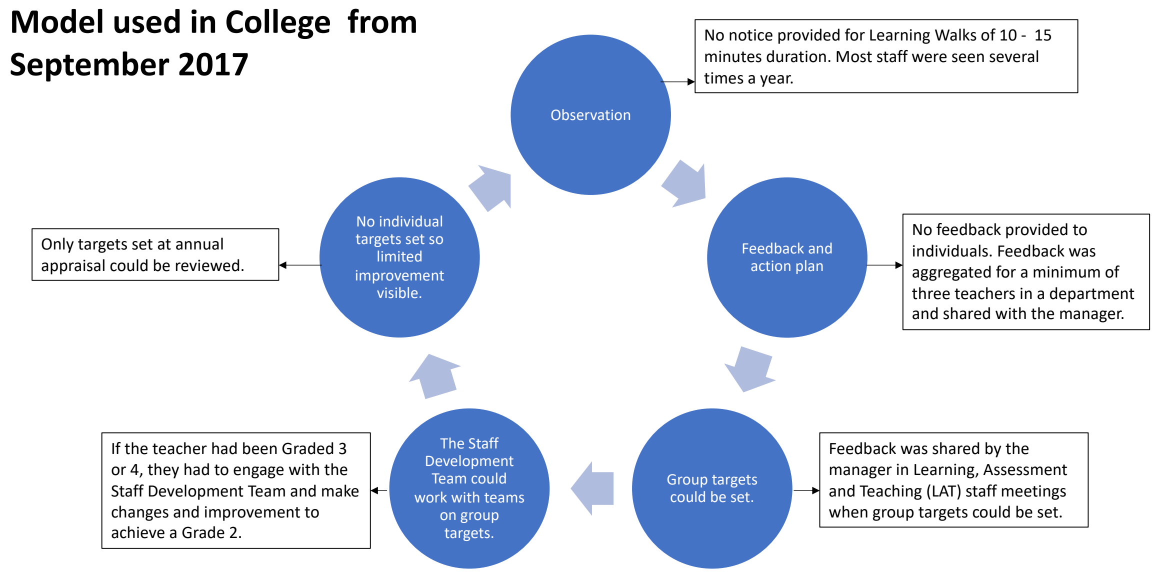


Figure 5

Managers liked the opportunity to monitor their areas by dropping in and seeing what was taking place and there was a sense that they gained a more rounded view through these regular informal visits. An external Senior Manager reported that their college, who used the same model, upskilled all heads of department and academic managers to take part in the same process. They rarely visited classes before, so this process enabled them to not only see what was occurring, but to deal with issues such as timetable clashes and inappropriate accommodation because they could see what was happening in practice and in experience and the impact of this upon teachers and learners.

Most observers noticed that staff accepted the *'no notice'* policy without comment, including union members, who had previously highlighted the UCU campaign against No Notice Observations. The Union Representative suggested that this campaign was aimed at formal observations. A minority of respondents mentioned teachers being concerned about the process, possibly due to a lack of information about the detail, and this emerges as a theme during the rapid changes in observation models.

The major shortcoming of the new process was the lack of individual feedback, leading to an inability to quantify the quality of teaching to stakeholders.

Aggregated feedback was provided to the manager of the area for discussion at their weekly Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT) meeting when the team would agree development targets, and some areas benefitted from these by setting team goals or working together on a specific subject. This was the ideal scenario, as one respondent commented below, but meetings were sometimes delayed, or operational matters took precedence.

The meeting to discuss LAT was not something I had previously experienced. These are now accepted and part of the teaching teams. (David, Advanced Practitioner)

Despite the reduction in anxiety of teachers, reported by the respondents, the process was still ‘top-down’. Adverse comments were made by teaching staff that there was no central system for arranging visits, so a teacher could have visits from SMT, a Governor with an Advanced Practitioner, or their manager within a short period. Joint Learning Walks with two observers were common. This could be viewed as disruptive, or in the absence of individual feedback it could be assumed that there was a particular reason for a number of visits, although this an untended consequence of the process. Equally a teacher may not receive any visits. With the number of potential observers, it was impossible to log who was going where and in consequence there was a wide variation in the number of visits a teacher could have. The general feeling from teachers was the beneficial aspects were:

- *the removal of grading,*
- *for some, the lack of individual feedback and therefore the breaking of the link to capability processes*
- *the informality of observers coming in without notice*

The punitive aspects had been removed but the purpose was not apparent to all staff. This indicates insufficient sharing of information or a lack of clarity when it was shared, which as stated previously has emerged as a recurring theme in this study.

The lack of individual feedback and written reports was mentioned by all respondents, whether observees or observers and was the primary negative perception of the model. *'Feedback is regarded by many as the most important part of the observation process',* (O'Leary, 2015, p. 283).

> *'Sustained professional development is most likely when feedback is related to clear, specific and challenging goals for the recipient'.*
> (Coe *et al.,* 2014, p. 5)

Comments about the new process of Learning Walks
I felt everything was geared towards OfSTED coming back. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner)
It didn't feel an inclusive development process. (Sandra, Senior Manager)
Improvements weren't captured so difficult to see the impact on teaching and learning. (Lucy, Advanced Practitioner)
From an audit or college perspective, how do we know or find out if staff were changing or developing? (David, Advanced Practitioner)
The Governors had a growing level of anxiety around the rate of improvement and growing frustration to see the rapid response we were looking for. (Matthew, Senior Manager)

The SMT and Governors really struggled with the lack of measurement of quality of the teaching. Other than the number of learning walks occurring, the only feedback was for an anonymised group of staff within a subject department, for example, Science or Hospitality. This feedback was shared by the line manager at Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT) meetings, which might be two weeks or more after an individual was seen. Some teachers felt responsible for any teaching seen which was less good, whilst others were able to absolve themselves as they could correctly say that they hadn't had any feedback.

Judgement, Impact and the ADP

By July 2018 the process introduced by the consultant in August 2017 was well embedded, and had succeeded in bringing about a cultural shift whereby teaching staff were used to observers coming in the teaching environment regularly for about ten minutes while they continued teaching as usual. Drawing on the expertise of their SCIF partner, in September 2018 the college moved to a model of observation followed by feedback which consisted of a discussion of judgement and impact, which is described in some detail in Chapter 4.

No notice of observation was given, which continued the practice of the previous model, and most staff were in favour, or at least accepted this, having become accustomed to it. Training was completed for use from September 2018, but due to changes within the SMT the model was revised from its original form, with the emphasis on the development plan. This was named the 'Accelerated Development Plan' (ADP) in recognition of the rapid improvement in teaching Royal College required.

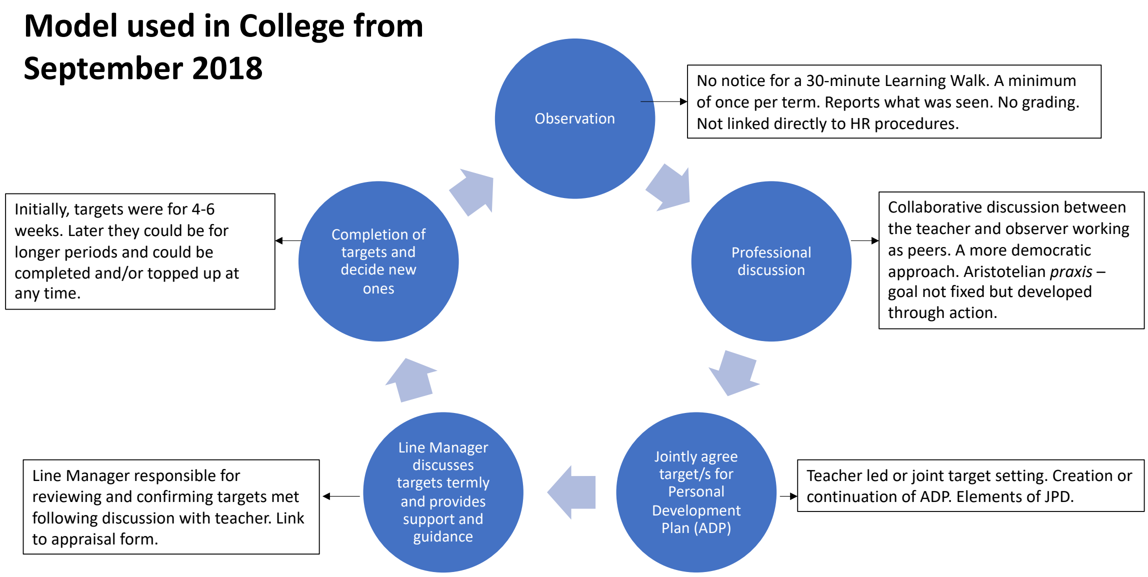


Figure 6

The ADP was expected to be 'owned' by the teacher and supported by the college, according to the rationale and detail of policy provided to teaching staff about the model. It was designed to '*inspire, motivate and enable our teachers to develop their expertise'* (Internal guidance document). This was the first time the onus and opportunity for self-development had been given to staff, so it required a cultural change, which some embraced, but others remained passive, expecting an observer to 'award' them targets.

The findings lend support to the notion that aspects of Joint Practice Development (JDP) are evident in the observation process and engagement with the ADP and this is discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 2 discusses JDP and the work of Fielding, *et al.,* (2005). Gregson, Spedding & Nixon (2015) offer guidelines for using JPD as an integral part of a college's CPD strategy. Their Six Step Cycle, also used on an individual basis in Case Study 2, for putting JPD in action is shown below and linked to the findings generated in this study about experiences of using the ADP model (Gregson, Spedding & Nixon, 2015, p. 269, Figure 16.1.1.)

Step One: Creating conditions for the collaborative improvement of practice.

The revised observation process changed the former *'feedback session'* into a *'professional discussion'*, leading to targets chosen by the teacher observed, thereby removing the top-down, *'I will tell you what you should do'* approach and giving the teacher ownership of their development. This creates conditions for collaborative discussion. However, the improvement element in JPD is a joint endeavour with shared action and mutual responsibility for the improvement, which is not always the case in college. A benefit of the professional discussion is that it encourages the teacher to reflect on their session, possibly aided by questioning and observations from the observer, which may develop into a collaborative relationship. Sennett (2009) refers to problem-solving prompting new questions; the brain considering new options, after which action may take place in a new form. Or, in the college process, targets may emerge and be recorded and worked towards.

Comments about target setting
…the discussion around points for development is really at the starting point. I mean that in itself is not necessarily developing the individual…in our college if a member

of staff identifies with their observer an area for development, then there is support available, either from the Staff Development Team, or through training course or peer observation, of just conversations with other members of staff. (Mark, Senior Manager)

…we're now able to focus more on the action side because the ADP is a much more, in my opinion, a much more living document than the action plan we used to have way back when… (Rose, Lecturer)

We should be using the targets on the EHCP plan and putting them into our targets. So, for our department, especially if we want to be outstanding, that's something we're definitely going to have to work to. (Sarah, Lecturer)

Step Two: Sharing experience of practice and making room for improvement.

The Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LAT) meetings provide a forum for sharing experiences and ideas which had not previously taken place and is similar to the workshop activities suggested by Gregson, Spedding & Nixon (2015). Sharing ideas through digital technology has also expanded, through ideas on the Moodle and live presentations at training events, which are recorded so as to remain available. Sharing experience of practice in JPD goes much further than the discussion or access to ideas and, again, stresses the joint aspect of the practice. Until you have 'done' (experienced) the practice together (planned and taught), you have not fully shared the experience of practice. In the college the current practice is a step forward in sharing experience and reaping some rewards. The work of the Advanced Practitioners with teachers is collaborative and indicative of JPD. Russell (2015, p. xii) explains:

> *'JPD is based on mutual respect, a willingness to learn from each other, equality in argument, and a desire to improve everyone's practice for the sake of getting better at teacher so as to improve the quality of students' learning.'*

Step Three: Identifying improvement priorities.

This takes place through two fora; firstly, the LAT meetings where department priorities are discussed, and secondly, the professional discussion following an observation, which led to personal priorities being agreed. These are reviewed by the line manager at regular intervals.

Acknowledging their professional knowledge and expertise, Wiliam (2007) advises that teachers should choose what aspects of practice to develop or improve as he suggests that making their own decision about their professional development is more likely to be successful. Treating teachers as professionals who have expertise, experience and understand the context of their practice, he contends, is a more democratic option. Developing strengths will transform performance (Honey, 2008), however, I notice in my experience that the focus on, and preoccupations with, perceived weaknesses generally prevails.

Step Four: Developing and implementing improvement priorities.

> *'A key part of the process and perhaps one of the most demanding. If a teacher's practice is considered 'a problem', perhaps based on results, they are less likely to accept new practices.'*
>
> (Fielding *et al.,* 2005).
>
> '*Telling people (or worse still, threatening people) that they just have to change rarely works. Inviting people in the teams within which they work to find a solution to a serious professional problem facing them is more likely to be successful…'*
> (Coffield, 2010, p. 5).
>
> *'Parties need a shared purpose … to 'own' the activity. This is important for not only initiating, but also sustaining the process, getting the roles right and ensuring there is an effective use of time. It entails a preparedness to learn in order to properly understand the new practice, possibly observing it first in order to get a better idea of its potential, reflecting at appropriate points in*

order to be able to be proactive in the learning process, and having some awareness of the challenges of the road ahead.'
(Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 22)

These quotations all express the importance of allowing people to find their own solutions, perhaps within a team or through collaboration with another in context, in place of being told what to do, or have your work considered a problem to be addressed, which as stated above, rarely works.

This careful 'scene setting' to allow teachers to make changes is essential for a successful outcome. Measures of impact, both hard and soft indicators, should be identified and how this can be collected and used. Gregson, Spedding & Nixon (2015) stress that this should be part of the initial planning, to enable effective interim and final reviews of the impact of the intervention. The initial planning and support can occur during the professional discussion following an observation, as mentioned by the respondent below, and be continued by the line manager and through the LAT meetings with colleagues. Teachers are also able to access the Staff Development Team at any time to discuss their ideas and have an informal observation.

They [SMT] actually want to look at ways of helping us with an expertise of staff from the observation team and I found it's helped anyway. I found that not being dictatorship now. (Rose, Lecturer)

What I like about the ADP is it flags up milestones, you know periodically things happen, like a drop-in session and learning walks which are very important. (Susan, Lecturer)

Step Five: Interim evaluation of impact and adaptation.

This links to the measure of impact set at the start of the intervention. This allows the opportunity to continue, adapt or discontinue targets based on the evidence. This is part of the termly review of the APDs that all managers should do and also at the Interim and Annual Appraisal. The Advanced Practitioners monitor the activity on reports on at least a monthly basis, more often for new staff, and arrange meetings to work together to progress them. These are rarely refused by teachers, who often value these meetings.

Step Six: Final evaluation of impact and identification of the next priorities for improvement.

This can take place for an individual during the Interim or Annual appraisal, which includes an evaluation of the activities recorded on the ADP. Initially, ADP targets were small, easily achievable and designed to provide quick wins and improvements to teaching in the period before the OfSTED Re-Inspection, so were evaluated promptly and new priorities set. Fielding*, et al.,* (2005) remind us that changes to practice take time and are not a quick fix so small advances can be motivating. However, as the process has become embedded longer targets are emerging, taking them back to the appraisal style where targets were set for the academic year, which are more difficult to assess in the interim.

As a department, the final evaluation covers all activity that has occurred to guide decisions about continuing, widening or discontinuing and may contribute to the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and training plan for the next academic year.

Linking the current college practice with the guidelines for JPD shows that the college is embodying many of the practices leading towards a more collaborative, democratic and powerful drive for improvement. As well as the desire from the SMT to do so, to fully embrace JPD requires funding to provide the time and space for its development. Time is a key factor, recognised by Fielding, *et al.,* (2005, p. 25)

- '*The time to create what a practitioner sees as 'good practice'*
- *The time to learn to transfer these practices*
- *The time it takes to learn and adapt a new practice, including building trust and relationships that are conducive to learning from others.*'

Less positively, there are some concerns expressed by respondents about the ADPs, with manager involvement considered a key driver for motivating staff to use them, but this was not always evident. My notes show that I asked a member of the Staff Development Team to view and add comments to an ADP where the teacher had met a number of targets, but the line manager had not reviewed it for some months.

Responses about the ADP
The line manager needs to keep an eye on what's going on. (Susan, Lecturer) What I've come to realise is that if we are going to keep it a fresh and alive process, it needs to be incorporated into more discussions with their line managers. So, if a line manager never pays any attention to it; doesn't look at the targets with staff there, then the person is going to lose some motivation. (Mark, Senior Manager) I am looking at ADPs. Some engage with it well, they see the value, but some people see it just as paperwork and don't see it as a tool for professional learning. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner) I am not sure how successful ADPs are. I think they are getting more successful as there is feedback followed by the ADP and then there is the discussion with the manager and appraisal and so on. I think that it is feeding in. (Lucy, Advanced Practitioner) Bear in mind that teachers want to be recognised if it is going well and if they struggle, they want support. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner)

The Case Studies 2, 3 and 4 in Chapter 4 show how line manager involvement benefits teachers, whether experienced and confident in the target they have set, or new to the college. In Case Study 2 the follow up with the manager helped ease a challenging situation for the teacher and the actions were evidenced on the ADP and later reviewed by the manager. In Case Study 3 Sarah suggests that regular reviews would enhance the use of the ADP, despite independently using it as a catalyst for professional learning. Case Study 4 shows how James was using the ADP to drive and evidence his professional learning as a personal endeavour but he valued his reviews with his manager and his mentoring with the Advanced Practitioner.

The Case Studies in this research show how varied the use of a basic document can be in igniting passion to develop new skills; find the way to deal with challenging students; and to evidence personal development as a new employee, but look more widely and identify how resources could be shared within a department. The form itself does nothing without the input of teachers, Advanced Practitioners and line managers, but has become a repository of targets and achievements and for many, a source of pride in their accomplishments, outperforming the appraisal process in this respect.

Whilst ADPs are not expressly linked to JPD, as noted in Chapter 4 there are a number of factors of JPD embodied in its use. Although the starting point is usually an observation, this was not the key focus for respondents, who saw the target setting as the purpose of the professional discussion. The change to an observation report containing judgement and impact did not appear to be received negatively, although it returns to a top down approach with the observer pronouncing on the session. As the focus of the professional discussion was predominately on the ADP, discussion was relatively limited, which may have meant the report itself had little impact for the observee.

The initial use of the ADP was a mutual, collaborative setting of targets in most instances, followed by discussion and review. The choice of targets was usually made by the teacher, for example, as shown in Case Studies 3 and 4. Those following from an observation as in Case Study 2, followed a collaborative discussion identifying the key points to work on. Most successful in these discussions is an existing, trusting mutual relationship, which is not always possible, but the teacher is free to work with anyone else once their targets are set, so can choose a suitable collaborator. The opportunities to review and discuss with others is valued, which suggests this is not seen as an audit or measurement process but a supportive, encouraging opportunity to reflect with another. This is a much more democratic practice for educational improvement than any previous used by the college.

Line managers could create the microclimate in the work setting that Eraut, (2001, cited in Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, p. 98) suggests might foster workplace learning which are listed in Chapter 1. Some of these characteristics are already in place through the college LAT meetings, which discuss teaching and learning and offer the opportunity of learning from experiences at a group level. The college holds 'Risk It' weeks when staff are encouraged to try new approaches to teaching with no risk of criticism if they do not work well. Line managers know their staff and can suggest productive mentoring or knowledge exchange.

However, many authors (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, Gregson, Spedding & Nixon, 2015, Dunne, 2005, Sennett, 2009) assert that patience and time are required to develop practice, and this is relevant to the line manager. They must adjust to the demands of managing the new observation and ADP process, which requires termly observations and meetings with individual staff members to discuss their targets and progress, in place of the previous annual observation and feedback session. This must compete with time for developing new qualifications, such as T Levels, covering staff absence and meeting student needs, and addressing the challenges the Covid-19 pandemic wrought, where learners are less prepared for further education and demand exceptional action to prevent potentially long-lasting impact (International Public Policy Observatory, 2021).

The confidence of the manager to support staff and encourage their development is also critical, and it may be premature and over-ambitious to expect that their involvement will run smoothly at this early point. Fortunately, the Advanced Practitioners work closely with teachers on their targets, not replicating the line manager role, but complementing it.

Comment on Advanced Practitioner input
Or in some cases, I actually don't think that's totally appropriate because some of my questioning tactics have been picked up in observations. So therefore, always felt it was probably more appropriate for somebody like xxx [Advanced Practitioner] to sign

those off. And now we have a shared document that's probably more accessible. (Susan, Lecturer)

The observation process

The observation itself was commented upon very favourably by respondents. Over a period of time teachers had started asking observers, mainly line managers or members of the Staff Development Team, to come into a particular session and follow it up with a discussion. This was a supportive approach when we moved rapidly to online teaching from March 2020 and teachers were able to receive guidance and training on using software and then ask for a drop in to see how it was working. During this period judgement was deliberately limited and positives stressed to support teachers.

Comments on the observation process from March 2020
I said to staff you can send me a link to drop in [online] and staff have been open to that and obviously sent me sessions that they would like me to drop in to, but I've really been impressed with what I have seen.' (Jane, Middle Manager) She came in on the Zoom session and I actually had very good, beneficial feedback from that.' (Susan, Lecturer) Rather than doing it <u>to</u> staff, I think it feels much more of a union and a much more joined up consideration. The college is probably the envy of a number of others [colleges] that we're in a space where we've got a more open-door approach that allows us to address the concerns and responsibilities that we have around the performance of teachers. (Matthew, Senior Manager) I think it is now more relaxed and we've got more feedback written or verbal feedback. I think it's more positive. I like it. I think it's a much nicer, a much nicer way of doing it. (Sarah, Lecturer)

This model of observation continued through 2020 and 2021 when much teaching moved online due to the pandemic. The college's support around practice and wellbeing during the pandemic was exceptional. Staff development was substantial, reflecting the extraordinary times in which we found ourselves. Online teaching techniques were the primary training offered and Advanced Practitioners visited classes to offer guidance on digital applications, such as Zoom, Kahoot and Padlet to enhance the student experience. Online training was also available on demand on many technical subjects. Managers also dropped into sessions, sometimes at the teacher's request, as mentioned above, or by their own choice to see how the sessions were going. The discussion that followed was supportive and encouraging, with any negative comments effectively banned during this challenging period. The advances made towards removing anxiety around observations, and encouraging reflection and target setting on the ADP, were embedded by March 2020, so visits to classrooms or online sessions did not cause anxiety for most staff.

Summary

The interviews I conducted generated a wealth of information about the models of education change and improvement. I heard the perspective of interviewees at different levels and responsibilities within the college and from external Quality Managers. Some participants in the study have recent personal experience of observation (although all participants have been observed at some point in their career). Others are responsible for developing and implementing the various models of observation, change and improvement reported here and are part of the SMT or report to SMT and Governors. This helps to create a more rounded understanding of the purpose of observation, including what is actually happening in experience and practice, and the staff development that should, or ideally, will follow from it. By chance, the study starts in the dark waters of Graded observations and ends on a positive note in the calmer sea with the latest model bringing about a stronger sense of shared responsibility and mutual accountability for change and improvement.

The next chapter concludes the thesis by summarising its main findings, offering recommendations, contributions to knowledge and lessons learnt.

Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter is set out in three parts. Part one conveys the conclusions of the study. Part two looks at the lessons learnt and offers recommendations for the future. Part three presents an overall summary of the study.

Part 1 Conclusions

The introductory chapters of this thesis underscore the importance of Putting Practice First. Positioning educational practice and experiences of practice at the forefront of the thesis involves developing an understanding of the nature of practice, what make practice educational and the processes and forms of knowledge involved in the improvement of a practice. In the context of this thesis, this led to considerations of the work of Kemmis (1995), Carr (1995) and Dunne (2005) as well as discussion of the concept of teaching as a practice and the moral qualities (internal good) inherent what makes a practice educational.

Kemmis (1995) observes that many research projects attempt to study practice 'from the outside' without reference to teachers, believing that the findings of research conducted by others will bring about change in the educational practice of teachers who have little or no experience of, or opportunities to engage in, educational research. He notes how this technical-rational, top-down, outside-in world view (which he describes as the 'spectator' theory of science), ignores the importance of teacher judgement in context, overlooks teachers' commitment to educational values and continuous professional learning and improvement, while at the same time assuming that teachers can and should absorb, then regurgitate the decontextualised findings of non-teachers and outsider researchers.

From this perspective, the job of teachers is to simply and mechanically 'transfer' the ideas of others into their own practice, reducing teachers to the role of mindless foot soldiers. Dunne (2005) reminds us that practice has always developed cooperatively, collaboratively over time, as part of a gradual, incremental process, that is moved forward in new and challenging ways by its practitioners, its insiders, those who practise and commit to improvement of that practice in the world now and in the future. Sennett (2009) concurs and insists that skill must evolve. This becomes satisfying and as the skill improves and becomes a source of pride and internal reward. He notes that time allows for reflection and imagination, which speed does not.

Pring (2005) argues that education is a moral practice and is part of humanities, not social sciences. He states that educational improvement should rest with teachers, who ideally should have a care for, and a commitment to, moral development in their practice, rather than being led by managers or reduced to rote training. He reminds us that teachers are members of a profession and have developed their social practice with educational principles and values framing their conduct for centuries.

> *'These are frequently implicit, but they embody a commitment to helping young people to learn those things which are judged to be worthwhile.'*
> (Pring, 2005, p. 199)

I make no apology here for repeating Brown's comment from the introduction to Chapter 5, as it encapsulates so well the moral aspects of educational practice.

> *'For me, teaching was always about helping young people come out of school being decent human beings; knowing the difference between right and wrong, showing acts of kindness. Yes, lessons are important but they're not everything.'*
> (Brown, 2022, p. 28)

Development of professional learning and self-improvement

Given the prominent view of the observation of teaching as a measure of teaching quality and a catalyst for improvement, the study examines three models of observation in use during a four-year period at one FE college in England. These are detailed and discussed in Chapter 4.

The OfSTED Inspection report of 2017 identified that the model of Graded observations used by the college did not provide accurate information on the quality of teaching. Despite recording 85% of observations as Grade 1 or Grade 2, the OfSTED Inspection found that this was not an accurate assessment of teaching and learning and the college was Graded 3, Requires Improvement. Interview respondents in the study repeatedly express doubts about the validity of a short observation, conducted once per year. This was borne out by OfSTED and in response to the Inspection report, the college's SMT changed to a different model of observation and educational improvement as detailed and discussed in Chapter 4.

An expected finding to emerge from this study is the antipathy towards graded observations, which created fear and distrust, which lends support to the findings of other studies including those of O'Leary, (2012b) and Coe *et al.,* (2014). Surprisingly, despite disliking the idea of grading in principle, some respondents did value it, for the information it offered them, and for some managers it was regarded as a useful measure of teaching quality. This suggests that in addition to being able to self-reflect, validation and discussion of the teacher's view of the session with another teacher adds value, when these discussions are conducted in an educational way. Lightman (2012, p. 8) writing about the unpopularity of observation when grading was the norm, suggests observation of practice is central to professional development and it is crucial for senior staff to observe teachers in order to support their development. However Lightman cautions that observations should be conducted as, *'… a collaborative, positive, developmental experience',* and that if it, *'…is resulting in a top-down culture of surveillance, blame or even bullying, it is not being done properly.'* This goes to the crux of the matter.

O'Leary (2012a), a prominent researcher in the field of teaching observation, has published many research studies which report much hostility to graded observations. However, he concludes that observations have an important role in improving the quality of teaching provided they concentrate less on the performance measurement aspect and more on professional learning and development. The latter approach he terms 'expansive', which emphasises professional learning systems in colleges and the development of communities of practice. This advances the idea that observation of practice, *per se,* is a necessary (and arguably even a natural activity as insiders in a practice informally observe each other in the workplace as a day to day aspect of their practice). Having said that, the purpose and goal of any observation should be the development that follows from it and a central problem here is that often this does not occur.

Respondents universally found action plans arising from the graded observation model were not used well, if at all. Teachers in the main did not value them as they were usually ‘given’ to them, and most managers did not follow them up until an appraisal discussion which scheduled to take place towards the end of the academic year.

Responses about the Action Plan
…filling in what we do every year for our appraisal. That’s basically just a list, a list of CPD activities with some reflection.’ (Sarah, Lecturer) Some would discuss, but do what they intended to do or not do anything, particularly if it was a Grade 2. (David, Advanced Practitioner)

As discussed earlier in this thesis, in order to make observation more palatable and developmental, it was deemed by SMT that a change in culture was required across the college.

Changing the culture

Changing the culture of the college was an unspoken aim of the discontinuance of Graded observations and the introduction of a model of observation and educational improvement which was a complete contrast – unannounced, frequent, brief, with no individual feedback. Torrington and Hall (1998) contend that culture is often implicit, and employees may not be consciously aware of it, but they suggest that it is real and powerful, and important for those in the organisation to attempt to understand the culture they construct, share and inhabit. Data from this study suggest that managers, particularly Human Resource managers, need to understand to what extent culture can be changed and how such changes can be implemented for the good of all concerned. Torrington and Hall (1998) maintain that change may be much harder and slower that managers usually expect or allow time for. The culture changes the college brought about with the new model of observation challenge this statement; the reduction in anxiety, acceptance of unannounced observations and increased frequency are remarkable for being swiftly achieved in a matter of months. What is also remarkable about the above changes in culture is that they have endured.

Responses about the new process
The idea of anyone coming into class has worked spectacularly well. Some actually encourage you to come in. (David, Advanced Practitioner) Quite a sea change around the anxiety enables us to have a growing level of acceptance of others coming in and out of the teachers' space. (Matthew, Senior Manager) The whole point was about changing mindset and culture. (Clare, Advanced Practitioner) No difficulty with the [Union national] position on No Unannounced Observations. (John, Union Representative)

Notwithstanding this success, respondents argue that the model was ineffectually introduced, leading to staff puzzlement regarding the purpose and the feeling (whiff) of a top-down approach remaining behind in the observation process. The lack of feedback was another puzzle and as Petty, (2022, p. 1) says*, 'Receiving effective feedback is so important'.*

Response about the lack of feedback
It felt like something being done. They didn't feel it as an inclusive development process. And I don't believe staff were really buying into the fact that it was something that was going to improve their practice. (Sandra, Senior Manager)

On the other hand, the provision of information and training of observers was intense and continued through joint observations and moderation meetings. This reinforces the top-down element of the model, where the power, influence and focus were on the management and their views of the overall quality of teaching, although observation was no longer used as a measure of the performance of individuals. Without feedback discussion, there was no opportunity for teachers to contribute to the process, rendering it more of one-sided monologue than a genuine critical and constructive discussion. This was a bold move. The decision to use a new and untried process, which dispensed with the performance management judgement from the observation process, consequently removing the data previously available to SMT, Governors and external stakeholders, in order to bring about the rapid culture change required constituted a significant shift in practice which required considerable courage on the part of the SMT.

> *'Transformational change requires courage; the courage to be different, to think and do things differently, to deviate from the norm. It also requires commitment, perseverance and trust in the process, the very antithesis of a 'quick-fix' solution'*
> O'Leary & Gewessler, 2014, p. 41)

The SMT had that courage, even when the FE Commissioner, the Senior HMI Inspector and our SCIF partners all queried this unusual model. Many managers and staff found it very strange. By July 2018 the SMT and Governors were really struggling with the lack of metrics in the measurement of the quality of teaching. Other than the number of learning walks occurring, the only feedback was from an anonymous group of staff within a subject department, for example, Hairdressing or Hospitality. This feedback was shared by the line manager at Learning, Assessment and Teaching (LAT) meetings, which might be two weeks or more after an individual was seen. Some teachers felt responsible for any teaching seen which was less good, whilst others were able to absolve themselves as they could correctly say that they had not had any feedback.

The effort of the observers was immense, many learning walks were completed during the year and recorded. Possibly a good deal more were not written up due to time pressure or not seeing a minimum of three sessions within a subject area, which was a requirement to ensure an indication of practice in the subject area, not the practice of an individual, was given.

As Head of Teaching and Learning, I regularly collated the information provided and identified themes for strengths and areas for development at a team level for the SMT meetings and Governor meetings. As the number of learning walks increased, I had to involve the Staff Development Team in order to complete this task, but the initiative was still not well received as it was not sufficiently clear if the college was making the progress that was clearly expected by Ofsted. Some senior managers were in favour of this process, others less so.

The report the Senior Her Majesty's Inspector (SHMI) from a Support and Challenge visit early in 2018, when fifteen sessions were observed, recognised that frequent learning walks were taking place but assessing progress against identified weaknesses was not. The SHMI suggested that more focus was required to ensure improvements in teachers' practice are sustained. Amongst the agreed next steps was:

- *Leaders and manager to continue to improve the quality of TLA*

With hindsight I, and other staff I have spoken to, can see how far and fast we moved towards our goal using this method, which reduced anxiety of observations, made visits to classrooms the norm and provided managers with the ability to see what was happening on a day-by-day basis, and as noted above, these benefits have continued.

Accelerated Development Plans (ADPs)

A major finding of this research is the unanimous positive reaction from respondents to the use of the ADPs, following the observation. Whilst development plans are not new or unusual, there is limited literature on their use as a primary driver for rapid improvement.

As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, the ADP embodies a number of aspects of JPD (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005). The observer does not have responsibility for 'allocating' targets but acts as a mutual partner in the professional discussion, not an 'expert' pronouncing on the session. I am responsible for the implementation of the observation process, providing initial training and ongoing moderation, maintaining records and providing statistics to SMT. I am a source of information and guidance for the college on all observation matters. I am able to draw upon the knowledge gained through my studies about the potential negative impact of observation (UCU, 2013, Coffield, 2017, Scott, 2018) and the importance of developmental goals (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, Wiliam, 2014, FETL, 2019) and using a cooperative approach to the professional discussion to develop the college's approach to observation and train observers. This included ensuring observers know that professional discussion and ADP are designed to encourage critical reflection and self-awareness, in place of the previous performance management approach. The focus is on the future changes or development, not on the observation itself, which acts as a catalyst for the discussion and subsequent development or change.

During training I emphasise the joint aspect of the discussion, allowing the teacher to reflect on their session and consider any improvements or changes they would choose to make. Using neutral questions and listening carefully, rather than making observations is a key skills for the observer as mentioned in Chapter 4. The observer's role is that of a peer, not a judge. A flattening of power relationships is an important factor in working together as Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) found. This is a more democratic way whereas the power was one way before; in the JPD approach, the ontological position is the truth is interpretive. A trusting relationship is another vital factor, and whilst this is not always possible to engineer in observations, it is quite often the case. The teacher being able to identify their own needs is another feature, which avoids the top-down approach to development that has previously been a part of the college's observation process. Professional learning and development concentrates on a forensic reflection of the session to clarify what occurred and what could change or develop. This is part of a cycle of problem-finding, problem-solving and critical professional dialogue which allows the teacher to appreciate the work they have done, and to identify in collaborative and cooperative critical dialogue how they might improve an aspect of their practice.

Collaborative reflection with another person and shared engagement in a subsequent mutual endeavour to improve an aspect of educational practice assists this. The lack of grading in this model enables the teacher to think about their work being 'good enough', through the exercise of good judgement. This displaces the technical-rational model in pursuit of 'excellence'; conforming to a set of inflexible criteria or a checklist, which look intuitively appealing on the face of it but do not work in practice; or using a system of putative 'best practice' which has been generated by others without knowledge of the context in which it was developed or consideration of the time, resources and practicalities of what may be involved in making the idea a reality in practice. A recognition that educational improvement takes time to develop and sustain is apparent from the respondents, some of whom are working on quite long-time, incremental goals, which was a finding from Fielding, *et al.,* (2005) and has emerged as a key barrier to improvement in this study.

Responses about the ADP
… it was quite clear. I took ownership and just kept using it week by week. Once I did a bit of reading, as soon as I'd done it, write it down. So, I've read this article, or I've done this or I have practised that, so this is towards my target. (Sarah, Lecturer) The benefit for me is keeping a reflective log evidencing my professional practice. One of the last things I added was a free course to improve my xxxx skills. I know I've got that module coming up in January [to teach] so it will enable me to feel more confident. (James, Lecturer)

They [lecturers] don't want to be dictated to from the top. They actually want to look at ways of helping us with the expertise of staff from the observation team. I found it's helped anyway. I feel we are all one. (Rose, Lecturer)

I found my observation very beneficial; it was reassuring. I was going to request one anyway because xxx sent an email asking if anyone would like them to drop in and I liked the way it was worded. I am finding through tough times, even with online [teaching] the support has made you not feel alone. I like the way you can put things in the ADP. I am using the reflection on the ADP more than the targets, but I have dealt with the targets within that sometimes. (Susan, Lecturer)

I think the teachers themselves are taking much more ownership and wanting to improve. In appraisals my staff can be quite good and say, I'd like to improve this, or focus on this area for a target. I have more individual involvement with my team because there's lots of discussion, not always formal discussion, but lots of discussions going on about teaching and learning, which are definitely happening more now than they did. (Jane, Middle Manager)

Follow up meetings

A recurring theme in the interviews is a sense amongst interviewees that the college's current model was working well, with the caveat that line management interest and involvement was a key ingredient of this success, but not always present. Respondents valued their meetings with the Advanced Practitioners, who are linked to each Faculty, as an opportunity to reflect on their work with a peer.

Responses about targets

… we had the meet up after the observation and I think it would be good to have follow up meetings just to say, yes, you're on track, think about your goals, what else would you want to do? So, I think regular meetings help because it's encouragement, even if it is five, ten minutes, right, let's review. (Sarah, Lecturer)

If there are no targets on an ADP, I ask questions of the line manager about how often they are reviewing them. That usually leads to improvement and targets appearing.'(Mark, Senior Manager)

As a manager running an area where teaching and learning has to be the focus, then if I have to give a bit more encouragement, then I have to. If they need to upscale, then they do. (Jane, Middle Manager)

CPD

There was less focus on CPD in interviews than the use of the ADPs, which would lead to development activities. In Service Training (INSET) continued to provide funding for CPD activities and the annual Training Days always took place. A development in 2018 was full day Teachers' Conference, with the welcome by members of the SMT. It offered a choice of hour long sessions on a variety of teaching and learning subjects for teachers could book into. This continued each year, online when necessary. Staff were encouraged to link their sessions to their ADPs and either add to targets or show that a session had contributed to one. They could also add reflection if not relevant to targets. Finance had been an issue in the college since 2009, as mentioned in Case Study 1 and this was mentioned by some respondents.

Comments relating to financing CPD

If the college had more money, I think my staff would attend conferences. They do Awarding Body training and do the Assessor and IQA Awards, but we do not always have money for external events.' (Jane, Middle Manager)

We have had disruption due to a significate refurbishment period and the focus of finance has been on this activity, so our core business became somewhat distracted with less focus. The Inspection forced us back to our core business and approaches to professional development of the staff … We came up with the concept around shifting the ownership of the development to the staff members through the ADP, so we were really quite vocal around all of this being wrapped up within an overall accelerated development programme. (Matthew, Senior Manager)

Part 2 Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

What has been learnt from this study? Chapter 5 sets out the findings from the case studies, interviews, copies of interviewees' personal documents in the Appendices, and examination of college documents. There was no way of knowing at the start of the study that so many changes in the observation procedures would occur, and how successful some of these would be in creating staff improvement and development. The initial change from the graded observation process based on the OfSTED model occurred as a reaction to the Grade 3 OfSTED inspection in early 2017, which found the observation grades inflated. This led to the adoption of an ungraded, no feedback model of learning walks in August 2017, which was in use at another college who had been Graded 3 by OfSTED, and they recommended the model. The SMT were keen to bring about a change in the culture around observations and adopted this model. This was a very different model of observation to college observers and, unusually the training was undertaken by the consultant, rather than by me, as Head and Teaching and Learning, with my team supporting it. No documentation accompanied the training, which made it difficult to disseminate to teachers, but the Principal explained the changes in writing to teachers as a, *'dialogue with teachers to understand their learners and how they experienced learning'*.

I met with the Principal and Head of Quality every two to three weeks from the late Autumn term to report statistical and qualitative progress. The main issues I reported on were a growing acceptance of brief visits to classrooms and concern mainly from teachers, but also some managers, about the lack of feedback. In a few cases managers were concerned how to deal with poorly performing teachers as the link with capability was lost. In a briefing to all staff in April 2018, the Principal shared that hundreds of learning walks had been undertaken and that it is now very much accepted and embedded in our improvement culture. He noted that many of our teachers had been able to learn from undertaking learning walks themselves.

The issues I had reported about the learning walk model to the Principal were present in the diagnostic report of the college's improvement partner in the SCIF process, Marine (pseudonym). The Principal shared aspects of the report with all staff in April 2018, which found that improvements suggested by teachers and managers were:

- That individuals receive feedback on ‘noticings’ (the facts observed)
- That clarity is provided on how the process fits with other college policies / procedures
- That managers would welcome guidance on how to deal with those very few colleagues who give cause for concern.

In this communication a revised process document was issued, which positioned me as an advisor to Faculty Managers when there was cause for concern and involvement in any further action, which was a return to my previous responsibilities. Due to my studies in the intervening period, I felt better equipped to look at alleged poor performance and conducting learning walks, which usually took place to see if concerns were valid. I had gained in confidence, particularly when confirming that concerns had not been seen by me or my team, or when managers rebuffed my suggestions for developmental support from my team for individual teachers, to potentially avoid progression to capability proceedings. My increased background knowledge through my studies, early data collection and networking with other practitioners enabled me to be informed about the negative aspects of observation, such as causing teachers anxiety, and the positive aspects, such as joint discussion; teachers choosing their own targets; cooperative working, and in my role I was able to promote through regular updates and training on observation processes at the Programme Managers’ Conferences, Training Day events, training given to departments and informal discussion.

I was part of a team formed in April 2018 to develop a new process, based on Marine’s model, which included feedback. Training was planned for the Summer 2018 term and my team and I received advance training from Marine to enable us to cascade to college observers. A programme was devised and training took place late in the Summer term for implementation in September 2019.

Late in the Summer term, an Interim Senior Manager, Sandra (pseudonym) joined the college, and this is detailed in Chapter 4. Sandra had a remit to prepare the college for reinspection and was content for the college to use the now ready observation process but added an action plan to it, called the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP), which would be jointly developed during the post-observation feedback, now termed the *'professional discussion'*. I worked closely with Sandra to develop the process ready for September. I developed the ADP to be Appendix 1) very flexible. I was responsible for the training of all observers and able to bring elements of JPD, such as joint responsibility for creating targets and equitable discussions, and the use of careful listening by observers, as explained in Chapter 4. I could view all ADPs, as could my team, who had responsibility for staff development and support, which was recorded on the ADPs. Due to the pressure of the forthcoming OfSTED use of the ADP was strongly promoted by SMT and managers and use became near universal, although differing in quantity and quality. OfSTED reported in early 2019, when the college received Grade 2, Good,

> *Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have improved the arrangements for observing the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Observers provide feedback to teachers that helps them to identify for themselves the actions that would most improve their teaching. Professional development for teachers focuses on addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection and the areas for improvement identified during frequent learning walks. This leads to improvements in teaching, learning and assessment.*

However, despite the strong start, data from the study suggest that there are areas that could be strengthened.

Recommendation 1 Provide clear purpose and a transparent rationale for changes

Ensuring communication is planned and effectively disseminated with opportunities to check understanding provided, is essential to the smooth implementation of new processes. It is crucial to ensure everyone affected is clear on the purpose, process and expected outcome. Data from this study indicate that when changes were made managers were far better informed than teachers, despite the impact being far greater on them. Direct communication was issued in the form of an information sheet, mainly via email, without subsequently checking understanding, or providing the opportunities for staff to find out more. The focus was mainly on the 'how' with little on the 'why', which affected teachers being able to understand the rationale behind the change. This take a top-down approach, and without understanding the reasons for the change, it is difficult for teachers to query or clarify. The timing was unavoidable, but making changes just before the summer break may be poorly remembered in September and should be repeated.

Recommendation 2 Hold follow-up meetings after observations

Respondents felt greater clarity would result from a short meeting, two to three weeks after the observation, to enable the teacher to check with the observer that their ADP was correctly completed and to discuss and reflect on the targets. If the teacher requires support or guidance on how to approach the targets, then this can be discussed and signposted to the Advanced Practitioners or colleagues. The role of the Advanced Practitioners should be recognised here, as their work is seen as a successful complement to the line managers'.

Recommendation 3 Implement discrete training for line managers on the purpose of the ADP and the importance of their involvement with the staff and their ADPs

Findings from this study show that the involvement of line managers is the single most successful action for teachers continuing to use the ADP. This supports Eraut's (2004) opinion that learning at work is greatly influenced by the manager's personality, communication skills and learning orientation. Such involvement provides the opportunity to discuss development and celebrate and praise targets achieved. The teacher can share their experiences and development activities, which can be disseminated to the department or wider college. The role of the manager, states Eraut (2004, p. 271) is usually motivating, appraising and encouraging production, whilst little attention is given to providing support to their staff and creating *'…a climate that promotes informal learning.'* Being aware of the practical aspects of strengthening informal learning for the individual and groups is uncommon in organisations. Therefore, appointing and developing managers for this role would be very significant for promoting learning (Eraut, 2004).

The focus of the college's training of observers, most of whom are managers, has been how to implement the observation process, with limited input about the purpose and their role. By the college promoting the ADP as owned by the teacher, managers have an opportunity to disengage for much of the year, becoming involved only or appraisals and course reviews, and this is the route some have taken. Discrete training of managers could focus on how learning occurs. The notion of *'good practice'* and the use of educational tools such as Bloom's Taxonomy (Bloom *et al.,*1956) or Rosenshine's Principles (Sherrington, 2019) may be considered by some managers a goal - the excellent lesson - a form of practice termed *poiesis* by Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), informed by *techné*, the technical skills or expertise. However the practice of teaching does not only require expertise but it has a moral and ethical aspect, which distinguishes it from making a product. *Praxis* is term appropriate for educational forms of practice, due to its purpose in achieving morally worthwhile ends, which have been discussed in several Chapters in this thesis. This a key concept for managers, who are themselves all teachers, to understand how learning occurs and how to support their staff in their practice.

Recommendation 4 Refocus the ADPs at the centre of professional learning

Data from this study indicate that the ADP is a helpful catalyst for change and improvement in educational practice. They are sufficiently flexible for all teaching staff, FE, HE, experienced or less so, with the more detailed proforma linking to the Professional Standards (ETF, 2022) used for staff new to teaching. Respondents report that they provide a focusing device for reflection and creating targets and provide them with evidence of progress and achievement, which are in themselves motivating.

ADPs can be used in JPD where working collaboratively with peers to generate improved learning opportunities for reflection and trying new practices. They support development that lasts for a long period and provide information for appraisals and training needs. Sarah (Lecturer) worked towards a long-term goal of gaining a communication qualification and disseminating this in the college to increase its impact. There was sufficient flexibility within the process for her to adjust her goals to work with students online due to the pandemic. She started in September 2019 and continued to December 2020. An extract of her ADP is at Appendix 4. James (Lecturer) planned Open University modules in his professional area from September 2019 to February 2021. An extract of his ADP is at Appendix 5.

New initiatives usually take time to become embedded in organisations and the ADP, although strongly promoted initially, is not now always used regularly. The Covid pandemic has substantially reduced the incidence of personal contact in staff rooms and face-to-face team meetings. Offering Training Day activities online were the only option during 2020 and 2021, when there was an emphasis on online teaching and staff and student wellbeing. Observations were very limited and the professional discussion was required by SMT to remain positive and encouraging. Target setting reduced as a result. This has led to less use and impact of the ADPs. Refocusing on ADPs by instigating Lessons 1, 2 and 3 to invigorate the process, remind or inform managers and teachers about the purpose, could return to sustained, regular use being a catalyst for change and improvement.

Recommendation 5 Develop a monitoring report for ADPs

This study establishes ADPs as a helpful tool and catalyst for staff development but only when they are used regularly and reviewed by line managers (Lesson 4). Developing a monitoring report showing usage enables managers and the Staff Development Team to identify those without targets or without recent entries and engage with them to offer guidance and support.

Recommendation 6 Create regular opportunities for collaborative CPD activities

Findings from this study lend support to claims in the literature (Sennett 2009, Carr 1995, Kemmis, 1995, Dunne 2005), that teachers find collaborative and cooperative approaches support their development, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 5. Aspect of JPD (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005) are apparent in the post-observation process, but as in many educational establishments, JPD is not used fully in the college. The Six Step Cycle developed by Gregson, Spedding & Nixon (2015) could be delivered as workshops, utilising the college Training Days to offer the time and space to work collaboratively in JPD endeavours where responsibility and accountability for improvement is mutual and shared. In addition, the joint creation of digital resources to support this could extend the current asynchronous opportunities for staff development.

Recommendation 7 Engage the expertise of teachers when developing new initiatives

The college has strong links with the recognised trade unions and consults before the introduction of new policies, providing members with the opportunity to comment via their representatives. However, union membership is not evenly spread through the college campuses and has limited numbers, with some academic departments not represented at all. There are few avenues for staff to be involved in piloting or contributing to new initiatives affecting teaching and learning.

Consultants have been employed to assess teaching and learning in the Faculties and to advise findings and actions to Faculty Managers and SMT. When we have experienced and capable teachers who could do this well, bringing their crucial understanding of the context, this would appear an unnecessary expense and may be of limited value. The Principal noted that some staff had personally gained from doing learning walks, and this view was shared by many who took part.

During early 2018, consultants were completing observations in any way they thought fit, while the college observers had a specific process and protocol. The consultants gave feedback, which was very confusing for staff, who did not receive feedback from the college observation process. The notion that external 'experts' can assess teaching and learning and advise actions to managers suggests *poiesis*, informed by technical knowledge or expertise – *techné* – where a specific product is expected, in this case presumably *'good'* teaching and learning. As Carr (1995, p. 68) states, *‘To practise is thus never a matter of individuals accepting and implementing some rational account of what the ‘aims’ of their practice should be.’*

Despite being employed by the college, the consultants had no responsibility or accountability for any improvement, so for the teacher their role was little different from OfSTED. Having recently introduced an observation process with no individual feedback to teachers or managers, this system was quite different but running parallel. As far as I am aware, there was no written feedback to teachers, so it is difficult to consider this open, democratic or cooperative when the observation findings were given to the manager. As the Head of Teaching and Learning with responsibility for observation reports and the provision of staff development, I received no information about these observations, leaving me unable to offer support from the Staff Development Team or understand any themes emerging.

Being involved in the development of new initiatives or reviewing existing ones can provide staff development of a collaborative nature, such as JPD. This would require an allocation of time, but may result in more successful outcomes at lower cost than employing consultants. This could be linked to the existing Talent Management programmes, where staff are prepared for potential promotion, which are already planned and costed.

A final suggestion

A final suggestion, which I cannot implement alone, but may be taken up by teachers in the FE sector is the linking of OfSTED to the ETF to provide the much needed research from practitioners, to inform the Government departments that hold such power over the education sector. Using the sector voice through research could impact upon the charge that OfSTED is not research-informed and create a department that educational practitioners and establishments can relate to. My starting point would be to discuss this with my SUNCETT PhD cohort, who have all recently engaged in research in education and are geographically spread around England, with local knowledge and networks. Most are members of research groups and have published in journals recently. All are familiar with OfSTED and their inspection regime. Discussing the idea with the ETF is the next step, and I already have some contacts through previous work and research. If I am able to obtain a favourable response, or even a lukewarm one, using the sector newspapers, TES and FE News is the next steps to bring the idea to a wider audience and engage with others with greater influence than I have.

Part 3 Summary

Research aim

The purpose of this thesis is to consider practice (any form of practice) and how it improves and what makes a practice educational. It explores the extent to which methods of collaborative and cooperative Continuing Professional Development (CPD) might support the development of teachers' capacities for self-improvement and bring about improvements in educational practice, as identified by OfSTED and by teachers themselves. It considers the strengths and limitations of more collaborative, cooperative, pragmatic and democratic alternative models of educational change and improvement in relation to traditional approaches to continuing professional development (CPD). It also addresses the improvement of educational practice including Joint Practice Development (JPD) (Fielding, *et al.,* 2005).

The original intention of this thesis was to compare the journey from a college being awarded a Grade 3, Requires Improvement, by OfSTED with two other colleges who made similar journeys and had similar demographics. In the process of the research, I had access to key documents and held initial conversations with Quality staff at these colleges. However, during the course of my study my key contacts ceased to be available. As I did not have alternative contacts or the option to develop them, I decided not to pursue this line of study. However I have been able to include some external input. One interviewee is a senior quality manager and another a middle manager at one of the colleges: they were able to add to my study in respect of one of the observation models, as their college used it and recommended it to us.

Methodology and data collection methods

As discussed in Chapter 3, this research is a study of teachers' lived experiences of OfSTED and experiences of approaches to educational improvement. The purpose of the thesis is therefore to explore understandings of subjective lived experience. This is accessed by interpretation and subjectivity, not objectivity. The primary approach is interpretive, working on a small-scale in detail and using methods such as case studies, structured and non-structured interviews. As an insider-researcher I am able to appreciate the culture of the group being studied and I am also aware that I need to avoid interpreting the data generated in this study solely in terms of my own perspective. In my work at Royal College I have responsibility for the organisation and monitoring of session observation. In interviews I strive to limit my input on the subject, as I want to hear about the experiences of others and how observation impacts upon teachers, which may be quite different to mine.

In the course of this study, I have made the design of the research and the ways in which I collect, analyse and interpret the data as transparent and as open to scrutiny as possible. From the outset, all interviewees were informed in writing of the purpose of my study and given information about confidentiality and informed that they could discontinue at any time in accordance with BERA Ethical Guidelines (2018). Collecting data through interviews worked well. It was fortunate that the interviews could move online during the Covid-19 lockdowns and did not substantially delay the data collection. I chose as my research population a wide range staff at different of levels of employment from lecturers to senior managers and including a Union Representative, which I thought would provide a broader perspective than other studies, such as the UCU Report, (UCU, 2013) which have focused mainly on lecturers.

The responses from my interviewees reflect their position and responsibilities and therefore show the differences of focus which could be expected. The collection of interviews as a mode of data collection was successful in finding out the individuals' views and provided the opportunity to probe these. A broadly fixed series of questions was used, varied slightly by the role of the interviewee, making it possible to compare responses. However, answers to probing questions arising from answers makes direct comparisons difficult in some cases. Sometimes a respondent would state incorrectly how a particular observation process was developed or worked and as this was an area of knowledge for me, I was unsure whether I should mention this to them. I decided not to because I thought this would be negative to appear critical, when the ways observation processes came about or worked were probably not crucial to the comments made. Indeed, I found it interesting that respondents took different perspectives on the development and communication about new process, including some negative aspects, which impacted upon the successful introduction of the processes, and could be used to inform future implementation.

Developing this study has drawn my attention to the extremely negative aspects of observation, particularly graded ones, in a way that I did not see before. Looking back now, I am horrified that an annual observation could cause so much distress and anxiety in teachers, and, as a teacher I experienced this myself some years ago when an OfSTED Inspection was due and the whole college was in torment. The impact on individuals and establishments from OfSTED Inspections and colleges' interpretations of observations has been documented by many academic commentators but despite evidence that it does not bring out improvements, it has continued to afflict establishments and staff through its methods.

Limitations of the study

The generalisability of these results is of course subject to certain limitations. Firstly, this small-scale research project with a relatively limited sample can offer insights into how academic staff at all levels in an organisation respond to a technical-rational, top-down approach to the complex subject of assessing and improving the quality of teaching. It shows how educational practice developed when teachers were provided with collaborative, cooperative and more democratic spaces and forms of support in which they could engage in these. However, it is important to note that this model and related approaches cannot be used directly as a model or recipe for success to be simply applied in other contexts.

Secondly, apart from the first model of observation and educational improvement, which was in use in many colleges for a significant period, the two subsequent models were a hybrid of several methods of observation and therefore would not be comparable to those in other colleges. Notwithstanding this limitation, the study adds to and deepens our understanding of how successful staff development and improvements can take place in a democratic and collaborative way. Data from this study indicate that collaborative and cooperative professional learning is more successful than other modes of learning in bringing about improvements in educational practice.

The charge of 'obviousness'

> *'Is what we find out in social and educational research old hat, stale, platitudinous? Are the results of such research mere truisms that any intelligent person might know without going to the trouble of doing social or educational research?'*
> (Gage, 2007, p. 276)

I had concerns that my research findings might be viewed as obvious – after all, it is of course obvious that teachers would prefer to choose their own development goals. Data from this study also suggest that collaborative learning is more productive than individual learning – after all, collaborative learning is something that we encourage in our learners. Communicating the pedagogic principles and values underpinning a new model of educational change and improvement including open and honest discussion of experiences of what is happening in practice; the nature of practice and the forms of knowledge and processes through which a practice improves carefully; making the ontological and epistemological purpose of the model and its guiding principles and procedures clear, is obvious. Or is it?

I am indebted to Gage's (2007, p. 281) discussion and research on the subject. He details *'extremely estimable people'* who have questioned the value of social and educational research findings, which they suggest would be already known to any intelligent person. However, their criticisms were not systemically and formally empirical, but made with limited detail or specificity to support their allegations. One example of *'obviousness'* Gage (2007) gives is that it that smaller groups are always easier to control and thus have higher achievement. However, Hattie's (2022) research on the effect size of an influence on student achievement, updated in 2018, shows that class size has limited impact and does not feature in the 'Zone of Desired Effects'.

Gage (2007, p. 287) reviews further research, including a rigorous study on teaching outcomes by Wong, (1987). Her research on a total of 1, 215 participants using real findings and their opposites found that, *'…we can say reasonably that people can not distinguish true findings from their opposites'*. Wong, (1987, cited in Gage, 2007, p. 288) concluded that her results,

> *'…clearly confirmed the idea that knowledge of outcome increases the feeling of obviousness. Thus, when people claim to have known it all along when an event is reported to them, their claim is often not warranted'.*

Perhaps my concern about 'obviousness' is unnecessary, and the comfort of Gage's (2007) research gives me confidence that my findings are worthy of serious consideration and future action.

Reflection on the researcher's PhD experience

My PhD journey started with a Practitioner Research Programme 2018-2020 (ETF-SUNCETT) with the University of Sunderland, funded by the ETF. I was fortunate to be able to progress to an MPhil, still funded by the ETF. I transferred to PhD in 2020 as self-funding, although I received assistance with funding in 2020/2021 from the University of Huddersfield as I am a teacher on their Certificate in Education and PGCE.

My original project was to examine the various ways CPD can be accessed to bring about sustained improvement in teaching practice. This was to support Royal College Strategic Ambitions 2018-2021:

1 *Deliver outstanding learner success*

3 *Develop a high-performance culture*

My role as Head of Teaching and Learning in the college includes responsibility for the operational management of the session observation process and the provision of staff mentoring, coaching and training and CPD activities as described below.

- *Managing the Staff Development Team in delivering high quality learning walk outcomes;*
- *Liaise with Programme Managers (PMs) and Heads of Faculty (HoFs) to provide delivery for staff training needs identified by Learning Walks, appraisals and CPD requirements;*
- *Provide training and standardisation for observers and act as the lead of ProObserve (reporting software)*

I love my job and find it endlessly fascinating. Researching participants' perception of session observation was a key part of my data collection and this deepened my knowledge of the subject and key literature informed me of the history and development of observation as a form of measurement. This acquired knowledge has enabled me to link theory and practice and enhanced my work. During my studies, the project developed to examine practice and what makes practice educational in addition to the original aim to research models of change and improvement to support the development of teachers' capacities for professional learning and self-improvement.

I attended the Research Development Workshops for MPhil Year 1 and Year 2 with the University of Sunderland and have been supervised throughout by Professor Maggie Gregson, who has provided constant support and guidance through the challenges of reading for, researching for, and writing the thesis and I give her my grateful thanks. I attended the ETF Annual Research Conferences in 2019, for which I provided an abstract and poster of my research, and 2020, and the International Practice Focused Research in Education Conference (IPFREC) in 2021. Working full time made studying difficult and I did not make the progress I expected. Covid 19 brought different demands and I requested an extension as my studies became further delayed. This was disappointing, particularly as my PhD cohort were progressing at a greater speed and most have completed, but I have come to terms with this now.

I am grateful to the college Principal and successive line managers for supporting my research and allowing me to use the information from college documents and to conduct interviews. My colleagues have been willing to be interviewed and have been generous with their time, and those I asked to use information from their ADPs have given me permission to do so. Close colleagues who are studying for PhD or Ed.D. have provided a support group and valuable opportunities for discussion. I attend BELMAS and BERA research events, which have been a great source of ideas.

Studying for the MPhil, and later the PhD, developed my understanding of the background to the ontological and epistemic models of educational change and improvement in use and their underpinning philosophical rationales. These was not familiar to me at the outset of this research, and I realise that now I look at aspects of my work far more critically and analytically, where I used to accept everything, such as the role of OfSTED, without question. My studies have had a positive impact on my teaching, particularly when providing study support to ITT students and MA students. My academic reading and writing skills have improved considerably from my MSc studies and I am able to encourage this in others. I am more confident that I can contribute to educational debates and have gained a theoretical background to practice, which was completely new to me.

Final thoughts

Many distinguished academics (Carr, 1995, Kemmis, 1995, Sennett, 2009, Coffield & Edward, 2009, Fielding *et al.,* 2005, Pring, 2005, Schön, 1984, Dunne, 2005, 2009, and Eraut, 1994) who built on the works of Aristotle (384BC-322 BC) and Dewey (1933), have contributed to our knowledge and understanding of the nature of educational practice, the forms of knowledge and processes through which a practice improves, pedagogic professional learning interventions and other methods and models of improvement (Schön, 1984, Fielding, *et al.,* 2005, Coffield & Costa, 2014, Crowley, 2014b, Gregson & Nixon, 2013). Other research has focussed on the models of observation and their impact (Gregson & Nixon, 2009, O'Leary, 2012, 2012a, 2017, 2020, Coe *et al.,* 2014, Biesta, 2010).

My small-scale research draws upon the contributions to knowledge and experience from the works of the above authors. It then builds on this body of work to examine practice, what makes practice educational and how models of change and improvement may create or inhibit conditions to support the development of professional learning and self-improvement. It considers the strengths and limitations of alternatives to traditional approached to CPD and the improvement of practice, including JPD, (Fielding, *et at.,* 2005) and how this model and its guiding principles may work in practice. My research reflects recent changes to the OfSTED Educational Inspection Framework (EIF) and the decision by OfSTED to discontinue graded observations.

The final model of observation and educational improvement studied at the college combines elements of a top-down, technical-rational approach to the organisation of the observation, which includes a written report and a professional discussion, with a hybrid, more collaborative, co-operative, democratic and contextualised approach to making changes or improvements in educational practice which is still in its formative stages. It has not fully replicated the model of JPD as there are still elements of power relations in the observation and subsequent discussion and the practice is not always conducted jointly, but progress is being made to develop this model more explicitly. This model of change and improvement is yielding promising advances in the professional learning, self-development and self-improvement of teachers and offers a possible example for other colleges to adapt and develop.

Future development of observation models and approaches to educational change and improvement may benefit from this research and develop effective introductions and democratic approaches to the subsequent staff development, which may build on the successful elements identified in this study. I intend to look for opportunities to disseminate my experiences of conducting this research and reporting its findings to other further education providers in the future. I believe my study is already of benefit to the college as it currently commends the current model, while providing information about what is not working so well, and what could be improved. My study progressed through several changes during its life, but I am confident my thesis adds another piece of the jigsaw to existing literature in this field of study . O'Leary, (2012 b, p. 9), maintains that observation of teaching and learning (OTL) in England, '…*is an undeveloped area of educational research, particularly in terms of recognised empirical work carried out amongst staff working in FE.'* While my research is not entirely empirical, it meets the other conditions that I hope it will add to this canon of research.

****

Appendices

Appendix 1 An ADP template

Accelerated Development Plan 2019/2020

NAME:		**PROGRAMME AREA**	
COVERING THE PERIOD FROM:		**TO:**	

Target	**What prompted me to develop this aspect of my practice? E.g. appraisal/LW feedback/Student feedback/CDPRs/ quality audit/personal reflection?**	**What actually happened?** **What was the impact on learning?**	**Target date (4-6 weeks)**	**Termly review by PM who should initial any entries.** **(This should cover areas going particularly well and those that need attention. Further targets may be set)**

Self-reflection on progress/professional discussion/evidence of progress from Walk Throughs and Extended Learning Walks

Date	**Initials**	**Learning Strategy Principle**	

Appendix 2 New Teacher Development Plan

NEW TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Name:	Programme Area:	Date Started:

Professional Standard (Learning Strategy Principle)	Priority	How will standard be achieved? *Possible methods*	What resources will I need? Possible resources	What is the Success Criteria? *Possible success criteria*	Target Date	Comp
4.Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn (P1, P3, P5, P7)	3 months	Produce and deliver 3 new T&L methods that show learner progression.	TES website. Staff Development site, Attend LP training session.	Feedback from LW.		

5.Value and promote social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion (P2, P6)	3 months	Use LNG117 form to adapt resources / activities to meet individual learner needs. Deliver an activity that embeds British Values	LNG117 form. Staff Development Site.	Copies of adapted resources. Record of adaptations on SOW. Session Evaluation Form.		

Appendix 3. Postcard following Learning Walk. This example is more detailed than most.

What I noticed:

- Register was taken with learners turning on camera
- Zoom was used to deliver this hybrid session
- Resources were uploaded on Learn prior to the session
- PowerPoint slides with voice over created to accommodate students who might be absent

This was working really well:

- High expectation and supportive of your students (prompt start and no drink in class)
- You invited feedback regularly both in class and online, e.g. appointed learners or invited learners to pose questions and respond in Chat or use reactions.
- Self-study tasks (video links) have been set up within the resources on Learn for students
- Verbal questions were posed regularly to check learners' prior knowledge, recap previous sessions and stretch students' current understanding.

These are the things I would like to talk to you about:

- English (use of terminology and meanings) and maths (Newton and measurement) were clearly integrated in the session naturally and reinforced throughout the drop-in session.
- Lots of practical examples and tips were used to support students in relating the principles to actual scenarios.

Appendix 4. Extract from ADP for Sarah (pseudonym) from August 2019

Accelerated Development Plan

NAME:	Sarah (pseudonym)	**PROGRAMME AREA**	
COVERING THE PERIOD FROM:	August 2019	**TO:** July 2020	

Target	**What prompted me to develop this aspect of my practice? E.g. appraisal/LW feedback/Student feedback/CDPRs/ quality audit/personal reflection?**	**What actually happened?** **What was the impact on learning?**	**Target date (4-6 weeks)**	**Termly review by PM who should initial any entries. (This should cover areas going particularly well and those that need attention. Further targets may be set)**
Pass Xxx Regional tutors' course	This has been a target on my appraisal for over two years.	Completed the 4-day residential course. (see below) I now have my Xxx Licence! 11.10.19	September 2019	9/4/20 Congratulations 😊 The work you are doing using Xxx and raising the profile within college is fantastic.
To complete outstanding schemes	I had an observation and my scheme was missing.	Completed in half term	22.10.19	9/4/20
Risk it week	I am going to get the students to do peer assessment using simple Xxx symbols to assess each other's performance.	Use the peer assessment in my session on Thursday afternoon. Very successful. Students communicated with each other. Xxx came to see after I told her how good it had worked. Will try and use at the end of every session now.	14.11.19	9/4/20

Produce Xxx student questionnaire	For years I have been complaining about the lack of appropriate student survey for my students and the Developing and Becoming groups.	Had a meeting with xxx to decide on what questions to use. Then developed Xxxxx questionnaire on planning day which students have completed last week.	14.11.19	9/4/20 This survey has now been used twice. Thank you for working with colleagues to develop this and ensure it meets need.
Improve my own development of understanding of speech, language and communication	Continuation of the development of my understanding of communication and how important this is for my students	Completed an online CPD short course from the Communication Trust	17.11.19	9/4/20
Develop a communication policy for the department!				
Learn how to use Zoom to enable me to contact my students while college is closed.	Need to contact students while college is closed due to Covid 19.	Set up Zoom account and watched a couple of online tutorials.		9/4/20 This was very successful.
Order and read Rosenshine's Principles in action	Email from xxx with useful links to watch. Watched one and decided to order the book as its very visual and wanted to see if I can update my practice.	Purchased book and started to read (in queue for Tesco shopping)!		9/4/20 Fantastic!
Learn how to use Zoom to enable me to contact my students while college is closed.	Take up further online training offered by the xxx team to "fully" get to grips with this as I have a feeling, I will be using this more with my students over the coming months!	Participate in college Zoom training.		

Self-reflection on progress/professional discussion/evidence of progress from Walk Throughs and Extended Learning Walks

Date	Learning Strategy Principle	
25.8.19	Preparing for Xxx regional tutors' course	Finished reading xxx 2nd book by Cath Smith. This really helped me to understand how xxx x was developed. But how it is difficult to define a xxx, as someone could be born xxx then another could lose their xxx, but have xxx then must learn xx xx, which is not in xxxxx order. This would be very confusing on several levels, especially if they all get together, they are all coming from different situations.

26.08.19	Preparing for Xxx regional tutors' course	Practiced drawing stages 1-6 symbols today. Only a couple now I can't remember.
27.08.19	Preparing for Xxx regional tutors' course	Printed more xxx pages I had prepared last week at home, laminated them so each student has a set of xxx ready to use at the beginning of term. Had to take them home to cut out and add hook and eye tape to them. A lot of cutting!
28.08.19	Preparing for Xxx regional tutors' course	Practiced stage 6-additional xxx. Prepared more xxx for students, emailed to work ready to print and laminate.

Appendix 5. Extract from ADP for James (pseudonym)

	14		**Cisco NetAcad Get Connected English 1120 cga Global Academy**	**Professional Development, CPD**	**Learning Outcomes** **Explore computer systems:** ▪ Types of computers ▪ Hardware and software ▪ Input and output devices ▪ Types of hardware and software ▪ Operating systems ▪ Main input peripherals ▪ How to connect, open programs and shut down a computer	**finish by 28 Feb 2021**		
	13		**Cisco NetAcad Introduction to IoT English 1120 cga Global Academy**	**Professional Development, CPD**	**Learning Outcomes** **I will complete the following:** This Introduction to Internet of Things 2.0 course is designed for people wishing to explore the Internet of Things and the impact it has on our everyday lives. It is not the intention of this course to teach about the IoT in depth but to provide a general understanding of the IoT and how it allows for digitization of daily tasks.	**finish by 28 Feb 2021**		
	12		**Cisco NetAcad Cybersecurity Essentials English 1120 cga Global Academy**	**Professional Development, CPD**	**Learning Outcomes** **Cybersecurity Essentials course.** By the end of this course, I will be able to: ▪ Describe the characteristics of criminals and heroes in the cybersecurity realm. ▪ Describe the principles of confidentiality, integrity, and availability as they relate to data states and cybersecurity countermeasures. ▪ Describe the tactics, techniques and procedures used by cyber criminals. ▪ Describe how technologies, products, and procedures are used to protect confidentiality. ▪ Describe how technologies, products, and procedures are used to ensure integrity. ▪ Describe how technologies, products, and procedures provide high availability. ▪ Explain how cybersecurity professionals use technologies,	**finish by 28 Feb 2021**		

Appendix 6

Example of Interview Schedule

Can you tell me what your role was at when Ofsted inspected the College in January 2017?

How did you view the grading of Requires Improvement?

The observation process used in College at that time was:

> Graded, with notice, one hour, with feedback and an action plan.
>
> What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this system?
>
> In your opinion, has there been any lasting impact from this system?

The Support and Challenge visit in June 2017 found limited progress in T & L. What was your opinion of that finding?

In September 2017 the College changed the observation process to one recommended by another college, working with a consultant, which was:

> Ungraded, no notice, 10 minutes, aggregated feedback to managers.
>
> What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this system?
>
> In your opinion, has there been any lasting impact from this system?

The Support and Challenge visit in February 2018 found some progress. What was your opinion of that finding?

In September 2018 the College changed the observation process to one recommended by an interim manager, which was:

> Ungraded, no notice, 30 minutes, professional discussion and accelerated development plan.
>
> What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this system?
>
> In your opinion, has there been an impact from this system?
>
> Do you think it is a system worth continuing?

In January 2019 Ofsted graded the College Good. To what do you attribute this improvement?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix 7

Celia Geen University of Sunderland PhD programme

Participant Information Sheet

My name is Celia Geen and I am Head of Teaching and Learning at the College of xxxx. In September 2020 I transferred from a Master of Philosophy research degree to a Doctor of Philosophy programme with the University of Sunderland. The subject is my thesis is organisational approaches to CPD and whether collaborative staff development can positively impact on Teaching and Learning.

My study will involve asking stakeholders about their experience and views of CPD and Ofsted Inspection specifically and generally, verbally or in writing, possibly more than once. I may compare the college's methods with those of two other colleges. My main research method is case study.

With your permission I may record an interview to assist me with transcription. I may also use an electronic transcription service, Temi, who will not receive any of your personal details.

All my research is conducted in accordance with the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research 2018 from the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Before your involvement in the study you will be asked to sign a consent form. It is absolutely fine if you do not wish to take part in this research and you can also withdraw from this research at any time by contacting me.

Although you need to write down some personal details, they will not be used in any publications and all information is anonymised. Your details and those of your organisation will be kept confidentially.

When I complete the research, my thesis will be submitted to the University of Sunderland. The outcome might be shared online and in various academic meetings or conferences. I will also share the outcome with you.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me by email celia.geen@xxx.

Celia Geen

Participant Consent Form

I agree to take part in the above research. I have read and agreed to the Participant Information Sheet which is attached to this form.

- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, for any reason and without prejudice.
- I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded.
- I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the research.
- I agree to any interview with Celia Geen being recorded and possibly transcribed by an electronic transcription service.
- I have been provided with a copy of this form and the Participation Information Sheet.

Name of Participant: ………………………………………….   Signed: ………………………………………………………….

Date: ……………………………………………….

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEE

Appendix 8 Transcript of interviews with three Advanced Practitioners from tape recorded interviews.

A	B	C
Can you describe the process of UNGRADED OBSERVATIONS used by the College from September 2017 to June 2018?	**Can you describe the process of UNGRADED OBSERVATIONS used by the College from September 2017 to June 2018?**	**Can you describe the process of UNGRADED OBSERVATIONS used by the College from September 2017 to June 2018?**
When we moved from that and OFSTED confirmed that we are not good or outstanding - we don't have 85% good or better, there was a complete switch to observing, not judging, so the GRADE and the judgment was removed and the FEEDBACK was given not to the individual but more to the manager in terms of general impression and I think we had this guidance that we had to see at least three sessions and the OBSERVATIONs were LEARNING WALK, we called it, they were shorter and there was no requirement of spending an hour in one place and it was generalized and given to the manager. The whole principle, I felt, changed then and was a great attempt from that perspective for FEEDBACK, we did lots of wondering, we were more asking questions than making judgments.	Because I came back to work I missed out on the beginning of the process because I was on leave, when I came back. The whole point of the DM system was not about the OBSERVATION - I think it was about changing mindset and CULTURE. So, I understood that there was a need to look at the quality of TLA as a whole. Even through the GRADED OBSERVATION OFSTED expected use to agree with the result of that so obviously something wasn't working. With xx I think this open door policy was something that we were not promoting. I think until then the teachers still feel the classrooms were their own space, their personal space. Through DM, because the college was trying to encourage this CULTURE shift, so I think it was more towards open door classroom policy, but there was a lot of ups and downs. There were tutors who felt unhappy about this they felt their personal space was invaded but it could be insecurity. Once you open the classroom doors and people come in at any time of the day and any time of the year, you don't know, you cannot control what goes on in the classroom. So there was anxiety and for me you know, I feel part of me feels that professional teachers, I am confident in what I am doing, and reflective so why suddenly change the way we observe. I believe the previous system was not really implemented properly. So, I didn't really feel strongly about changing it from GRADED to UNGRADEd but I like that idea but I wasn't sure about the walk throughs, the open door classroom policy, because I felt that again there was a process that wasn't made very clear, particularly when I came back from my leave. I felt everything was geared towards OFSTED coming back. There has got to be a rapid change but then I felt, my own reflection	
Good points about the process?	**Good points about the process?**	**Good points about the process?**
	So I think the benefit of the new system is that it is more objective and also you would allow whether or not the OBSERVATION team or other tutors would see the real happening, what TLA is like in the classroom, rather than pre-arranged. But the flipside, part of me also wondered, for some teachers it can be quite stressful, depending on the context. If you have challenging students it can be quite stressful, because unless you know the context, you go into the classroom for half an hour and make a judgment but I know that we are trying to look into improving the process further so that teachers feel, sometimes you have a bad day, we all have a bad day so you might feel okay. You might feel okay, this is not the best session. In a way, it probably provides a flexibility as it is not one OBSERVATION a year, so with this new process I think it kinda normalises that OBSERVATION is about. It is not a one off judgment on how you teach and the quality of TLA it probably gives a bit of flexibility but somewhere in the background it is niggling me that new teachers might find it a little bit different. But we have the walk throughs but with new teachers they have not yet developed their teaching skills so I	The idea of anyone coming into class has worked spec tactually well. I remember in institutions where I worked before, the dread of OBSERVATION window being opened and staff were immediately on the back foot. An experience here from the xx process I haven't encounter any type of resistance from staff, to the point I go in and think, are they going to object? They don't. In fact in some areas, people are encouraged to come in, so quite a sea change. I think it was less when there was not FEEDBACK as this was their first attack - I'm not getting any FEEDBACK - how can you expect anyone to improve? The team are on the back foot in terms of what their role was. We had to go through that to come out the other side. I find myself coming back to the wonderings and noticing in the walk throughs. We were not doing long OBSERVATIONs. I suppose that TLA meeting, the meeting to discuss TLA is not something I have every encountered until I came here. I don't know if that was happening before, but that's another positive. Those things are now accepted and part of the teaching teams. Even if it raises anything about the profile of the teaching team - having a conversation with staff. It is now honing that and making it more measurable in terms of impact. We were conscious that there was a need to demonstrate what was happening or what was the point? It's not just a point of measuring it for the sake of measuring it, it is
What was the impact on TLA?	**What was the impact on TLA?**	
I felt that we had a process but did not have a CULTURE where this would sit comfortably because we had to have a rapid IMPROVEMENT and CULTURE doesn't change rapidly. I think that we went ahead with the processes that were poorly understood by staff due to lack of information, and I felt by all of us as we were trying to make sense of this new situation, CULTURE and new requirements and in terms of IMPROVEMENTs,		

Appendix 9 Example of transcription from TEMI.com

Speaker 1 (00:00):

All right.

Speaker 2 (00:03):

Okay. I'm just going to speak to this, to see that this is working. Yes, yes. Sure, sure. So, can you tell me about any observations you've had over the past few years, starting with the earliest?

Speaker 1 (00:19):

Yeah, well, of course the earliest would be traditional class space that I've had. I've actually I I've, I've actually been quite lucky if I remember back to the beginning. I think observation is absolutely nerve wracking if I'm, if I'm really honest. And I think the majority of people do in the traditional sense. And when I think right back to starting I really did think it was xxx to look don't get me wrong. I believe in preparation. And, and I try my hardest, but, and genuinely I've been reasonably successful now. I don't actually grade my success on the grade because before we had graded observations, it was actually on the feedback I got. And I did actually find one I was absolutely devastated with, but it was actually more to do with it shortfalls. And the fact that my, my session was all planned, but of course I had I got into a room and the computer didn't work and things like that.

Speaker 1 (01:27):

So going back to the original observations and the grading I actually found the grading method very stressful, and I think a lot of people did. And as I say, I've actually fan as a as I've got older, probably I can say that the more I've been in education let's put it that way or the longer I've been in education, I found once they dropped the grading system, then the observation process was much more productive if I'm really honest. I, I think there was quite, not probably efficiently, but the definitely felt like there was this stigma individually on that. What your number was, what your grade was. Although I've got to admit, I've always been had very good feedback and have reasonable grades. That's not been an issue. So if we now look at the situation we've got, now, we don't use the word observations.

Speaker 1 (02:25):

We have walk throughs and things like that. When I heard it, I thought, Oh, I don't like this. And I went round with a member of the learning practice and I, we actually dropped into classes to get it only for a few minutes. And I thought, Oh no, that's not really what I'm here for. I don't want to be doing, but do you want to know something? It was very, very beneficial. I've got to admit it's a very good practice. And we only did a few things. It was not judgmental, but what actually was more beneficial to the person walking around. I felt I saw such a vast within, and we must've only been half an hour to an hour.

Appendix 10 Extract of coding framework mapped to three participants' responses in semi-structured interviews (the original has substantially longer responses). Nowell *et al* (2017) work is used to inform the data analysis and is discussed in Chapter 4.

(*Pseudonyms).

Catagory	Lucy*	Clare*	David*
Observer	As an OBSERVER I was required to observe staff.		
Capability	the OBSERVATION GRADE that fed into the CAPABILITY procedure,	There were two consecutive GRADE 3, over a year or even close to 2 years, there was more of an issue because the person could be moved into CAPABILITY,	
Graded observation	the OBSERVATION GRADE that fed into the CAPABILITY procedure, the OBSERVATION was an hour long I would receive my appraisal and OBSERVATION GRADES would be discussed as a as one of the indications but some occasions you would see someone put on a show for GRADED OBSERVATIONS	Prior to 2017 June we had GRADED OBSERVATIONs and it was once per year. I didn't really feel strongly about changing it from GRADED to UNGRADED Any kind of OBSERVATION is useful.	From a personal response, I quite liked the GRADING, I knew where I was and needed to improve. The GRADING part felt like a MEASUREMENT I remember in institutions where I worked before, the dread of OBSERVATION
Ungraded observation		I didn't really feel strongly about changing it from GRADED to UNGRADED	If you are writing a report, having a meeting, doing an ADP*, so from my perspective, it felt much better as you could show what you were doing. I think we are probably GRADING by another way.

Discussion	You would have good DISCUSSIONS. Then there is DISCUSSION with the manager and appraisal.		there would be DISCUSSIONS in the whole team
Ofsted	remember when OFSTED GRADING changed. 3 had been satisfactory, which was changed to RI,	I felt everything was geared towards OFSTED coming back.	
Feedback	then observee was given FEEDBACK I think that they are getting more successful as there is FEEDBACK following by ADP*	I would sit down with the OBSERVER and they would give me FEEDBACK It was a great attempt from that perspective for FEEDBACK, I think some OBSERVERs were good at giving FEEDBACK	The thing is there was no FEEDBACK to the member of staff, I'm not getting any FEEDBACK - how can you expect anyone to improve?
Culture	CULTURE doesn't change rapidly. LEARNING WALKS happen twice a year, which is more often plus walk throughs, which also kind of change the CULTURE. I think that the change in approach I believe that xxx proposed was a fantastic mode for the CULTURE	The whole point of the second system was not about the OBSERVATION - I think it was about changing mindset and CULTURE. because the college was trying to encourage this CULTURE shift	

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