*Let’s Talk*…

Improving Engagement and Collaboration in Continuous Professional Learning and Development for Teachers in Further Education

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**Abstract**

The professionalism and continuous development of teachers in the further education sector is an ongoing debate which has challenged government both past and present. As a result, numerous policies on developing teachers and their professionalism have been introduced along with recommendations on how teachers in the further education sector should develop their practice.

As a newly appointed learning, teaching and assessment co-ordinator, in a further education college in the north of England I decided to carry out an action research project. This role held the responsibility of the professional learning and development of teachers across the organisation. The main aim of the research was to increase the engagement and collaborative learning of teachers using cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) as the theoretical framework. Conversely, a greater understanding of teachers’ perceptions of professional learning and development was a fundamental starting point for the research. A new approach to the continuous professional development of teaching staff across the whole organisation was introduced. This involved the whole college teaching community, with teachers from each curriculum department attending training needs analysis meetings at the beginning of the academic year. A sample group of 23 teachers and 5 managers from across various curriculum areas were additionally, and directly, involved as research participants, completing questionnaires and interviews.

The research findings highlighted the complexities of collaborative learning which resonates with Engeström’s activity theory and learning at work. There was greater engagement and collaboration identified. Yet this was more evident with some, but not all, teachers. There was a variation in circumstance which may have influenced whether a teacher chose to engage or not. These included established departmental cultures, the impact of government policy on practice as well as individual perceptions of self and how the experiences encountered were interpreted.

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**Glossary**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **ALI** | | Adult Learning Inspectorate: This was a non-departmental public body founded under the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It merged with Ofsted in April 2007. | |
| **AOC** | | Association of Colleges: A not-for-profit membership organisation in the UK which was set up by colleges in 1996 to represent them. They are an associated registered charitable trust and a commercial division. | |
| **BIS** | | Department for Business, Innovation and Skills: Government department created in 2009 by merging the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR). | |
| **BTEC** | | Business and Technology Education Council: Specialist work-related qualifications. These qualifications combine practical learning with subject and theory content. Available from entry level through to level 7. | |
| **CATE** | | Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Training: This is the statutory body that sets and upholds the standards for entry to the teaching profession. | |
| **CEL** | | Centre for Excellence in Leadership: These were created in 2003 to support the development of leadership skills in the learning and skills sector, particularly in further education (FE) colleges. They also support work‐based learning provision, offender learning, and adult and community provision. | |
| **DfE** | | Department for Education: Government department in the UK responsible for child protection, education (compulsory, further and higher education), apprenticeships and wider skills in England . | |
| **DfEE** | | Department for Education and Employment: Formed in the UK in1995 when Department for Education took over the Employment Department's training, discrimination and equal opportunities roles. In May 2001 it became the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). | |
| **DfES** | | Department for Education and Skills: A Government department in the UK between 2001 and 2007. They were responsible for the education system (including higher education and adult learning) as well as children's services. | |
| **DIUS** | | Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills:  A Government department in the UK. Created in 2007 to take over the functions of the Department of Education and Skills and of the Department of Trade and Industry. | |
| **ETF** | | Education and Training Foundation: Established 2013, in the UK. The ETF is the expert body for professional development and standards in Further Education (FE) and Training. | |
| **FE** | | Further Education: in the UK is education in addition to that received at secondary school. It may be at any level in compulsory secondary education, from entry to higher level qualifications such as awards, certificates, diplomas and other vocational, competency-based qualifications. FE colleges may also offer HE qualifications such as HNC, HND, foundation degree or PGCE. FE colleges are also a large service provider for apprenticeships. | |
| **FEDA** | | Further Education Development Agency: Founded in 1994. FEDA's role was to support research into further education and to give advice on curriculum, management, and pedagogic matters. It became the Learning and Skills Development Agency in 2001. | |
| **FEFC** | | Further Education Funding Council: Was a UK non-departmental public body of the Department for Education and Skills. It allocated funding to Further Education and Sixth Form Colleges in England between 1992 and 2001. It was then replaced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). | |
| **FELTAG** | | The Further Education Learning Technology Action Group: Established in 2013 as part of the Skills and Enterprise in BIS. It made practical recommendations intended to ensure the effective use of digital technology in learning, teaching and assessment. | |
| **FENTO** | | Further Education National Training Organisation: was a UK National Training Organisation (NTO) in 1998. FENTO was responsible for establishing standards for the further education sector. | |
| **HNC/D** | | Higher National Certificate/Diploma: Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) are work-related, or vocational, higher education qualifications. They are Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications respectively. | |
| **IfL** | | Institute for Learning: Was a voluntary membership, UK professional body. It ceased operating in 2014. | |
| **ITE** | | Initial Teacher Education. These are usually teacher training partnerships in the UK between a university and college/school.  The partnership work together to provide the professional education and development of trainee teachers. | |
| **LEA** | | Local Education Authorities: These are local councils in England and Wales. They are accountable for education within their region. | |
| **LLUK** | | Lifelong Learning UK: Was one of the independent, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for UK employer. It was accountable for the professional development of all those working in community learning and development, further education, higher education, libraries, archives and information services, and work based learning. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service superseded LLUK and its responsibilities in 2011. | |
| **LSC** | | Learning and Skills Council: Established in 200, it replaced the Further Education Funding and the Training and Enterprise Councils. It is a UK non-departmental advisory body accountable for funding and planning education and training for over 16-year-olds. In 2010, the Learning and Skills Council was superseded by two organisations: the Skills Funding Agency and the Young People's Learning Agency. | |
| **LSDA** | | Learning and Skills Development Agency: Was a publicly funded UK body which supported further education. In 2006 it was superseded by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and the Learning and Skills Network (LSN). | |
| **LSIS** | | Learning and Skills Improvement Service: Was a not-for-profit UK company formed in 2008 to support and improve achievement in the Further Education and Skills sector in England. | |
| **LSN** | | Learning and Skills Network: was an independent UK not-for-profit organisation. It provided services to the learning and skills (further education) sector such as; consulting, outsourcing, research, technology and training. It went into administration in 2011. | |
|  | |  | |
| **NVQ** | | National Vocational Qualification: These assess competence in a work situation and are based on national occupational standards (levels). The NVQ was created to develop the integration of vocational training with the assessment and certification of professional competencies. | |
| **NQF** | | National Qualification Framework: A framework for the acknowledgement and award of qualifications based on standards of knowledge, skills and competence. | |
| **OFSTED** | | The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills is a UK government department. Ofsted is accountable for inspecting a range of educational institutions, including further education colleges. | |
| **SET** | | Society of Education and Training: is the professional membership body for the UK Further Education and Training Sector. | |
| **SoW** | | Scheme of Work: A plan setting out how a qualification will be delivered in the timescale identified. This includes the teaching, learning and assessment activities; sequencing of content as well as, the amount of time spent on each topic. | |
| **SSA** | | Specialist subject area: There were 15 sector subject areas classified by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). OFSTED used the SSAs for planning and reporting on inspections. | |
| **TNA** | | Training Needs Analysis: Training, or Learning Needs Analysis assists with understanding what is required to improve performance. It relates to skills, competencies and capabilities. TNA contributes to figuring out both individual as well as team learning needs. It supports designing professional development which is specific for addressing any gaps in knowledge and skills competences to improve practice. | |
| **TTA** | | The Teacher Training Agency: Founded in 1994 in the UK by the Education Act 1994. Its purpose was to: fund the provision of teacher training; improve the quality and efficiency of all pathways into the teaching profession; contribute to raising the standards of teaching; and provide information and advice on teaching as a career. 2005 the TTA was superseded by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA). In 2012, the Teaching Agency was established as an agency of the Department for Education. In 2013 the Teaching Agency merged with the National College for School Leadership to become the National College for Teaching and Leadership. | |
| **QIA** | | Quality Improvement Agency: Created in 2006 from the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). It was a non-departmental public body of the UK government its responsibility was to support a broad range of education institutions including further education colleges. In 2008 the QIA merged with the Centre for Excellence in Leadership becoming the Learning and Skills Improvement Service. | |

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

* 1. **Introducing the research context and the researcher.**

This action research was carried out in a further education college in the north of England**.** There were three campuses offering various vocational as well as higher education provision. The research involved representation from each campus and curriculum area. I had been employed by the college for 11 years in various roles before being appointed as the learning, teaching and assessment co-ordinator. The main responsibility of the role was to lead and co-ordinate the professional learning and development of teachers. Always being passionate about developing my own practice as well as others made this an ideal opportunity explore new approaches. This action research was intended to enthuse and engage colleagues with their professional learning and development and of course, learning myself along the way.

At the time of research commencing there were 121 teachers employed at the college. They were on various contracts with 66 (55%) part-time/term time only. The teachers offered a diverse range of expertise to learners across a wide range of subject specialisms from entry level to higher education. There were 1572 full-time learners, mainly 16-18 years old, 152 were 14-16-year-old. 4317 part-time learners attended which, included apprentices, adults, higher education and employability. ‘*Some of the students who attended the college came from areas which were in the top 10% of the most deprived wards nationally and around 45% of adults and 73% of learners aged 16 to 18 had no level 2 qualifications on entry’* (Ofsted, 2013, p.12).

Conducting this action research from within as insider research was the consequence of two very different personal experiences with professional development. This occurred whilst working for two different further education colleges simultaneously on part-time/term-time only contracts. The reasons for choosing action research for this project is discussed further in chapter 3 the methodology in sub-section 3.7.

* 1. **Starting points: my experiences and beliefs**

My teaching career began in the further education sector twenty-two years ago, emerging from industry with no formal teaching qualification as many in the sector do (Thompson and Robinson, 2007; Thompson, 2014). The first teaching positions held were in private training agencies. Within two years this progressed to teaching in two very different further education colleges. The first teaching contracts held were ‘per class’ or hourly paid, contracts in which there was no legal obligation by the employers to assure regular teaching hours. If vocational courses enrolled enough learners, teachers were offered hours; if not, a role was not forthcoming. These are now termed ‘zero *hour’* contracts. Many teachers in further education colleges are currently employed on these contracts (Findlay and Fiddy, 2003; UCU, 2017; Belgutay, 2017).

It was during this time that both initial teacher education and continuous professional learning and development were high on my personal agenda. I have always held a passion for learning and developing new skills for each role held throughout my career. Continuously learning to improve practice is, I feel, essential and something as teachers we do without always recognising or valuing the impact it has on our practice and the learners we teach. I believe that continuously engaging with learning and development to improve practice is what differentiates an experienced and expert teacher. Coe *et al* (2014) identify six common components for what they consider as great teaching and one of them involves; ‘*reflecting on and developing professional practice, participation in professional development…’* (ibid,2014, p.3)

Ayres *et al* (2004) research suggests it could take anywhere between 8 and 24 years to become an expert teacher. Both Coe and Ayres’ research is school-based though it resonates well with teachers within the further education sector too. It is important to point out that individuals enter teaching careers in the further education sector with very different life experiences. These experiences can influence firstly, how confident individuals are at the starting point of their teaching career. Secondly how confident they are as adult learners developing new skills and knowledge.

It was while working at two different further education colleges that I experienced the different approaches and cultures towards both initial teacher education and continuous professional learning and development. It was a troubling situation then and has continued to be so over the many years I have served in the further education sector. There was, for example, no commitment from one of the colleges in supporting hourly-paid teaching staff through initial teacher education or with continuous professional learning and development. This was offered only if a permanent part-time or full-time contract was secured. The overt rationale was that management did not want to invest time and money training someone who may leave to go elsewhere if a permanent contract was offered. This is arguably a short-sighted assumption but it was nonetheless a convention embedded into the culture of the organisation. The second college took a different approach. It offered hourly-paid teaching staff the opportunity of enrolling onto an initial teacher education programme. There was, at that time a bursary available for people wanting to enter a teaching career in the further education sector however, the government have since removed this funding. This college also encouraged hourly-paid teaching staff to attend continuous professional learning and development events which ran twice a year, in February and July. The culture in the first college compared unfavourably and their approach begged the question of why any organisation would not seek to benefit from giving teaching staff the opportunity to go through the initial teacher education programme as well as engage in regular continuous professional learning and development activities. Would this not improve the knowledge and skills of teachers, resulting in better experiences for learners, leading to improved achievement.

This belief has never been far from my mind during the various roles held within the organisation. My career began as a vocational specialist teacher and course team leader for school link programmes (14-16 year olds), which was part of the government’s increased flexibility agenda. It was whilst in this role I completed the Teacher Effectiveness Enhancement Programme (TEEP) at a local partnership school. This programme was the one that sparked my curiosity and motivation to learn as much as I could about how individuals learn, and so to improve my practice. This was the first time that my passion for my subject specialism was overtaken by my desire to learn as much as possible about how people learn and develop, and, more importantly, how I could play a key role in that process if I understood more about learning and development. I created lots of resources and changed my approaches trying out different strategies. It was whilst sharing these resources and ideas with colleagues within the department that the manager decided to share what I was doing with senior management. This led to joining the cross college professional learning and development team as well as becoming an eLearning champion. It was quite daunting sharing ideas and strategies with colleagues from across different curriculum areas. However, I found the challenge exhilarating especially working with those who did not want to hear about or change their approaches. This led to leaving the curriculum area I was a part of and joining the teacher education team. I became programme leader for the Professional/Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Post Compulsory Education and Training (PGCE/PCET) which was in partnership with a local university. As well as this role I became the learning and teaching co-ordinator which was a part-time position within the quality department which focused on improving learning, teaching and assessment practice across the college. Within two academic years, this became a fulltime role as the learning, teaching and assessment manager. This was due to the workload involved and the necessity to improve teaching practice and learning outcomes across the college.

* 1. **The origins of the research project**

The purpose of the research was to use action research to continue my learning journey as the learning, teaching and assessment co-ordinator. This was to both inform and improve my practice which Elliott (1991, p.49) maintains is the ‘*fundamental aim’* of action research. The intention was to generate further knowledge and understanding of the professional development of teachers both within the college as well as across the further education sector as a whole. There was an issue with the traditional approach to the professional development of the teachers across the college which was evident in the lack of engagement and interest displayed. Teachers being disengaged had been witnessed during my years as a teacher within the college. The continuous professional development cycle had depended on two annual three day cycles in February and July which was led from top down, mandatory and very prescriptive. The action research involved introducing training needs analysis meetings with each curriculum team at the beginning of each academic year. This would engage teachers in discussions with regards to the strengths as well as areas to develop within their practice.

As discussed earlier I had previously carried out numerous action research projects within the college involving both colleagues and learners. I was introduced to the world of action research and the benefits it could have on developing professional practice whilst studying on the professional graduate certificate in education teaching qualification. I studied alongside colleagues who worked towards the post graduate certificate in education. All of the topics were taught together, the activities we engaged in were the same although the assignments were different as the post graduates already held their first degree in the specialism they taught. I did not hold a degree as my background was vocational by nature.

The first action projects I carried out were as a practitioner researcher, as an in-service trainee teacher who was interested in improving practice as well as the experience for learners. This was in attempt to increase their opportunities in life by successfully achieving qualifications and progressing onto further study/employment. Subsequently, during 11 years of teaching across various curriculums areas and levels within the organisation, I continuously engaged with action research with the aim of constantly improving my practice. Somekh (2006, p.1) describes action research as ‘*a means whereby research can become a systematic intervention, going beyond describing, analysing and theorising social practices to working in partnership with participants to reconstruct and transform those practices.’* Whilst in a teaching role most of the action research involved the learners who were studying on the courses which I taught. Seeking approval from an ethical board/committee was not required, since this was considered a part of professional development to improve practice. The research was in the attempt to influence change through collaboration with teachers which Gelling and Munn-Giddings (2011, p.100) stress is at the ‘*heart’* of action research. However, it was important and keeping within ethical standards throughout the practitioner research projects that learners were always aware when they were a part of a study to develop practice. Winter & Munn-Giddings (2001, p.9) describe action research as *‘The study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding*.’ Action research is not without its critics, which is discussed in the methodology chapter in sub-section 3.7. Nonetheless, this form of research was the best fit for the study, to introduce change within the college context as well as my development as the learning, teaching and assessment co-ordinater. The action research was carried out as an insider, both working and researching alongside colleagues who agreed to be participants in the study.

In summary, the action research was initiated in an attempt to bring about change, to improve the approach to the continuous professional development of teachers across curriculum areas and campuses. I have always been passionate about my professional development and wanted to enthuse colleagues to feel the same, leading to greater engagement. Historically, the professional development model which had been in place for numerous years was not doing this. It was hoped that by introducing training needs analysis sessions with teachers within their curriculum departments, making the professional development more personalised and collaborative, there would be an increase in engagement as well as colleagues learning with and from one another. I believed that by meeting annually with teachers in their curriculum departments and carrying out training needs analysis would be a good starting point (see figure 1). During the training needs analysis sessions teachers would discuss both personal as well as team strengths and areas for development. This professional dialogue would be a crucial starting point to gain a clearer understanding of how both individuals, as well as curriculum teams, viewed continuous professional learning and development. It would allow me to gain a clearer understanding of how continuous learning and development was perceived across the college as well as individual interpretation of it. The training needs analysis sessions would open up professional dialogue around teachers reflecting on and evaluating their practice (OCSLD Team, 2018). The training needs analysis sessions were to encourage these conversations focusing on developing practice to improve the learners’ experience.

The research examines why some, but not all, teachers take the lead and engage in communities of practice. It critically interrogates the relationship between the professional learning of teachers and associated theoretical accounts of those psychological and sociological processes. Of relevance, in particular, are sociocultural practice, agency and cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). The research examines the complex interrelationships between these, and learners’ personal experiences and interpretations of the world. The action research was based around the question of: could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development, increase engagement and collaboration?

The following chapter offers a greater insight into the history of government agenda and policies with regards to teachers in further education and professionalism. It also provides an explanation of the association between teachers, their professional learning, sociocultural practice, collaboration and communities of practice.

**Figure 1: Intervention and Cycles**

**Let’s Talk… Improving Engagement and Collaboration in Continuous Professional Learning and Development for Teachers in Further Education**

**Personal Observation/Interpretation/Staff CPD survey 2011-12 identified that:**

*There was a culture within the college of CPD being seen as something that was done to teachers which affected their intrinsic motivation to engage.*

*Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?*

**Figure 1: Intervention and Cycles**

**Cycle 1 Introduced training needs analysis (TNA) sessions**

* TNA sessions were carried out across all curriculum departments.
* Teachers were engaged in professional dialogue with regards to their own learning and development.
* Individual and team strengths and areas for development formed part of the discussions.
* Departmental professional development plans were agreed and created.
* Teaching staff were informed of the continuous learning and development process and the financial support available.
* Professional learning, as well as industrial updates, were discussed.
* Teaching team collaboration included in Professional learning and development days/events.

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**Cycle 2 Revisiting training needs analysis sessions.**

* TNA sessions were repeated with each curriculum department.
* Departmental professional development action plans were revisited and discussed. This reviewed the professional learning and development which had been completed.
* Teachers were informed about the Wednesday afternoon meeting slots scheduled throughout the academic year to allow time to meet and collaborate.
* Teachers were updated about the new professional learning and development schedule, 1 day per half term.
* Teachers learnt about the key dates available for Industrial updating (Feb/July)

**Cycle 1**

**Cycle 2**

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

**2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first gives an overview of the history of government agenda and policy with regards to teachers in further education, professionalism and continuous development. The second section discusses how the research is associated with sociocultural theories of learning and the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) which was developed from Vygotsky’s (1962) earlier studies. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) also has strong connections with this study which is also examined. The third section draws together the policy and theories giving a viewpoint on how they interlink and relate to the study carried out.

One of the key reasons for conducting a literature review is to identify any gaps in knowledge which could be fulfilled via further investigation (Cozby *et al.* 1989). It is always standard practice to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of the area under investigation as well as to identify with the research which has already been conducted and the conclusions drawn from it. Gay and Airasian (2003, p. 16) suggest that a literature review ‘*involves systematically identifying, locating and analysing documents containing information related to the research’*. Maxwell (2006, p. 28) emphases the importance of the ‘relevance’ of the literature under review to ensure those reviewed have ‘*important implications for the design, conduct or interpretation of the study, not simply those that deal with the topic'*. Whilst the sources of data were plentiful and valuable for the research, caution has been taken in their examination. Relying at the beginning of the research on this source of information it was crucial to remember that the documents studied were written for a purpose, agenda, and an audience so their reliability and validity came under question (Cohen *et al,* 2007).

The selection of literature investigated was based upon the quality of the evidence it contained. Authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning were all considered. Secondly, literature has been chosen by the extent in which it enabled the understanding of the topic, how it had been researched and key issues (Hart, 1998). Literature choice was derived from various informants and sources as it produced a balanced study by comparing and contrasting one with another (Bell, 2004).

**2.2 Conducting the Literature Review**

The approach to the literature review was twofold as it was important to search beyond the research questions which were focused on teachers within the organisation. A review of government policies, books and research papers on teachers’ professionalism and continuous professional development in the further education sector was conducted. This was to enable me to share the context for the setting where the action research took place. This literature review followed the same approach as the review on learning theories believed to be linked to the research at hand.

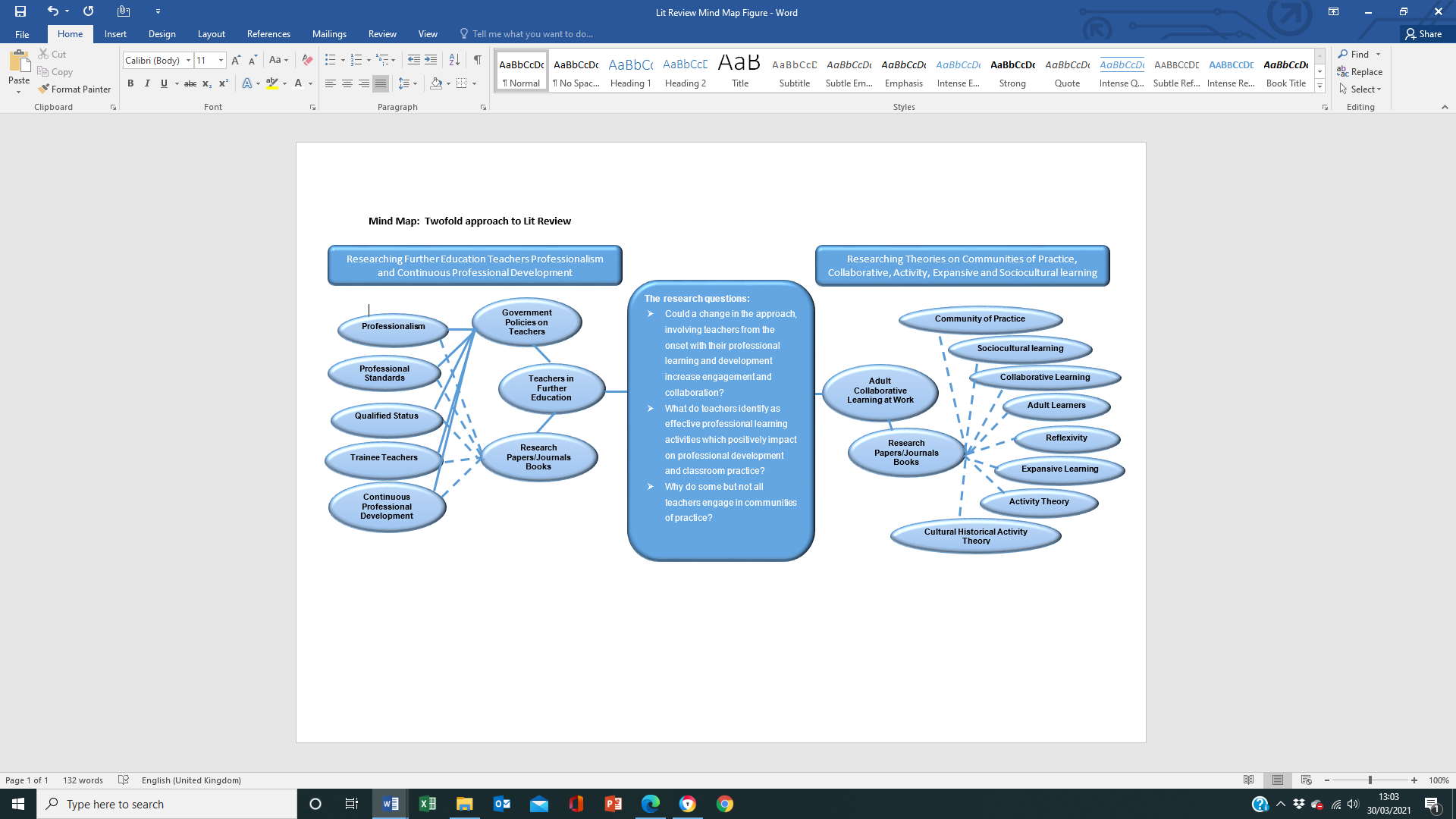
The research questions:

* Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?
* What do teachers identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice?
* Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?

It was the research questions asked which influenced and gave direction to the second part of the literature review. EPPI (2009) agree stating ‘*the research question is the most important stage and provides the framework for all other stages’.* The research questions should always be ‘open-ended’ because if it cannot be followed by a question mark it is not an ‘*interrogative statement’* (White, 2009, p.36).

**2.3 Mapping the Literature Review**

Due to the literature review focusing on two different aspects of the action research it was a useful activity to create a mind map (see figure 1) of how the literature review activity was going to be initiated.

**Figure 1 Mind Mapping the Twofold Approach to the Literature Review**

**2.4 Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations for the review first looked into the ethical considerations within the reviewed research papers. Nonetheless, it is vital to point out that earlier papers may not have been subject to the same ethical scrutiny as they are today. This was well thought-out to ensure papers were not claimed as being poor if they did not mention ethics. There is a great awareness of ethical concerns in educational and social research; this is evident in the escalation of literature available and the emergence of regulating codes of research practice developed by various bodies such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018), British Sociological Association (BSA) (2017), Academy of Social Sciences (AoSS) (2015), Social Research Association (SRA) (2021). There are extensive overviews of research principles and frameworks available to ensure ethical considerations are incorporated into research; however, these principles are not absolute as they must be interpreted in the light of the research context (Cohen et al, 2007). There are a number of principles to consider, including those mentioned above that organisations have been established to protect the rights of participants. BERA (2018, p.5) outline key principles and give guidelines for each principle; the principles state that; All educational research should be conducted within an ‘*ethic of respect for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom’.* These are the principles used for the literature review. The participants in the literature review were the authors of the chosen studies. These participants were treated with the utmost respect with regards to the literature they provided as ‘*educational researchers should not criticise their peers in a defamatory or unprofessional manner, in any medium’* (Bera, 2018, p.29). The methods used for the literature review were fit for purpose as BERA (2018, p.11) remind us:

*When working with secondary or documentary data, the sensitivity of the data, who created it, the intended audience of its creators, its original purpose and its intended uses in the research are all important considerations.*

**2.5 Quality of Sources**

The sources were utilised for the literature review were mainly primary; however secondary have also been included (see figure 2).

**Figure 2: Primary and Secondary Sources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Primary Sources Used in Review** | **Secondary Sources** |
| Government Documents and statistics  Professional Journals  Peer Reviewed Journals  Authored Books  Conference Papers  Research Reports  Survey Reports | Textbooks  Websites  Online Newspaper Articles |

When assessing the quality of the sources a set of questions were asked (see figure 3). The questions were used to make a judgement on whether or not the source would assist in generating knowledge with regards to the research at hand. The selection of literature was based upon the quality of the evidence it contained. Authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning were considered taking into account May’s (2002) comments. Forster (1994, p.155) asserts the following questions should be asked of each:

*Are the data genuine? Are they from a primary or secondary source? Are they actually what they appear to be? Are they authentic copies of originals? Have they been tampered with or corrupted? Can authorship be validated? Are the documents dated and placed? Are they accurate records of events or processes described? Are authors of documents believable?*

**Figure 3 Questioning the Source** (adapted from Thomas, 2013, p.63)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Questioning the Source** | **Notes** | **Primary/**  **Secondary** | **Include/**  **Exclude** |
| What type of document is it? |  |  |  |
| Who is the author? Is this person considered an expert in their field? |  |  |  |
| Why was the source published?  When was it published? |  |  |  |
| Where was it published? |  |  |  |
| Is the source meant to inform, explain, persuade or sell something. |  |  |  |
| Who is the audience the source is written for? |  |  |  |
| If the source was written as the result of a piece of research… | | | |
| What kind of research is it?  - small scale  - large scale |  |  |  |
| What is being claimed of the research? |  |  |  |
| Does the researcher(s) identify the limitations/weaknesses of the research? |  |  |  |

Critical appraisals assess the quality and transparency of the sources used for the literature review they identify how the knowledge was created, investigate if the methods used were ‘*fit for purpose’* and ‘*fit for use’* also ‘*legal and ethical considerations’* (Pawson *et al*, 2003, p.3). This ensures that the sources are not simply read but studied closely to identify if they are ‘good *enough’.* Checklists or scales were implemented to assist with this (see figure 3). This guaranteed the same systematic approach was taken for each study which minimised the risk of biases and issues being unnoticed.

**2.6 Search Strategies**

The development of the research strategy was a recursive one which was ongoing until the final strategy was developed. It was often made up of smaller ‘*test searches’* which were reflected upon, evaluated and on the results of them acknowledged to move forward to a more structured approach. The CRD (2009, p.243) contend

*The first step is to break down the review question to help guide the development of search terms, using a structure such as PICOS. It is not necessary to include all of the PICOS concepts in the search strategy.*

The first stage of the literature review focussed on Further Education Teachers Professionalism and Professional Development

***Population:*** *Further education teachers, trainee teachers, teacher educators*

***Intervention:*** *Continuous professional development, professional standards, professionalism,*

***Context:*** *Further education teachers’ professionalism, continual professional development and qualified status.*

***Outcome:*** *Knowledge generation on the history of further education teachers: government policies relating to professionalism, qualifications and professional development.*

The second stage focused on theories of collaborative learning/communities of practice

***Population:*** *Teachers in further education, adult learners*

***Intervention:*** *learning collaboratively, communities of practice, learning at work, learning in a social context, adult learning,*

***Context:*** *Teachers engaging in collaborative learning*

***Outcome:*** *Knowledge generation on sociocultural, collaborative, expansive and adult learning as well as CHAT.*

When deciding which concepts to utilise the focus was on those that could be translated into search terms. Various approaches of searching were employed and an inventory of terms drawn up that dissected the population, intervention and context of the study. Using Boolean operators (Aliyu, 2017) for the search criteria the following were applied:

The first stage: Further Education Teachers Professionalism and Professional Development

“professionalism” OR “professional” OR “continuous professional development” AND “professional development” “Post Compulsory Education” AND “professional standards” OR “teaching qualifications” AND “Further Education Colleges” OR “Learning and Skills Sector” AND “Teaching Adults” OR “Teaching in Further Education” “Developing Teachers” AND “Teacher Qualified status” OR “government further education policies” teacher development government policy “”

The second stage: Theories of collaborative learning/communities of practice

“Adult Learners” OR “Adult learner” OR “collaborative learning” AND “Community of Practice” “Socio cultural learning” AND “Activity Theory” OR “Learning at Work” AND “Expansive Learning” OR “” AND “Reflexivity” OR “Effective Collaborative Learning” AND “Learning in Collaboration”

The literature came from a variety of sources using both manual searches and databases. This was to minimise the possibility of publication bias which would restrict the research and wider research gives the opportunity to identify studies which have not been published in peer review journals such as research results circulated as reports or discussion papers (CRD, 2009). Citation searches were conducted on selected articles for the literature review as these identified very pertinent papers. Relevant internet resources were searched such as official Government further education websites for policies, papers and agendas; OFSTED for inspection reports and updates, Educational and Training Foundation for professional teaching standards to gain information relating to the literature review themes. Reference management was crucial to ensure efficiency and to have a research trail from the offset of the research. A structured reference list adhering to the Harvard standards has been utilised throughout the search.

There are issues which the reviewer must take great caution with, within the analysis of the data as the reviewer brings their *‘own, preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, biography, background and agenda’* (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p. 469). Walford (2001, p.98) confirms this issue by affirming ‘*all research is researching yourself’.* Documentary research and documents came in a multitude of forms. Whilst the sources of data were plentiful and valuable throughout the research, caution was taken in their examination.

**2.7 History of FE Teachers, Professionalism, Continuous Professional Development and the impact of Government Policy**

**2.7.1 Setting the Scene**

This section will familiarise the reader with the background of the further education teacher, professionalism and continuous professional learning and development. The professionalism of the further education teacher and their professional learning and development have been under debate for quite some time further education has always according to Ainley & Bailey (1997) and Allen and Ainley (2007) sat on the borders of education, lacking the clear view of schools or the esteem of universities, which is a view shared by Thompson (2014) and Petrie (2015).

The term teacher will be used throughout this thesis in its broadest sense to cover the diverse range of titles used within the sector such as instructors, lecturers, trainers, tutors and assessors. How a teacher in further education refers to themselves is often reflected in their role. For example, someone could refer to themselves as a lecturer whilst teaching theory in a classroom; a personal tutor when carrying pastoral tutorials; a trainer when they are teaching in the real working environment (workshops). Throughout the study, consideration was given to how individuals perceive the world around them. How they place themselves within the social context of curriculum departments as well as the organisation as a whole. It is the individual interpretations of self, others and experiences that will lead to how people view themselves in terms of which title they may use. This could be associated with reflexivity and the sociocultural perspective of learning, how teachers across further education enter the profession with a diverse range of experiences and different backgrounds.

Another point to consider which Findlay and Fiddy, (2003, p. 151) raise is the changing ratios of contract to permanent staff which reflects an increased *‘casualisation’* in the further education sector. Research carried out by the UCU (2017) supported this as they found 60% of colleges were now using zero-hour contracts to deliver teaching. The questions to deliberate here are;

- *Are zero-hour contract staff offered professional learning and development opportunities?*

- *How many colleges are investing time, resource and money into ensuring these teachers are delivering sessions which engage, motivate and challenge learners meeting the standards expected by the organisation?*

*- How do zero-hour contracts impact on the morale of teachers who have no stability or continuity of employment?*

Belgutay (2017) confirms from research carried out across the sector that over 60% of teachers have no continuous learning and development opportunities. This figure is linked to part-time and casual staff. Teachers are entering the sector as experts from industry, some holding teaching qualifications; however, the majority are not offered or expected to engage in continuous professional learning and development.

Elliott, (1996) as well as, more recently Thompson, (2014) affirm the further education sector is linked inherently to government policy. This places them at the centre of, as well as having a key role to play in economic imperatives and social inclusion. The further education sector has been given various titles over the years such as 'post-compulsory education', 'lifelong learning' and learning and skills'. It was the Higher Education in Further Education Act (1992) which initiated the incorporation and independence of further education colleges. This resulted in the further education sector developing; connecting with schools; higher education institutions; employers for work-related learning as well as social services for socially excluded; disadvantaged learners across the age range of 14 to mature adulthood (DfES,2003a). This may be one of the main reasons why it is so difficult to establish a shared professional identity which is a view shared by Simmons (2009) and Thompson (2014) during their research on the sector. This may also be one of the reasons why developing continuous learning and development and initial teacher education (teaching training) within the sector is a complexed one to address. Developing professional standards and training for teachers in further education would be required to look at the specific, diverse area in which they teach.

Teachers in further education often see engaging with continuous learning and development as a mandatory requirement which they do not fully support. This creates a culture which is common across the further education sector. Research conducted by Orr (2008, p.102) suggests that teachers view continuous learning and development as something that is '*done to them’* taking away any intrinsic motivation to want to be involved. The government in an attempt to fix what they claimed to be a '*broken sector’* (Orr, 2009b, p. 483) stated that teachers should commit to continuous professional development. 30hrs (pro rota for full-time teachers) per academic year. Simmons and Thompson (2008) and Orr (2009a) imply this is adding to the accountability and audit culture regime. Conversely, teaching professionals in schools and universities, as well as other professions, such as nurses and health care professionals are all expected to engage in continuous professional development. This is to ensure their practice kept up to date and current.

Much of the continuous learning and development available and offered to teachers in further education colleges emerged in the form of organised certified courses or annual whole college staff development workshops, presentations, seminars and so on. This form of continuous learning and development has been identified by Scales (2011) as a ‘*Sheep Dip*’ exercise which sees teachers attending development sessions under the direction of managers. This ticks the box for collecting the mandatory accumulation of continuous learning and development hours for government audits. Research carried out by Creemers *et al* (2013), Thompson (2014) and Petrie (2015) indicates that continuous learning and development in further education is problematic and at times ineffective. This could be one of the reasons behind the continual government policies aimed at improving the professional development of teachers across the further education sector.

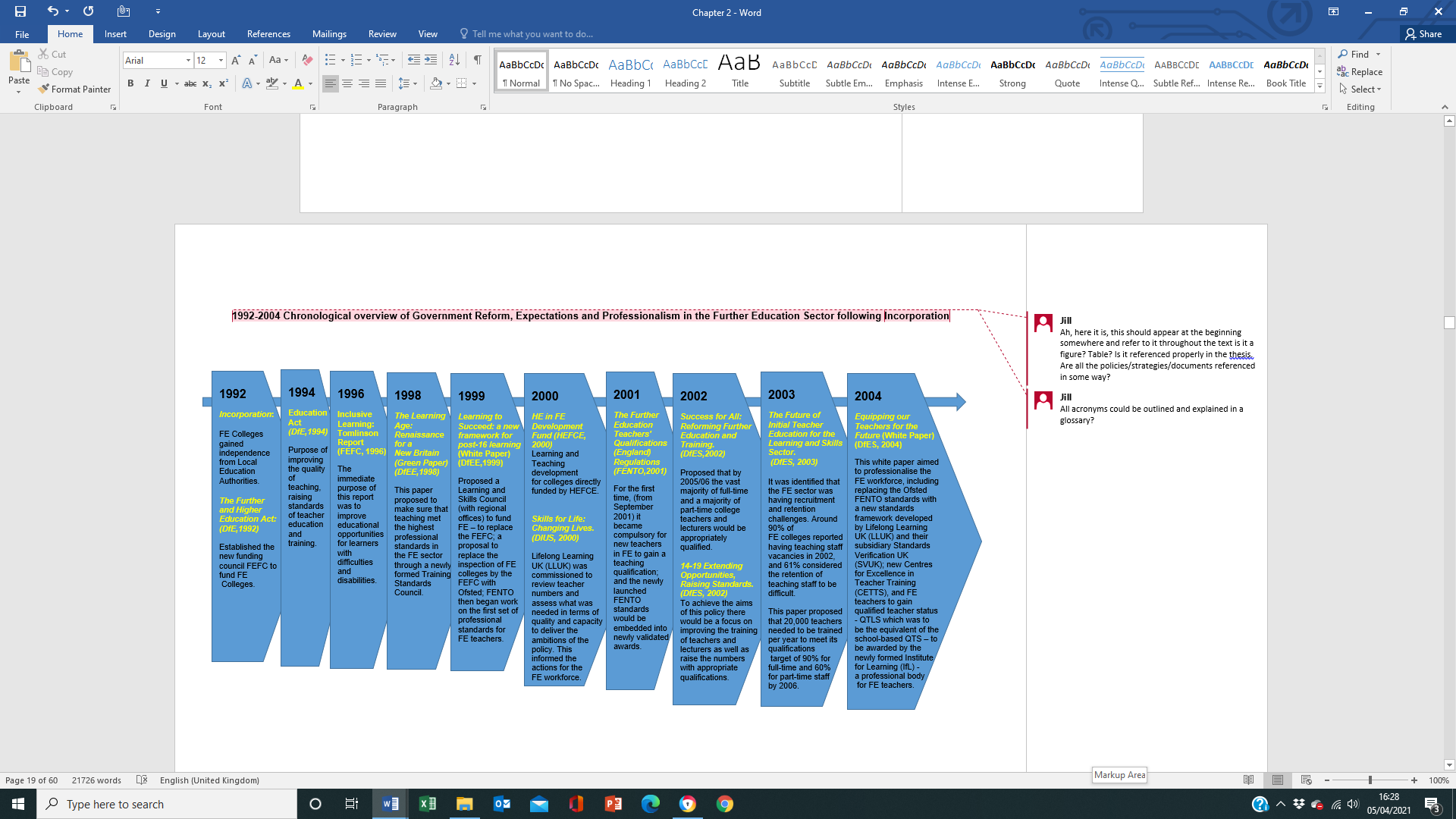
**2.7.2 Chronological overview of Professionalism, Initial Teacher Education and Professional Learning and Development in Further Education Colleges**

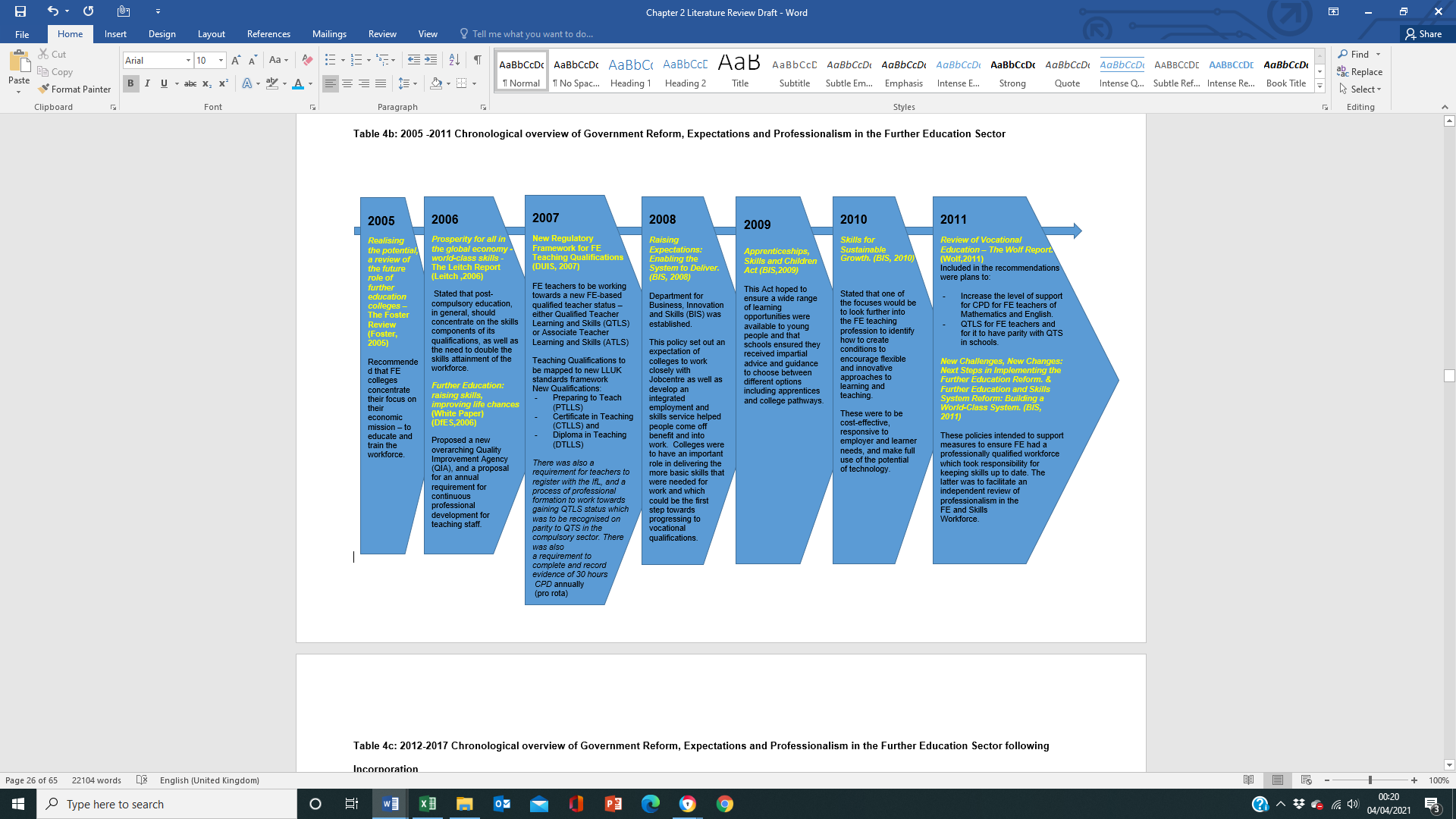
Local education authorities (LEAs) in the UK held the responsibility for further education colleges for almost fifty years following the 1944 Education Act. Participation in professional learning and development including initial teacher education had been voluntary. A succession of government reports which followed the Second World War were focused on improving the professional development of teachers in the sector. The McNair Report (1944) was key to the establishment of three teacher training colleges which were specialists for teachers in the further education sector. In 1946 the teacher training specialist colleges were Bolton and London, and 1947 saw Huddersfield joining. Following the Crowther Report (1959) Wolverhampton also became a specialist college. It was the Russel Report (1966) that endorsed that new teachers within the sector should gain their initial teaching qualification within three years of being appointed. These reports focused on expanding the number of teachers who were trained and qualified in the sector. Conversely, they brought with them an increase in budgetary cost to support the sector requirements. The report proposals were rejected by the government on a financial basis. The government did however, recommend salary incentives to those who studied and gained the qualifications (Parry, 1966). In the 1960s further education colleges prospered and continuous growth in student numbers led to the employment of more teaching staff. This, in turn, saw an improvement in the numbers of teachers gaining teacher training (Evans, 2009).

Margaret Thatcher was elected Conservative prime minister in 1979. Though, it was when Thatcher was Secretary of State for Education and Science that she set up the James committee which was to focus on re-organising teacher training including the further education sector. The James Report 1972 recommended three stages of teacher training for further education teachers. *‘The first phase was a two-year course in general education followed by a phase of initial teacher training which would continue into a third two-year phase of in-house training’* (Lucas 2004a, p.70). This report identified improved opportunities for the teachers in further education. A government white paper, Education: A Framework for Expansion (DES, 1972) proposed that there should be an increase in teacher training for further education. However, for a variety of complex reasons, partly related to the political and economic crisis of the early 1970s and partly the low priority further education had traditionally held in successive governments, these proposals were, once again shelved (Lucas 2004a&b). The Thatcher government wanted to dominate the training of teachers and in 1983 the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Training (CATE) was formed. This council focused on teachers in secondary education not teachers in further education. During this era, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was planned, although Ofsted was not established until the 1992 Education (Schools) Act. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, there was a growth in numbers of trained teachers in further education. The qualification gained was the pre-service and in-service Certificate of Education / PGCE. This improvement was not reinforced by the government and between 1975 and the early 1990s there were no identifiable policies that regulated the quality of teaching staff in further education colleges.

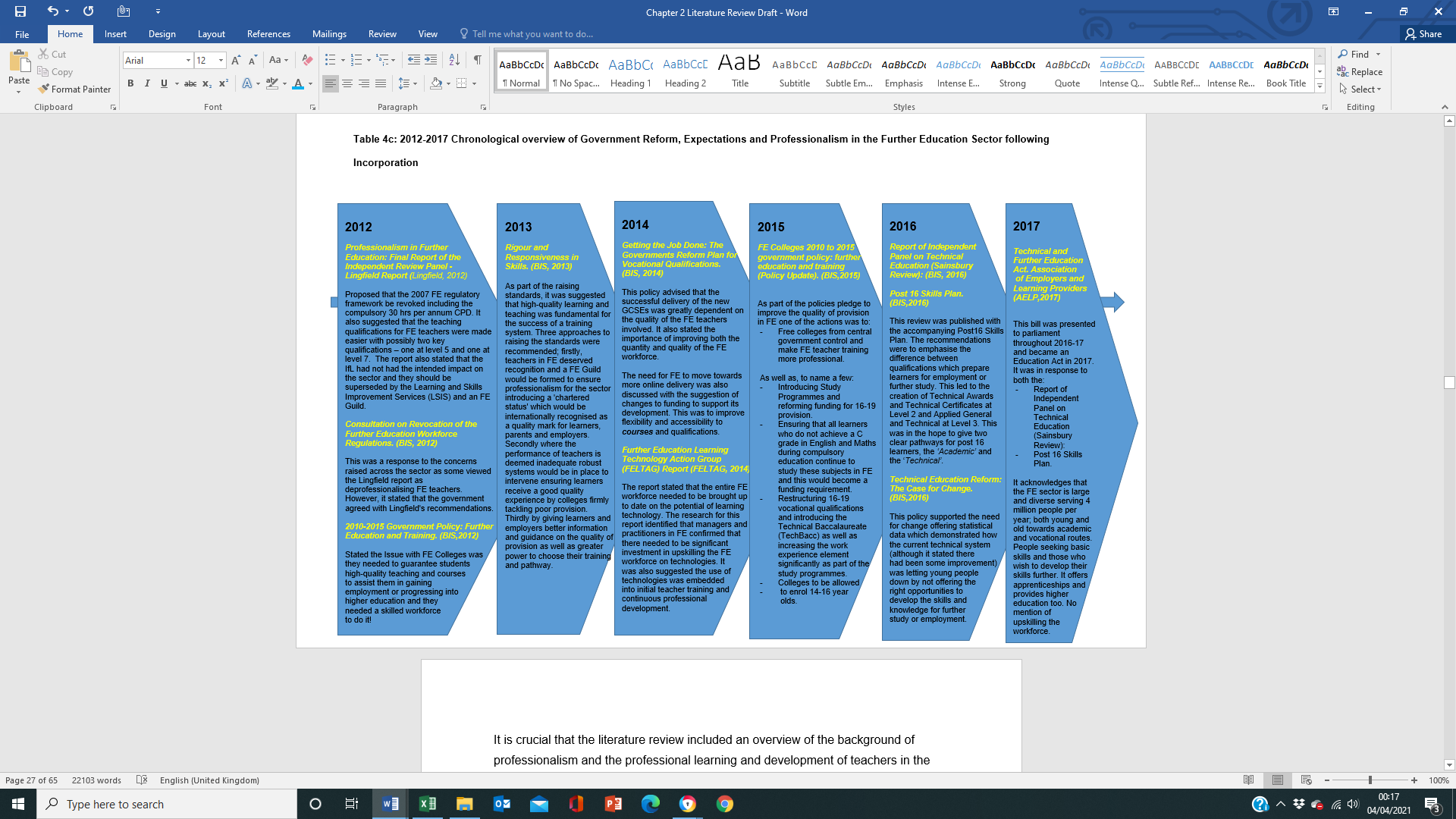
The Local Education Authority (LEA) managed further education colleges until 1993 when they went through incorporation. ITT and continuous learning and development were in place but varied tremendously between colleges across the sector. The LEA funded courses often offered to teaching staff were designed to update them in their subject specialism rather than improve teaching skills. The Teacher Training Agency (TTA) was established under the 1994 Education Act (see figure 4a) with the purpose of improving the quality of teaching, raising standards of teacher education and training (Lancaster, 1997). 1996-1997 saw ‘Ofsted *and TTA working together to create a framework for the assessment of Quality in Initial Teacher Training*’ (Hudson & Lambert 1997, p.168). In 1995 the Further Education Development Agency (FEDA) was established, with its focus ‘*not just to promote best practice but to embody it’* (FEDA 1995, p.1). During 1993-1997 a decrease in the numbers of FE teachers with recognised ITT qualifications was noted alongside mounting concern for the quality of the teaching in the sector. Further education was identified as having a *‘growing role in raising the skill levels and promoting Lifelong Learning’* (Lucas 2004a, p.89). In 1997 the Labour Government was elected. In 1999 a report by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) recognised a shortfall in funding for staff development in a ‘*sector that should be convinced of the benefits of training’ (*FEFC 1999, p.22). Due to the nature of the further education sector and the diversity of both the learners it serves and the services it offers, ITE and professional learning and development would be a challenge to any government to standardise with a set of qualifications or recommendations. This has resulted in over twenty years of workforce reforms to develop professionalism and high standards of learning and teaching across the sector. The Government seemed keen to support the development of teachers in the sector; however, the funding to do so was not so forthcoming. It could be the lack of funding and job security across the sector which has had a negative impact on teacher professional development.

New Labour’s ‘*professionalism agenda’* was centred on statutory requirements for teaching qualifications and national standards for teachers across the sector (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005, 2013; Thompson and Robinson, 2008; Thompson, 2011). In January 1999 standards for further education, teachers were launched by the newly created Further Education National Training Organisation (FENTO) (see figure 4a). The intention of the standards was to inform the initial teacher training and continuous learning and development across the sector. As part of the consultation period, the University of Wolverhampton and its partnership colleges assisted with mapping the standards to the teacher education qualifications (Certificate in Education). The standards consisted of three main elements; 1) professional knowledge and understanding; 2) skills and attributes; 3) key areas of teaching.These standards were introduced at a time when the government focus was on ensuring colleges became more cost-effective *‘potential for greater efficiency through rationalisation of provision and facilities’* (DfEE, 1998, p. 47). The teachers’ contracts had been through significant change following incorporation which brought increased workloads linked to demands for market competitiveness. Bathmaker, (2000, p.17) points out that; ‘*It would be naive to ignore the possibility that the Standards may be applied in such a way that they contribute more to the monitoring and intensification of lecturers’ work than to professional development’.* The incorporation of further education colleges in 1993 saw them becoming independent and leaving the control of central and local government (LEA). Research carried out by Simmons & Thompson, (2007, 2008) highlighted the lack of compulsory teacher training in the sector which they believed lead to mind-sets and a culture flippant towards innovative teaching which was not uncommon. During this time developing pedagogy was considered to be something which could be acquired through experience. Robson (2006, p.14) suggests that ‘*the assumption has been… that if I know my subject, I can, by definition, teach it to others’.* During these years further education and those who taught within it had a very low profile as they were associated with practical skills and knowledge for the workplace and so associated with 'trades' rather than professions of which was identified as part of Simmons and Thompson (2007, 2008) research findings.

**Table 4a: 1992-2004 Chronological overview of Government Reform, Teacher Training and Standards in the Further Education Sector**

**Table 4b: 2005-2011 Chronological overview of Government Reform, Teacher Training and Standards in the Further Education Sector**

**Table 4c: 2012-2017 Chronological overview of Government Reform, Teacher Training and Standards in the Further Education Sector**



Before incorporation teachers in further education had greater autonomy and were not pressured into gaining teaching qualifications, nor were they monitored and held responsible for ensuring learners progressed and achieved. This may not have necessarily been a good position to be in, giving consideration to what seems to have been a very casual approach to the teaching profession. Could this have led to a culture which held no responsibility for ensuring learners achieved the qualifications they had enrolled onto? The lack of commitment towards ensuring teachers engaged in teacher training is a personal concern. Many teachers in further education, which, is discussed throughout this sub-section and further in sub-section 2.8, enter the profession straight from industry. They are often experts in their specialism, though not in teaching their skills to others (pedagogy). A lack of focus on professional development and gaining teaching qualifications may have been one of the reasons why teachers were resistant to the changes following incorporation. Further education colleges were outside of the policy-driven culture that schools were a part of. They were left to manage and progress independently planning their own futures. Incorporation brought with it a climate of melancholy and confusion for teaching staff. This was mainly due to the centrally-imposed funding reductions in the search for greater 'efficiency' in the sector. Resulting in rigorous utilisation of staff and the destructive focus on performativity and performance (Randle and Bradley, 1997a&b). Managers’ focus was on finance, efficiency and budgeting which, whether or not they thought it was more important than professional development was not optional. Managers would have been under a lot of pressure to ensure their departments were efficient and cost effective so they may have been experiencing pressure to achieve this. Teachers witnessed an intensification of managerialism which had not been experienced pre-incorporation. They endured a decline in salary, increased teaching contact hours, and reduced job security and autonomy. This can be attributed to the managers’ attention being on controlling staff and expanding the curriculum offer to draw down more funding from government agencies (Shain & Gleeson, 1999; Kerfoot & Whitehead, 2000). This consecutively led to a change in management structures as colleges were subject to quasi-marketisation. Jameson, (2008, p.22) states the climate in further education colleges changed along with the new management structures during this time and this saw the beginning of a culture of ‘*blame, fear of surveillance and distrust’*. The changes in the new 'business-like' management styles impacted tremendously on teacher's professionalism as they were often becoming increasingly regulated and curtailed by masculinist bullying (Jameson, 2008). This along with the redundancies, restructuring, failing colleges plus overworked and overstressed teachers began the culture of ‘*them and us’* (ibid, p.12). It is wise to consider the impact on managers during this period. The literature reviewed focused on the professional development and professionalism of teachers, the government policies as well as research regarding this. Yet, managers were going through these changes too. They would have witnessed management structures being streamlined resulting in a reduction in managerial positions available. The managerial positions would have been designed to address the new ways of working, ensuring business efficiency. This took their focus away from managing and quality assuring learning and teaching via course review and evaluation which then became a part of the teachers’ workload (Ainley and Bailey, 1997).

From 1993 the further education sector diversified from its traditions of developing the skills of individuals for entering manufacturing employment to encompassing scholarly education, learners with special educational needs, adult learners, the unemployed, refugees and short term visitors to the UK. The sector has also, for a number of years provided education for learners under the age of sixteen (Goodrham and Hodkinson, 2004, Avis *et al,* 2010, Orr, 2010). The provision for learners under the age of sixteen was formalised following recommendations from the Wolf Review of Vocational Education (Wolf 2011, p.129) (see figure 4b). This formalisation came with specific criteria for the quality of provision in college which also added implications to the learning and development of teachers (DfE, 2013). This demonstrates the diversity and complexity of the further education sector as well as the vocational nature of the majority of the provision. ITE is usually delivered on a part-time in-service model. Teachers are employed and working in the role before gaining teacher training. ITE, as well as the professional learning and development of teachers in further education is an ongoing development which has resulted in continuous workforce reforms to improve the standards of teaching and increase professionalism. It has been acknowledged that this *‘endless change*’ will have had an undermining impact on professional learning and development across the further education sector (Beale, 2004 and Edwards *et al*, 2007). The intention of the research was engage teachers in professional dialogue. To involve them from the onset of each academic year with the planning of their professional development. It was important to identify what professional learning and development teachers considered as having the most impact on their practice and supporting their suggestions. This led to the question; what do teachers identify as effective?

It was New Labour's agenda on professionalisation which led to the Lifelong Learning UK Workforce Strategy for the Further Education System in England: 2007-2012 (LLUK, 2007). This strategy brought with it mandatory commitments to ITE and continuing professional development. LLUK was a regulating body formed to ensure high standards were met and continually upgraded. This was to enable teachers in further education could become professional practitioners. New national standards for teachers in further education were introduced along with the new professional status of Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS). A new structure of teaching qualifications was created in addition to compulsory membership to the new professional body, the Institute for Learning (IfL). The IfL was to represent the further education sector (Thompson and Robinson, 2008). LLUK was commissioned by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 2007 to facilitate the development of the Further Education Workforce Strategy (LLUK 2007). In 2004 Lucas pointed out that there had been more government policies and regulation since New Labour came into power regarding raising the standards of teaching in further education than ever before (Lucas, 2004). There were at least five different government-funded agencies as well as an independent professional body for teaching staff, the Institute for Learning (IfL), (Orr, 2009). Steer *et al* (2007, p. 177) assist in simplifying educational policies as their definition identifies policy drivers as the generally expressed aims while the policy lever is '*shorthand for the wide array of functional mechanisms through which government and its agencies seek to implement policies’*. When giving this consideration one such policy lever would be the setting of targets in further education. On further examination of the targets that were set for continuous learning and development in further education (mandatory 30 hours Pro Rota). It becomes apparent how policy levers become detached from the purpose of policies and the changes they are meant to bring about. This policy was to improve the practice and professionalism of teachers in the further education sector. On the other hand, according to Orr (2009, p.480) it actually reduced professional autonomy and trust as it led teachers towards *‘centralised accountability*’. This also demonstrates how further education managers could readily produce evidence which indicates targets have been met due to working in an audit culture. The concern here is that targets have been met -hence performativity flourishes - while actual professional practice often sees little or no improvement (Orr,2009). This accountability could have a negative impact on the motivation of teachers. This may influence whether or not teachers decide to engage in continuous learning and development activities and collaborate with one another. The question here is; why do some but not all teachers engage in continuous learning and development applying agency?

In 2007 the LLUK also produced the New Overarching Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector (LLUK,2007) (see figure 4b). These included a staggering 190 statements relating to skills, knowledge and attributes over six domains which included *‘Apply appropriate methods of assessment fairly and effectively’* (LLUK, 2007, p.13) and ‘*structure and present information clearly and effectively’* (LLUK, 2007, p, 6). The standards were a huge contrast to the standards commissioned for our colleagues in schools and universities where their professionalism seems to be acknowledged giving only a set of broad professional values for teachers to interpret themselves (Orr, 2008, p.103). Brown *et al* (2008, p.17) conducted a significant research project into tertiary education, globalisation and the knowledge economy and identified that ‘*while the skills of the workforce remain important, they are not a source of decisive competitive advantage*’.

In 2008 The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) which held the responsibility for economic growth was established. The focus was on the skills and education required to encourage and support people towards starting their own business. This involved the further education sector too, which added to the ever-shifting, changing landscape. It seems as though one of the issues of trying to develop professional development standards for the sector is a tough task to achieve. This is due to the constant changes in the education provision it provides and the diverse nature of the learners it serves. BIS joined the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) together to form and fund the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). This was a service formed to accelerate quality improvement through more professional development and support for further education teachers. The aim was to raise standards and achievements in the sector. LSIS also worked in partnership with the sector to build and sustain self – improvement.

The Coalition Government between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in 2010 brought policies and agendas to professionalise the further education sector through training and continuous learning and development for teachers. Two government strategies were launched in 2010: the *Skills for Sustainable Growth* and *Investing in Skills for Sustainable Growth* (BIS,2010a&b)*,* which both highlighted the necessity of having highly trained teachers in further education. This was the response to a report produced by the Office for National statistics (ONS) on International Comparisons of Productivity, 2010. (ONS,2010). The UK did not fare well in the report; it was lower than the average of G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and USA). Labour productivity is a key measure of economic performance. As discussed throughout this chapter, the further education sector is linked to training people to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to improve the UKs economic performance. This was and still is a huge challenge has it involves diverse age groups, abilities as well as qualifications and delivery models. Teachers in the further education sector are expected to develop new skills and knowledge required for each change in policy. Policy makers seem to be attempting to support this by professionalising and upskilling the further education workforce. This is evident in the numerous policies which have focused on developing the teachers across the further education sector. Nonetheless, the difficulty seems to lay with the lack of funding allocated to the sector. As whilst the demand for further education increases, the funding cuts to the sector place teachers in constant threat of restructures and redundancies do to the demands of delivering more efficiently.

The Wolf Report and New Challenges, New changes consultation (Wolf,2012) was released in 2012. The report was a review of vocational education. It recommended reforms in teacher qualification requirements and that QTLS (the FE equivalent of Qualified Teacher Status) should be recognised in schools. This was the first time that teachers in further education had been given the opportunity to gain professional status which would be on parity with that of teaches in schools. Then in 2012, there was another turn around with regards to the professionalism of teachers in further education. The government commissioned Lord Lingfield to review both the standards and professionalism in the sector. The Lingfield interim Report (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012a) that followed suggested that the government should consider whether or not it was important for teachers in the further education sector to hold a teaching qualification. It also questioned whether or not there was a need for them to engage in continuous learning and development. As Huckfield (2012) asserts ‘*FE Professionalism- You couldn’t make it up if you tried!’* A government-directed consultation in response to the Lingfield interim report confirmed the feeling of dismay from teachers working in the sector (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012b). In the introduction in the final report Lord Lingfield acknowledge that the interim report ‘*had little effect, indeed it led to controversy and difficulty in a sector on which many thousands of young people depend for an introduction to the skills which will found their careers, and on which this country relies…’* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012c, p. i). He went on to say;

*It seemed to me and my colleagues that the conclusions and recommendations of our Interim Report (published earlier this year) were inevitable, even where they were regrettable insofar as they brought disadvantage to the careers of some well-meaning and committed people* (ibid,2012c, p.i).

This was a report which acknowledged the errors towards the professionalism and professional development of teachers in the further education sector. It also gave recognition to the important role of further education colleges and the teachers who serve within it. There were 1063 respondents to the government consultation (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012b). It confirmed that teachers felt that regulation was necessary as they thought to revoke them would have detrimental effects and '*undermine the efforts to professionalise the sector*’…they thought that ‘*regulation of teaching qualifications provides a very important reassurance for the public, taxpayers and students that lecturers in college are qualified to teach’* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012d, p.10). The vast majority (80%) of respondents conveyed concerns and anxiety with regards to reputation as teachers and professionals if regulations were revoked (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012d, p.13). Support for the regulations on continuous learning and development; though, was lower (62%) as respondents viewed the fact that colleges had robust continuous learning and development programmes in place which were '*measured through self-assessment and student success rates’.* Teachers did acknowledge the importance and their commitment to continuous professional development. Although teachers *‘felt it was not necessary to legislate for CPD practice and indications are that the regulation has become devalued’ (ibid, 2012b, p.11).* The Lingfield interim report (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2012a) was frowned upon by teachers across the sector. However, the openness of Lord Lingfield to publically admit the errors within it and the consultation which followed opened up the dialogue between teachers and policy makers. This resulted in the final report acknowledging that the sector had been hindered by the various Governments and the countless policies on the professionalism and continuous professional development. The final Lingfield report (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012c) included the endorsement of a Further Education (FE) Guild to replace the IfL. Also the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) as the body to enhance the status of the further education sector and develop a new set of professional standards and teaching qualifications. The responsibility of developing the Guild was given to the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) in 2012. The FE Guild became the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) in 2013 and is still in place today with one of their main aims being, *‘To raise the quality and professionalism of teachers and trainers across the FE and training sector’* (ETF, 2013)*.*

In May 2014 the ETF produced a new set of Professional Standards (ETF, 2014), working in collaboration with approximately 1000 teachers from the sector. The standards were drawn from consultation events, in-depth interviews and an online survey. They were produced on a two-page document which was made up of 20 standards (as opposed to 190 set out by the LLUK in 2007) separated into key themes of Values and Attributes, Knowledge and Understanding and Skills. Written within the standards are professional practices which include “*evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs”, “manage and promote positive learner behaviour*” and “*contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others*” (ETF, 2014a&b). Guidance for teachers was also produced in a 22-page document (ibid,2014) which gives examples of how standards could be applied. The chief executive for the institute for learning supported them affirming '*The standards provide an excellent foundation for professional conversations about learning and development, and recognise the value of teachers and trainers being able to use their judgement and exercise professional autonomy, to ensure the best outcomes for learners’ (Cooney, 2014).* May 2015 saw the formation of the Society for Education and Training (SET) which is the new professional membership organisation of the Education and Training Foundation for practitioners working in the post-16 education and training sector. The SET took over from the IfL with regards to teachers in further education becoming members of a professional body as well as offering the route towards Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status which would be viewed on parity to QTS as recommended in the Wolf (2011) review.

In 2012 the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) produced a policy titled 2010-2015 Further Education and Training (which was updated in 2015) (BIS, 2012) (see figure 4c). It stated (in both versions) the issue with further education colleges was they needed to guarantee students high-quality teaching and courses to assist them in gaining employment or progressing into higher education and they needed a skilled workforce to do it. It proposed in the actions to improve the quality of further education provision and one of the actions would be ‘*freeing colleges from central government control and making FE teacher training more professional’* (BIS,2012). In 2013 the BIS policy ‘*Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills’* (BIS,2013*)*  suggested that the success of a training system could only be achieved if the learning and teaching were to a high quality. To achieve this goal, they asserted that three approaches would assist: firstly, teachers in further education were to be recognised as professionals and the FE Guild would assist and endorse this. Secondly, they enforced the importance of a robust performance management system to ensure that teachers who were deemed inadequate were supported to improve their practice. Thirdly, learners and employers should receive good advice and guidance prior to deciding which pathway to take.

*Getting the Job Done: The Governments Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications in* 2014 (BIS,2014) was produced by BIS. It advised that the success of the new GCSEs being delivered in further education were dependant on the good practice of the teachers involved. The policy also discussed improving the quantity and quality of the further education workforce. However, this does not correlate with the continuous government cuts in funding which has reduced the workforce and there is no chance of expanding it in the current climate. The *Further Education Learning Technology Action Group Report* (FELTAG,2012) stressed the importance and need to implement more learning technologies in the delivery of qualifications in the sector offering a more flexible online option for learners. It also acknowledged the response from further education managers and practitioners who confirmed that the workforce would require upskilling with continuous support and development. This would, in turn, require substantial investment to meet the recommendations of this report. The Sainsbury Review in 2016, which was an *Independent Report on Technical Education* (BIS,2016) (see figure 4c). highlighted in the report that Infrastructure and the subsequent recommendation 33 was that

*Good technical education requires expert teachers and lecturers and access to industry-standard facilities. College principals have told us that recruiting technical education teachers with well-developed pedagogical skills, mastery of their field, and up-to-date industry experience can be a significant challenge in the competitive labour market. Accessing high-quality professional development, including industrial updating, throughout their teaching career, is essential for technical education teaching staff to remain current.* (ibid, p.64).

This would enable, according to the review, high-quality provision for learners studying on both the technical as well as the apprenticeship routes within further education Colleges. Would introducing regular time slots for teachers to collaborate with colleagues to discuss and solve issues engaging in professional dialogue have a positive impact on their practice and the learners’ experience.

It is crucial that the literature review included an overview of the background of the policy context relating to professionalism and the professional learning of teachers. It is also hoped that it would raise awareness of the continuous issues further education teachers face when it comes to how their professional status is viewed. Another important consideration to share within this chapter is how government policymakers have a misunderstanding of the complexities further education teachers face on a day to day basis. This is due to the fact that they are trying to respond to the continuous shifting sands of what is expected of them. Vince Cable in 2010 (Wheeler, 2014) stated at a conference that government officials had planned to axe further education in England and Wales altogether and that civil servants claimed that '*nobody would really notice’* (*ibid*,p.1). O'Leary (2016, p.3) argues that no one in Whitehall cares about further education. '*Why? Because it's a sector that predominantly caters to the needs of the working-class communities and rarely (if ever) touches the lives of politicians and policymakers; as such it can be easily dismissed as a budgetary burden'*.

It is anticipated that having read this 2.7 section of the literature review, the reader (if they are not part of the sector) will have a clearer picture of the Government policies and agendas professionalism and the continuous professional development of teachers in the further education sector. Given the changes in further education policy discussed above, it is interesting that theoretical developments in continuous learning and development moving away from the technicist, positivist inspired approaches initially imposed by the government. It is this to which I now turn, framing the theories related to the more current approaches to continuous learning and development and the complexities they may bring to the fold.

**2.8 Theoretical Framing**

When the research was in its infancy I was focussed on how the continuous learning and development of teachers could be improved to engage teachers and encourage collaboration. The communities of practice concept, at that time, seemed to be a good model to introduce and develop across curriculum departments. However, once the reviewing of literature commenced it didn’t take long to establish that the individual within the social perspective must be given equal consideration. So the theoretical framework was revised to theoretical framing to allow for a broader study of theories relating to individualism as well as the sociocultural perspective to be examined as well as how individuality impacts on how they react and interact with others in a social context.

Initially, the study began with the work of Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning; Legitimate Peripheral Participation. Teaching staff across the college had identified that collaborating with colleagues was one of the most effective professional learning activities and which had the greatest impact on their practice. Lave and Wenger's theory suggests that human minds develop in social situations. They point out that '*learners inevitably participate in communities of practice and the mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move towards full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community*’ (ibid, p.29). The importance of newcomers resonates with the departmental teams which included both experienced teachers who had served the college for numerous years and the inexperienced who were new to the organisation/department.

Lave and Wenger’s studies derive from the work of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theories along with Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) which discusses learning as a social activity. Their work was inspired by Vygotsky’s well-known contention that intrapersonal consciousness is built from interpersonal tool-sharing. It is important to point out that Vygotsky acknowledged he was a Marxist, established by his great success with scientific research with the historical-materialist approach (Davydov and Kerr, 1995). He was a critical realist; critical realism primarily focuses on ‘*determining what is objectively real and what is subjectively accepted as truth’* (O’Mahony and Vincent, 2014, p.9). Abdul (2015, p.23869) suggests that with critical realism the ‘*focus is placed primarily on the objective reality as opposed to the subjective interpretation’* during research. Ellis et al (2010, p. 3) propose that ‘*CHAT concepts can be traced back to Vygotsky’s Marxist, developmental project’*. However, once Vygotsky’s studies moved into other fields of the humanities he acknowledged the role of culture on individuals’ development and proposes that the researcher is actively involved with the researched, which resonates with the interpretivist approach taken towards this study.

The complexities of human learning and development discussed in this chapter are the same underpinning complexities of professional learning and development for teachers. It must never be presumed that as adult learners none of the prior learning experiences from birth to childhood to adolescence influence how adults share new-found knowledge or to co-operate and collaborate with others. It may be, as those from a position more sympathetic to the interpretivist tradition (for example, Archer 2003; Giddens1984; Garfinkel1967),[[1]](#footnote-1) would argue, that it is the inner conversations and misinterpretations which affect how individuals engage in learning and where they place themselves within a departmental team, particularly if a cultural hierarchy is present. There are social forces at work within departmental teams which could affect individuals differently and how they engage with professional learning and development. Conversely, it may well be how the person interprets and more importantly uses that experience to engage and develop their practice which is crucial. Engeström's (2001) expansive learning theory considers both the complexities of learning collaboratively as well as how these complexities can (at times) lead to transformations in practice. Expansive learning is discussed further in sub-section 2.8.5.

**2.8.1 Agency**

Structural imperatives notwithstanding, learning is complex and profound. Indeed, Jarvis (2006) believes that human learning processes define who we are and, without learning, humanity could not transition from a biological state to successful societal functioning. Curzons (1983, p.3) argues that human learning ‘*is in essence recognition that society’s mode of life must be learned since an understanding of it is not inherited by each individ*ual’. These claims perhaps borrow from existentialist tenets; as Cooper (1990, p.2) reminds us, it is wise to acknowledge that ‘*existence’ refers to the kind of existence enjoyed by human beings and it also refers to a form of existence which distinguishes it from all others’.* It may be that it is reflexivity which distinguishes how persons perceive the human existence which forms their human being. Being is tethered to ‘becoming’ as individuals engage in a process of growth – of learning - which brings about change. The individual learning experiences teachers have encountered throughout their life could shape who they are and how they interact with the world and others. Indeed, this may be one of the reasons why teachers who are given the same opportunities for independent and collaborative professional learning respond differently. It could explain, perhaps, why some appear to recognise and apply agency and engage in communities of practice whilst others shy away from what they may see as a challenge.

Agency has been central to educational thinking since Enlightenment (Biesta and Tedder, 2006). Archer (2007) discusses how reflexivity creates either ‘*active age*nts’ who employ governance in their lives or ‘*passive agents’* to whom things just happen. Structuration theory may also have influenced how individuals engage and take control of their own learning and the relationship between individuals and social forces (Giddens, 1984). Individuals who do not actively engage are often perceived as being passive. However, theory suggests that the environment, individuals and behaviour all influence one another which could have a detrimental effect on how individuals engage with others in given situations. This reinforces the view that social forces are at work and influence an individual’s agency. Fairchild (1970) describes social forces as:

*Any effective urge or impulse that leads to social action. Specifically, a social force is a consensus on the part of a sufficient number of the members of society to bring about social action or social change of some sort. In the plural, the social forces are the typical basic drives, or motives, which lead to the fundamental types of association and group relationship*.

Both Garfinkel (1984*)* and Giddens (1984)suggest that it is in their daily activities that individuals reinforce and reproduce a set of expectations and it is this set of ‘other *people’s expectations that establish the ‘social forces’ and social structures’*… Of course, Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology and Gidden’s structuration theory fall within the interpretivist and hermeneutic tradition, a tradition which runs counter to Vygotskian materialism in many respects. However, given the paradigmatic overlap in terms of *cultural* analysis, these tools can help illuminate agency. Giddens reiterates that ‘*Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people d*o' (Giddens & Pierson1998: p.77). Garfinkel’s (1967; 1984) sociological studies in the 1960s identified how individuals acted and responded differently in unpredicted ways to everyday questions and situations. This resulted in tension as individuals viewed it as a disjuncture in what they perceived as '*normal behaviour’.* There are cultures within departments which are the result of social forces, where staff have followed the same practice for numerous years and expect others (new members to the team) to follow their lead and work in the same way. This may cause friction within the teams as new members often bring new ideas and approaches which others may resent and be unwilling to change. A point to raise and consider here is, could it be that these individuals are exerting their agency choosing not to engage. The significance of the individual within communities of practice and how relationships within the community can be conflicting at times was raised by Lave and Wenger (1991, p.116):

*Shared participation is the stage on which the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the established and the hopeful, act out their differences and discover their commonalities, manifest their fear of one another, and come to terms with their need for one another. (...) Conflict is experienced and worked out through a shared everyday practice in which differing viewpoints and common stakes are in interplay.*

However, it must be noted that Lave and Wenger's study was based on five case studies of apprenticeship programmes which although substantiated in empirical data the findings were based on apprenticeship frameworks rather than the *‘history of real societies and patterns of organizing work’ (*Engeström, 2007, p. 1). Whilst Engeström (2007) identified the weakness of the situated learning study being based on apprenticeships rather than the wider sociocultural perspective, he ensured firstly to acknowledge the positive influence it had on the studies of learning. Engeström praised the development, moving away from the individual and the acquisition of knowledge to joint participation and learning for all involved in the process. It was a further study by Wenger (1998) which associated communities of practice with learning in the workplace. Wenger went on to further develop this theory into a conceptional framework for use in organisational design and knowledge management (Wenger *et al*, 2002).

Agency according to Biesta and Tedder (2007) as well as Caldron and Smith (1999) encompasses the opinion that an individual is active, and has control of both their personal and professional life. They developed a helpful ecological view of agency, that agency is attained under particular conditions. Biesta and Tedder (2007) suggest that even if individuals have the capacity for active decision-making and control they are dependent on the conditions they find themselves in. In their view agency is a matter of individual capacity to act joined with the contingencies of the environment in which it occurs (Priestley *et al*, 2012). Priestley *et al* (2015, p.3) suggest that;

*Viewing agency in such terms helps us to understand how humans are able to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments.*

Therefore, the working environment within curriculum departments would have an impact on a teachers’ individual capacity for interaction with others. Fellenz (2015, p.9) believes that teachers develop mechanisms to cope with the pressures and emotions associated with the profession which involves having both a ‘*professional and general self*’’. The professional self is a part of the general self; however, its function is to focus on becoming, being and practising as a professional. The general self is the inner influence that reflectively and reflexively informs the professional self. This sheds light on how intricate the interaction of agency is on the development of the professional self. Hargreaves (1998, p.835) argues that teaching is an emotional practice and that good teachers are ‘*not just well-oiled machines, they are emotional, passionate beings who connect with their students'.* The teaching profession is increasingly complex and demanding (Tickle, 1991) due to educational reform, inspections, area reviews, funding cuts and the performativity culture which has crept into the further education sector (Orr, 2009). This affects the development of the curriculum offered as well as the challenge of developing relationships with colleagues, students, parents, carers and employers which requires a sound emotional understanding (Goleman, 1995; Denzin, 1984). Hochschild, (1993, p.7) distinguishes teaching as a caring occupation which requires emotional labour. She believes that;

*This labour requires one to induce or suppress feelings in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others. This kind of labour calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and it sometimes draws on a source of self that we honour as deep and integral to our personality.*

Jackson *et al* (1993) agree pointing out that teachers are always expected to be sanguine regardless of inner emotional state to ensure they create an environment conducive to learning. Teachers also hold the responsibility for holding numerous meetings, recording and keeping audit trails with regards to monitoring attendance, retention and achievement. The pressures of teaching along with the ongoing demands for audit documentation as well as going through the process of formal observations on teaching practice which are more often than not graded, it is perhaps not surprising that teachers can lose their sense of purpose and end up demoralised (Nias, 1991).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) offer a theory regarding agency which views individuals as actors in situ. They become embedded in many temporal processes of social engagement (at times simultaneously) as well as choosing their role within them. They propose that individuals have the capacity to change their relationship and roles within various situations thus enabling human agency to alter the structural environments. This supports Biesta and Tedder (2007) and Priestley *et al* (2015) theories on ecological agency. These are interesting theories as when considering teachers within curriculum departments and how they engage with colleagues to solve issues. They may be collaborating on several issues with different colleagues at times concurrently which would include, for example, curriculum development, learner engagement and retention. Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.963) also suggest that individuals engage in ‘temporal *processes of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to conceptualise past habits and future projects with the contingencies of the moment).* Teachers within departments will draw upon past experiences with both colleagues as well as the issue at hand which will influence who they choose to engage with and how. In sociocultural spaces fields of expression are exerted by individuals which transform into modes of power creating social forces *(*Rummel, 1976). It is how individuals perceive one another which creates the group dynamics and who exerts power over others. Applying this to education departments would suggest that, when conversing, it is an individual's gestures, eye contact, words and facial expressions which give an indication of the powers an individual may have to change the thoughts, ideas and actions of others. If someone is captivating, their field of expression will command substantial power over perception. On the other hand, if an individual cannot motivate and inspire they may exercise force to maintain an elevated position within the group and situation. This could be the reason why some teachers decline to engage and exercise their agency in certain situations. This also has a bearing on the complexities involved in establishing and sustaining communities of practice. In Engeström’s (2001, p.136) description of activity theory his second principle ‘*multi-voicedness’* acknowledges that individual thought, opinions and histories can be problematic, however, he points out that they can also evolve towards innovation.

Sociologist Archer (2007) suggests an individual's reflexivity leads to internal conversations which in turn influence how individuals make their way through the world. She suggests that there are two levels of reflexivity. An individual with a lower level of reflexivity would allow the environment to shape their being whilst those who hold higher levels of social reflexivity shape and position themselves in social groups and environments. Considering this in ecological agency terms the same environment could influence individuals in very different ways. On one hand individuals could oppose the structural constraints and engage, whilst others feel restricted by them and do not. Indeed, Archer (2003, p.56) argues that in social theory reflexivity remains a cypher and has not been given the consideration required to produce clear concepts and understanding of it. She believes it has been seriously neglected by social theorists and without it, there would be '*no social ball’*. Interestingly, Archer (2003) and Leary (2004, p.19) also note that reflexivity, inner conversations and reflection can be detrimental to an individuals’ development as these can '*distort our perceptions about the world, which leads us to draw inaccurate conclusions about ourselves and other people and thus prompts us to make bad decisions based on faulty information’*. Reflexivity, giving thought to the misinterpretation discussed above could see individuals being *‘passive agents’ to whom things simply happen as opposed to ‘Active agents’ who exercise governance in their lives* (Archer 2007, p.6).

**2.8.2 Sociocultural Theories**

Sociocultural theorists claim that people learn from one another by engaging in shared practices in social situations. Lave and Wenger (1991, pg.11) study referred to this as ‘*the situated nature of learning’.* Situated learning places significance upon the social interactions forming an effective learning environment and requires a radical shift of emphasis away from the individual. Indeed, this paradigm diverges significantly from mainstream cognitivist and behaviourist schools of thought; Vygotsky’s research during the 1920s and 30s focused upon ‘*conceptualising conscientiousness’* (Edwards, 2011, pg. 2). Vygotsky’s interest lies with how minds are shaped and how individuals view and gain an understanding of the world around them.

As a result of Vygotsky's studies, he identified mediation as the way in which individuals interact and work with ideas that are valued in the practices displayed. He believed that people work on the world to influence and improve it. Vygotsky suggested that learning is a process of internalisation and externalisation in which individuals make sense of the physical and social world. This is much more than intellectual development; rather, it alters how we act and interact with the world and in turn, that altered world acts back upon us in a complex dialectic. Archer (2007) characterises reflexivity as a feature within which each individual has inner conversations which mediate their interactions with the world around them. This reflexivity also highlights how individuals may position themselves within various experiences which may also include participating in communities of practice and on a wider scale in society itself. Engeström expanded on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) as their early studies on situated learning were informed by research into apprenticeships within the workplace. Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2010) investigates both learning and collaboration in the workplace. Engeström (1999) drew from the work of Vygotsky's perception of mediation and he developed the Vygotskian rudimentary triangle which is discussed and illustrated further in sub-section 2.8.4. Vygotsky argued that language is the most important tool. Dialogue reveals how persons are interpreting the world around them. This, in turn, influences their interaction with others and practices. Vygotsky’s theory on the social formation of the mind suggests that whilst there may be an individual biology and consciousness at work in the process, thought cannot be considered to be a solely individual activity. The connection between the articulation of thought and speech he claims is part of the process of ‘*conceptualisation*' (Derry, 2008, p. 84). Vygotsky believed if thoughts cannot be put into words, the thought has not been defined. This would indicate a lack of understanding and connection to prior thoughts and knowledge. It is only when this occurs that, according to Vygotsky (1987), meaning can be established. Bruner (1987, p. 2) affirms that Vygotsky laid extensive emphasis on the role of language-in-activity and the development of '*man’s mental life and upon its cultivation during growth’*. He argues that the interaction between the human and his or her tools - primarily language - is at the heart of Vygotsky's work. According to Bruner (1987), Vygotsky would not accept that human development was a solitary achievement at all; rather, Vygotsky believed it was initiated and mediated by conversations and dialogue.

Cole and Scribner, (1978, p. 8) credit Vygotsky as ‘*the first modern psychologist to suggest the mechanism by which culture becomes a part of each person’s nature*’. Vygotsky’s research on early childhood and learning indicated that a child’s own internal thoughts, and the interaction with others via activities, assist in developing the mind. He believed that ‘*things do shape the mind’* (Vygotsky, 1998, p.39). He claimed that a child’s learning, through the interaction with more advanced individuals could be enhanced. When giving consideration to this theory and the professional learning and development of teachers, it supports the claim that teachers arrive at the starting point of their careers via very different and diverse backgrounds and experiences which could have an impact on their future learning and development. This could be said to influence how confident individual adults are in new situations and learning experiences and how they interact with others.

Vygotsky (1978) argues that there is not a direct relationship between the stimulus and response in the S-R model of learning. The S-R learning model is used in conditioning. Conditioning is a method of learning where a stimulus is used to evoke a response. This action is embedded into memory becoming a learnt behaviour. Vygotsky (1978) believes there was mediation between them which involved two mechanisms tools and signs. He suggests that (one of the mechanisms) ‘*tools are the means of mastering nature*’ (Jarvis, 2006, p.164). Vygotsky (1978, p. 53) argues that ‘*tongue is the tool of thought’*. The psychological activity in the mediation process are the signs, instruments used to solve problems such as remembering and choosing (Vygotsky, 1978. p.52). This is where he encompasses culture into the process of learning and development. Wenger’s (1998, p.4) theory of learning focuses on learning as social participation where individuals take an active role within the social communities and, by doing this, they form their identity within it. By participating, individuals have a feeling of belonging which ‘*shapes not only what we do but who we are and how we interpret what we do’*. This resonates with Vygotsky’s thoughts on how cultures influence learning and development.

**2.8.3 Legitimate Peripheral Participation and Communities of Practice**

It is the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) which appears to offer one of the most compelling frameworks for understanding learning in social contexts. Legitimate Peripheral Participation (LPP) and Wengers’ (1998) Communities of Practice have gained legitimacy in a range of academic fields since the 1980s, though they owe their provenance to the early twentieth century in Soviet Russia and the work of Lev Vygotsky. On this view, learning is regarded as a situated activity in which learners partake in communities of practice; in so doing, they acquire knowledge and skills. Of course, though these theories share a common foundation, there are unresolved tensions within and between them, and they differ in terms of emphasis. Lave and Wenger’s studies draw from the work of Vygotsky’s sociocultural theories and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Of particular significance for this study of further education teachers is Vygotsky’s ‘*methodological interest in the mediation of human activity by physical and psychological tools’* (Ellis *et al*, 2010.p. 2). The person-environment interface is a feature of this process which requires careful analysis. Biesta and Tedder (2007) as well as Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theories on agency, for example, highlight the complexities of human influence and behaviour during social engagement and activities such as communities of practice. Engeström’s (1987, 2009, 2010) studies on expansive learning and activity systems take the study of these further in an attempt to illuminate collaborative learning and the learning environment.

The legitimate peripheral participation theory was developed from Lave and Wenger's' (1991) attempt to clarify apprenticeships and situated learning in which it was associated. It was their quest to give a thorough explanation of '*situated learning’* which led the researchers to believe *‘learning is an integral and inseparable aspect of social practice’* (ibid, 1991, pg. 31). This led them to using the term legitimate peripheral participation to characterise learning. Brookfield (2005, p.2) reminds us that; ‘*A theory is nothing more (or less) than a set of explanatory understandings that help us make sense of some aspect of the world. To the extent that making sense of existence is a natural human activity, it is accurate to say that we are all theorists and that we all theorise…*' According to Lave and Wenger (1991), legitimate peripheral participation describes the action of individuals' engagement in communities in practice. They believed for the skills and knowledge to continuously develop into mastery level new members should be welcomed. They bring with them new skills and knowledge which would add to the body of knowledge already established within the group and its members. This could be associated with the team collaboration which teaching staff, who were participants in the research, identified as one of the most effective forms of professional learning in terms of impact on their practice.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) legitimate peripheral participation considers the intricacies and complexities of the relationships within communities of practice. However, it was Engeström's activity and expansive learning theory which goes more in-depth with the complexities about learning in the workplace giving a broader context. This often echoes the relationships within curriculum departmental teams. Social forces are continuously at play when individuals participate in any form of community practice. Lave and Wenger, (1991, p.35) link social learning to legitimate peripheral participation to argue that learning is a fundamental part of ‘*generative social practice in the lived-in world*’. They maintain that learning is an ongoing process involving the whole, embodied person and their interactions with the people and world around them. When discussing a social theory of learning Wenger (1998, p.4) believes that in fact we are all social beings and that is a ‘*central aspect of learning*.’ He presents his social theory as requiring components to represent the social partaking in the development of learning (see figure 5). When discussing ‘*Meaning, Practice, Community and Identity’* he identifies how talking and sharing enable abilities to change both individually and collectively when working in what he calls a ‘*Community of Practice*’.

**Figure 5: Components of a social theory of learning: an initial inventory** (Wenger, 2008, p.5)

1. ***Meaning****: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful.*
2. ***Practice:*** *a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action.*
3. ***Community:*** *a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence.*
4. ***Identity:*** *a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities.*

*(ibid, 2008, p.5)*

Applying the social theory of learning to education, Frost *et al* (2013, p.9) confirm that ‘*the value of collaboration in sustaining teachers’ professional growth*’ is key. They also discuss ‘*collective professionalism*' and the shared responsibility teachers hold to maintain the high-quality standards of practice. Engeström (2011) acknowledges Lave and Wenger's (1991, 1998) communities of practice theory and learning in collaboration, collectively. He notes that the expansive learning theory places the importance on communities as learners which supports the initial work of Lave and Wenger.

Communities of practice and situated learning, it could be said, share the same characteristics of teachers in FE developing their practice collaboratively. It involves and values the contribution of both experienced and inexperienced teachers sharing their experiences and problem solving together to develop a greater knowledge and understanding of what works well in the classroom. ‘*Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers and about activities, identities, artefacts and communities of knowledge and practice’* (Lave and Wenger (1991, pg. 29). Lave and Wenger's' (1991) studies open up discussions on both the complexities as well as the advantages of learning collaboratively which, in this study relates to the learning of teachers. Engeström's studies develop learning collaboratively in the workplace further. Teachers working and learning with one another is not just situated in their everyday practice at work, it encompasses their participation and social engagement with the world around them. This influences how they interact with one another and how they view themselves within the community of practice. The centre of learning is in the individuals' interaction and engagement in social practice, a tenet which relates to the community of practice theory, activity and expansive learning theories. These theories also resonate Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development theory.

Each individual who participates within the community of practice will do so in a variety of ways which is defined through the peripheral participation which discusses how individuals locate themselves in the social world. It identifies the complexities in human relationships and where individuals place themselves within social structures such as communities of practice and relations of power. Considering this within a curriculum departmental structure there are characteristics which are evident in relationships between teachers, their colleagues and managers. The various ways in which individuals interact with communities of practice and the world around them explains why communities as a whole, not just communities of practice are diverse and complex by nature. It assists with developing an understanding of why Lave and Wenger (1994) chose to call it peripheral participation acknowledging the importance of participation in various forms, each as important and valued as each other. Indeed, diversity adds to the emergent knowledge and skills within the community of practice.

Of course, there is a subjective element to knowing. How individuals perceive and utilise activities is cognised within their own consciousness. Though learning is social, the ontological reality of individual embodiment and consciousness cannot be overlooked. However, Vygotsky (1962, 1978) characterised the ancient philosophical dualism of subject-object as a dialectic which is better studied as ‘person-in-environment’. It is helpful to think of this as culture - the beliefs, values, traditions and skills of a social group – conveyed intergenerationally.

It is this theoretical tenet which supports Lave and Wenger’s (2008) communities of practice where individuals form communities to learn together to develop practice and solve problems. Arguably, if professional teachers have not fully developed the practice of co-operative, collaborative dialogue in early life perhaps this could hinder them as a professional adult in terms of social agency. Society can be divided across class, gender, ethnic and other lines. If an individual has grown up in a culture dissimilar to the professional teaching role, there may be tensions at work - tensions which may hinder or obstruct their participation.

**2.8.4 Cultural-Historical and Activity Theory**

Vygotsky’s emphasis on culture and history overlaps significantly with other social constructivist perspectives on teacher education and continuous professional development (Ellis *et al*, 2010) which fall more within the hermeneutic and Weberian interpretivist paradigm. Vygotsky’s (1962; 1978) sociocultural theory originated within the dialectical materialist tradition as part of political and intellectual changes during and after the Russian Revolution. Cultural-historical theory differs in that its attention is on mediation, on how human consciousness and practical activity draw upon (psychological and physical) mediation tools in creating cultures. These tools according to Ellis *et al* (2010) are informed by past use and, through present activity, can determine new meanings. This theory could also be associated with Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) theory on agency where they discuss individuals being engaged in

‘a *temporally embedded process of social engagement informed by its past (in its habitual aspect, but also orientated toward the future (as a capacity to imaging alternate possibilities) and towards the present (as a capacity to contextualise past habits and future projects with contingencies of the moment)’*.

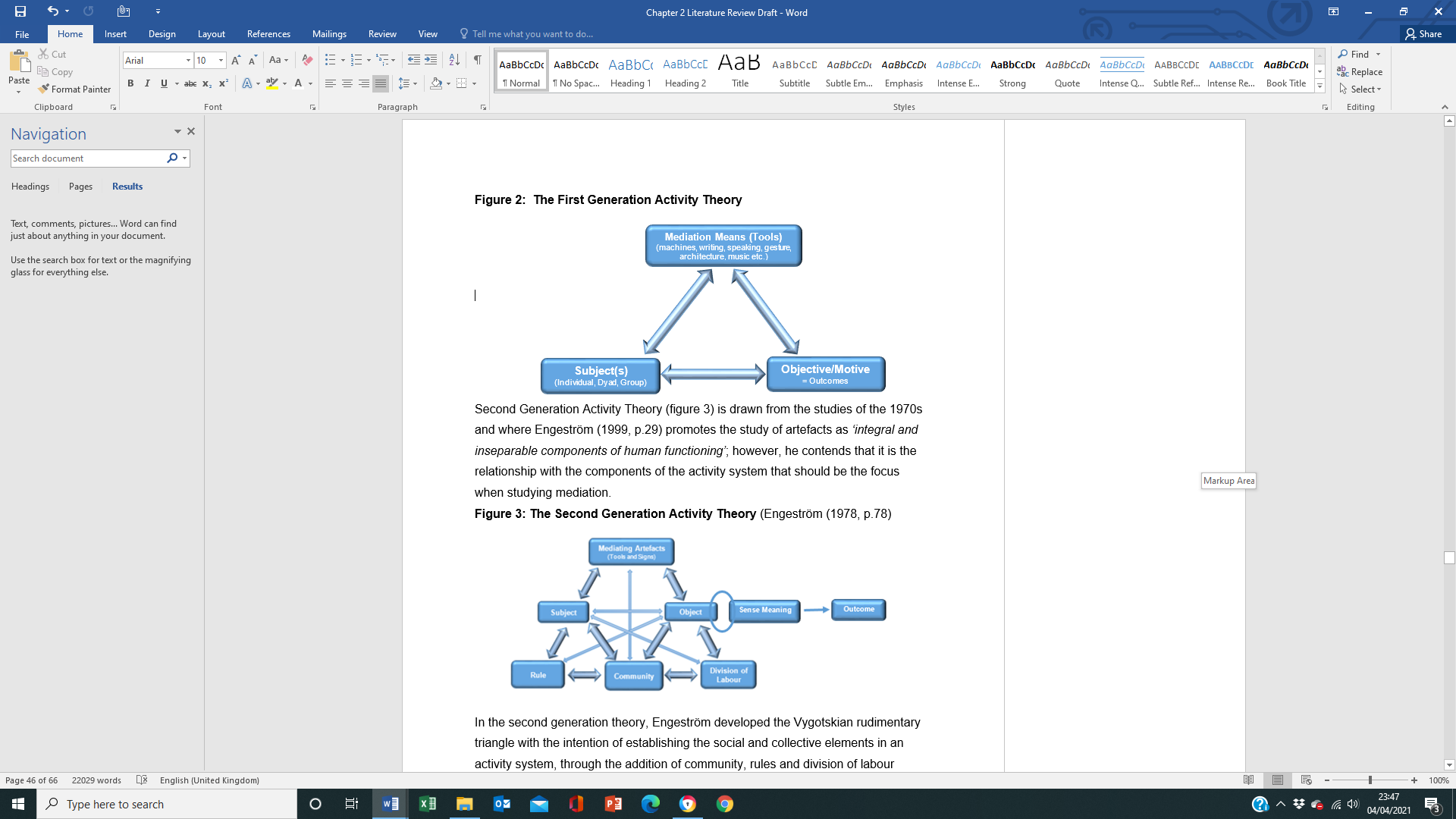
Cradle (2004) suggest that

*'A human individual never reacts directly (or merely with inborn reflects) to the environment. The relationship between human agent and objects of the environment is mediated by cultural means, tools and signs. Human action has a tripartite structure'*.

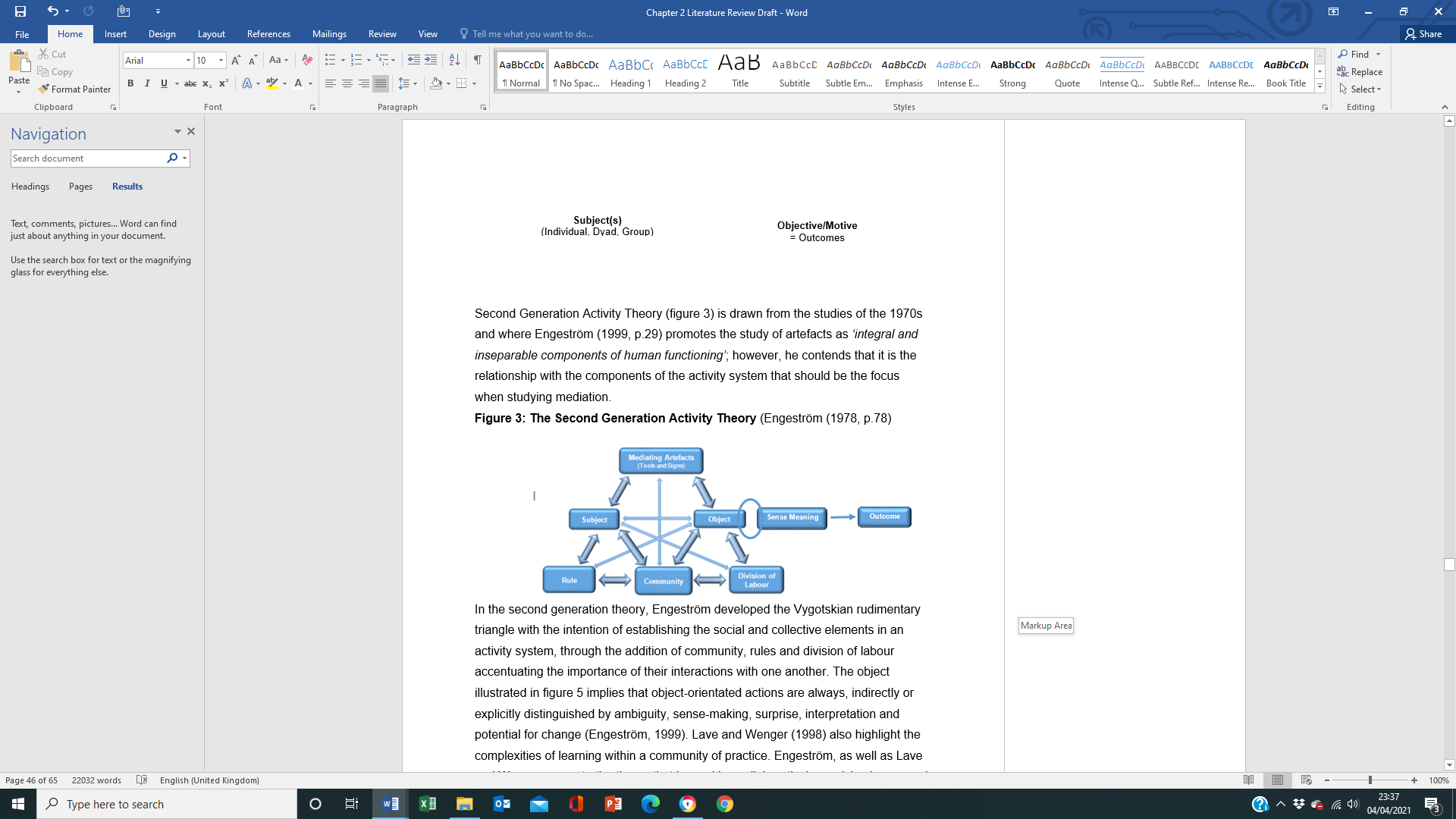
Leont’ev, one of Vygotsky’s students developed the activity theory which informed CHAT further shifting emphasis to collective instead of individual subjects. It was the work of Piaget, Dewey and Vygotsky that opposed the idea of ‘mind as *container’* (Fenwick *et al*, 2011). They shared the view of learning as an active venture rather than a passive transmission of knowledge (Taylor, 2014). CHAT takes on Vygotsky's interest in social and semiotic mediation, moving the focus from the individual to collective subjects (Engeström *et al,* 1999). This theory assists with the understanding and analysis of the relationship between the human mind (what people think and feel) and activity (what people do) (Daniels *et al*, 2010; Kaptelinin & Nardi, 2006; Roth and Lee, 2007). CHAT provides a theory (Mukute, 2009) to explore how groups of people with different experiences and perceptions collaborating on the same object can work on new complications and mutually develop new knowledge or tools to address the issues (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Daniels, 2008).

However, another feature distinguishing Vygotskian-inspired theory from other cultural analyses, is that it includes a role for conflict. Engeström (1999) provides an outline on the development of activity theory over time suggesting that the first generation (figure 6) drew on studies from Vygotsky’s concept of mediation in the 1930s. The triangle illustrates how Vygotsky combined cultural artefacts with human actions in order to dispense with the individual/social dualism. The focus during the first generation was more on the individuals.

**Figure 6: The First Generation Activity Theory**

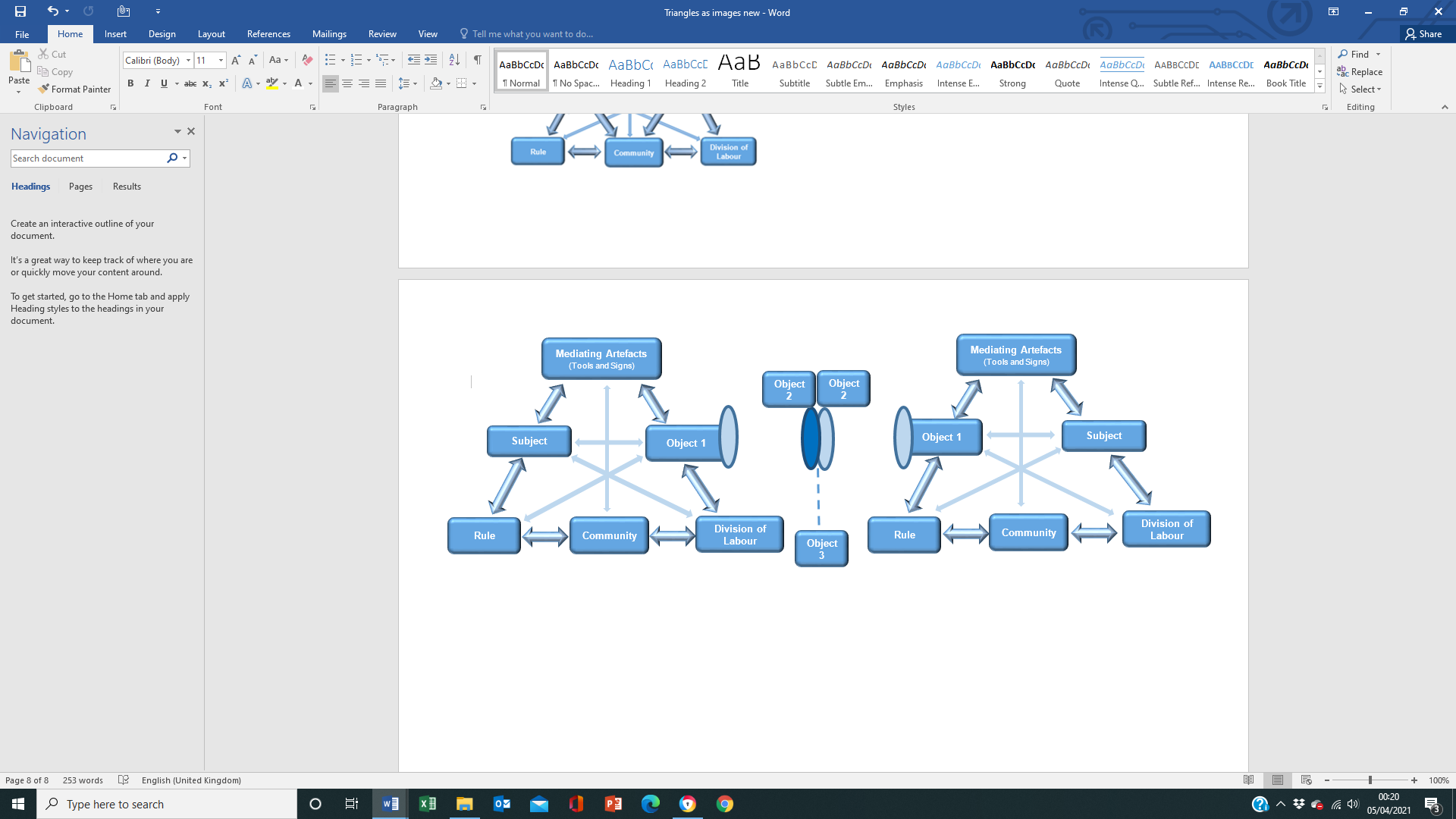


Second Generation Activity Theory (figure 7) is drawn from the studies of the 1970s and where Engeström (1999, p.29) promotes the study of artefacts as *‘integral and inseparable components of human functioning’*; however, he contends that it is the relationship with the components of the activity system that should be the focus when studying mediation.

**Figure 7: The Second Generation Activity Theory** (Engeström (1978, p.78)

In the second generation theory, Engeström developed the Vygotskian rudimentary triangle with the intention of establishing the social and collective elements in an activity system, through the addition of community, rules and division of labour accentuating the importance of their interactions with one another. The object illustrated in figure 7 implies that object-orientated actions are always, indirectly or explicitly distinguished by ambiguity, sense-making, surprise, interpretation and potential for change (Engeström, 1999). Lave and Wenger (1998) also highlight the complexities of learning within a community of practice. Engeström, as well as Lave and Wenger, promote the theory that by working collaboratively resolving issues and conflicts all reinforce the learning process.

Engeström’s attention is on the process of social transformation which includes the structure of the social world including the *conflictual* nature of social practice. He suggests that the ‘*motive force for change and development’* is a result of internal tensions and disagreement (Engeström, 1999, p.9). This supported by Fenwick (2006) and Rainio (2008) who assert that developing agency could involve hostility and conflict. Engeström also believes that it is the complexities within activity systems which lead to evolution where not only the subject but the environment modifies through activity (figure 8). This could be allied to Wengers (1998) views on the intricacies of establishing and sustaining communities of practice. Engeström (1999) expands the second-generation theory to the third where he aims to develop conceptual tools to appreciate dialogues, multiple perspectives and networks of interconnecting activity systems.

**Figure 8: Third Generation Theory**

According to Edwards (2011, p.1) CHAT ‘*offers a broad approach to analysing learning and contexts of learning’*. It usually attracts researchers who are interested in how cultures influence the development of mind and action. Edwards and Daniels (2004, p.108) confirm that *‘Its emphasis is on action or intervention in order to develop practice and the sites of practice’.*  Foot (2014, p.3) suggests that;

*The core ideas are: 1) humans act collectively, learn by doing, and communicate in and via their actions; 2) humans and relations make, employ, and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate; and 3) community is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning – and thus to all forms of learning, communicating, and acting.*

Fenwick *et al* (2011, p.9) propose that CHAT studies investigate the history of systems and relations between mediation artefacts, division of labour, rules and cultural norms - in a nutshell, *‘how things came to be as they are, how they came to be viewed in the ways they are and how they are appropriated in the course of developmental trajectories*’. Roth *et al* (2012) define CHAT as *‘a cross-disciplinary framework for studying how humans purposefully transform natural and social reality, including themselves, as an ongoing culturally and historically*[*situated*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Situated_learning)*, materially and socially*[*mediated*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_mediation)*process’.*

It is Vygotsky's (1978) valuable perception into the dynamics of consciousness, proposing that it is formed by the history of each individual's social and cultural experience (Vygotsky, 1978). He viewed consciousness as particularly social, as an internalised framework derived from the interpersonal. This has a substantial connection to how departmental teams collaborate with and learn from one another across the college. It should be taken into consideration that individuals arrive at the point of entering a teaching career with very diverse learning and life experiences which influence how they think and act in both their transition and development as teaching professionals. This is discussed further throughout the methodology, findings and conclusion chapters.

**2.8.5 Expansive Learning**

The work of Leont’ev (1978) and Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2010) developed Vygotsky’s studies which focused on the ‘*cultural formation of the mind in action*’ (Edwards, 2010, p. 67). They reviewed the purpose of activities and how they are culturally formed. Engeström (2008. p.204) characterises these activities as ‘systematic *formations that gain durability by becoming institutionalised…they take shape and manifest themselves only through the action performed by individuals and groups’.* The activities according to Leont’ev (1978) involve objects (problems) to be worked on. Engeström (2001, p.136) describes activity theory with the aid of five principals. The first one discusses a ‘*collective artefact mediated and object-orientated activity system’*, which networks with others to initiate an analysis of both own and other activity systems. The second principle identifies the '*multi-voicedness’* where individual thoughts, ideas and histories make them both troublesome and innovative. This is where individuals may start positioning themselves within the activity system. This recognises the complexities of group activities and communities of practice which can be associated with curriculum departmental teaching teams. The third principle is historicity which describes how activity systems can be developed and enhanced over long periods of time. This can only occur if the history of the activity and objects studied to gain a clear understanding. This is important for departmental teaching teams as the history of the individual - for example, their personal and professional life experiences before joining the departmental team - may conflict with the historically common practice within the department. This will have an influence on how they interact with the team and vice versa. It is at this point that considering Leont'ev's (1978) definition of object (problem) requires the team to work on it to resolve the situation which could result in a change in practice for all, as explicated in expansive learning theory. The fourth principle examines contradiction and how they can be a source for learning and development. Individuals may not, for example, think change is necessary, and thereby resist. It is only when such conflicts and negotiations are negotiated that learning and development may occur. The fifth principle is the one which asserts that activity systems may have '*expansive transformations’* (Engeström, 2001, p.37) as a result of the former four principles. These principles link clearly with the complexities of human learning and development as well as participating in communities of practice. Expansive transformation within a community of practice would see a collaborative approach and agreement being developed by going through the five principles discussed. This would result in a change in behaviour, approach to teaching practice and so on.

The expansive learning theory according to Engeström (2001) is very different to other theories of learning as their attention is on how subject knowledge and skills are developed usually involving a subject specialist (teacher). The learning outcomes are distinct and a change in behaviour as knowledge and skills are acquired is evident. Engeström (2001, p. 37) contends that:

*The problem is that much of the most intriguing kinds of learning in work organisations violates this presupposition. People and organisations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time. The important transformations of our personal lives and organisational practices, we must learn new forms of activity which are not yet there. They are literally learned as they are being created.*

Engeström (2000b, p. 526) was quite dismissive of learning theory. He maintained that if learning was; ‘*limited to processes of acquisition of skills, knowledge and behaviours, already mastered and codified by educational institutions’* it would make learning inconsequential in the creation and execution of innovative solutions. According to Engeström (2001), expansive learning relates to collective transformation. He points out that although the transformation is collective it is initiated by individuals within the community. The purpose of expansive learning activities is to produce '*culturally new patterns of activity’* through engaging all individuals within the activity system. This, in turn, creates *‘new forms of work activities’* (ibid, 2001, p.139).

Engeström (2010, p.138) makes reference to and acknowledges how useful Bateman’s (1972) theory of learning, especially for his own studies. Bateman characterises three levels of learning. Level I relates to ‘*conditioning, acquisition of responses’* considered to be correct and he gives the example of giving the correct responses to questions in the classroom. Wherever there is Learning I, Learning II is occurring. This involves individuals learning how to change their behaviour to enable them to fit in and belong, satisfy the teachers' expectations and pass exams. Bateman (1972) according to Engeström, suggests at times this may inundate those involved with *‘contradictory demands’*, Learning II is categorised as *‘double bind’* This issue could, at times, lead onto Learning III where individuals or all involved begin to review and evaluate the ‘*sense and meaning of the context and construct a wider alternative context*’ (ibid, 2001, p.138).

Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development is a significant influence on the theory of expansive learning. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) characterised the zone as:

*The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.*

In Engeström’s (1987, p. 174) Learning by Expanding he stated that:

*It is the distance between the present everyday actions of the individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in the everyday actions.*

Engeström (2000b, p.533) discusses how expansive learning does not follow the traditional theories of learning which view learning and development as a vertical process where individuals advance to higher-order thinking (Bloom, 1956; Anderson *et al*, 2001; Brookhart, 2010; Higgins *et al,* 2005) and competence. It is here we find one of the most profound tensions between the interpretivist and materialist traditions and the issue with which Vygotsky grappled. Engeström compliments this theory by proposing horizontal and sideways learning and development, all of which are involved in *‘expansion’*. In later studies, Engeström and Sannino (2010, p.2) reinforce that *'expansive learning puts primacy on communities as learners, on transformation and creation of culture, on horizontal movement and hybridisation and the formation of theoretical concepts'*.

The drive for change in expansive learning theory is accredited to inner contradictions from within an activity or between two activities. Engeström, 1987, p.45) suggests that the stages and forms of activity materialise as solutions to the contradictions in the form of ‘*invisible breakthroughs’*. Engeström and Sannino (2010, p.5) revisit the role of contradictions and affirm that they are the ‘*driving force of transformation. The object of an activity is always internally contradictory. It is these contradictions that make a moving, motivating and figure-generating target.’*

Engeström (1987, p.44) defined four levels of contradictions which may appear in the human activity system:

**Level 1:** Primary inner contradiction (double nature) within each constituent component of the central activity.

**Level 2:** Secondary contradictions between the constituents of the central activity.

**Level 3:** Tertiary contradiction between the objective/motive of the dominant form of the central activity and the object/motive of a culturally more advanced form of the central activity.

**Level 4:** Quaternary contradictions between the central activity and its neighbour activities.

As described in Engeström (2001, p. 152), the seven steps in the expansive learning cycle are: 1) Primary Contradiction; 2) Secondary Contradiction; 3) Modelling the New Situation; 4) New Model; 5) Implementing the New Model; 6) Quaternary Contradictions and Realignment with Neighbours and 7) Consolidating The New Practice. Engeström (2010, p. 8) discusses the 1999 model of the seven steps which provides a more simplistic form which emphasises the key activities for each step. They developed into 1) Questioning; 2) Analysis; 3) Modelling the New Solution; 4) Examining and Testing the New Model; 5) Implementing the New Model; 6) Reflecting on the Process, and 7) Consolidating and Generalising the New Practice, (figure 9)

**Figure 9: Sequence of Learning Actions in an Expansive Learning Cycle** (Engeström, 1999, p.384)

Resistance

Stabilisation

*The process of expansive learning should be understood as construction and resolution of successively evolving contradictions…The cycle of expansive learning is not a universal formula of phases or stages. In fact, one probably never finds a concrete collective learning process which would cleanly follow the ideal-typical model. The model is a heuristic conceptual device derived from the logic of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. (Engeström, 2010, p. 7)*

Expansive learning is a fundamental hypothesis in the work of Engeström. It relates to questioning and developing practices where simple ideas are developed into complex activities which result in a change in practice for those involved. It involves, for example, teachers (individuals) reflecting on their practice, and questioning the reasoning behind it. This is shared, discussed and debated as a collective which eventually, once it goes through the steps above, initiates a change in practice for those involved (Engeström, 2008).

Critical appraisal of the literature and theory, in concert with a reflection upon empirical data, leads to the conclusion that one should never assume that a person who enters the teaching profession shares the same beliefs, values and more importantly life experiences. They do not enter the profession and then proceed along a ‘*teacher production line’* coming out nicely packaged at the end with all the same skills and attributes. So how then can we expect all teachers to recognise and apply agency in the same contexts, having the confidence to take the lead and work autonomously as well as communicate and collaborate well within communities of practice? Significantly, the CHAT Interventionist research method coheres with this research in terms of how it can be used when examining the findings as well as the day to day interaction with colleagues. It is a strong feature of thesis substantively and methodologically. The objective of interventionist research is to nurture *‘expansive transformations’* where the objects and motives of collaborative activities are established and individuals collectively welcome the new opportunities that evolve from them. CHAT research methods ‘*combine with the active participation of researchers with the monitoring of changes in participants’* (Taylor, 2008, p.101), which has been the key focus and intention of this research.

Having interrogated the theoretical developments in some depth, it will be instructive to now return to the policy context within which my research sits, to draw out the research implications.

**2.9 Government policy in further education and the possible impact on teacher development, sociocultural perspective and the community of practice (CoP) theory.**

This third and final section will examine how the constant changes in government agenda and policies for teachers in the further education sector could have a negative impact on professional learning and development. This is key to the discussion which follows.

Creating the correct climate for learning to take place is essential for all learners including teachers. The diversity of teachers as individuals and so how they learn should be respected. Shanks (2012, p.1) categorises this individuality using the term ‘*individual learning deposition’* which *‘comprises a teacher’s learning biography, their attitude towards and engagement with learning opportunities and how they react to environmental factors’.* This individual learning deposition is influenced by both past and current experiences and personal interpretation of them. In section 2.8.1 this individual disposition is discussed as an individual’s agency which is influenced by past experiences and personal interpretation of them. This in turn can affect how they collaborate with others. One of Engeström’s (2001) principles he uses to describe activity theory which builds upon the work of Wenger is ‘*multi-voicedness’* (ibid, p.136). Multi-voicedness incorporates individual thoughts, ideas and histories into the complexities of group activities such as communities of practice. This was not given any consideration by policymakers in the UK '*who have tended to concentrate on generic criteria and standards for education and training’* (Fuller and Unwin, 2004, p.). This on top of the performativity and accountability culture which has increased in the further education sector since incorporation (Simmons and Thompson, 2008; Orr, 2008, 2009a; Avis and Bathmaker, 2004; Avis *et al,* 2009; Ainley, 2003) does not lend itself to creating a conducive learning climate. When we think about creating the right climate for learning and encouraging the development of communities of practice it is a tall task given the external factors which have an impact on both team and individual morale. The constant changes in policy can initiate uncertainty and anxiety which adds to the teachers’ emotional labour (Hochschild, 1993) discussed in section two. Emotional labour involves teachers containing their true feelings to give the impression they are confident, displaying positivity in the hope that it will influence the minds of their learners and colleagues alike. It must be remembered that individuals will have their own perceptions and therefore view about the world around them and the experiences they are encountering. Ball (2008, p.3) highlights the detrimental impact policy has on the further education sector ‘*for FE lecturers, in particular, policy is currently experienced as a constant flood of new requirements, changes, exhortations, responsibilities and expectations,* *which bear down heavily*.’

It has been identified within section one and two of this chapter that the professionalism and professional learning and development of teachers serving in the further education sector is a well-debated one. It also uncovered that the lack of enthusiasm and engagement of some teachers was not only symptomatic of institutional culture, but there was also evidence of it being inextricably linked to whole sector issues (Orr, 2008; Scales *et al,* 2011). The cultural-historical activity theory deliberated in section two discusses how human conscientiousness and practical activity draw upon both psychological and physical mediation tools in creating cultures. Although the theory focuses on collective learning rather than the individual it is how the individual is informed by past mediation and then through present collective activities create new meaning. That is to say, individuals (teachers) who are collectively experiencing constant changes to their roles and expectations collaborate to find a solution to share the encumbrance. However, they will still have their own individual interpretation of what they are experiencing which may result in some becoming disengaged and demoralised.

Section 2.7 outlined the policy context of the further education sector and the possible influence government policies were having on teachers therein. There are many factors to consider when trying to engage teachers in professional learning and development within further education. This study involved attempting to interpret why some may be disengaged with the process. As discussed in both section one and two the apparent stress and demands on teachers in further education could be attributed to many factors. The important point to remember is that each individual teacher will interpret each experience they encounter differently which, in turn, affects how individuals interact and engage with the world around them. There is a continuous sea of change due to the constant flow of policies where the government are attempting to hold the further education sector responsible for the buoyancy of the national economy (Coffield, 1999; Rikowski, 2001: Avis, 2007; Orr, 2009a&b, Tummons 2014a, 2014b, 2015 & 2017). This constant change can be unsettling for teachers and could impact how they interact with their professional development as well as colleagues. Fellenz (2015) proposes to become a professional practitioner encompasses developing the appropriate skills and knowledge as well as '*familiarisation with the situated practices that are enacted by members of the profession’* (ibid, p.2). For teachers in further education, this familiarisation begins as soon as they enter the profession, many of which have not studied or held formal teaching qualifications. This correlates with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning as well as Wenger’s (1998) community of practice theory where learning involves engagement in social practice. Teaching is a profession and teachers are viewed as professionals and with that comes the expectation of them to perform and conduct themselves well. Developing the professional self and maintaining it for teachers in further education (as well as other sectors and professions) is challenging. Fellenz (2015,p.2) points out teachers ' *are strongly inﬂuenced by changes in the educational, social, legal, cultural, technological, institutional and societal context of professions.* The focus is on learning with and from one another in a social context; however, the importance of developing the individual within this cannot be underestimated as;

*The individual is both target and agent in such educational and developmental processes. And the issue of agency is not simple: we cannot create, produce or grow professionals—but neither can they create, produce or grow themselves. The agency behind such learning processes arises from multiple, interdependent sources in complex and changing networks of relations (ibid, p.2).*

Social forces are at play within communities of practice which can be associated with curriculum departments. Social forces and structures are formed from individuals carrying out daily activities which become common practice; these then set expectations of self and others (Garfinkel, 1984; Giddens, 1984). It is during times of change that individuals may, as Emirbayer and Mische (1998) suggest, become actors in situ. Individuals adjust their roles and relationships according to the different situations within which they find themselves enabling human agency to be modified to alter structural environments. This research studied colleagues individually; however, it also investigated how they interconnect with others within their curriculum departments. The relationships between teachers and the cultures that had been formed within curriculum departments were observed and discussed with the research participants as well as colleagues during the training needs analysis sessions. The relationships and cultures are discussed further in the findings and analysis chapter.

Research corroborates that the constant changes in policies since incorporation has contributed to what Ball (2008) and Orr (2008) consider to be a culture where the further education sector has become one of accountability, performativity and audit control. This, Hodkinson (2005) argues, creates *‘dysfunctional tendencies’* which could see teachers focusing on and prioritising performance indicators rather than their professional learning and development to improve learning and teaching. Hodkinson (2005, p.1) suggests that; ‘*The most effective way to improve learning in FE is to change learning cultures, by increasing positive synergies and reducing dysfunctional tensions.’* However, this is easier said than done; cultures cannot be changed overnight. Cultures are built upon beliefs, values, traditions and skills of those involved which are complex by nature. Cultural-historical activity theory which is discussed further in section 2.8.4 suggests that both ‘*physical and psychological mediation tools are used to build cultures*' (Ellis *et al,* 2010, p.3). Cultures must be studied to gain a greater understanding of the individual and group interactions and development before attempting to analyse and implement any change.

Another salient factor to take into consideration is governments’ attempts over the past 20 or so years to, as they state, *‘professionalise’* the further education sector. They seem intent on reframing professionalism within the currency of teaching standards. There have been three sets of teaching standards written by three different government bodies. The first two were;

*…superseded because they were deemed not to be fit for purpose: they were cumbersome, they were prone to multiple interpretations, they by no means satisfactorily represented the complex bodies of knowledge and practice that characterise the work of teachers in the sector and they failed to establish a serious ethos of professionalism* (Tummons, 2017, p.355*).*

The standards were also met with disapproval from Ofsted (2003) in a report which was the result of a survey they had carried out with regards to initial teacher training in the further education sector. They highlighted that the quality of initial teacher training across the further education sector was inconsistent and that the standards had no impact on improving this (Lucas, 2004). This survey also highlighted that ninety percent of teachers in the further education sector were initially employed without teaching qualifications and that they completed their training on a part-time, in-service basis. Lucas *et al.* (2012) confirm that this, as well as providing initial teacher education is an ongoing issue across the sector.

Tummons (2014a, 2014b & 2016) objects, as he suggests each individual may have their own interpretation of the teaching standards. This resonates with the tenet discussed in section 2.8.1 regarding individuals’ own interpretation of life experiences informing their worldview. In section 2.8.3 Lave and Wengers (1991) situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation, focuses on collaborative learning. Nonetheless, the intricacies of the individual within the social context of learning cannot be ignored. Each individual will bring their own views and thoughts which are influenced by past experiences which inform their interpretation of the situation at hand such as adhering to teaching standards. Section 2.8.4 explores the cultural-historical activity theory and how the focus is on collective rather than individual learning. However, on the other hand, there is an emphasis on how individuals within these collaborations have different experiences and perceptions. The cultural activity theory acknowledges the complexities of working in collaboration may hold and yet, Lave and Wenger (1998), as well as Engeström (1999), contend that working collaboratively to overcome conflicts and issues reinforces the learning process. The professional standards set by three different governing bodies are left open to personal interpretation. As discussed in section 2.8.1, Archer (2007) is keen to raise the concern of reflexivity and how misinterpretation can lead to misunderstanding and confusion which she suggests does affect an individual's agency. Teachers across the further education sector would be interpreting these professional standards differently depending on their past experiences developing their own meaning. Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) theory suggests that individuals learn with and from one another via cultural appropriation and mediation which may be how attitudes and cultures towards continuous professional learning and development and teaching standards have been formed.

One of the key themes which emerged during section 2.7.2 is how policymakers discuss the need to upskill the workforce. The Lingfield (2012) report; however, took a U-turn with regard to the professionalism of the workforce questioning whether teachers in further education required qualifications and continuous professional development. The cuts government are making to further education provision is also making teachers feel vulnerable with constant redundancies and restructures seriously affecting the continuity of employment. These changes are adding to, what Hochschild (1993, p.7) suggests, the teachers’ ‘*emotional labour’*. When giving consideration to teachers in this stressful state working in collaboration in communities of practice they will as Fellenz (2015, p.9) believes called upon their ‘*professional self’* to cope with all of the additional pressures to be able to perform professionally. This adds to the complexities of working in communities of practice as some teachers more than others may feel anxious. This will have an impact on how they, as individuals, are perceiving the constant change they encounter. These concerns are discussed further in sections 2.7 and 2.8. With 60% of colleges using zero-hour contracts to deliver teaching, there are serious concerns for morale and the quality of practice (UCU, 2017). Bailey and Urwin (2014) support this as they too express their concerns with regards to the policymakers continuously disregarding the sector by the way of withdrawing financial sponsorship through the constant amendments to funding procedures and regulatory systems.

According to Jephcote and Salisbury (2009, p. 967)

*There are overlapping areas of reform which individually and collectively appear to have worked to vary the conditions and stability of FE teachers’ lives, work and careers. Broadly, these include (i) the incorporation of colleges in 1993, and (ii) associated external regulation in the form of audit and inspection, (iii) the ongoing association of FE colleges with the failings of the British economy and, (iv) more recently the re-branding of FE as the ‘learning and skills sector and, (v) the introduction of national professional standards.*

When exploring the communities of practice and cultural-historical activity theories (which is discussed further in section two), the ethos is that people learn with and from one another. Recognition is given to the intricacies and complexities of learning in collaboration while at the same time acknowledgement that learning can still take place in these situations (Engeström, 1987, 1999: Daniels, 2008). According to research already carried out in education, teachers have identified that one of the most effective forms of continuous learning and development to improve practice is working in collaboration with colleagues (Darling-Hammond *et al,* 2017; Kraft & Papay, 2014; Bathmaker & Avis, 2005, Higgins *et al*, 2015). Wenger (1998) when discussing social theory linked to communities of practice suggests, that there is not a start and end process to learning so we should not be measuring it through courses attended and qualifications gained. Whilst historically government policy makes continuous reference to qualified teachers and gaining qualifications.

Learning should be viewed as a continuous journey and ‘*one that places learning in the context of our lived experience of participation with the world*’ (*Wenger, 1998,* p.3). This is where individual perceptions of the constant changes could have an impact on how teachers engage in communities of practice and where they place themselves within the social setting. Archer (2003, 2007) discusses how reflexivity plays a role which can be detrimental to an individual's engagement with others. Some may thrive with the continuous change becoming '*active agents’* taking charge of the situation influencing what happens. A point to consider here, which is discussed further in section two, an individual may exert their agency and choose not to engage, pushing back against the performativity culture and social forces. While others feel vulnerable and disillusioned becoming ‘*passive agents’* (*ibid*, p.6) allowing the environment and the behaviour of others shape what happens to them. Participants within a community of practice create their identity within it. Archer (2003) proposes that reflexivity, that is, the inner conversations we have can have a detrimental impact due to how we perceived and interpret experiences. Teachers in further education are constantly trying to decipher the expectations of government with each new policy introduced. It is how the teacher as an individual interprets these ongoing changes and where they envisage themselves moving forward that influences how they respond to each situation.

The constant threat of restructuring and redundancy due to the changes in policy and cuts in further education funding does not have a positive impact, the fear of losing financial security and stability is daunting. As a result, teachers may lose the sense of being valued and belonging which is an important element to learning in a social context, within a community of practice which is considered further in section two. Wenger (1998, p.46) suggests that,

*Colleagues collectively orchestrate their working lives and their interpersonal relations in order to cope with the job* … They are quite aware of their interdependence in making the job possible and the atmosphere pleasant.

Another factor to consider (which was previously discussed in chapter one as well as in section one of this chapter) is that up to 60% of college rely on zero-hour contract staff for teaching. This often omits them from continuous learning and development opportunities including working in collaboration with colleagues who have permanent or fixed-term contracts. Engeström (1999, p.9) believes that it such internal tensions which may drive an individual's 'force *for change and development’* creating as Archer (2003) suggests ‘*active agents’*. The Teaching and Learning Research Programme (2005) conducted a research project titled Transforming Learning Cultures which investigated further education in England and stated that it was *‘shaped by complex cultural relationships. Improving learning depends upon recognising this complexity.*’(Hodkinson, 2005, p.1). The research concluded that ‘*current policy and managerial approaches are damaging learning in FE*’ (ibid, p.1)

As we saw in section one the government has a history of emphasising the need to retrain, upskill and develop the further education teaching workforce. Basing how effective a teacher is on whether they hold a teaching qualification and thinking that a teaching qualification alone would ensure high standards of teaching across the sector is not a wise judgement to make. The constant changes and introduction of mandatory thirty hours of continuous learning and development added to the culture of performativity and accountability. Research carried out by Orr (2009) which focused on the gap between policy and practice in the further education sector identified that the government target of thirty hours was being achieved in colleges; however, teachers involved in the research could identify mechanisms which had been put in place to record continuous learning and development without there being additional engagement with it. Targets were met and evidence collated to meet the government requirements; however, practice had not been developed.

*In a symbiotic response to the government’s requirement to measure impact through numerical targets, college managers have pragmatically constructed systems to report achievement of the numerical targets attached to CPD in patterns of practice. This symbiotic response derives from the unequal and undemocratic relationship between colleges and the government*. (ibid, p. 19).

Sociocultural perspectives propose that we learn with and from one another by engaging in shared practices. This conflicts with the policies and agendas which point towards teachers (often studying individually) gaining teaching and subject specialist qualifications. This as well as the annual mandatory 30 hours of continuous individual learning and development they consider as evidence of learning taking place to improve practice rather than acknowledging the importance of collaboration and continues learning. Higgins *et al* (2015) in their international review on ‘*developing great teaching’* highlighted the importance of continuous learning. They emphasise the importance of keeping the ‘*rhythm’* of learning throughout the academic year*. ‘The review tells us it is important that professional development programmes create a “rhythm” of follow-up, consolidation and support activities. This process reinforces key messages sufficiently to have an impact on practice (ibid, 2015, p. 13).’*  Husband (2018, p. 20) supports this view affirming that ‘*practice embedded work-based learning and ongoing career-long professional learning are all integral part of one continuous process'* which has a positive impact on practice. Teachers collaborating to develop their practice correlates with communities of practice, activity and expansive learning theories which problem solve and share practice to continuously improve both as a team as well as an individual. This collaboration, learning at work is not without conflict and dispute as individuals form their identity and position themselves; however, it is suggested that this too adds to personal development and learning (Engeström, 1999, Wenger, 1998).

Lave and Wenger’s (1991) situated learning, Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice as well as Engeström’s (1987,2010) expansive learning theory is associated with learning in the workplace which many government policies refer to in their bid to professionalise the workforce. Situated learning ethos is that individuals learn with and from one another in a social situation not necessarily through mandatory continuous learning and development events and teaching qualifications. These produce measurable outcomes but not linked to continuous learning as we know it which, is acknowledged in the research carried out across the further education sector discussed in section one. The McNair Report (1944) following World War 2 focused on initial teacher training; however, it was the Russell Report in 1966 that made it compulsory. It is important to state here that teachers in this era thought that having industrial experience and expertise was enough to equip teachers well with the tools for required for teaching others.

It was not until the James Report in 1972 that teacher education was discussed as continuous learning covering three stages; phase one would be dedicated to general education over two years; phase two to gaining a teaching qualification; phase three involved a further two years of in-house training. This would have been a good model to follow as the focus was on more than just gaining a teaching qualification. It paid attention to ongoing development which would include working collaboratively with colleagues via the two years of in-house development which would be closely associated with communities of practice and expansive learning which as discussed in-depth in section two of this chapter. This would, as Higgins *et al* (2015) recommend keeping the rhythm of learning going which research confirms assists with developing great teaching. Disappointingly this proposal was shelved by the government before it got the change to be implemented. When the FENTO (1999) teaching standards were introduced they were seemingly based on a set of values which included reflective practice and scholarship as well as collegiality and collaboration. The FENTO standards were mapped into the Certificate in Education (CertEd) and so it was mainly when teachers were studying towards their teaching qualification that they had the opportunity to engage and learn more about them. The FENTO (1999) standards were supposed to give more autonomy to teachers individualising their learning and development. Bathmaker (2000) believes that this could create an issue as if teachers were following their own pathways to improve practice according to their needs *‘one implication of a high degree of flexibility is that learning can become atomised, compartmentalised, and both isolated and isolating*.’(ibid, p.19). This is the complete opposite ethos to developing collaborative practice working in communities of practice where teachers learn with and from one another. Changing the approach to the continuous learning and development process as part of the research was to encourage teachers to work collaboratively to develop their practice over a sustained period of time so that it was continuous. The FENTO standards read more like a rigid list of competencies that teachers were, as individuals to possess or work towards. The same could be said of the LLUK (2007) and ETF (2014) professional standards for teachers across the sector.

**Conclusion**

The literature review has been divided into three sections as they were equally important to share with the reader individually. Firstly, to set the scene for those not familiar with teachers in further education and the government’s policies with regards to training and professionalism. It was imperative to discuss sociocultural theories which included communities of practice as this was this was what I was hoping to develop with teachers across the college. Communities of practice were the initial research; however, during the literature review, cultural-historical activity theory and expansive learning were included as these theories were all influenced by Vygotsky's (1978) insight of mediation, which he identifies as how individuals interact that are valued in the practices displayed. Vygotsky proposes that learning is a process of internalisation and externalisation in which individuals make sense of the physical and social world.

As a result of the findings during the literature review the initial research question was extended adding a further two questions to be investigated:

* Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?

Further questions to be studied are:

* What do teachers and research identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice?
* Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?

**Chapter 3 Methodology**

**3.1 Introduction:**

With the literature review complete a greater understanding was gained on how cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) could be utilised as the framework for the action research. Engeström’s (1987) second generation activity triangle was used to plan the methodology which is discussed further and illustrated in sub section 3.3. The action research conducted was in the workplace and involved colleagues learning at work to develop their practice. There was a focus on both the action of the individual as well as their engagement in collaborative learning. Using the CHAT framework seemed appropriate to use to investigate collaboration to develop practice. CHAT has developed through three generations of research (Daniels, 2004; Engeström, 1987, 2001) first, second and third as discussed in the literature review. Hasan & Kazlauskas (2014, p.9) describe activity theory which is, at times referred to as CHAT as being all about *‘who is doing what, why and how’.* However, they acknowledge that when studying human activity things are seldom that straight forward. Hasan & Kazlauskas (2014) believe that utilising activity theory as a framework for research *‘provides a lens with which to tease out and to better understand human activity’* (ibid, p.9) which was the purpose of the research.

This action research carried out was real world research (Robson, 2011), encompassing all of the complexities that are related to human activity and collaborative working as well as learning. CHAT provides a framework for analysing human activity whilst at work (Julkunen, 2011). The activity theory framework or descriptive tool (Nardi,1996) provides ‘*a unified account of Vygotsky’s proposals on the nature and development of human behaviour*’ (Lantolf, 2006, p. 8). The action research involved a multi-dimensional approach utilising various tools to analyse professional practice and professional self. Employing CHAT as the framework for the action research offered a language and framework to assist with understanding whether or not introducing training needs analysis sessions would increase engagement with professional learning, development and collaboration. This investigation involved utilising a variety of tools; 1-1 interviews, online questionnaires, professional dialogue, training needs analysis sessions, student satisfaction surveys, learning, teaching and assessment observations, attendance, retention and achievement data. The action research was initiated due to the lack of teachers engaging with professional development as well as learning collaboratively. The research focused on the changing the professional development process in order to deepen my understanding of the enablers of, as well as, barriers to change.

The action research was primarily qualitative, as it sought to explore how individuals (teachers) ‘*see and experience the world’* (Given, 2008, p.26). Its process brings about change which was one of the intended outcomes of the action research at hand. This approach was the best fit for the research as it assisted with addressing the ‘why’ questions within the study. The focus was to ‘*capture individuals’ thoughts, feelings or interpretations of meaning and process’* (*ibid*. 2008, p.26). Initially, the research aimed to evaluate effectiveness, measuring the impact of changing the approach to professional learning and development. During the literature review on sociocultural theories, it became apparent that it was important to investigate and attempt to explain why introducing the training needs analysis, encouraging collaboration had been effective in engaging some but not all teachers. New knowledge was gained on the complexities of collaborative and adult learning as well as how past experiences could influence whether or not individuals chose to be involved and in what capacity. The review also considered how different individuals would view themselves within any given situation and experience which could also have an impact on their involvement. This linked to both recognising the teachers as individuals and how past experiences could influence whether they chose to engage or not. It also highlighted that teachers involved in the training needs analysis sessions would all have their own individual thoughts and feelings related to the experience which could influence whether or not they chose to engage as well as how they chose to. Adding the ‘*why do some but not all’* element would enable both the reader and I to gain a greater insight of the complexities of adult learning and the factors which influence it. Bradley (2001, p.567) reminds us; *‘There are grand ideas, good ideas and doable ideas…In the case of executing a research project, being able to recognise these differences is essential’.*  Though the idea was not grand, this change nonetheless expanded the study to an achievable degree and the ‘*Why’* in the research aimed to enrich and give more explanatory depth to the analysis.

The research intended to increase teachers’ engagement with professional learning and development including working in collaboration. In order to gain an understanding of why some but not all teachers engaged it was important to explore how individuals saw and experienced the world around them. It was during the training needs analysis sessions as well as the 1-1 interviews that this was identified. Teaching staff, as adults have developed their own interpretations due to the experiences they have encountered throughout their lifetime, these experiences may influence how they see and place themselves within society as well as in the workplace. Sargeant (2012, p.1) affirms that ‘*qualitative research focuses on understanding the intervention or phenomenon and exploring questions like ‘‘why was this effective or not?’’ and ‘‘how is this helpful for learning?’’* From a personal stance, the '*Why*’ in the research is crucial as it draws attention to individuals and how they view and make sense of the changes introduced. It investigates the complexities of human learning and how personal interpretation can have an impact on teacher agency.

Due to the nature of the research, it is important to acknowledge that individuals involved in the research will have their own ‘*ideas about their world and attach meaning to what is going on around them… their behaviour depends crucially on these ideas and meanings’* (Robson, 2011, p.17). It has been suggested that we only ever truly know our own thoughts and feelings from experiences (first-person perspective) and can only assume in the third person perspective, how others are interpreting the same experience (Arici and Toy, 2015). This goes a little way towards attempting to acknowledge that individuals faced with the same experiences and interactions will hold their own thoughts, views and beliefs. All of which will influence how they perceive the situation. This may be one of the reasons why some teachers engaged more than others when the training needs analysis meetings were introduced. It also leads to the consideration of those who were proactive, demonstrating agency prior to the changes being introduced. It also identifies those defying any social forces (for example: restructures, redundancies, mismanagement and so on) which may have been detrimental to their development. The CHAT framework was employed as the theoretical framework as it centres on three core ideas:

*1) humans act collectively, learn by doing, and communicate in and via their actions; 2) humans make, employ, and adapt tools of all kinds to learn and communicate; and 3) community is central to the process of making and interpreting meaning—and thus to all forms of learning, communicating, and acting* (Vygotsky, 1978).

The action research was carried out in the hope of going beyond analysing teaching practice, working in partnership with participants to transform practice. By working together as professionals throughout the research a change in practice was expected. However, while researching social situations you cannot assume to have the control to influence positive outcomes. The positive outcome in this case would be a teachers learning collaboratively which has an impact on their practice. The complexities involved in human experience and the social relationships developed within an organisation or department (as with this research) should not be underestimated. The research could not determine the intended outcome of engaging all teaching staff with professional development and collaborative learning. The intervention, conversely, could be utilised to gain more knowledge of teachers and their engagement. This was another reason to implement the CHAT framework as Foot (2014, p.3) suggests;

*There is significance in each word in the label cultural-historical activity theory. Cultural points to the premise that humans are enculturated, and everything people do is shaped by and draws upon their cultural values and resources. The term historical is used together with cultural to indicate that since cultures are grounded in histories, and evolve over time, therefore analyses of what people do at any point in time must be viewed in light of the historical trajectories in which their actions take place. The term activity refers to what people do together, and is modified by both cultural and historical to convey its situatedness. Theory is used in this label to denote a conceptual framework for understanding and explaining human activity.*

**3.2 Research Questions**

Clarifying the intention of the research was a good exercise to assist with unravelling the research questions as well as remembering as Robson (2011, p.63) acknowledges the purpose of the research was *‘to explore, to describe and to explain’* as well as deepen personal knowledge and understanding*.* This resonated with the research as changing the approach to professional learning and development was explored and the findings described and shared. The research questions were important as they provided focus to guide the research, data analysis, writing of findings and to avoid straying from the course of investigation (Bryman, 2008). It was important to establish clear questions which were understandable and researchable.

The research questions:

* Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?
* What do teachers identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice?
* Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?

It was important to pay particular attention to the sources of evidence which could be collected with regard to the questions. This ensured evidence could be collected in various ways so that one piece of evidence could support another allowing for triangulation. Considering things from different angles using different methods of collecting and corroborating evidence can only strengthen the findings as opposed to only using one (Noble and Heale, 2019). Utilising the CHAT framework assisted with this as the various mediating artefacts involved various approaches to collecting evidence. As discussed both earlier and later in this chapter, these included online questionnaires, 1-1 interviews, teacher, manager participants, external data reports (see table 1).

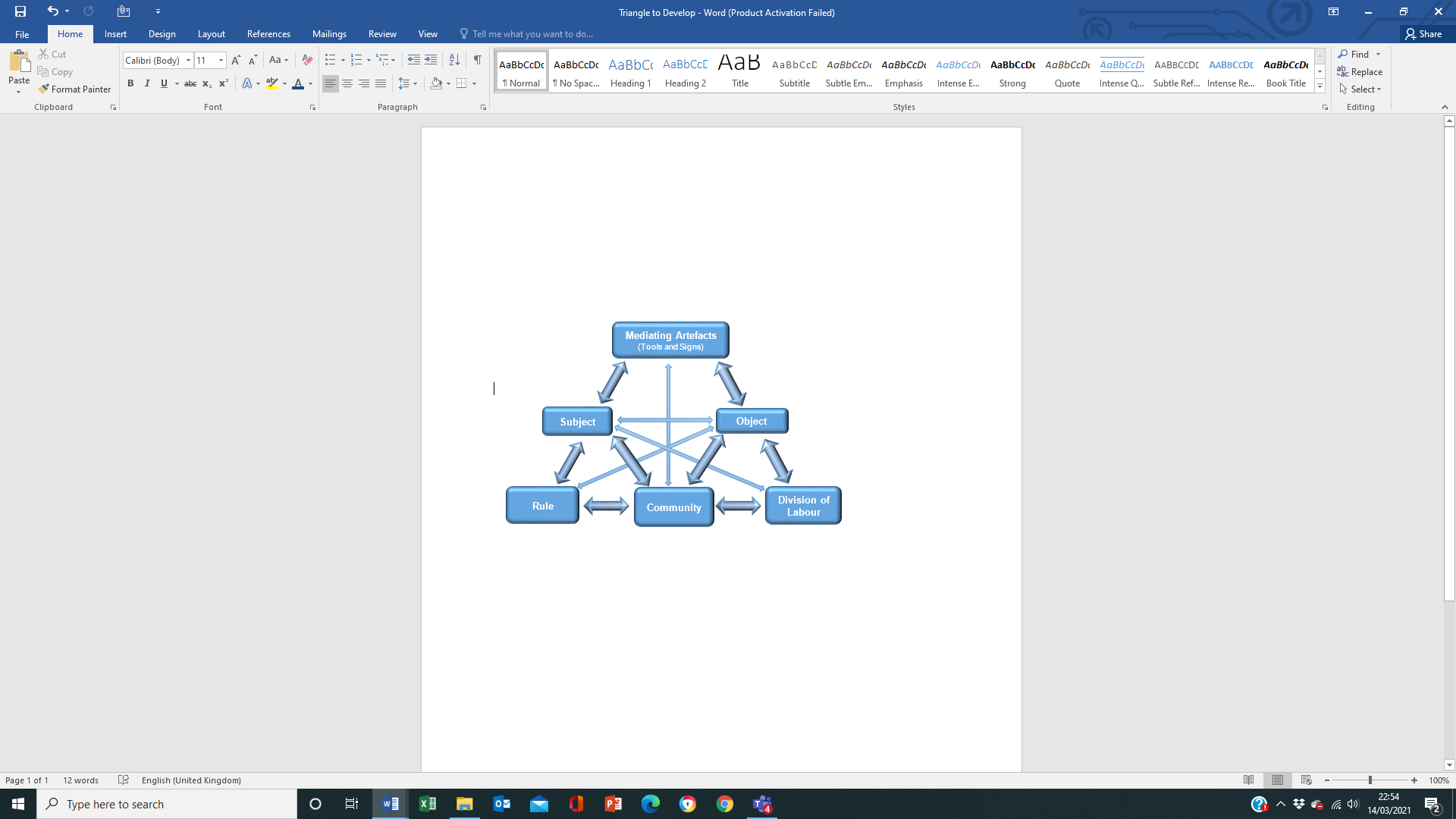
|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Evidence | | |
| Table 1: Evidence Generated for Triangulation | | |
| Question | **Ways of answering with evidence** | **Evidence Generated for Triangulation** |
| 1)  Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration. | * 1. **Semi-Structured** **Interviews** with   - Teachers  - Managers  **Professional Dialogue Notebook** | **Semi-structured** interviews were utilised to ensure key questions were asked to collect the data required to answer the questions. This structure also allowed flexibility allowing the freedom to follow up on specific points which may influence the analysis.   * **Teachers:** These interviews allow the participant to discuss the impact (if any) of changing the continuous professional learning and development process. It allows for personal thoughts, opinions and any restricting barriers to be identified and discussed. * **Managers:** These interviews were conducted to see if there had been any notable changes to teachers and departmental teams since the changes to the continuous professional learning and development process. These were used as corroborative evidence to support triangulation as they are looking and answering from a different perspective. Managers may notice changes teachers and teams themselves have not recognised.   **Professional Dialogue Notebook:** This booklet was kept inside of my college diary for ease of access. It was utilised to record conversations held with managers and teachers outside of the sample group. This was during discussions to capture the thoughts and opinions from the target population outside of the sample group. These written records were used as corroborative evidence. |
| 2)  What do teachers and research identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice? | **Literature Review on published research**.   * 1. **Semi Structured** **Interviews** with   - Teachers  - Managers  **Self-Completed Online Questionnaires**  **QDP Learner Satisfaction Surveys**  **Learning & Teaching Observations**  **ProAchieve Retention and Achievement Reports**  **Professional Dialogue Booklet** | **Literature Review:** This is vital as it ensures that the researcher is aware of what is already known and can hopefully add to the field of research. A range of documents were located and analysed including articles, research reports, reviews and books. The evidence from the literature review will be used corroborative evidence linking the organisation findings to the sector.  **Semi-Structured Interviews:** interviews were utilised to ensure key questions were asked to collect the data required to answer the questions. This structure also allowed flexibility allowing the freedom to follow up on specific points which may influence the analysis.  **Online Questionnaires:** Teachers identify what continuous professional learning and development activities they take part in and which ones have the most impact on their personal development and practice. Corroborative evidence to compare/support/oppose teacher/manager interviews, learners’ views, grade profile and literature.  **QDP Learner Satisfaction Surveys:** The data collection gives the learners view on whether teaching practice has changed/improved since the changes made to the continuous professional learning and development process. However, caution will be taken to ensure these are not used to elaborate on findings as there are many variables to take into consideration for improvement.  **Learning and Teaching Observations:** Grade profiles for individuals and departments can be used as corroborative evidence to support what teachers and managers are identifying during the interviews and online questionnaires. If there is an increase in the engagement of the activities identified as having the most impact on practice the observation grading should see improvements to support this.  **ProAchieve Retention and Achievement Reports:** The retention (learners who continue to study throughout the academic year) and learner achievement (learners who successfully gain the qualification) rates should improve, in theory, if the professional learning activities teachers engage in have a positive impact on their practice.    **Managers and Teachers:** This booklet was kept inside of my college diary for ease of access. It was utilised to record conversations held with managers and teachers outside of the sample group. This was during discussions to capture the thoughts and opinions from the target population outside of the sample group. These written records were used as corroborative evidence. |
| 3)  Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice? | **Literature review.**   * 1. **Semi Structured** **Interviews** with   - Teachers  - Managers  **Self-Completed Online Questionnaires.** | **Literature Review:** This is vital as it ensures that the researcher is aware and understands the theory and can link it to the research at hand. A range of documents were located and analysed including articles, research reports, reviews and books. The evidence from the literature review will be used corroborative evidence linking the findings to the theory.  **Semi-Structured Interviews:**  interviews were utilised to ensure key questions were asked to collect the data required to answer the questions. This structure also allowed flexibility allowing the freedom to follow up on specific points which may influence the analysis.  **Online Questionnaires:** Teachers identify what continuous professional learning and development activities they take part in and which ones have the most impact on their personal development and practice. Corroborative evidence to compare/support/oppose teacher / manager interviews, literature. |

**3.3 Applying the CHAT Framework**

The second generation activity theory clarifies he fundamental difference between the individual action and a collective activity (Engeström, 2001, p.134). Figure 1 offers a visual aid to illustrate how the CHAT framework has been utilised to create the framework for the research. The mediating artefacts (tools and signs) represent the actions and approaches employed to explore the individuals’ perceptions around the introduction of the training needs analysis sessions as well as learning collaboratively with colleagues. The mediating artefacts included the questionnaire (see appendix 7a- d) Interview questions (see appendix 9a-b), TNA activity template (see appendix 1a) and professional dialogue notebook (see appendix 11). The subject is the teacher as an individual, whilst the community identifies the sample group as a whole. The rules cover the activities the research participants (sample group) agreed to engage in as well as the whole teaching population while attending the training needs analysis sessions. The activities included completing online questionnaires, 1-1 interviews as well as attending the training session analysis sessions with colleagues from their curriculum department. The divisions of labour give recognition to the teacher as an individual and as a collaborator with regards to their professional learning and development. The object leads to the research questions under investigation.

**Figure 1: Applying the Theoretical Framework: Second Generation Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987) to the Action Research**

* Language
* Online Questionnaires
* 1-1 interviews
* Professional Dialogue (note book)
* LTA Observations
* Student Satisfaction Survey
* Attendance, Retention and Achievement Data.
* TNA Activity Template



Collection of data to investigate the following:

* Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?
* What do teachers and research identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice?
* Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?

Teachers

Sense Meaning

* Engagement in TNA Sessions
* Completion of online questionnaires
* Attending 1-1 Interviews
* Sample Group
* 23 teachers, 5 managers
* Whole teaching population
* Teacher as Individual
* Teacher as collaborator

**Outcome/ Findings**

The research and the introduction of the training needs analysis sessions are being viewed as one activity as they were intertwined. The training needs analysis sessions had been introduced across all curriculum areas and teachers, the research was based on introducing this new approach and the research participants consisted of teachers and managers across those curriculum areas. The action research involved myself as researcher investigating the practice and behaviours of the teachers of whom I also worked alongside as a colleague in my professional role on a daily basis. To consolidate this point, to separate the activity from the research would serve no purpose as they involved and informed one another. Elements of the activity theory triangle have been added to each sub-section to draw attention to how and where it has been applied.

Deciding on the approach to this study was not just concerned with which method to utilise, it involved giving a lot of consideration to ontology and epistemology. This was due to the fact that the research involved the study of people who, as Thomas (2013, p.11) describes, do *‘strange, unpredictable things, gather in peculiar ways, act irrationally, learn and change.’*  The concern is that people (including oneself) perceive things differently from one another and act in various ways. Ontology is the study of being, it involves giving consideration to personal perspectives on the *‘what is’ with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality as such’* (Crotty, 2015, p. 10).

This research involved the study of people both on their own and together with colleagues. Studying people can be problematic due to the diverse ways in which people act and interact with others, how they, at times, can act irrationally and change their behaviour. This can make social science research complex and difficult as when observing people, their interactions with other people and experiences, it is wise for researchers to consider how they are perceiving these things and how they should be looking at them (Thomas, 2013, p.119). During the research, I constantly considered what I was looking at as well as for during the study. It became apparent that it was not enough to study whether or not teachers were engaging more with professional learning and development; it was hoped that this study would assist in developing a greater understanding of teacher agency and the factors which may impact on the individuals’ ability to use agency. As suggested earlier the focus should be not only what we are looking at (teachers engaging in continuous learning and development as well as forming communities of practice). As a researcher I should also know what I was looking for (why are some teachers engaging when others are not?). It is important to take into account that teachers arrive at the starting point of their training and career from a variety of diverse backgrounds which may have already influenced and shaped them as both adults and learners. Thomas (2013, p.109) suggests ‘people *have feelings and understandings and these affect the ways that they perceive and interpret the world*’. This may be an attribute of the complexities of studying human behaviour, interactions and learning.

Changing the nature and focus of the research question can affect not only what the researcher is looking at in the mind-independent world but also how they find out about it. In other words, as an action researcher, it was vital for me to consider the intricacies and debates regarding epistemology, ontology and methodology to ensure that personal approaches are appropriate, can be analysed and justified to ensure the findings are seen as valid and reliable. These considerations portray notions, perceptions, opinions and the nature of reality and truth (knowledge of that reality), they can have some influence on the manner in which research is carried out, from the design through to the conclusion. McKenzie *et al (*1997, p.9) accentuates the requirement for researchers to contemplate two questions: *‘What is the relation between what we see and understand [our claims to know and our theories of knowledge or epistemology] and that which is reality [our sense of being or ontology?]. In other words, ‘how do we go about creating knowledge about the world in which we live?*’

*Enter into the world. Observe and wonder; experience and reflect. To understand a world, you must become part of that world while at the same time remaining separate, a part of and apart from. Go then, and return to tell me what you see and hear, what you learn, and what you come to understand.* (Patton, 1980:121).

The framework for thinking about the world under study during this research was interpretivism as the focus has been on colleagues and the way they interrelate, their thoughts and how they form their own ideas about the world and how their worlds are constructed. Central to the research was gaining an understanding. Investigating what understanding colleagues had of their professional learning and development and how they perceived it in their world. To gain an understanding of this may lead to a deeper understanding of why some but not all teachers are confident to take the lead on the professional learning and development, work in communities of practice and apply agency.

In an attempt to reduce bias due to personal experiences, cultural background and views on the world several observations and measures were utilised during the research. This was to ensure triangulation was exercised to gain a better understanding of what was happening in reality, which is discussed further in sub section 3.9.3. It is important to acknowledge that during the research I do not deny the fact that there may have been unconscientious bias. However, there has been great attention paid to understanding the participants’ perceptions and thoughts of the world around them.

Great consideration has been given to epistemology to ensure the most appropriate approach is taken to the research. Whilst ontology is the nature of things under study it is vital to give acknowledgement and have clarity on how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998). Focusing on epistemology directs the researcher to concentrate on how knowledge can be obtained and so links it to the ‘*methods, theories, concepts, rules and procedures applied within a discipline…’* (Resca, 2009, p.9). I have aimed at ensuring a clear picture is given to anyone reading the –thesis, making it transparent how the research has been approached and most importantly *‘why*’ which Remenyi *et al* (1998) considers to be central to any educational research. The approach taken to the research is qualitative (social constructivist, interpretivist).

Qualitative research allows the views and feelings of the participants to be shared which in turn opens up the story, a crucial element to this research. Applying quantitative approaches with rigour can strengthen the findings. There are complexities with studying the social world as a social scientist, attributed to the fact that individuals perceive each situation and experience differently, constructing their own knowledge and understanding. The research at hand studied people individually as well as how they interrelate to others to form their ideas of the world around them. Action research was the approach taken for this research, utilising Lewin’s research cycles (1946), this is discussed in more detail in sub section 3.7. Lewin’s early research in the mid-1940s was a response to problems he identified in social action (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). ‘*He believed that social problems should serve as the impetus for public inquiry within democratic communities…* *action research necessitates group decision and commitment to improvement’* (Dickens and Watkins, 1999, p.128). The foundation of Lewin’s research cycle is (I feel) influenced by symbolic interactionism as the focus is on the symbolic meaning individuals develop which inform the research findings.

This associates with one of the main sociology theory frameworks, symbolic interactionism. This theory focuses and depends on the symbolic meaning that individuals develop and build upon during the process of social interaction. Crossman (2018) suggests that:

*Symbolic interaction theory analyses society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events, and behaviours. Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave based on what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. Thus, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation. People interpret one another’s behaviour, and it is these interpretations that form the social bond. These interpretations are called the “definition of the situation.”*

Symbolic interactionism according to Carter and Fuller (2015, p.1) was developed ‘*to understand the operation of society from the 'bottom-up,' shifting the focus to micro-level processes that emerge during face-to-face encounters in order to explain the operation of society*’ This can be likened to the intended outcomes for the research where introducing training needs analysis sessions to find out what teachers consider to be their development needs is used to inform the professional learning and development sessions. Thus moving away from the ‘top down’ management driven approach.

While symbolic interactionism origins lead back to the 19th century and one of the fathers of sociology theory, Max Weber. It was the American philosopher George Herbert Mead who introduced and developed this perspective further. Weber’s key focus was on the elements of class, status and power in the structure of society, he believed class was economically determined. Weber maintained that class and status ascertained an individual’s power and influence within society. He argued that individuals act according to their interpretation of the meaning of their world. Mead expanded these thoughts asserting that people themselves were social products; but, themselves were constructive and resourceful. Mead proposed that the true test of any theory was that it was ‘*useful in solving complex social problems*’ (Griffin, 2009, p. 59). Blumer (1986) referred to symbolic interactionism as the study of human beings and their behaviours. Herman and Reynolds (2003) are of the opinion that people are active in shaping their world and not just individuals who are acted upon by society. This connected with the study at hand as some teaching staff take the lead on their professional learning and development regardless of the culture or barriers they may face. However, others do not and that may well be the result of how they are interpreting the world around them and where they may have positioned themselves within the group of colleagues they are working with.

According to Blumer (1986, p. 2), symbolic interaction is based on three rudimentary premises:

1. *Humans act toward things based on the meanings the things have for them.*
2. *The meaning of such things is derived from or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.*
3. *These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.*

The first premise involves how people behave towards everything they experience in their world such as physical objects, actions and concepts. The behaviours are shaped by the meanings individuals have given these elements. The second premise describes that the meanings formed are a consequence of social interaction with others. During this social interaction, individuals interpret one another's actions to ascertain the meaning. The third premise explains how individuals take their own meanings of experiences/ things through an interpretive thought process which involves inner conversations to decide what to do next. The focus of symbolic interactionism is on the language and symbols which assist with giving experiences encountered in life meaning. It is the experiences and how they are perceived which lead to how individuals interact with the world. Individuals spend time considering their next step or approach depending on how they believe others perceive them.

There are criticisms with research carried out from this perspective because it is difficult to remain objective due to the close proximity the researcher has with the participants. Some criticise the narrow focus of symbolic interaction stating that focusing on small group interactions does not address the influence wider society has on individual behaviour. However, advocates consider the close proximity as one of its main strengths. It has been suggested that symbolic interactionism should be viewed more as a theoretical framework than formal, scientific theory. According to Roe *et al* (2010, p.36) during their research on the stigma of mental health and recovery;

*Symbolic interaction is a theoretically robust framework with which to study social interaction between individuals…Conventional approaches, in particular the medical model, fail to consider differing cultural and social experiences…*

Due to the nature of the study, I was immersed in the research working closely with colleagues across the organisation attempting to gain a greater understanding of the behaviours exhibited. This included, as Thomas (2013, p .109) recommends;

*Talking to people in-depth, attending to every nuance of their behaviour, every clue to the meanings that they are investing in something. So we attend to their blinks, winks, hums and hahs, their nods and nose blowings, as well as listening to the actual words that are coming out of their mouths.*

Berliner (2002) contends the ‘*hard sciences’* could be redefined as the easy-to-do sciences because they are conducted under controlled environments and do not meet the challenging complexities of those in the soft sciences. One of the main foci of this research is to gain a better understanding of why some but not all teachers engage in continuous professional development and learning. It is about attempting to gain a greater understanding of how they view the world around them.

**3.4 Ensuring Continuous Ethical Practice**

My ethical antenna as both the action researcher and work colleague were in continuous interplay throughout the research planning, activity as well as in collating the findings. When developing the research proposal great consideration was given to how the participants identity could be protected which informed the mediating artefacts (methodology). The research required gathering and collating the thoughts and opinions from the sample group who were also work colleagues and so it was vital to implement approaches which would allow their identity to be protected at all times. The online questionnaires, for example, could be completed in privacy without colleagues being aware; the 1-1 interviews were conducted discreetly as not to raise curiosity from colleagues. My professional role within the college involved working with teachers across curriculum areas as departmental teams as well as on a 1-1 basis. My professional position for this element of the research was very useful for my role as an action researcher. This enabled individual 1-1 interviews with the research participants, who were also colleagues, to be carried out without raising any suspicion amongst colleagues from the greater research population. Another essential factor when planning the research was, how could I as a researcher gather the information required without it becoming too onerous for the research participants. In my professional role I was greatly aware of the workloads and time constraints teachers faced with on a daily basis. Conducting the research and asking colleagues to be participants involved them dedicating time to complete the activities required to gather their personal thoughts and opinions. These factors influenced both the amount and type of questions utilised in both the online questionnaires and the 1-1 interviews. The last intention as either a researcher or work colleague was to add any additional pressure or stress to their position.

**3.5 Negotiating Access**

It was essential to present and discuss the possible benefits of the proposed research to the executive team to gain consent before the research could be conducted. The proposal was initially discussed in a meeting with the assistant principal for quality and standards. I was then invited to present the proposal in person to the executive management team which consisted of the principal, vice principal curriculum, vice principal finance and assistant principal quality and standards. The executive team were interested in how changing the approach to continuous professional learning and development could improve how teachers engaged with it to improve their practice. Approval was granted without any adjustments being requested. The only concern the executive team shared was how much of my time would be consumed meeting with each curriculum department, agreeing and creating departmental professional learning plans. Further discussion reassured the executive team this was necessary in an attempt to improve engagement in professional learning and development which would have an impact on teaching practice and learner outcomes. The proposal of teaching teams working in collaboration, in communities of practice appealed to the executive team. They hoped this may strengthen the relationships within departments where individual strengths would become team strengths. It was the assistant principal for quality and standards who gave the consent (see appendix 3).

**3.6 The Participants** *(Activity Theory: Subject)*

The target population for this action research involved all teaching staff across the 20 curriculum areas and three campuses, there were 121 teachers in total. The teachers were on various contracts the majority (55%) part-time/term time only (see table 1).

**Table 1: Overview of Teaching Staff**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Teaching Staff** | **121** |
| **Full-Time Permanent Teachers** | 55 (45%) |
| **Part Time /Associate Lecturers** (zero hour/term time only contracts) | 66 (55%) |
| **Male Teachers** | 50(41%) |
| **Female Teachers** | 71(59%) |
| **Experienced Teachers**  (minimum of 3 years’ experience holding PGCE teaching qualification, could be F/T, P/T or AL**)** | 60 (49%) |
| **Inexperienced Teachers** | 61 (51%) |

A sampling frame was utilised for selecting the participants (see appendix 6). 40 members of the teaching staff, 2 from each of the 20 curriculum departments, 1 male/1 female, 1 full-time, 1 part-time (where possible) were emailed to enquire if they would be a participant and join the sample group (see appendix 4). All of the 10 programme area leaders (PALs, curriculum department managers) and all 4 of the head of faculty managers (HoF, line managed the PALs) were emailed and offered the opportunity to be participants in the research. The email gave very clear information on the research proposal as well as details of what being a participant would entail. A participant information/consent form which included an ethical statement was also produced for participants to read and sign (see appendix 5). The intention of the research was to involve 40 teacher participants. 23 teachers agreed to be participants, (see table 2). The research participants’ analysis provides the detail to consolidate that the sample group was representative of the whole college teaching population that were involved in the changes introduced to the professional learning and development process. This new process involved introducing the training needs analysis sessions.

**Table 2: Research Participants** *(Activity Theory: Subject)* **Analysis.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Research Participants** | **23/121** | **19%** of teaching population |
| **Departments** | **19/20** | **95%** of departments |
| **Full-Time Participants** | 14/23 | 61% |
| **Part-Time/AL Participants** | 9/23 | 39% |
| **Male Participants** | 12/23 | 52% |
| **Female Participants** | 11/23 | 48% |
| **Experienced Participants** | 12/23 | 52% |
| **Inexperienced Participants** | 11/23 | 48% |

5 curriculum managers accepted, 3 heads of faculty and 2 programme area leaders, gaining representation from all of the four faculties. The teacher participants were coded PT and manager participants PM 1,2,3 etc. to ensure their identity was protected during this process.

Taherdoost (2016) reminds us that researchers cannot collect data from all those involved in the research and so researchers are required to select a sample. The entirety of the participants - in this case, the teachers - became the research population or desired population (Ross, 2005). The study did not have the luxury of extensive time or resource to collect data to analyse from the whole population. The sample group was representative of the whole population as they shared population characteristics which could be compared which Ross (2005, p. 4) refers to as ‘*marker variables*’. However, he also reminds us that there are no ‘*objective rules for deciding which variables should be nominated as marker variables and no agreed benchmarks for assessing the degree of similarity’* to determine if the sample is truly representative of the research population. Purposeful (also known as judgmental, selective or subjective) sampling was utilised, as the strategy was to include participants who could provide important information about experiences which could not be collected from any other sources (Maxwell, 1996). Purposeful sampling occurs according to Black (2010, p. 225) when, *Elements selected for the sample are chosen by the judgment of the researcher. Researchers often believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgment, which will result in saving time and money*.’

Prior to the action research, it seemed that professional development opportunities had little or no impact on the learners’ experience or the teachers’ practice. This was supported and evidenced by the Ofsted (2002, 2006, 2009) reports, internal and external observation grades plus learner satisfaction surveys (carried out at induction stage and while the learners are on programme) which is discussed further in sub-section 4.2, chapter 4. The college had a long history of delivering professional development through two windows within the academic year: February and July. The vast majority of the staff development opportunities were initiated and lead from the ‘*top-down'*. Managers identified the themes to be delivered following on from teaching observation feedback as well as mandatory requirements to ensure staff adhered to data tracking and monitoring using the college MIS system, an approach which is known to be ineffective (Kelly, 2012). This research was driven by the research enquiry process into the degree to which the professional learning and development of teachers could be enhanced and improved if it was approached in a new way. This involved teachers from the onset each academic year attending departmental training needs analysis sessions. Would it lead to an improvement in professional practice, learners’ experience and the culture of professional development?

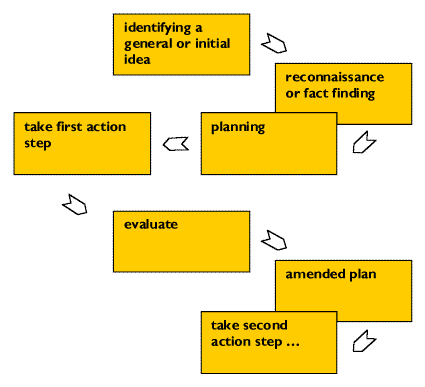
White (2009) believes that great care should be taken to ensure personal beliefs and preferences do not influence the research process as this would, in turn, have some bearing on the results which would affect their validity. However, this would be an impossible aim for this action research as I was centrally situated within the research and questions were drawn from a personal interest in gaining a more in-depth understanding of teachers and their continuous professional development and learning. My positionality and the integral role that plays throughout the research cannot be denied. According to Edwards (2014), some objectivity is possible but neutrality certainly is not**.**

There were several measures taken in an attempt of ensuring objectivity was maintained as much as possible. The responses to the self –completion questionnaires (see appendix 7a-d) included quantitative questions which were measurable without personal interpretation coming into play. They were completed without any interaction between the participants to ensure I could not influence the responses. The one to one interviews were semi-structured, (see appendix 9a-b) followed the same format and the interview notes were shared with the participants so they could confirm they were a true reflection of what was discussed during the interview. Great care was taken not to influence or give any directive on how the questions should be answered, keeping my input to the minimum was a constant personal focus throughout the one to one interviews. It was important to consider my body language and facial expressions during the interviews. This was important as I did not what the participants to have any indication of whether I agreed with their thoughts and suggestions or not which could have influenced their responses. This was quite a challenge as I had worked alongside all of the participants for several years and they did now how passionate I usually was with regards to supporting and developing teaching practice. I explained at the beginning of the interviews that I would try and stay objective in an attempt not to influence their responses in any way. The interviews with managers were to gain another perspective (so it was not solely a personal one) on how the training needs analysis sessions and teaching team collaboration events were being received by teaching teams. A thematic table (see appendix 10) was created to draw together the data from the one to one interviews, this was to illustrate the trustworthiness and dependability of the research. By sharing and detailing the pragmatic approach taken to the data analysis with the reader it is hoped that the transparency would gain the confidence of it being a reliable source collated and analysed objectively (Nowell *et al*, 2017; Aronson, 1995; Tobin and Begley, 2004).

**3.7 Action Research** *(Activity Theory: Rule)*

There are numerous variations to the approaches to this form of research. However, it can be distinguished as an approach in which the researcher and the researched work collaboratively through the diagnosis of a problem, the development and a solution (Bryman, 2004). Insider research (Costley *et al*, 2010; Asselin, 2003) is also carried out in collaboration with colleagues/known participants sharing some of the same characteristics as action research. However, Lewin’s (1946) action research cycles as well as Somekh’s (2006) action research disciplinesaligned more appropriately to the purpose of the research as well as integrating well with the CHAT theory (see table 3). Another important point put forward by Hitchcock & Hughes (1999, p.27) is that ‘*action researchers are concerned to improve a situation through active intervention…’* and Cohen *et al* (2007, p. 297) back this theory asserting it is ‘…*a powerful tool for change’* which is the intent of this research. Kemmis & McTaggart (1981; p.10) maintain that ‘*to do action research is to plan, act and reflect more carefully, more systematically’.* Accordingto the literature, action research is frequently utilised in education and can be considered as sitting under the umbrella of ‘*insider research’.* However, the focus of the discussions which follow focus on action research as not to detract from the approach implemented by discussing the wider literature reviewed on insider research.

Kurt Lewin was one of the founders for the term action research as he strived towards changing the life prospects of disadvantaged groups. Lewin’s approach involves a spiral of steps (illustrated below in figure 4) each composed of a cycle of planning, action, fact-finding and evaluation (Smith, 1996, 2001, 2007).

**Figure 2: Lewin Action Research Cycle**:

(Smith, 2001)

Lewin’s action research was established in working with communities as a channel to initiate change. His work determined the importance of action research as a methodology that supports systematic change where *‘individuals and groups always work within socio-cultural, political and economic structures that themselves are regulated by organisational, regional, national and international frameworks*’(Somekh, 2006, p.19).Lewin’s action research shares the same foundations as symbolic interactionism which is the study of human beings and their behaviour to generate a greater understanding to inform change which is discussed in depth in section 3.3. A fundamental issue for action researchers in is the degree to which the change which occurs is the result of the agency of individuals and the level of which individual action is determined by organisational structures where they work or live. Both agency and structures are discussed further in the literature review chapter. Somekh (2006) believes that to encourage and maintain change within an organisation action research must adopt a systemic approach. Groups working collaboratively as well as reflectively in the workplace to improve practice and systems is supported by Argyris (1993) ‘doubleloop learning’ theory. The work of Vygotsky and socio-cultural theories discussed in the literature review chapter provide a valuable way of comprehending the relationship between agency and organisational structures. Vygotsky proposes that human action is always mediated by cultural tools (Wertsch,1998). Socio-cultural tools are entrenched in historical practices and organisational structures and their influence either enable or constrain the actions of individuals.

Engeström’s (2005) developmental work research utilises CHAT as the basis for working with those who share in a common area of practice to generate knowledge about their work practices, identify points of contradiction in the activity system and use these as the basis for refining and improving it. CHAT draws upon the socio-cultural theories which are the interrelated and rooted nature of action. Being formed by socio-cultural tools and historically developed practices made it the most suitable framework to utilise for this action research working collaboratively with colleagues. Blunden (2015, p.1) suggests Engeström’s (1999) activity theory offers a three-way relationship of ‘*mutual mediation, as the community’s relationship with its environment is mediated by individuals and the individuals’ relationship with their community is mediated by the environment’.*

Somekh (2006) shares eight disciplines of action research; however, she is keen to point out that they do not suggest that action research is without complexity and that the early theoretical work surrounding it presumed an unproblematic link between cause and effect in social situations. The socio-cultural theories (discussed further in sub section 2.3 of the literature review chapter) also assist with casting light on collaboration in action research. Wenger (1998) emphasises the predictability of differences, disagreements and anxieties which can at times be tolerated rather than being negotiated to reach a joint consensus. This may lead to tensions within the community of practice which impact on the intended outcomes. Somekh (2006) maintains one of the key concerns for action researchers who intend to introduce change is to what degree the change is brought about by the agency of individual as opposed to being governed by the organisational structures in which they work

Somekh’s (2006) disciplines give further clarification on how closely it resonates with CHAT to generate knowledge/bring about change. The table I have created below (see table 3) illustrates how these disciplines support the work of Engeström and the CHAT theory. The focus of both action research and the CHAT theory is the generation of new knowledge and understanding working in collaboration. However, both give acknowledgement of the importance of the individual contribution within these communities and complexities which may unfold.

**Table 3: Somekh’s (2006) Disciplines and CHAT**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Somekh’s (2006) Eight Action Research Methodology Principles** | | **Engeström’s (1987) Activity Theory** |
| ***1.*** | ***Action research integrates research and action*** in a series of flexible cycles involving, holistically rather than as separate steps: the collection of data about the topic of investigation; analysis and interpretation of those data; the planning and introduction of action strategies to bring about positive changes; and evaluation of those changes through further data collection, analysis and interpretation … | Activity theory is activity which utilises mediation Artefacts (tools and signs) to assist with gathering information from different sources to generate knowledge. |
| ***2.*** | ***Action research is conducted by a collaborative partnership*** of participants and researchers, whose roles and relationships are sufficiently fluid to maximize mutual support and sufficiently differentiated to allow individuals to make appropriate contributions given existing constraints. These partnerships can be of many kinds. They may be between a practitioner–researcher and students/clients and colleagues in that researcher’s field of professional practice. | Activity theory is based on collective activity in collaboration. The activity is to generate new knowledge and understanding which involves individual contributions. |
| ***3.*** | ***Action research involves the development of knowledge and understanding*** of a unique kind. The focus on change and development in a natural (as opposed to contrived) social situation, such as a workplace, and the involvement of participant–researchers who are ‘insiders’ to that situation gives access to kinds of knowledge and understanding that are not accessible to traditional researchers coming from outside. | Linking to activity theory the subject in this study is the teacher as individual, the divisions of labour explores both the teacher as individual as well as a collaborator. |
| ***4.*** | ***Action research starts from a vision of social transformation and aspirations*** for greater social justice for all. Action research is not value neutral; action researchers aim to act morally and promote social justice through research that is politically informed and personally engaged. They construct themselves as agents able to access the mechanisms of power in a social group or institution and influence the nature and direction of change. | Activity theory is associated with the socio-cultural theory where individuals work collaborative to bring about change by developing new knowledge and understanding. Activity theory acknowledges the conflicts and complexities of individuals working together collaboratively and how social factors may have an influence on an individual’s agency. |
| ***5.*** | ***Action research involves a high level of reflexivity and sensitivity*** to the role of the self in mediating the whole research process. The self of the researcher can best be understood as intermeshed with others through webs of interpersonal and professional relationships that co-construct the researcher’s identity. | Activity theory recognises how individual reflexivity plays a role in how individuals interpret the experiences of working collaboratively. It can both stifle or augment interaction with others within the group. |
| **6.** | ***Action research involves exploratory engagement with a wide range of existing knowledge*** drawn from psychology, philosophy, sociology and other fields of social science, in order to test its explanatory power and practical usefulness | Activity theory is founded on a collaborative pragmatic approach where past knowledge and experience is developed by learning from others within the group as well as involving existing knowledge from outside of it. |
| **7.** | ***Action research engenders powerful learning for participants*** through combining research with reflection on practice. The development of self-understanding is important in action research. | Activity theory appreciates the importance of both the collective as well as individual learning and how past experiences can influence them in a positive or negative way. Whilst working collaboratively individuals will be reflecting on the interaction with others as well as self. |
| **8.** | ***Action research locates the inquiry in an understanding of broader historical, political and ideological contexts that shape and constrain human activity*** at even the local level, including economic factors and international forces | Activity theory highlights how there are historical experiences and situations which will have shaped both the individual and group which create cultures. |

The aim of the action research was to contribute to both personal development as well as to the development of those involved in the research. The intention was to increase the ability to think independently with newly gained knowledge and understanding. Influence and learning are naturally occurring developments throughout life as individuals learn how to think, act and make choices. You cannot assume because you have learnt, gaining knowledge, from a specific experience those who experience it with you hold the same thoughts and understanding. Individuals learn and are influenced (to briefly identify a few) by the media, books, family, friends, colleagues, traditions and cultures (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, 2008). In studies like mine this has considerable implications, and led me to aim to have a positive effect on individuals and their personal growth. Rorty’s (1999: xxv) philosophy on action research is very useful for researchers:

*We cannot regard truth as a goal of inquiry. The purpose of an inquiry is to achieve agreement among human beings about what to do, to bring consensus on the end to be achieved and the means to be used to achieve those ends. An inquiry that does not achieve co-ordination of behaviour is not inquiry but simply wordplay.*

Bradbury & Reason (2001) emphasise that action research should not be seen as a simple methodology in social research. It has different objectives, is based in different relationships and requires different techniques for conceiving information and its relation to practice.

Due to this research being carried with work colleagues it involved sharing my identity, language and experience with the research participants (Asselin, 2003; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). It was conducted in a shared setting (workplace) where there were some benefits, such as, access to the participants was readily available and the organisation in which the research was carried out was well known (Smyth and Holian, 2008). Maykut and Morehouse (2005, p. 24) suggest that the ‘*Qualitative inquirer looks to indwelling as a posture and the human-as-instrument for the collection and analysis of data'.* They characterise posture as ‘*a state or condition taken by one person at a given time especially in relation to other persons or things…* *A qualitative researcher assumes the posture of indwelling while engaging in qualitative research’* (ibid, p.23). It was vital throughout the study to be conscious of ensuring professional relationships held with colleagues were not damaged (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Costerly *et al*. (2010, p.6) highlight the following as benefits and challenges:

* *Negotiating access to your own work situation as an area being researched and securing consent for the research to take place;*
* *Promising anonymity and confidentiality to your colleagues.*
* *Possibly challenging the value system of your organisation or professional field in some way.*
* *Interviewing your colleagues;*
* *Managing the power implications of your work and your positioning as a researcher and as a practitioner within your research project.*

The motivation for this research, due to my personal passion for continually learning as well as the role I held was to gain a greater understanding of:

* How colleagues viewed continuous professional learning and development.
* How they engaged with it and communities of practice
* Why some but not all teachers engaged with the process
* How might it be improved?

This research was carried out in a work setting with colleagues and managers and so it was my responsibility to ensure the risk of physiological, psychological or emotional harm to participants was minimal (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2007). Kerstetter (2012, p.99) suggests while researchers are part of the community they are studying the ‘i*ssue of trust emerges as critical to creating and sustaining successful partnerships’*. Hart and Bond (1995, p.22) suggest the action researcher as ‘*catalyst’* with the specific purpose of facilitating change through active involvement with the research participants. Barbour (2014, p.73) supports this view proposing that action researchers often view the research participants as ‘*co-researchers’*. However, giving consideration to Barbour’s proposal action researchers must always be conscientious that the participants, even when viewed as co-researchers or those who are co-workers (as with this research) their safety, confidentiality and anonymity is the action researcher’s fundamental responsibility. The necessity to maintain confidentiality and anonymity is a preserved principle in the action research endeavour (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008; Newby, 2010).

Having an integral role within the organisation required both reflecting on and recognising positionality (Thomas, 2013, p .144) within the study. This assists with identifying the researcher’s (individual) view of the world as well as the position they are taking in relation to the research at hand (Foote and Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden and Howell-Major, 2013). When giving consideration to positioning and the individual’s approach to the research it involves ontological assumptions (the nature of social reality), epistemological assumptions (the nature of knowledge) and assumptions about human nature and agency (Sikes, 2004). These are all influenced by personal ethics and beliefs (Wellington *et al* 2005). Sultana (2007, p. 380) reminds us that ‘*It is critical to pay attention to positionality, reflexivity, the production of knowledge and the power relations that are inherent in research processes in order to undertake ethical research*…’

Snape and Spenser (2003, p. 2) maintain that:

*It is important to recognise that there is no single, accepted way of doing qualitative research. Indeed, how researchers carry it out depends upon a range of factors including their beliefs about the nature of the social world and what can be known about it (ontology), the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired (epistemology), the purpose(s) and goals of the research, the characteristics of the research participants, the audience for the research, the funders of the research, and the position and environment of the researchers themselves.*

Due to the nature and focus of the research, I was immersed both working and studying with colleagues within the organisation. The research object – the ontological given – was the social milieu. It became a study of not only listening to understand but closely observing behaviour including body language, attitude, and subtle social cues, such as, for example, pauses when questioned. Denzin &Lincoln (2005, p.3) define this as qualitative research and suggest that: qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the social world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices ... turn the world into a series of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Beck (1979) as quoted in Anderson and Arsenault (2004, p.153) maintains ‘*the purpose for social science is to understand the social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take in reality’* One of the main foci of this study is to further understand how a teacher’s past experiences and personal perception from interactions with others may influence their agency and engagement in communities of practice. The action research was conducted over two cycles (see figure 3).

**Figure 3: Action Research Cycle 1 and 2**

**Training Needs Analysis sessions**

* TNA sessions were carried out across all curriculum departments.
* Teachers were engaged in professional dialogue with regards to their own learning and development.
* Individual and team strengths, as well as areas for development, formed part of the discussions.
* Departmental professional development plans were agreed and created.
* Teaching staff were informed of the new continuous learning and development process and the financial support available.
* Professional learning and industrial updates were discussed.

**Cycle 1**

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**Cycle 1and 2 involved:**

* A sample group consisting of 23 teachers and 5 managers from across curriculum areas.
* All participants completed an online questionnaire.
* 1-1 interviews were also carried out.
* Professional dialogue with regards to the professional development of teaching staff was recorded in a diary.



**Cycle 2**

**Cycle 1: 2012-2013**

Cycle one involved introducing a training needs analysis session with each of the 20 curriculum departments, across the three college campuses at the beginning of the academic year. The training needs analysis sessions involved the whole college teaching population. The sample group of 23 teachers and 5 managers who agreed to be part of the action research to share their views on the newly introduced process were representative of the 20 departments, various teaching contracts, gender and experience. The sessions began with teachers from every curriculum department individually completing a basic self-assessment activity (see appendix 1a). The tool used was a simple one which was not scrutinised in great depth as it was a means to initiate conversation, professional dialogue with regards to teaching practice. The self-assessment tool was adapted from the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS, 2010) ‘*finding your focus’* template which they developed for managers and teachers across the further education sector to use to encourage reflection on practice as well as identifying areas for development to focus on. The resource pack was titled*Small steps – big difference: stimulating discussion about reflective practice.* Some of the topics included within the self-assessment tool, such as differentiation may be contended by those reading this thesis; however, it must be pointed out that the emphasis was on initiating conversation. This has been highlighted throughout each chapter to gather the personal / collective thoughts, opinions and interpretations from teachers in curriculum departments across the organisation. The teaching team from each curriculum area varied; however, each training needs analysis session included teachers on various employment contracts; full-time; part-time; associate lecturers; genders; male, female as well as both experienced and inexperienced teachers.

Once the teachers completed the self-reflection which took approximately 10-15 minutes they were encouraged to share their reflection with the team. This was then discussed further with the teaching team and I acted as facilitator to keep the conversations going highlighting the personal as well as team strengths and areas for development. Teachers within the teams were supportive of one another and at times when an individual had self-assessed their practice too harshly they were quick to give examples of how they were better than they had assessment themselves. This lead to some honest and open conversations and at time changes to the original numerical grade them had given themselves. The strengths and areas for development were noted on a flip chart during the session and with the approval from each member of the team within the session a professional development action plan (see appendix 1b) was created. I developed the action plan on a table format and emailed it to the team for approval to ensure I had not misinterpreted anything from the conversations or session notes. It was imperative to identify and add both individual and team strengths that had been discussed with the team to the plan. This was to ensure the plan was balanced, not just focusing on the areas for development. It was important to identify and discuss individual strengths within the team and then encourage peer support where required. This was to ensure these became team strengths working in collaboration with one another in communities of practice.

Teaching team collaboration events (see appendix 2) were also introduced during the first cycle. One event was scheduled for each half term (6 weeks). The events involved the whole teaching team as well as their programme leader meeting to discuss any issues/concerns and collaboratively working on solutions. Teachers were also encouraged to share good practice with colleagues as part of these meetings. These were introduced as it soon became apparent whilst carrying out the training needs analysis sessions that teachers wanted time to work with one another. This was discussed and recorded on the departmental action plans (see appendix 1b), 17 out of the 20 (85%) of the departmental action plans recorded that teachers specifically stated that time to collaborate together would be beneficial to their professional learning and development. The majority (85%) discussed how they valued collaboration with colleagues and the impact it had on their individual practice as well as developing the team as a whole. During the first cycle, it was not possible to change the scheduled professional development activities which was three days in July and again in February. However, what was achievable was to alter the focus of them as a result of the training needs analysis sessions. The training needs analysis sessions enabled teachers to inform the cross-college professional development days making them more personalised to their needs. The teaching team collaboration events were the result of the training needs analysis sessions. I used the areas from development from the departmental action planes to draw out key themes which were utilised to create a programme of professional learning and development programme over the allocated three day windows.

**Cycle 2: 2013-2014**

The professional development action plans which were created in cycle 1 were revisited as part of the training needs analysis in cycle 2 at the beginning of the session for 10-15minutes. This involved discussing both the individual departmental areas for development which had been recorded with the team previously. This was to establish if the teachers and the team had managed to complete professional learning activities to develop their practice. During the discussions I made notes on the plans as to whether they had been completed, if they were still relevant and to be added onto the new action plan going forward or if the professional learning activity was no longer required. The impact of the professional learning and development on both personal practice as well as the teachers working collaboratively was also deliberated as a team, again I facilitated this to assist in gaining an understanding of whether or not the events had been beneficial to the teachers and their teams. New departmental professional development action plans were developed identifying both individual as well as team needs. These were shared with the teachers and agreed following the meetings for approval. They were then shared with the programme area leaders and assisted in identifying themes which would be useful to inform the scheduled professional learning event throughout the academic year.

A weekly Wednesday afternoon meeting schedule was introduced in cycle 2 as a result of the findings from cycle 1. The meeting slots were to be scheduled from 3-5pm, all teaching was to finish at 3pm to allow all teachers to attend. This was endorsed by the principal based on the findings from cycle 1. The traditional professional development annual programme of three days in July and February was replaced with one day per half term. They were dedicated to the professional learning and development of teachers across all curriculum areas which included those in the sample group. The themes for the professional learning days were informed by the training needs analysis sessions. The departmental professional learning action plans were collated to identify the themes for the sessions, I then scheduled the professional learning sessions as it was part of my cross-college role. The schedule was shared with the curriculum managers and executive team at one of the weekly curriculum and quality management meetings. Industrial/vocational updating also became a focus for teaching staff during cycle 2 which was supported by the curriculum managers and executive team. The majority of teachers in vocational curriculum departments had identified during the training needs analysis sessions that industrial updates were a crucial element of their professional learning and development. This was to ensure they kept their vocational specialism skills and knowledge up to date. 18 out of the 20 (90%) of the departmental professional development action plans identified industrial updates as an area for further development. The only two departments which did not have this included on their departmental action plans were English/Maths and Learning Difficulties/Disabilities

**3.8 Research Methods** *(Activity Theory: Mediating Artefacts)*

**3.8.1 Self-Completion Questionnaires** *(Activity Theory: Mediating Artefacts)*

This form of survey involved the 23 teacher participants from the sample group answering and completing the questions by themselves. The ethical considerations surrounding the questionnaires were firstly, participants could complete them discreetly in private without colleagues knowing they were doing so. No names were requested only gender and which curriculum department they belonged to. Great care was taken when using any quotes to ensure the identity of the participants could not be ascertained. The quotes were referenced to PT which indicated participant teacher. Reference to any curriculum area was removed from the quotes to ensure specific curriculum departments could not be identified as this would narrow the identity of the staff down. The surveys were designed to be completed without taking a lot of the participants’ time. The teachers who had agreed to be participates were giving up their time to assist with the research so it was important that it did not become a burden. The questionnaires were semi-structured (see appendix 7a-7d), firstly to enable the structured closed questions on specific topics to be used to allow for themes and comparisons to be made. These questions were focused and succinct making them easy to code and analyse (Bailey, 1994, p.118). The open questions used allowed thoughts and comments to be collected allowing the participants to explain and give reasons for their responses this was important to assist with investigating the culture and attitude towards continuous professional learning and development. The benefits of using the self – completion questionnaires included; being short to reduce the risk of the participants becoming bored; cheap to administrate; absence of interviewer effects; no interviewer variability as well as being more convenient for participants. The drawbacks of using this approach could include; the researcher being unable to: prompt or probe; identify the participant to the response; collect additional data. There was also the possibility of missing data as well as having a low response rate (Bryman, 2008, pp. 217-219).

There were ten questions included in the questionnaire (see Appendix 7a-7d). The first three questions were focused on ascertaining the curriculum area the participants belonged to; whether they were male or female and the terms of their contract of employment. These questions were included to establish and demonstrate that there was representation of staff across curriculum areas, male/female involvement and varied contracts of employment. The fourth question enquired how many hours of professional learning and development the participants were engaging in, this would enable any change throughout the duration of the research to be identified and examine further. The fifth question queried how the engagement in professional learning and development was initiated; self, college lead or mandatory again this was to establish if there were patterns of change (change in behaviour) during the course of the study. Question six probed the participant with regards to the types of activities and frequency they engaged with. The seventh question was an expansion of question six enquiring which activities (did the participants think) had the most impact on their personal development and teaching practice. Question eight was included to ascertain if there were any barriers (in the participants' mind) that prevented them from engaging in professional leading and development activities. This was important as their lack of engagement may have been due to barriers which were out of their control to change. The ninth question was incorporated to gain a picture of how many managers were carrying out appraisals and linking individual development plans (IDP) with staff (see Appendix 8). Question ten enquired if participants were aware of their departmental professional development priorities to assess whether there were departmental as well as individual priorities in place which were shared with the participants.

The self – completion questionnaires were utilised to gain a more informed (knowledge) of the variances between participants working in different curriculum areas within the same organisation. The questionnaires were employed to examine and identify if they were recurring themes. These themes are discussed in the research findings and analysis chapter.

**3.8.2 One to One Interviews** *(Activity Theory: Mediating Artefacts)*

The interviews were conducted with both the 23 teacher and 5 manager participants. These meetings were scheduled with each participant, the locations varied dependant on where the participant was based on the college premises. It was crucial to remember constantly throughout the research how busy both the teaching staff and managers were and how they were giving their valuable time (which was in heavy demand) to take part in these meetings. It was imperative to follow the same routine and setting for each interview to ensure consistency of approach in an attempt to avoid different experiences which could impact on the responses given to the questions. The interviews were carried out in quiet locations such as staff rooms, empty classrooms and meeting rooms. This was to minimalise any disturbance and disruption. The purpose of the interview and research were shared with the participants at the beginning of the interview. This was to ensure they were fully aware of how the information gathered was going to be used to inform the study following ethical practice. As both an action researcher as well as a professional working with colleagues ethical practice always took precedence. It was vital to maintain the trust that had been established over the numerous years of working alongside colleagues’ role modelling ethical behaviour (CIPD 2021). This could not be jeopardised by any means at all.

The interviews were semi-structured and consisted of five questions for the teaching participants and eight for the managers (see appendix 9a-b), Once the questions were answered participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions or to add any additional comments. A visual aid was used during the interviews for the question which asked if teachers/managers thought they were working in communities of practice (see appendix 9a-b). It was important to establish a common ground to ensure all participants received the same information regarding communities of practice and not assume they all held the same knowledge and understanding surrounding them. Handwritten notes were taken throughout the interviews and all participants were given the opportunity to read them and confirm that they were a true record of what had been discussed throughout the interview. The interview records were then signed for authentication by the participants (see appendix 9a-b). In the first cycle (2012-13) three of the participants were interviewed via the telephone due to logistics and teaching commitments. These participants were emailed the questions and responses following the interview so they could confirm the interview notes were a true reflection of what had been discussed. During the second cycle (2013-14) all participants were interviewed face to face. The interview responses were collated onto thematic tables (see appendix 10) for analysis which is discussed in the research findings and analysis chapter.

The benefits of using the face to face interviews were: the interviews were flexible and adaptable; they allowed for an interchange of views between the interviewer and those being interviewed; knowledge was generated between those involved in the interview; they allowed for participants to discuss their interpretations of the world and how they perceived situations. Opdenakker (2002, p.3) discusses how one to one, face to face interviews give the researcher the advantage of picking up social cues for example, body language, voice, intonation, he suggests that ‘*the interviewee can give the interviewer a lot of extra information that can be added to the verbal answer of the interviewee on a question’.* Coughlan (2009) supports this by suggesting that social use enhance the interviewers understanding of what is being said. Opdenakker categorises face to face interview as ‘*synchronous communication in time and place’* (ibid, p.2) where there is no significant time delay between question and answer making the answers from the interviewee more spontaneous without lengthy reflection. Wengraf (2001) discusses an advantage of 1-1 interviews is the interviewers’ ability to terminate the interview using cues to avoid them taking too much of both the interviewees and interviewers time. This was a crucial point to consider when both planning and executing the interviews as time is precious and not forth coming for teachers due to their workload. My intention as a researcher was to gain the necessary information I required and as a professional colleague to acknowledge the time restraints teaching colleagues faced on a day to day basis. Wengraf (2001, p.194) discusses what he has termed as

double attention… that you must be both listening to the informant's responses to understand what he or she is trying to get at and, at the same time, you must be bearing in mind your needs to ensure that all your questions are liable to get answered within the fixed time at the level of depth and detail that you need.

The disadvantages of face to face/1-1 interviews come in the form of them being: time-consuming for all involved; open to bias on the interviewers’ part; possibly inconvenient for participants (Opdenakker, 2001; Wengraf, 2001). Adams (2010) reminds us that interviewing colleagues can be challenging. However, as professionals working alongside colleagues as well as researchers we must remain focused to avoid missing any key aspects of the interview; be non –judgemental and emotionally in control. The research was carried out with colleagues with whom I worked alongside each day in my professional role, they witnessed both my passion and dismay at certain situations and circumstances. Nonetheless, as a researcher it was crucial to remain objective and be aware of my own social cues which could have influenced the responses and discussions during the interviews. Getting the balance correct was difficult during the interviews as I did not want to be perceived as being distant or alien to the person the participants were accustom to, I am, by nature a very passionate person.

As discussed earlier, it was crucial throughout the research to work ethically as I did in my professional practice. I held the responsibility of protecting work colleagues within my cross college role as well as an action researcher and them as participants from any physical or psychological harm. The protection of the participants’ anonymity within the research was crucial as well as confidentiality as it was within my professional role. The professional cross college role held at times, involved very sensitive conversations around teaching practice and the areas for development. Teachers were either directed by managers for support and development with regards to their practice. This was often the result of falling below a good grade as part of the lesson observation process. Some teachers requested discreet support on various elements of their practice such as behaviour management, planning for learning and assessment strategies. Teachers requested this on with the confidence they could access support without it drawing attention to their practice by senior management. This demonstrated how vulnerable teachers were feeling as a result of the reoccurring restructures and redundancies which were not just a college issue but a sector one which is discussed in-depth in the literature review chapter. In both of these instances discretion and developing practice were crucial which reflected my role as an action researcher. It was imperative that teachers could share their concerns, thoughts and opinions in the confidence that this would be held confidentially enabling practice to be developed. The research was based on resolving an issue with regards to professional development with the assistance of colleagues as participants. Transparency and openness throughout the research with each method utilised was as essential as it was with my everyday practice. The cross-college role held did not have direct line management of teachers or curriculum managers so the professional relationships held were based on being consistently reliable, authentic and genuine. It was vital that the action research embedded all of these attributes to ensure professional relationships were not damaged. There were several occasions during the 1-1 interviews when the teacher and manager participants discussed relationships with managers and colleagues and requested that they were not recorded which demonstrated their confidence of sharing information and sensitive information whilst at the same time knowing it was safe to do so. These discussions highlighted the complications of working and learning collaboratively which is highlighted on numerous times in relation to cultural historical activity theory and communities of practice, discussed in depth in the literature review chapter.

**3.8.3 Professional Dialogue Notebook** *(Activity Theory: Mediating Artefacts)*

Due to the fact that the research population involved all of the teaching staff and managers from each curriculum area, conversations with regards to the changes in the approach were occurring on a regular basis. The conversations which took place involved me in the professional sense as the learning, teaching and assessment co-ordinator who had introduced the training needs analysis sessions.

The discussions often involved personal reflection on how staff/managers engaged with professional learning and development to improve their practice as well as barriers to this. Professional dialogue resembles coaching which encourages individuals to plan, reflect and evaluate their practice as well as the learners’ experience (Oxford Brookes, 2018)*.* This view is shared by Simoncini *et al* (2014, p.29). However, they worry that teachers having the ability to reflect maybe ‘taken *for granted*’ and that professional dialogue would go hand in hand to enhance the practice of reflection. Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999, p.271) and Feldman (1999, p.138)refer to professional dialogue as *‘inquiry conversation’*, ‘*reflective conversation’* or *‘learning conversation’***.**A record booklet (See appendix 11) was developed and carried around inside of my college diary to ensure that some of these conversations were captured with the consent of those they involved. These were colleagues who were not part of the sample group; however, it was important to follow the same ethical practice as with those who were part of the sample group, holding the responsibility of protecting their anonymity. The thoughts and opinions of the wider research population were important to capture. The records were dated and signed by colleagues to ensure they were read and the individuals happy to have them used for the research. There were occasions where colleagues did not want conversations recorded and it was essential to ensure them that they were not recorded or included within the research. Whilst conducting action research it was vital, as discussed on numerous occasions throughout this chapter, to maintain the trust and professional relationships which had been the result of working together for numerous years. Transparency and integrity were key principles which enabled this throughout the research.

**3.8.4 Data Collection** *(Activity Theory: Mediating Artefacts)*

Data was collected using the various mechanisms utilised by the organisation which gathered and collated information to produce statistics with regards to; learner satisfaction, data trends on annual learning, teaching and assessment formal observations as well as the retention and achievements rates for learners studying across the college. Prøitz *et al* (2017, p. 1) discuss how data use in education covers a comprehensive breadth of perspectives which include in practice and in research. They also highlight *‘data and data use as a basis for change for and by actors on the individual, local, regional, national and international levels of the education system’.* Prøitz *et al* (2017) are keen to point out that the increased use of data in education, practice, research and policy has led to it being used for both development and control. This is evident when managers utilise this information to identify qualifications/courses which have low retention and achievement rates. Often the teachers are challenged and actioned to improve the provision. The same is, at times, used to challenge the performance of teachers if the grading of their learning, teaching and assessment observation is not good or outstanding. Using data in this fashion often leaves teachers feeling demoralised and adds additional stress and anxiety to the teaching role. I have witnessed data being utilised to both support and develop the practice of teachers as well as performance manage which are two very different approaches taken by managers. It is important to note that the use of the data within this research was to assist with identifying if there had been any development in practice and learner satisfaction, in which, the increased participation in professional learning and development may have influenced. It would be wise to remember, as Prøitz *et al* (2017, p.2) remind us ‘*data use is situated as both the problem and the solution in education, in terms of policy, practice and research’.* The data used for the student satisfaction survey was from a report produced by QDP an external company which is used by colleges across the further education sector. The learning, teaching and assessment observation profiles were generated by BM an external consultancy service who were utilised to carried out the observations across each curriculum area. The three-year data trend for learner retention and achievement was collated by Proachieve, an externally managed data information system which collates data internally as well as across the further education sector to compare with national averages.

**3.9 Research Ethics**

Ethics in any context is concerned with devising codes and principles for moral behaviour (May, 2003). As Anderson and Arsenault (2004, p.16) remind us *‘all human behaviour is subject to ethical principles, rules and conventions…*' It was also vital to identify the complexity of ethics for action research, not only with thought for the moral arena but also the legal one as there has been increasing pressure coming from this direction throughout the century (Anderson and Arsenault, 2004). The ongoing ethical practice which took place during the research is discussed throughout this chapter as it was entrenched from the planning stage to the implementation as well as writing up the findings. The ethical considerations and practice for each method utilised is detailed in each sub-section as well as sub-section 3.4. Social scientists face many ethical issues throughout their investigations and in the methods, they employ to collect valid and reliable data (Cohen *et al,* 2007). While the researcher’s focus is reflecting on their personal views and those of others or they seek to find validation for their actions in comparison to others, they enter the territory of philosophical ethics. 'Second Order' questioning is the term used for this approach as they are asking about things rather than taking them at face value (May, 2003). Barnes (1979) neatly identifies that ethical decisions made in research 'arise' when researchers try to decide between two courses of action not in terms of efficiency and convenience but by what is known to be morally right or wrong. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2007, p.4), support this contending that

*ethics are part of a broader social discourse governing the rightness or wrongness of action, and as such belong in the realm of the collective and the public. We should not confuse ethics with efficiency. In the end, ethics is associated with morality, which again is informed by values.*

They also maintain that values inform ethics which create value structures. Values are concepts held by individuals which vary from person to person they become habitual, personal and are influenced by social context. This culture forming activity is an element of the CHAT theory discussed both earlier in this chapter and more in-depth in the literature review.

As this action research was conducted within the workplace it was vital to ensure that it followed the path of the morally right as professional relationships and trust could not be put to risk. This was crucial throughout the research which ensured a measured approach was taken as discussed throughout this chapter. It was imperative to ensure the focus on ethical decisions was firmly on what is right for the participants in the research and not on what would be advantageous to myself as a researcher. There was a determination throughout the research to maintain integrity both as a professional and researcher. It was vital not to damage relationships where trust was lost and colleagues left feeling betrayed. It was a balancing act throughout the research constantly questioning my thoughts as both a professional and a researcher. It was my responsibility to ensure equilibrium of maximising the benefits of the research whilst minimising the risk or harm to participants (BERA, 2018).

An ethical statement was developed and signed by the participants and myself (see appendix 3) to ensure the best interests of those involved in the research were prioritised and identified. Ethical standards are paramount in all forms of research including action research and whilst conducting qualitative research one’s ethical antenna must be especially sensitive and researchers must be aware of the traps that lie in wait (Kelly, 1989). Due to the fact that this research was conducted within the organisation confidentiality and personal respect were crucial (Hopkins, 1985).

The action research involved inviting colleagues to be participants in the research sample group, and being aware of the possible power dynamics that may be at play was crucial (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2005). The research involved colleagues at the same level within the organisation as well as managers on a higher level. Acknowledgement was given to the fact that just because I had access to teaching staff and managers it did not confer the right to involve them in the study without giving careful thought to possible ethical implications. There was huge responsibility ensuring that the participants’ identity was protected. The organisation in which the research was conducted employed approximately five hundred members of staff (teaching, support, finance, management information and estates). The provision was offered in three different locations which were up to fifty-six miles apart, one main and two smaller campuses. However, this did not reduce the possibility of identities being recognised by colleagues which Gelling and Munn-Giddings (2001, p.105) identify as being an issue due to its ‘*collaborative and participatory nature’*. My professional role often involved working with teachers on a one to one basis so it was not unusual nor did it raise questions from colleagues when I was seen with teachers which, was discreetly part of the research. This was to my advantage as a researcher as it assisted with protecting anonymity of research participants. The disadvantage of this was ensuring I was objective and not influencing the responses by my facial expressions and body language was very difficult. It was constantly on my mind that I was not acting in the way colleagues were familiar with in my professional role so an explanation was given at the beginning of each interview of how I was going to be objective and why it was important throughout the interview process.

The main aim throughout the research was to be as open, honest and transparent as possible throughout the study. Holding a cross-college role (at the time of the research) which involved working with staff and managers on a daily basis did have an advantage as I already had access to teachers and managers as well as being familiar with the organisation. The cross-college I held did not have direct line management of any of the research participants neither teachers or managers. Good working relationships had been established with teaching staff and managers across college in the role I held at the time of the research as well as roles held previously within the organisation. This resulted in trust and mutual respect which made the participants (I feel) more open and honest during the research. At times throughout the research, I needed to respect the participants' requests not to record some of the thoughts and opinions expressed as this would have resulted in the breakdown of trust and relationships.

Guillemin & Gillam (2004, p.106) believe that there are no longer the disputes about action research, it is an accepted tool for researchers to utilise and that the pragmatic significance of the methodological approach has been ‘*demonstrated on multiple occasions’.* They both advocate its effectiveness as well as the necessity of ensuring ethics are thoroughly examined before the research commences. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) maintain that action research focuses on generating new knowledge to influence change that will potentially be beneficially to the target population.Barbour (2014, pg.87) recommends researchers to be conscientious and give consideration to the following questions:

* *The impact the research is going to have on the participants*
* *The implications which may arise when researching colleagues*
* *How to give clear guidance to the participants which includes detail of what it will involve them taking part in.*
* *How to ensure participants confidentiality and anonymity will be protected.*
* *When discussing the research with participants do not over promote your expectations.*
* *How are you going to create a safe environment for colleagues to participate?*

Bearing this in mind from the planning to the implementation as well as when sharing the findings of the research assisted with ensuring ethical considerations were constantly at the forefront of my mind. How these considerations were addressed, is discussed throughout this chapter.

**3.9.1 Reliability and Validity**

Reliability and validity are embedded in the positivist perspective but their status and meaning is more contentious in qualitative research (Thomas, 2010). Using triangulation as a method of testing reliability and validity to assist in establishing the truth in quantitative research could also be adapted, redefined. Qualitative research relies on a naturalist approach in which the researcher searches to understand phenomena and does ‘*not attempt to manipulate the phenomena of interest’* (Patton, 2002, p 39). Qualitative research according to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 17) is ‘*any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification’* it is the kind of research where the findings ‘unfold naturally’ (Patton, 2002, p.39). It was vital for me to examine and have a clear but critical comprehension of both concepts.

**3.9.2 Reliability and Validity Alternative Conceptions**

Reliability is a theory used for examining or evaluating research. If reliability is a form of testing to extract dependable information the most important test in a qualitative study is its quality (Golafshani, 2003). Good qualitative research can assist with '*understanding a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing’* (Eisner, 1991, p. 58) which reflects the aim of this research. So in terms of reliability Stenbacka (2001, p. 551) discusses evaluating quality in quantitative research with a ‘*purpose of explaining*’ whilst in qualitative research, the quality emphasis is on ‘*generating understanding*’. She holds that the term reliability has no relevance in qualitative research as this is associated with measurements.

Many qualitative researchers argue that we should be concerned with both validity and reliability initially whilst devising a study through to the point of evaluating the quality of its results. With this in mind Lincoln & Guba, (1985, p. 290) ask the question: ‘*How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?’* They discuss how the reliability and validity in qualitative research come under the terms of Credibility, Neutrality or Confirmability, Consistency or Dependability and Applicability or Transferability. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p. 300) also use the term ‘*dependability*’ which is consistent with the concept of ‘*reliability*’ in quantitative research. They draw focus on auditing both the process and product to determine the dependability of the research, a view shared by Campbell (1996) who identifies thorough scrutiny of raw data, data reduction products and process notes as a means of ensuring consistency in qualitative research. Seale (1999, p. 266) believes that to guarantee reliability in qualitative research trustworthiness is essential ‘*trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability’*. Thomas (2013, p.139) takes the very strong view that;

*In interpretive research you are interpreting on the basis of you being you, interviewing someone else being them. Who you are – your ‘positionality’ will affect this interpretation, and you should not expect someone else to emerge with the same interview transcripts as you*.

He is concerned that too much time is spent thinking about it and how to fit the study of human beings into it when it is far more important that '*attention is paid to whether the instrument is doing what you want it to do and isn’t picking up something irrelevant or something that is simply easy to measure’ (ibid, p.140).* However, he does stress the importance of and ensuring that when collecting data, the measuring instruments utilised are consistent on each occasion they are implemented.

There are a number of terms used to describe validity in reference to qualitative research. Some researchers assert that validity is not pertinent in this form of research (e.g. Thomas, 2013). However, there is the unanimous acknowledgement that there must be quality assured checks or measures incorporated into the research. Researchers have established their own notions of validity and have often adopted what they consider to be more appropriate terms, such as, quality, rigour and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002). Stenbacka (2001, p. 551) suggests that validity should be redefined for qualitative research and emphasis the necessity of the quality assurance ‘*to be solved in order to claim a study as part of proper research’*. Davies & Dodd (2002, p.281) use rigour when discussing reliability and validity. They maintain that although rigour is disputed in quantitative research it has been developed and implemented in qualitative ‘*by exploring subjectivity, reflexivity, and the social interaction of interviewing’*. The trustworthiness of the research depends on issues which in the context of quantitative research are discussed as reliability and validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The trustworthiness of the research is crucial for establishing confidence in the findings. All of the issues regardless of the terms applied are imperative to differentiating between what are seen to be good or bad, reliable or worthless research findings. It is hoped that the findings from this research are acknowledged as trustworthy and add to the knowledge base on teachers’ professional learning and development, agency and communities of practice.

Triangulation is an approach used to enhance the reliability and validity of research findings (Mathison, 1988). Patton (2001, p. 247) who, in support of triangulation asserts that ‘*triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods’*. How this was planned and implemented for the research is illustrated earlier in the chapter with the aid of table 3 in sub section 3.2. This can mean using several kinds of methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Barbour (1998) contests this suggestion as she perceives it as becoming problematic when mixing methods within one paradigm. However, she affirms triangulation to be implemented successfully in qualitative research needs to be redefined. From qualitative research viewpoint reliability, validity and triangulation, to be significant must be redefined to allow for the opportunity of establishing the truth in a multitude of ways. Whittemore and Chase (2001) discuss the validity of qualitative research relies on utilising both primary criteria, secondary criteria as well techniques (see figure 4). They categorise the criteria as ‘*Credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity are considered primary criteria, whereas explicitness, vividness, creativity, thoroughness, congruence, and sensitivity are considered secondary criteria*…’ (ibid, p. 529). Whittemore and Chase (2001) contend that one cannot be used alone, primary criteria is required for all qualitative research whereas secondary criteria offer additional levels of quality to the research validity.

**Figure 4: Contemporary Synthesis of Validity Criteria in Qualitative Research**

**Primary Criteria**

Integrity Authenticity

Credibility Criticality

**Secondary Criteria**

Vividness Explicitness

Creativity Thoroughness

Congruence

The validity of the research which demonstrates it has measured what it was intended to measured is evident in the triangulation of research methods, utilising both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Patton, 2001). Healy and Perry (2000) support this approach, they suggest that while making a judgement on both the reliability and validity of research we need to rely on multiple perceptions about a single reality. By involving teachers, managers, online questionnaires, 1-1 interviews, a professional dialogue diary, data from both internal and external systems as well as research papers from the field, this thesis considers the interpretations and perceptions from multiple sources.

**3.10 Summary**

In this chapter I have the discussed the CHAT theory and how it has been used as a framework for the research. This has been achieved by sharing the activity theory triangle as well as identifying how each element of the triangle has been utilised from the planning to the implementation stage of the research. The analysis of the data collected follows in chapter 4 which uses the CHAT theory to construct the knowledge with regards to the impact of the introducing training needs analysis sessions.

**Chapter 4: Research Findings and Analysis**

**4.1 Introduction**

The research aim was to change the approach to continuous professional learning and development. By introducing departmental training needs analysis meetings and assessing the impact on participants.

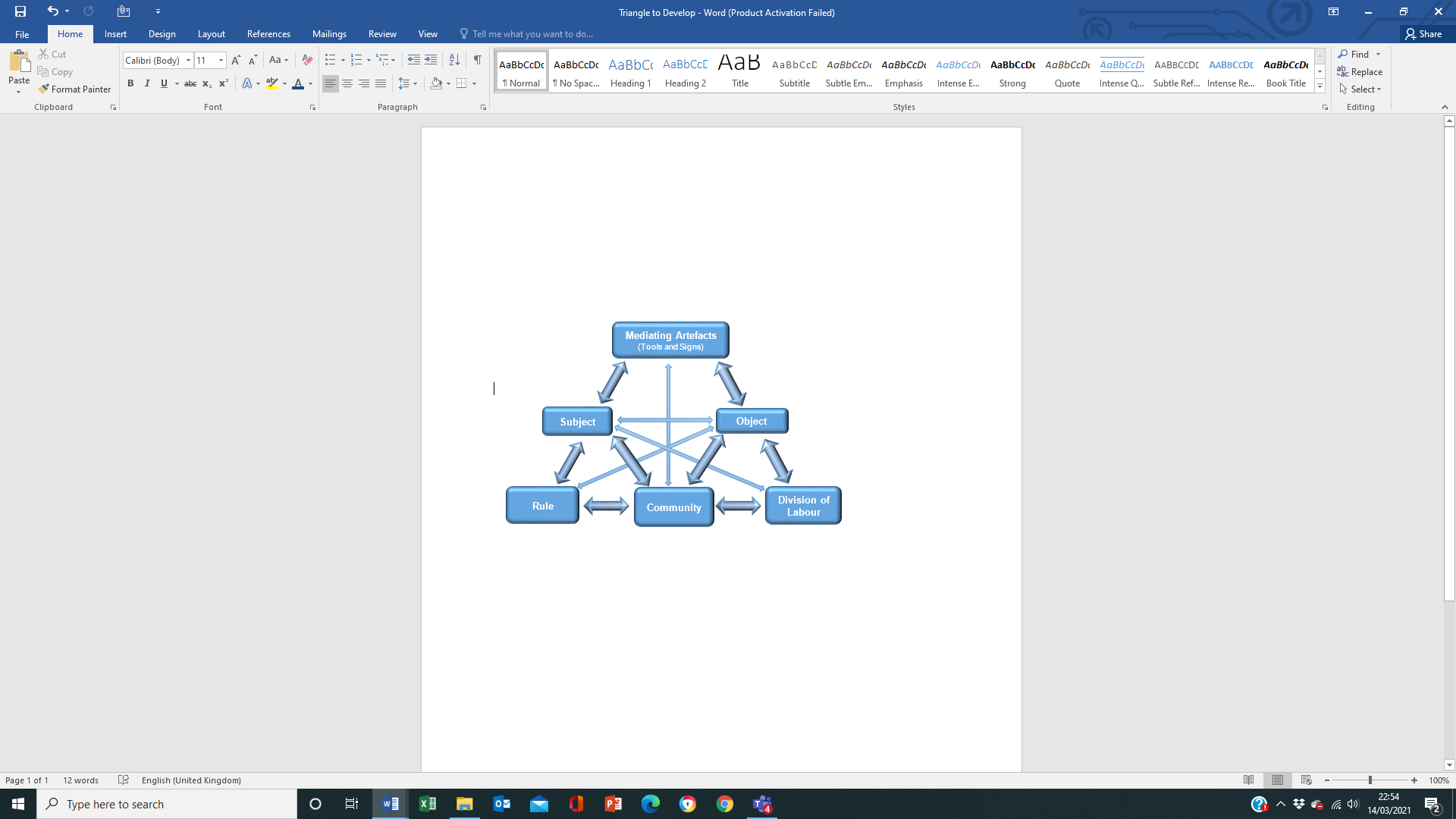
The research questions for this study were:

* Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?
* What do teachers and research identify as effective professional learning activities which positively impact on professional development and classroom practice?
* Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?

The research as discussed in the methodology chapter was carried out in an educational setting which is a complex environment. It involved colleagues who all individually held their own perspectives. The research was carried out within a natural setting and so required focus on both the participants as well as recognising the *‘complex contextual environment’* (Davis, 2012, p.95). Activity theory has been explored to determined its usefulness within educational settings and teacher education research within schools and universities (Ellis *et al*, 2010; Feldman & Weiss, 2010). However, it has not, to my knowledge been utilised in the further education sector on the professional learning and development of teachers. Activity theory is considered to assist with understanding the change and development which occurs in these settings as a result of the research carried out. Activity theory offers tools and approaches for analysing ‘*collective activity, interactions within a community of practice and structural change and development’* (Davies, p.95). Activity theory research observes human activity as the basic unit of analysis which includes both internal (mental) and external (physical) activity. These actions are often illustrated with the aid of the activity triangle which assists with planning the fundamental components which are to be analysed. The research population were actively involved in working towards trying to achieve the research intended outcome which was to increase participation and collaborative learning at work. Figure 1 offers a visual aid to how activity theory has been utilised in the analysis of the research findings which supports it use as a methodological framework discussed in the methodology chapter in sub section 3.3. Activity theory is discussed in depth in the literature review in sub section 2.3.4 which also reinforces its significance to this research.

**Figure 1: Utilising Activity Theory for Analysing Research**

* Language
* Professional Dialogue, Opinions, Views
* TNA Documentation
* Departmental Action Plans
* Interview Records
* Online Questionnaire Responses



Teachers

To increase engagement in professional development and collaborative learning.

Teacher as Individual and collaborator

* Increased engagement in professional learning and development.
* Ownership/leading on professional learning and development.
* Identifying the most effective forms of professional learning and development.
* Enhancing teaching practice.
* Leading on activities
* Drawing on experience
* Positioning oneself within the community

Engagement in Training Needs Analysis as well as Professional Learning and Development

* Departmental Teaching Teams
* Departmental Managers

This first section of the chapter will present the college learning, teaching and assessment data from the learner satisfaction survey, formal observations of learning, teaching and assessment. Whole college data on annual retention and achievement will also be presented. Three-year data trends have been used, the first year being 2011-2012 which was the year before the research was initiated. The second section will share each research question, the findings and analysis utilising the cultural historical activity theory (CHAT). This section was devised in a way to enable the reader to have a clear view of the findings and impact for each of the research questions.

Of course, the most significant aspect of the research was to develop a greater understanding of any behavioural or attitudinal changes in teachers in terms of participation and engagement. It was hoped that changing the approach may set the foundation for teachers to work collaboratively, participating in communities of practice. This is the reason why the CHAT framework has been used as the subject was the teachers and how they worked both independently as well as with colleagues in a community to generate new knowledge and skills. The *mediating artefacts* were the tools used by the teachers and I to organise the activity. This assisted with the triangulation of sources. The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of colleagues’ thoughts, opinions and possible challenges with regards to their professional learning and development.

The main focus of professional learning and development for teachers is to improve their practice thus enhancing the learners’ experience. This should then have an impact on learners’ success towards achieving the qualifications towards which they are studying (Creemers *et al,* 2013; De Vries, *et al*, 3013; Jensen *et al*, 2016). With this in mind the following mechanisms have been utilised to gather evidence of any impact the action research may have contributed towards:

* Learner satisfaction surveys focusing on the learning, teaching and assessment section
* Formal learning, teaching and assessment observation grades
* The college annual retention and achievement rates

**4.2 College observation of learning, teaching and assessment data.**

The data presented in this section has been taken from the three main sources which are utilised by senior and middle management. They are used to measure the quality of the learning, teaching and assessment across the curriculum offer. This data was not part of the research activity. It was a process which was conducted outside of the research which could be used as a tool in the analysis. External organisations were contracted to provide this information which is discussed further in each sub section. The learner satisfaction survey includes a variety of questions. However, only the ones associated with learning, teaching and assessment are considered for this study. The formal learning, teaching and assessment grade profile has been included for consideration as well as retention and achievement figures. The retention and achievement data offers an interesting account and discussion. Historically the college was very good at retaining learners until the end of the academic year which is evident in the 3-year data trend (see table 3). However, the gap between the retention and those who actually achieved the qualification at the end of the academic year was often approximately 10%. The college executive leadership team would never expect that the gap between retention and achievement to be more than 1-2%. This was the clear message given to all curriculum managers during management meetings. If the learners were retained until the end of the academic year it was an expectation that they should achieve the qualification. This section offers analysis and discussion with regards to the three sets of data.

**4.2.1 Quality Drives Performance (QDP) Learner Satisfaction Survey**

There is an expectation that continuous professional learning and development should improve teaching practice and the learners’ experience. The annual QDP survey report was examined over three a year period, the year before the research was initiated and the two years of the action research. This was to add another element of data collection to the report findings (Table 1). The QDP Survey is used by colleges across the sector, the responses to each of the questions are collated and compared nationally. All learners complete the QDP survey twice annually, once following induction in October the second in March which is the ‘*on programme*’ survey. The learners are asked about the course they are studying and the experience they are having.

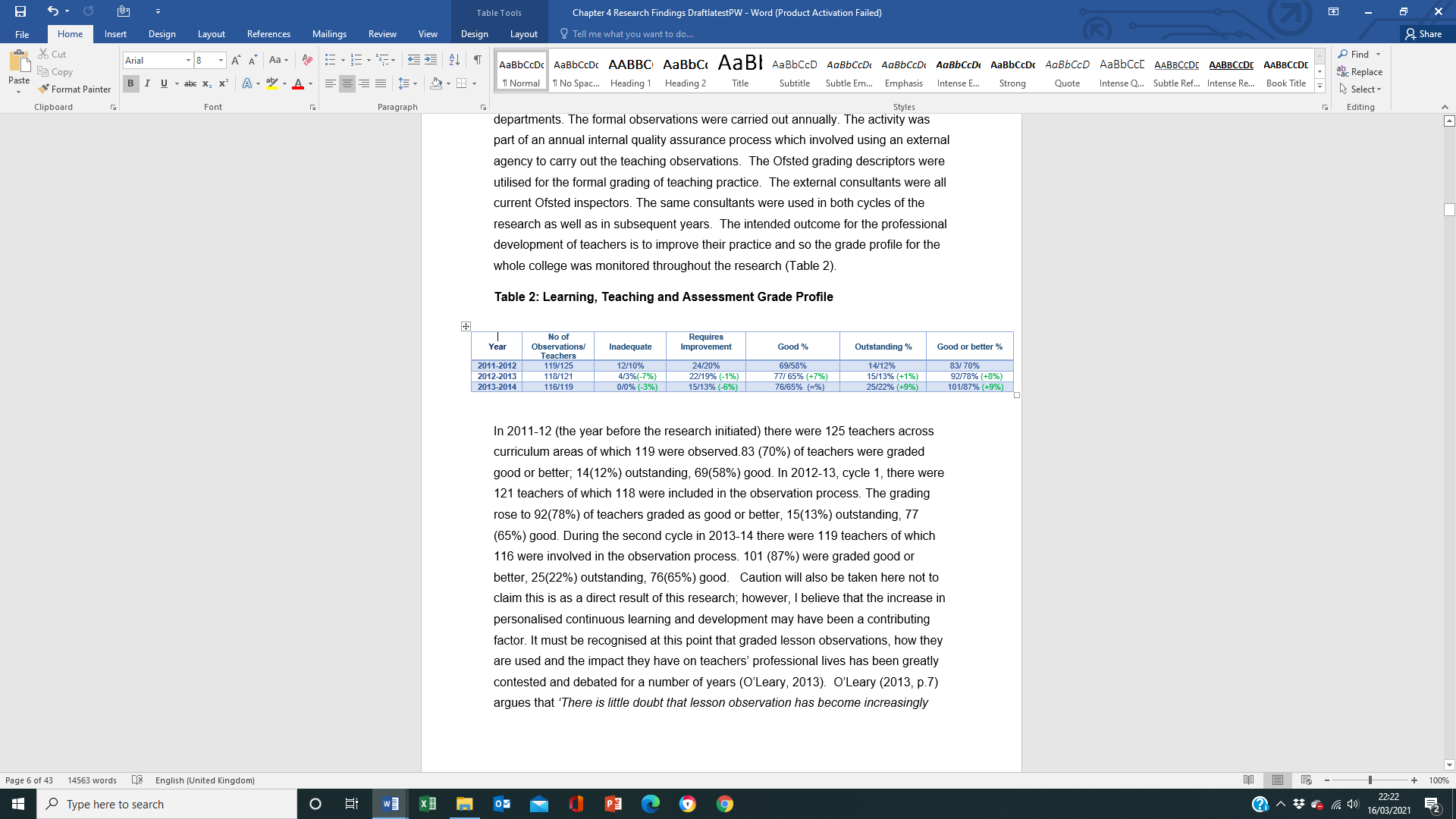
**Table 1: QDP Learner Satisfaction Survey**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | *The teaching on the course is good* | T*eachers use different ways to help with learning* | *Learning objectives are made clear to me* |
| 2011-2012 | 83% | 78% | 77% |
| 2012-2013 | 96% (+13%) | 92% (+14%) | 92% (+15%) |
| 2013-2014 | 97% (+1%) | 95% (+3%) | 95% (+3%) |

It was interesting that the affirmative response rate to the first question - which asks if *‘the teaching on the course is good’* - rose from 83% to 96% from 2011-12 (which was the year before the research initiated) to 2012-13 in cycle 1. It rose to 97% in cycle 2, 2013-14 for strongly agree and agree responses. This is one possible indicator that teaching had improved, though of course it is a limited source taken on its own. The respondents included Level 1 – Level 3 learners across all curriculum areas. The learners who completed the survey whilst studying a level 1 or 2 qualification in the first cycle would have completed it again in the second cycle while continuing their studies at the subsequent level. The respondents were therefore the same each year of the research. It was in the first cycle in 2012 that the training needs analysis meetings were introduced and professional learning and development started to become more bespoke, personalised for teachers. Other noticeable increases in rating were in the questions asking if ‘*teachers used different ways to help with learning’* which rose from 78% in 2011-12 (the year before the research initiated) to 92% in cycle 1, 2012-13 then 95% in cycle 2, 2013-14. Finally, ‘*Learning objectives are made clear to me’* from 77% in 2011-12 (the year before the research initiated) to 92% in cycle 1, 2012-13 then 95% in cycle 2, 2013-14. This thesis is not suggesting that this was solely the result of changing the approach to continuous learning and development. However, it was an important means of collecting how the learners viewed their learning experience.

**4.2.2 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Observation Grade Profile**

As part of the quality assurance process, formal, graded observations of learning, teaching and assessment were carried out on all teaching staff across curriculum departments. The formal observations were carried out annually. The activity was part of an annual internal quality assurance process which involved using an external agency to carry out the teaching observations. The Ofsted grading descriptors were utilised for the formal grading of teaching practice. The external consultants were all current Ofsted inspectors working as consultants. The same consultants were used in both cycles of the research as well as in subsequent years. The intended outcome for the professional development of teachers is to improve their practice and so the grade profile for the whole college was monitored throughout the research (Table 2).

**Table 2: Learning, Teaching and Assessment Grade Profile**

In 2011-12 (the year before the research initiated) there were 125 teachers across curriculum areas of which 119 were observed. 83 (70%) of teachers were graded good or better; 14(12%) outstanding, 69(58%) good. In 2012-13, cycle 1, there were 121 teachers of which 118 were included in the observation process. The grading rose to 92(78%) of teachers graded as good or better, 15(13%) outstanding, 77 (65%) good. During the second cycle in 2013-14 there were 119 teachers of which 116 were involved in the observation process. 101 (87%) were graded good or better, 25(22%) outstanding, 76(65%) good. These were the same teachers’ year on year. Caution will also be taken here not to claim this is as a direct result of this research; however, I believe that the increase in personalised continuous learning and development may have been a contributing factor. It must be recognised at this point that graded lesson observations, how they are used and the impact they have on teachers’ professional lives has been greatly contested and debated for a number of years (O’Leary, 2013).O’Leary (2013, p.7) argues that *‘There is little doubt that lesson observation has become increasingly associated with the monitoring of standards and teacher accountability in the sector’.* This is a view shared by Orr (2008, 2009)who believes they add to the performativity culture within FE colleges. It is not the personal intention to endorse or support this process but to simply report the percentages as data findings to acknowledge the change. It could not go unmentioned within the report that in the February of 2013 during the first research cycle the college received the two-day notice that Ofsted were going to inspect under the new framework which had a very strong focus on learning, teaching and assessment. As the learning and teaching co-ordinator (at that time) interviews were scheduled with inspectors regarding staff development and continuous improvement. This gave me the opportunity to discuss and explain the change in the approach, introducing the training needs analysis meetings to the inspectors. The report which followed the inspection stated that ‘*a highly effective and multi-faceted learning and teaching programme is developing which encourages sharing of good practice and some innovative practice between curriculum areas. Teachers are embracing the strategies and this is improving the experience of students*’ (Ofsted, 2013, p.3). This was a very encouraging statement from the inspection as the inspectors acknowledged the work being carried out to personalise professional learning and development.

**4.2.3 Annual Retention and Achievement Rates**

The role of the teacher is fundamental in the success and progress of learners. The professional learning of teachers, enhancing their skills and knowledge is a key element to their success. Teachers identified that working collaboratively had the most impact on their practice. The CHAT theory attention is on the collective not individual subjects. CHAT ‘*emphasis is on action or intervention in order to develop practice and sites of practice’* (Edwards and Daniels, 2004, p.108*).* According to research carried out by Lloyd and Davies, 2017 and Bermark, 2020 professional learning should be focused on how to improve practice to enhance learning. They share the opinion that teacher collaboration is an effective way to achieve this. Learners and their learning should be central to teachers’ professional learning and never understated as it should ensure continuous development which is relevant and committed to improvement. As Jensen *et al (*2016) suggest ‘*The focus on learning also heightens the importance of understanding students’ learning as a key component of effective teaching’.* However, Harwell (2003, p.2) argues that ‘*professional development can succeed only in settings or contexts that support it’*. This links to the CHAT discussions in sub section 4.3.1 which are illustrated in figures 2 and 3. Where teachers were supported by their managers and time allocated the collaboration took place. Teachers should be afforded the time required to engage in continuous, flexible professional learning which includes individual study as well as collaboration and reflection. Higgins *et al* (2015, p. 13) reinforce the importance of leaders giving teachers time so they are ‘*supported to engage… in a rhythm of follow up, consolidation and support activities’.* Knight (2007, p.1) supports this stating that:

*Quick fixes never last and teachers resent them; they resent going to in-services where someone is going to tell them what to do but do not help them follow up. Teachers want someone that’s going to be there, that’s going to help them for the duration, not a fly-by-night programme that’s here today and gone tomorrow*.

Learner achievement, defined by learners achieving the qualification they enrol onto and study throughout the academic year, improved annually from 84.9% in 2011-12 (the year before the research initiated) to 92.5% in cycle 2, 2013-14. Part of this could be attributed to enhancing the professional learning of teachers, taking a different approach which began with a departmental training needs analysis meeting to encourage teachers to take the lead on their learning. There is evidence that teachers in the sample group were engaging more in collaborative professional learning. However, it was how the professional learning was initiated which ascertained a substantial increase. Teachers identified that more of their professional leaning and development was self-initiated when completing the online questionnaire (see table 4).

**Table 3: Retention and Achievement**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Academic Year | Retention/  Achievement | College Results | National Average | R/A Difference |
| 2011-2012 | Retention | 96.7% | 92.1% | **+4.6** |
| Achievement | 84.9% | 91.2% | **- 6.3%** |
| 2012-2013 | Retention | 95.8% | 92.1% | **+3.7** |
| Achievement | 85.7% | 91.2% | **- 5.6%** |
| 2013-2014 | Retention | 93.7% | 92.1% | **+1.6** |
| Achievement | 92.5% | 91.4% | **+1.2%** |

It must be acknowledged at the same time that even though retention remains at 90%+ there has been a steady drop during the period of the research. A positive outlook on this is that the difference between the percentages of learners who were retained on the courses that achieved narrowed considerably (Table 3). During 2011-12 (the year before the research initiated), 96.7% of learners studied until the end of their course. However, only 84.9% achieved their qualification which resulted in 11.8% not achieving. Moving forward to cycle 2 in 2013-14, 93.7% of learners studied until the end of their course with 92.5% achieving their qualification narrowing the gap to 1.2% of learners who did not achieve. Improving teaching practice including reflection and evaluation could have played a role in the increase of learner achievement.

**4.3 Discussion and Analysis for Research Questions 1-3.**

The data collected for analysis was the result of the using various research activities (mediating artefacts) to gather the thoughts and options of both the research participants as well as the wider research population which is discussed in-depth in the methodology chapter in sub section 3.3. The teachers involved as research participants as well as the wider teaching population were the *subjects*. The focus of the activity was the *object*, which was to increase engagement in professional development and collaborative learning. The *rules* refer to the process and procedure that govern the activity. In this case there was an expectation that teachers engaged with the training needs analysis meetings as well as professional development including learning collaboratively. The *community* includes the wider population of teachers and managers who were part of the activity as well as the research participants, this *community* is made up of *subjects*. The *division of labour* is what the *subjects* do, individually or as a *community* during the activity. The data presented in each of the preceding sections is the result of various activities taking place which is discussed and illustrated in each sub-section adding context to the analysis.

**4.3.1 Q1**: ***Could a change in the approach, involving teachers from the onset with their professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?***

There were three methods of data collection to assist with identifying any changes with participation and engagement. It was firstly explored in the self-completion questionnaire and then investigated further during the 1-1 interviews. Ongoing professional dialogue with teachers and managers outside of the sample group has also been analysed. It was important for the study to identify whether teachers thought there were barriers that were preventing them participating and engaging with professional learning and development. During cycle 1 the participants’ initial thoughts and interpretations were gained on the introduction of the training needs analysis meetings at the beginning of the academic year. The training needs analysis meetings were initiated to engage teachers within their departmental teams in professional dialogue with regards to their individual and team strengths and areas for development.

***How were teachers engaging with professional learning and development?***

The self-completion questionnaires included questions which would allow for quantitative data collection (see table 4). They were utilised to identify the professional learning and development teachers were engaging in. The data for 2011-2012 has been included (highlighted in green) where possible, this was the year before the research was initiated. The data was extracted from the college professional development staff survey; there were 125 members of teaching staff at that time, and 27(22%) completed the survey. At the time of the research there were 121 teachers of which 23 (19%) were part of the sample group covering 19/20 (95%) of the curriculum departments.

**Table 4: Self- Completion Questionnaire Data**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | | 2012-13 | 2013-14 |
| Q1. Range of teaching participants taking part in the research | Construction and Engineering  Creative and Lifestyle  Health, Care, Sport & Foundation Learning  Land Based Industry | 3 (13%)  10 (44%)  4 (17%)  6 (26%) | 3 (13%)  10 (44%)  4 (17%)  6 (26%) |
| Q2. Gender of the participants | Male  Female | 12 (52%)  11 (48%) | 12 (52%)  11 (48%) |
| Q3. Teaching Contracts | Full-Time (permanent)  Part-Time (permanent)  Hourly Paid | 14 (61%)  8 (35%)  1 (4%) | 14 (61%)  9 (39%)  0 |
| Q4. Professional learning hours engaged in. 23 Respondents | Participants committed 31hrs +to professional learning activities | 16 (70%) *(15/ 56% in 2011-12)* | 17 (74%) |
| Q5. How professional learning was initiated, participants could choose more than one option. 23 responded. | Self- initiated  College lead  Mandatory | 21 (91%) *(13/48% in 2011-12)*  19 (86%) *(23/85% in 2011-12)*  17 (77%) *(21/77% in 2011-12)* | 21 (91%)  20 (87%)  11 ( 48%) |
| Q6. How often various professional learning activities to enhance/improve classroom practice and personal development were used? The percentages indicate those who agreed Quite a lot and a lot. Participants could choose more than one option. 23 respondents. | Working collaboratively with colleagues developing resources and curriculum  Workshops  Industrial/Vocational Updates  Whole College professional development | 18 (82%) *(5 /18% in 2011-12)*  17 (77%)  15 (65%) (15/*55% in 2011-12)*  13 (59%)  *(26/96% in 2011-12)* | 20 (87%)  16 (70%)  22 (96%)  18 (78%) |
| Q7. Please identify which professional learning activity has had the most impact on your personal development and classroom practice and give a brief explanation why. 23 respondents | Working collaboratively with colleagues  Industrial/Vocational Updates  Accredited Qualifications  Research Activity | 12(52%)  8(35%)  2(9%)  1(4%) | 15(65%)  8 (35%)  0  3 (13%) (included in collaboration with colleagues response) |
| Q8. Has there been any barriers preventing you from engaging in professional learning activities? 23 respondents  If yes please expand on your answer: | Yes  No  Time  Funding Available/Cost of event/training  CPD Application process Issues | 15(65%)  8(35%)  14 respondents    5(36%)  6(43%)  3(21%) | 8 (35%)  15 (65%)  6 Respondents  4(67%)  2(33%)  0 |
| Q9. Was an Individual Learning Plan (IDP) completed with a line manager? 23 Respondents | Yes  No | 21(91%) *(17/63% in 2011-12)*  2 (9%) (*10/37% in 2011-12)* | 22(96%)  1(4%) |
| Q10. Did teachers know their departmental professional development priorities? 23 Respondents | Yes  No | 12(52%) *(9/33% in 2011-12)*  11(48%) *(18/67% in 2011-12)* | 19(83%)  4(17%) |

Question 8 and 9 set out to collect, in the first instance, quantitative data. However, participants were encouraged to add further comments, in the hope of gaining an insight into the first response thus gaining qualitative data to use within the research report. This would allow information to be gathered on individual thoughts, views and interpretations from the participants. This enabled the following two themes to be identified. In the first cycle 2012-13, 15/23 (65%) participants cited that there were barriers accessing professional learning and development activities. When asked to identify what they thought were causing the barriers, which was a free text box, 6/14 (43%) of the participants cited funding. In cycle 2 2013-2014 there was a substantial decline with 8/23 (35%) indicating there were barriers. Out of the six who expanded their responses to give the reason why, 4(33%) stated funding. There were a number of teachers from various curriculum areas who did not know there was a central pot of funding for continuous professional development. As a result of this the teachers never applied for any previous to the training needs analysis meeting being introduced. This was likely the result of historic practices and experience where support and funding was not available within the organisation. Teachers in these departments had stopped applying for financial assistance to develop their practice. The new teachers who had joined these departments had been misinformed by colleagues and did not challenge or query it. This demonstrates the influence cultural historical practice can have on current engagement and teacher agency with regards to professional learning and development, where common repeated practice leads to cultures (Priestley *et al* 2015). This links to the CHAT discussion further on in this chapter which is illustrated in figure 3. If the subjects are not supported or misinformed about the activity object which is to develop practice they would not be intrinsically motivated to do so.

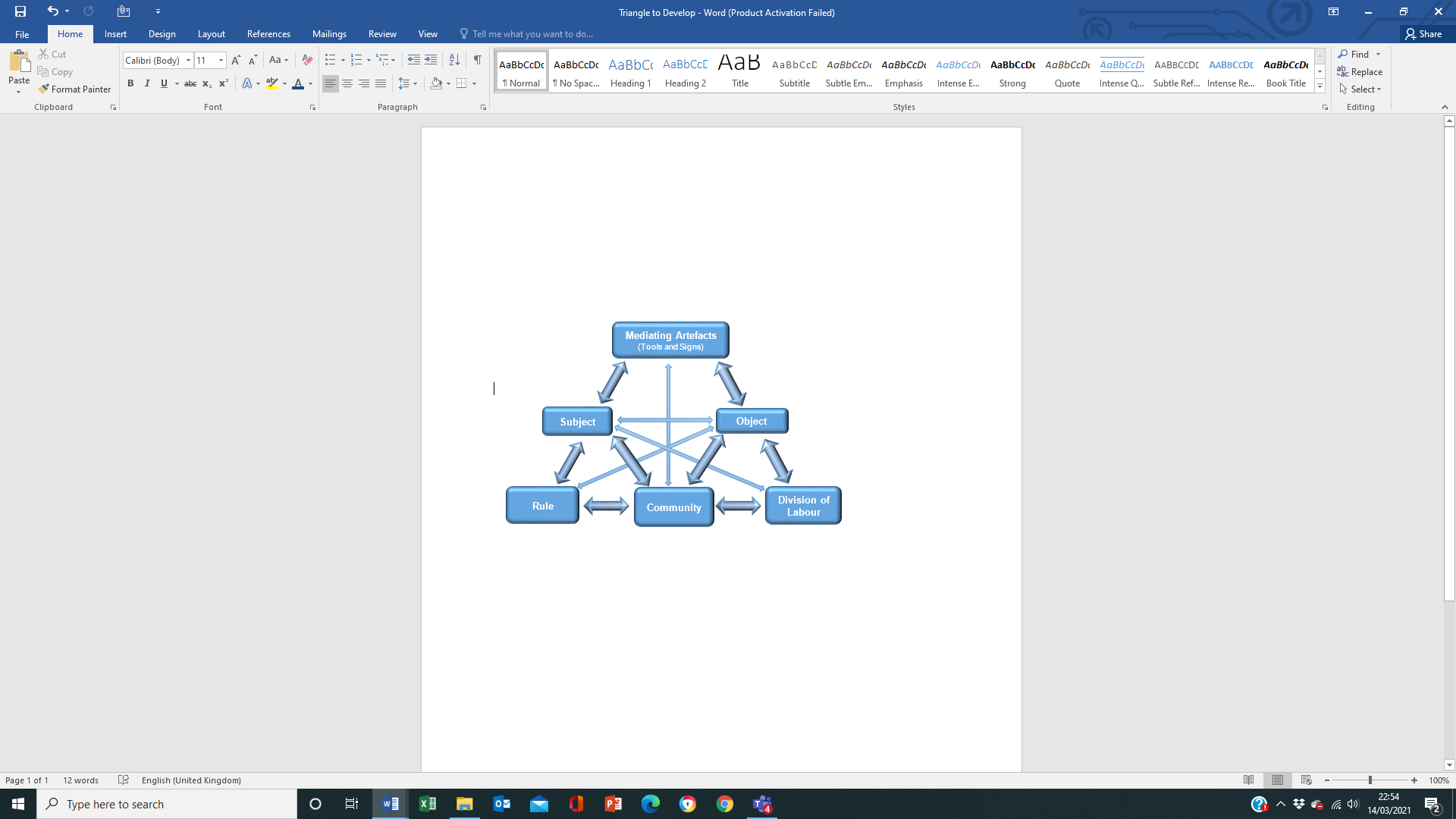
There are several factors which could be considered here; firstly, why were only some staff fully engaged in the professional learning process. This was evident in the annual professional learning logs (see appendix 12) submitted. Whilst others who were on the same teaching contract were not? Was it due to the very nature, level (entry 3 – foundation degree) and size of the groups they taught that had an impact on the teachers’ non-contact hours? Teachers were often consumed by researching, marking, pastoral and behavioural reviews as well as contacting and holding meetings with parents/carers.

Looking at this from a theoretical CHAT perspective gives a broader outlook which identifies how social forces have an impact on individual behaviour. CHAT involves collaboration, social interaction in which minds develop as a result of the activity. However, working collaboratively is not without its complications (Engeström,2008). This relates to the question of whether an individual chooses to engage or not. Past (historical) experience and practice influence how situations are perceived and where an individual would situate themselves within it. The important point here is how the individual reacts to these situations and is fundamental in the theories of both CHAT and teacher agency. Are they, as Archer (2007) would suggest ‘*passive agents’* where they just let things happen to them or ‘*active agents’* who exercise control to ensure they still engaged in professional learning and development? Could it be as Coleman (1998) proposes, they are becoming a product of the environment with no motivation to learn? Then again one could argue that teachers are using their agency to resist social forces and choose not to engage.

Question 10 was simply to identify whether or not individual teachers within departmental teams were aware of the departmental professional development priorities. The response in the first cycle 2012-13 was 12/23 (52%) which was an increase from the previous year 2011-12 of 9/27 (33%). However, still quite concerning is that only half of teachers knew the priorities they were expected to work towards. This figure rose to 19/23 (83%) in the second cycle 2013-14 identifying teachers were more aware of the departmental professional development priorities and professional dialogue with regards to it was taking place. The responsibility for ensuring teachers knew about the professional development lay with the programme area leaders (curriculum managers) for each curriculum department. The managers were to share the professional development priorities with their departmental teams during planning and review week which took place in the first week of July each year. The planning and review week was a none teaching week at the end of the academic year. It was used to review the previous year’s performance and complete self-assessment reviews. The second part of the week was dedicated to planning for the up and coming academic year. It was during this time that programme area leaders would share and discuss the initial professional development plans with each of their curriculum departments. To interpret this through CHAT (see figure 2) the mediating artefacts were the activities to be carried out. The *subjects* were the teachers (individually), the *object* was for the subjects to complete self-assessment reviews on the performance of their courses for the academic year. Then collectively as a *community*, teachers and managers were to plan for the up and coming academic year which involved developing both individual as well as departmental action plans. How these activities were carried out both individually well as collaboratively were created divisions *of labour*. The lack of awareness in 2011-12 could suggest that the *object* and *rules* for the activity were not shared and carried out effectively with the *community* by the managers. If there was lack of understanding by the teachers of what was expected from the activity and how it would inform the object this could lead to lack of engagement and collaboration due to lack of clarity.

**Figure 2: Implications of the Subject Not Understanding the Activity**

* Language
* Professional Dialogue, Opinions, Views
* Self-Assessment Reviews
* Curriculum Planning involving individual/ departmental professional development plans



* Review and complete and submit self-assessment documentation.
* Collaboratively complete and submit the curriculum planning documentation
* Collaboratively complete the departmental professional development plan.

Teachers

Teacher as Individual and collaborator

* Self-Assessing/ownership
* Increased engagement in professional learning and development.
* Identifying the most effective forms of professional learning and development for individual/department.
* Enhancing teaching practice.
* Drawing on experience
* Positioning within the community
* Ownership of curriculum offer
* Departmental Teaching Teams
* Departmental Managers
* Review and self-assess performance of courses
* Engage collaboratively to plan he curriculum for the forthcoming academic year.
* Identify individual and departmental professional development needs to develop a departmental action plan.

If the Subject does not understand the Rule due to it not being explained effectively, it negatively impacts on the Division of Labour which prevents the object being achieved.

***Teachers’ thoughts and views on the introduction of the training needs analysis meetings in cycle 1?***

1-1 interview records were analysed and informed thematic tables (see appendix 13a-14b) which were developed to assist with comparing the thoughts and opinions of research participants during both cycle 1 and 2. The first question asked in cycle 1 was what the initial first thoughts were when the teachers were asked to attend the training needs analysis meeting. This gave a mixed response with 13/23 (56%) being positive about the whole thing. PT1 stated ‘*Thought it was a good idea so training could be looked at per department instead of generic courses. So something could be developed as own needs in department’. This was* supported by PT2 comments; *‘Pleased because it felt as though you were being listened to this time and helping to move because it was specific to the team. ‘Much better than having two yearly slots for generic CPD’.* The remaining 11/23 (44%) were a little more sceptical or cautious of what to expect, worried it may it lead to disappointment. PT11 thoughts were: ‘*Another something else to do. Not positive or negative… just, well here we go…’*  PT16 confirmed that they thought *‘potentially it would just be talking shop to tick boxes, all items discussed would be filed but not acted upon’.*  PT10 ‘…*I did not have a lot of confidence in the TNA meetings actually making a difference.’* The same question was asked in the interviews with curriculum managers, 4/5 (80%) thought introducing the TNA meetings would be a good idea and a positive step forward. Only 1 had slight reservations on how helpful it would be as their teams were already very proactive and reflective. The managers were also asked how their teams initially reacted when they were informed about the training needs analysis meetings. 3/5(60%) said that teams had been positive. 1/5 (20%) were a little apprehensive, while 1/5 (20%) managers (PM4) stated some of the teams initially thought it was ‘*another thing to have to do beforehand. However afterwards teams were saying it was good to do.’* From a CHAT perspective, the lack of understanding of the activity before the training needs analysis meetings lead to apprehension. This changed once the teachers attended the meetings where the activity *objec*t was shared and clarity given with regards to how the *rules* would assist with achieving it.

There are several important factors to remember when introducing change within an organisation. The key factor which Coffield (2010, p.5) affirms is that ‘*telling people (or worse still, threatening people) that they have to change rarely works. Inviting people in the teams within which they work to find a solution to a professional problem facing them is more likely to be successful’.* The introduction of the training needs analysis meeting was to initiate this process. Teachers across college all received a consistent message about the change. Firstly, why it was being introduced which shared the activity *object and rule*. Secondly, to receive feedback on their interpretations and experience of professional learning and development. The training needs analysis meetings were to encourage teachers to collaboratively inform the professional learning and development process. Which, would achieve the *object* of the activity. The change would occur as a result of the activity.

***Were teachers engaging, taking the lead with their professional learning and development?***

The online self-completion questionnaire indicated that in both cycle 1 and 2 that 21/23 (91%) of professional development was self-initiated. This had rose from 13/27(48%) in 2011-12 the year before the research was initiated. It was not until the 1-1 interviews in cycle 2, 2013-2014 that participants were asked if teachers had taken more of a lead with their professional development since the introduction of the annual training needs analysis meetings. 20/23 (87%) of teacher participants stated they had taken the lead and 4/5 (80%) manager participants also confirmed this.

*PT4: stated that; ‘By taking the lead I have updated my specialism more and it has brought me up to date with techniques and processes which have changed since I was in practice. It also keeps my professional registration current’.*

PT8 confirmed;

*I definitely take more of a lead as now we are encouraged to whereas beforehand we weren’t asked. We just had to attend what the college managers thought we needed usually the same stuff for everyone. It used to be in July and February we were directed to attend three meetings each time, to be honest we just used to look for the shortest ones. Now we know we can apply for CPD throughout the year which makes it easier and better.*

PT 9 expressed the following;

*I think it gives you the confidence it is going to be supported. You keep your eyes open and find out more. My team focuses a lot more on CPD whereas it was a ticky box exercise and a lot of meetings were topics we were already delivering ourselves at a higher level. Great that HE training is so flexible and personalised to make it relevant to what you are doing. Gives confidence in what you are doing has an impact on students as your practice is constantly changing and without studying I would not have the knowledge.*

PT 12 explained that the introduction of the training needs analysis meetings had no impact on them taking the lead. They were already proactive with regards to their professional learning and development. Yet they did state that the new team members who were less confident had benefitted from the process. PT11 confirmed that time constraints were an issue and so they had not engaged or taken the lead. The department team had been reduced to skeleton staff with no room for flexibility. PT12 stated that ‘*if time allowed they would benefit from going back out into industry*.’

PM 1 supported the staff comments confirming

*The staff are requesting to go back out into industry as CPD and are approaching employers which has not happened previously. They are coming back into college more enthusiastic and confident about what is happening. They are ready to share their newly gained knowledge and skills with both colleagues and students.*

PM3 discussed how*:*

*The staff have always engaged in the CPD provided by the college and have regularly gone out into various professional organisations to keep their skills and practice up to date. The main difference is the number of staff engaging in research and higher education studies which is great for our area*.

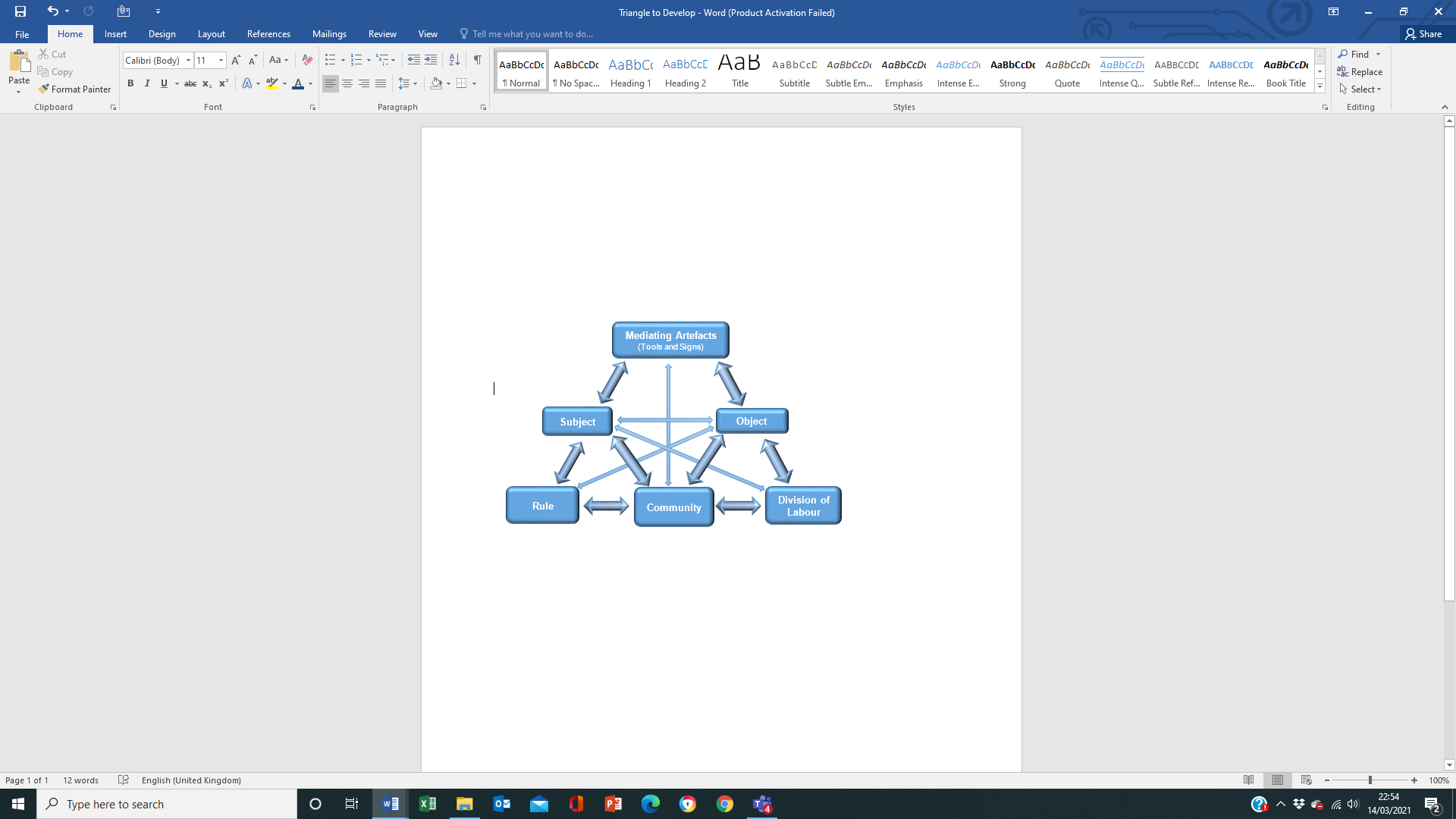
***Wider discussions which took place as a result of introducing the training needs analysis meetings.***

As part of the gathering data for the research I used a professional dialogue note book (see appendix 11). This was to capture the wider discussions with colleagues as discussed in the methodology chapter. These discussions were with both teachers and managers outside of the sample group. They were recorded, signed and dated for authenticity. Introducing the training needs analysis meetings was a change of approach which involved all teaching staff across the college. I felt using the note book to capture conversations would add to the research findings offering more qualitative data from the whole college population. This would capture a wider view on how the training needs analysis meetings and changes were being received. The professional dialogue note book was maintained over both cycle 1 and 2 of the research.

During one of the training needs analysis meetings teachers were discussing how they updated their industry expertise during their holidays and weekends. They were not aware and their manager had not informed them that it was continuous professional development which should be completed during working hours not in holidays in their own time. When this was discussed with the manager (PD6) he claimed that it was not a requirement. He was not going to give consent for it to be done during working hours as he would be short staffed. He also stated that the teachers in his department did not have time to complete any professional development activities. The manager was reminded during a long conversation which followed that awarding body requirements; professional standards as well as the college policy of 30 hours’ continuous professional development (pro rota) were to be adhered to. It was finally agreed that teaching staff must be supported to engage in professional development activities. There were three teachers who were quite new to this team (2-4 years of service) who were pushing against the restrictions which the manager had imposed over numerous years and the culture which had been created by teachers with a substantial amount of years’ service. The new teachers were engaging in professional development and encouraging reluctant colleagues to be involved. Giving consideration to this situation, the complexities of individuals and challenge to change the culture around professional learning for all to benefit resonates with the CHAT theory. The mediating artefacts were the professional development activities new teachers engaged in, and how they were encouraging others (see figure 3). The teachers within the same department as individuals (*subjects*) as well as collaboratively (*community*) completed the activities to develop their practice which was the *object* of the activity.However, because of historic practices and the views of the manager the *rules* (the professional development expectations and opportunities for teachers) were never fully established. This led to a culture where teachers did not engage in professional development due to lack of understanding of the process as support from their manager.

**Figure 3: Possible implications of Departmental Cultures on Activity**

* Language
* Professional Dialogue, Opinions, Views
* Professional development Activities/Records



* Teachers to complete a minimum of 30hrs per academic year professional development.
* Professional development activities to include both industrial and pedagogical development.
* Teachers working collaboratively to develop practice.
* Teachers are supported financially to complete professional development

Teachers

Teacher as Individual and collaborator

* Self-Assessing/ownership
* Increased engagement in professional learning and development.
* Identifying the most effective forms of professional learning and development for individual/department.
* Enhancing teaching practice.
* Drawing on experience
* Positioning within the collaboration/ community
* Ownership of curriculum offer
* Departmental Teaching Teams
* Departmental Managers
* 30 hours of professional development to be carried out each academic year.
* Both industrial (where appropriate) updating and pedagogical development.
* Attendance at annual professional development meetings.
* Independently sourcing professional development opportunities
* Professional development to be included in the annual working contract (holidays not to be used for this).
* Financial support available for professional development.
* Professional development application process.

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If the *Subjects* do not understand the *Rules* due to them not being explained effectively*,* or is not supported by the manager it could negatively impact on the *Divisions of Labour* which prevents the object being achieved. However, in this case of the new teachers, they did not allow the lack of knowledge of the rules or managerial support deter their engagement in professional development activities. The new teachers were not allowing social forces to have a negative impact on their development.

There was no managerial pressure to be involved, as discussed earlier the manager was not supportive of professional learning and development. This was a team of professional teachers with different strengths, opinions and personalities with a common purpose to develop their practice. Some were more enthusiastic than others all of which bear the characteristics of the ‘*multi-voicedness’* Engeström (2001, p.136). Engeström (2001) discusses as the second principle of an activity system which always involves a ‘*community of points of view, traditions and interests’* (*Ibid*,p.136) The division of labour in such activities create positions for participants who come with their own histories and experience.

There were many discussions when the training needs analysis meetings were initiated as part of the first cycle. During one of the very first discussions apprehensions were raised. A teacher (PD3) was concerned that the meetings were to inform the senior leadership team of the teaching teams and individual strengths but more importantly the areas for development. This teacher was worried this information would be utilised during the redundancies and restructures. These were becoming an annual occurrence due to the cutbacks in further education funding. This further demonstrates the low morale and confidence of some teachers. This could be attributed to the constant changes to policies and funding enforced by the government. It exhibits the impact social forces have on the culture within organisations where there is so much uncertainty with regards to job security. The training needs analysis activity was under pressure from forces outside of it. The pressure was on the *subjects*, teachers as individuals and well as in collaboration in the *community.* If the pressure lead to teachers feeling vulnerable and anxious as to who the information was shared with it would negatively impact on the *division of labour* due to a lack engagement. The *rule* would not be fulfilled; all of these factors would result in the *object* not being achieved. Conducting this action research, as well as holding a cross college role for several years assisted with gaining the trust from teachers across college during the change to the continuous professional development process.

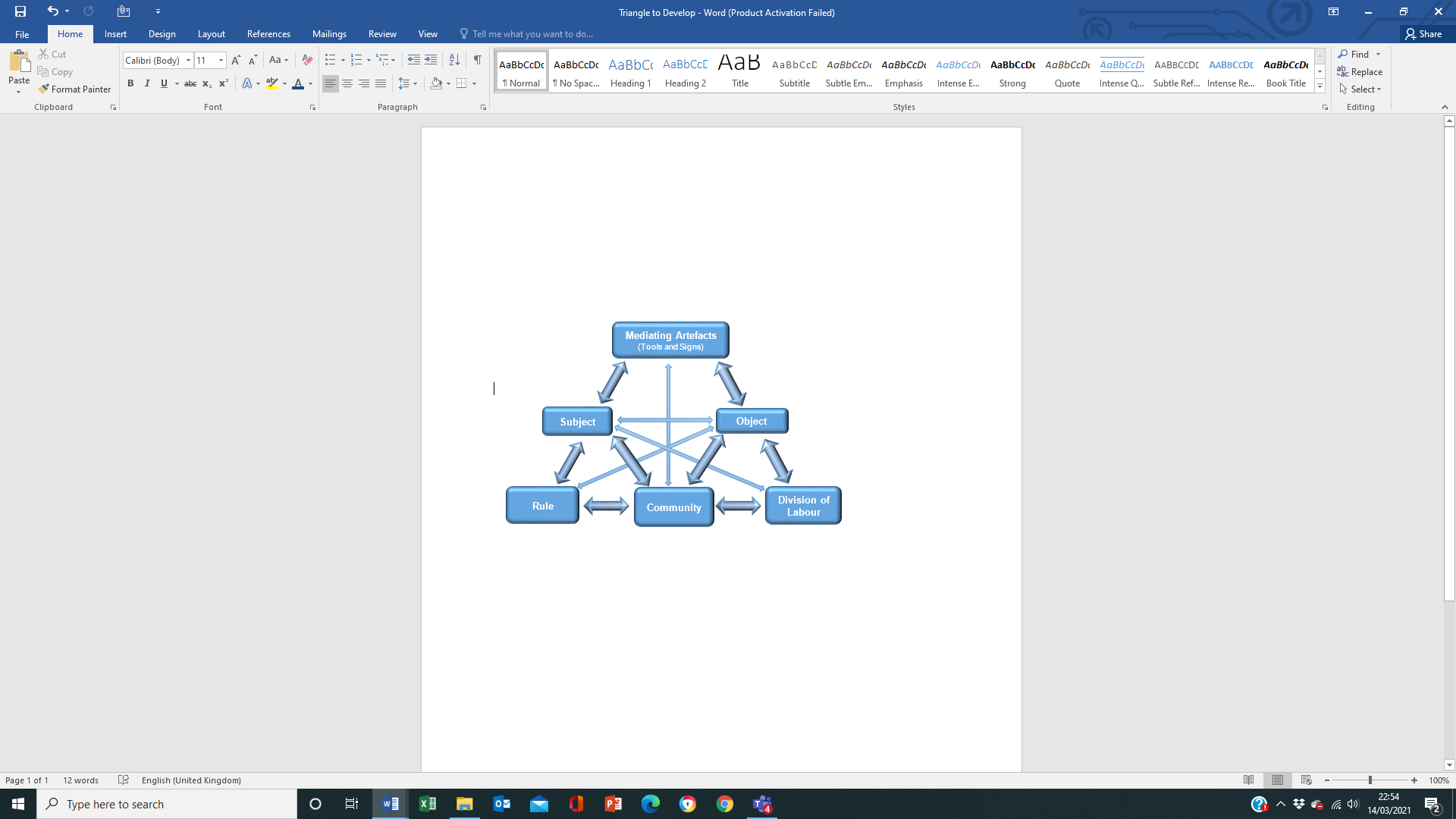
During a conversation with head of faculty (PD2) in cycle 1 she warned that staff were sceptical and would be challenging during the introduction of the training needs analysis meeting. They had been let down on numerous occasions in the past with regards to having their professional development funded. The head of faculty then stated that following the training needs analysis meeting the majority of the team felt more positive. The head of faculty reported that the team had started to source their professional development requirements to apply for funding.

During cycle 1 a head of faculty (PD10) discussed having, in his words ‘an *aging team’* who refused to go back out into industry as they repeatedly stated they had trained most of the managers and staff in organisations across the region and so would learn nothing. The head of faculty was worried about the impact their actions and attitudes were having on a new member of the team who wanted to go back out into industry on an annual basis and understood the importance of doing so. The new member to the team was worried about the repercussions if they did. This could have been the result of poor management over numerous years which allowed for this culture to be established. The new member of the team did go back out into industry which demonstrated his reflexivity as an active agent who was not going to allow the environment he was now part of to affect or influence his behaviour as a professional. He was pushing against the social forces which had been established by the team and their expectations of anyone who joined them. The new teacher was exercising and establishing his, as Fellenz (2015, p.9) would say, ‘*professional self’*.

Two teachers in the same team (PD24 &25) discussed during cycle 2 how introducing the Wednesday afternoon meeting schedule / activity (see figure 4) had enabled them to meet as a team on a regular basis. They discussed and monitored learners’ behaviour and any other issues. The participants had their capability amplified by the structure and tools available to them. Having time allocated to work collaboratively they were able to; solve problems and issues; put systems in place to improve the quality of the learners’ experience; share ideas and resources; carry out regular standardisation meetings and build relationships. The Wednesday afternoon meeting schedule was developed with the assistant principal for quality and standards. The scheduled gave an overview of the activity to be completed for each Wednesday afternoon throughout the academic year. This was then discussed and shared with the departmental managers to disseminate to their departmental teams. The *mediating artefacts* were the discussions, opinions and views which were to be shared. The *subject* was the teachers individually as well as collaboratively within the *community.* The *rule* scheduled activities for each weekly meeting which informed the *division of labour* which was a variety of activities carried both individually as well as collaboratively. The *object* of the meeting activities was to ensure the teachers were allocated time each week to work collaboratively to resolve issues and share best practice.

**Figure 4: Wednesday Afternoon Meeting Activities.**

* Language
* Professional Dialogue, Opinions, Views
* Learner issues/risk of failing
* IQA Activities
* Sharing good practice
* Problem solving



* Teachers meet and work collaboratively resolving issues.
* Teachers share best practice with regards to learning, teaching and assessment. To develop personal and team practice.

Teachers

Teacher as Individual and collaborator

* Identifying issues and developing solutions.
* IQA Activities
* Sharing best practice
* Enhancing teaching practice.
* Drawing on experience
* Positioning within the collaboration/ community
* Leading on activities
* Departmental Teaching Teams
* Departmental Managers

Meet as a team to identify issues then discuss and develop solutions /action for the following

* Enrolments
* Registrations
* Attendances
* In- year Retention
* Behaviour
* Assessing
* IQA Activities

Share learning, teaching and assessment best practice with colleagues.

***So was there an increase in engagement and collaboration?***

When analysing the data collected from the self-completion surveys; 1-1 interviews as well as the professional dialogue with colleagues outside of the sample group, there was evidence of an increase in participation. However, the substantial increases were in how the professional learning was initiated and collaboration. It was clear that some teachers had been sceptical of the training needs analysis meetings. They considered them as another hoop to jump through which would just tick another box for compliance. It was important not to view these thoughts and opinions as teachers being negative. It was more about understanding the reasons behind the scepticism. This was one of the benefits of working in the further education sector for so long and having a teaching background. I could relate to why teachers may have these feelings (Smyth and Holian, 2008), which is discussed at length in the methodology chapter in sub section 3.7.

These views may well be the result of the performativity and compliance culture entrenched into colleges across the sector. This is discussed at length in the literature review chapter in sub-section 2.2. Lucas and Crowther (2015) propose that the incorporation of colleges brought with it a focus on performability and performance which had a detrimental impact on the teachers who served within it.

The online questionnaire (question 4) evidenced an increase in engagement with professional learning activities. This rose from 15/27 (56%) in 2011-12 the year prior to the research to 16/23 (70%) in cycle 1, 2012-2013 and 17/23(74%) in cycle 2, 2013-2014. However, it was question 5 on how the professional development was initiated which saw a significant increase. 21/23 (91%) in cycle 1 and 2 compared to 13/27(48%) in 2011-2012. Question 5 also identified a substantial reduction in mandatory training from cycle1 17/23 (77%) to 11/23 (48%) which is illustrated in table 4. This confirmed that more teachers were taking the lead with their professional learning and development. This could be accredited to the training needs analysis meetings teachers attended at the beginning of the academic year. The meetings informed both the departmental professional development plans as well as the professional learning and development sessions offered during the professional development teacher training days.

There was also a considerable increase in teachers collaborating within teams. The collaboration activities involved developing the curriculum, solving issues and supporting the development of one another. This is supported by the data from question 6 of the online questionnaire. Teachers collaborating increased from 5/27 (18%) in 2011-2012 to 18 (82%) in cycle 1, 2012-13. This rose again in cycle 2, 2013-2014 to 20(87%) (see table 4). Question 6 consisted of a list of professional development activities of which the participants could choose more than one (see appendix 7a-7d). Question 7 was a free text box which offered participants the opportunity identify what professional learning activity had the most impact on their practice. The 1-1 interviews with teachers and managers also confirmed that there was an increase in collaboration. In cycle 1 question 3 and cycle 2 question 4 (see appendix 9a) teacher were asked if they had attended teaching collaboration events (see appendix 2) to develop their practice with colleagues. In cycle 1 16/23 (69%) and 21/23 (91%) in cycle 2 confirmed they had. The teaching team collaboration events were introduced during cycle 1 as an immediate response to the training needs analysis meetings.

During the research there was a significant increase in teachers working collaboratively. In 2011-2012, 5 (18%) teachers identified they were working collaboratively which rose to 18 (82%) in cycle 1 2012-2013, then to 20 (87%) in cycle 2 2013-2014 (see table 4). Respondents stated they were utilising this form of professional learning activity quite a lot. This was question 6 which offered a list of professional learning activities to choose from, participants could choose more than one activity (see appendix 7a-7d). These findings were further investigated during the 1-1 interviews. The interviews with teachers and managers confirmed that teachers were working in collaboration. In cycle 1, 2012-2013, 16/23 (69%) of teachers confirmed that they thought they were working collaboratively as a community of practice; however, sometimes in pockets rather than the whole team. In the curriculum departments where this was not taking place teachers discussed the relationships within the teams being a barrier to this PT 11 expressed their personal thoughts ‘…*I think there are two teams within the department. Pockets of this is happening within the department, not as a whole*’. The interviews with managers support this 4/5 (80%) stating that curriculum teams were working collaboratively. The managers also confirmed that teachers were working in pockets rather than the whole department in some curriculum departments. In cycle 2, 2013-2014, 17/23 (74%) teachers confirmed they were working collaboratively another 5 (22%) stated that they were working in collaboration with colleagues but not as a whole curriculum team. The interviews with managers in cycle 2 supported these findings with all managers stating the curriculum departments were working in collaboration. However, 3/5 (60%) specified this was occurring in pockets across the departments and not always as a whole curriculum team.

In terms of the activity theory the teachers as individuals, the *subject*, were engaging with the *mediating artefacts*. However, this was done in a split *community* rather than one which involved all of the teachers within the department. The *rule* was observed and the *object* achieved. Managers stated that teachers were working with the colleagues that they had good working relationships. This was rather than facing conflict and confrontation from those they did not. These teachers were engaging in discussions and debates which included sharing and agreeing with different thoughts and opinions. Nevertheless, they were doing so in what they viewed as an established environment which supports the cultural aspect of the CHAT theory. This is where past experience can be developed by current activity to create new meaning. Edwards and Daniels (2004, p.108) believe CHAT is characterised by its ‘*collectivist perspective and its emphasis on action or intervention in order to develop practice and the sites of practice’*. Although teachers were working in a split *community* to carry out the activity their focus was on the same object which was to improve their practice.

Although collaboration had increased it is important to point out that this was not the case for all teachers across curriculum departments. There were several reasons shared as to why teachers were not collaborating. These included time constraints, managerial influence and poor working relationships within curriculum teams. Research conducted by Bolam *et al*. (2005) McGregor, *et al.* (2006) and Jenson *et al.* (2016) confirm that allocated time is a crucial element of professional development. PT5 proposed that ‘working *as a team developing thoughts and ideas on teaching’* was very beneficial. PT13 affirmed that ‘*sharing ideas and resources has been really useful to use straight away in my own teaching*’. Data from question 7 which was a free text box found 15/23 (65%) of teachers identified working collaboratively with colleagues as one of the most effective forms of continuous professional development.

**4.3.2 Q2:*****What do teachers identify as the professional learning activities having the most impact on professional development and classroom practice?***

***What professional learning and development activities did teachers identify as having the most impact during cycle 1 and 2?***

In both Cycle 1, 2012-2013 and 2, 2013-2014 the self-completion questionnaires question 7 (see table 4) asked participants to identify which professional learning activities had the most impact on their practice; in both cycles all 23 participants completed this question. This question was given a free text box in the hope that thoughts and opinions would be captured to add richness to the quantitative data to enable the study to be shared in a more effective way. This would assist with exploring how different teachers viewed their professional development activities without any potential influence of the researcher on the responses. The highest ratings in cycle 1 indicated that: 12/23 (52%) of teachers identified that collaborating with colleagues as the most impact on their practice. While 8/23 (35%) of participants felt that going out to a vocational placement as having the most impact as it offered experiences which were shared with the learners. This coheres with Lave and Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation and Wenger’s (1998) communities of practice where learning is regarded as a situated activity wherein individuals build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Engeström (1987, 1999, 2001, 2007, 2010) would acknowledge this as expansive learning. He believed that these activities if continued would create a culture which is performed by both the individual and group. PT1 stressed that ‘*going back out into industry has updated my skills and knowledge. I have changed the way I deliver certain units and the information I give students’*. PT16 stated that *‘Industrial update was very good and has already impacted on teaching and learning’*.

Another popular response was engaging with academic studies which included vocational qualifications, research to update knowledge, BA (Hons) and MA studies. PT4 asserted that ‘*I personally undertook an accredited course which has had the most impact on my personal development as this has expanded my area of specialism*’. PT9 affirmed that studying for the BA (Hons) PCET enabled them ‘*to keep up to date with current practices plus political and social movement within FE as well as enabling them to network with practitioners from other areas’*.

***How did the training needs analysis meetings work within the system to impact on teachers’ professional learning and development?***

During the 1-1 in interviews in cycle 1 2012-2013, the following question was posed to the teacher participants; ‘*Has the introduction of the training needs analysis meeting allowed professional development to be more personalised to your specific needs?*’ Manager participants from the same curriculum areas were asked if they thought it had made a difference making it more personalised. Asking the same question of both allowed for their views on the new approach to be explored. This was to gain insight into their interpretations and whether they viewed things very differently. During cycle 2, 2013-2014 teacher participants were asked if they were taking the lead with their professional learning. Managers were asked if they thought teachers had started to take the lead. This approach was again to compare their interpretations. In the first cycle 11/23 (48%) of teachers and all 5 manager participants identified with their professional learning and development had benefitted from the new approach, PT14 stating;

*Yes, absolutely went back into industry and changed resources to match the updates. Done it in June when classes were closing off. Managers are very supportive of going out. This was my first industrial update for 5 years. Students liked to hear about me going out into industry and respected the fact that the teacher was being updated as well.*

While PT20 confirmed;

*Yes, in terms of identifying those individual needs and certainly in terms of giving greater thought to our individual needs this is certainly a yes… As far as colleagues are concerned I feel that there has been a major step forward, with their needs being identified and the process allowing them to gain vital initial training opportunities which will enable them to progress onto new career paths (these can be shared in that Community of Practice).*

In cycle 2, 18/23 (78%) teacher participants affirmed it had been more personalised, PT14 following on from cycle 1 stated

*Yes, it is more personalised, I think the attitude toward staff development has changed as we take the lead. We as a department don’t like days of old when we had to choose 3 CPD events from a pre-set schedule twice a year. It didn’t have any impact on teaching. The CPD I do now, for example going back out into industry makes a huge difference to confidence and teaching’*.

Two out of the three teachers who claimed it did not have an impact discussed that they were already proactive. One stated time and staffing constraints were a barrier. This teacher belonged to a department which had been subject to staffing restructures. This was part of the college’s attempt to deal with the funding cuts taking place in the further education sector. This could be counterproductive for an individual engaging in professional learning and development. They may perceive others within their department as having more charisma and confidence in their practice, and as a threat to their livelihood which could result in low self-esteem and efficacy. This is where an individual’s reflexivity could cause issues as according to Leary (2004, p19) ‘*the curse of self’: ‘The capacity to self-reflect distorts our perceptions about the world, leads us to draw inaccurate conclusions about ourselves and other people, and thus prompts us to make bad decisions on faulty information…*’

All five managers in both cycle 1 and 2 identified that teams had benefitted from a more personalised approach. PM2 confirmed that;

*Yes, undoubtedly benefitted, linked in well with appraisals going on’. 1st Aid Training went ahead and all got trained which is something which was identified and worked out well. Teachers are now starting to ask to go to conferences, networking events etc. Helped them think about focus and prioritising CPD’*.

It is worth noting that although the five managers agreed that individuals and teams had benefit two stated that the teachers who engaged with the process had benefitted, PM4 stated;

*Yes ‘the ones who have engaged with the process. This has definitely seen their confidence, skills and knowledge increasing which is great to see when they are in the classroom or RWEs. Again it’s the ones who don’t and never have engaged that we need to work more on next year.’*

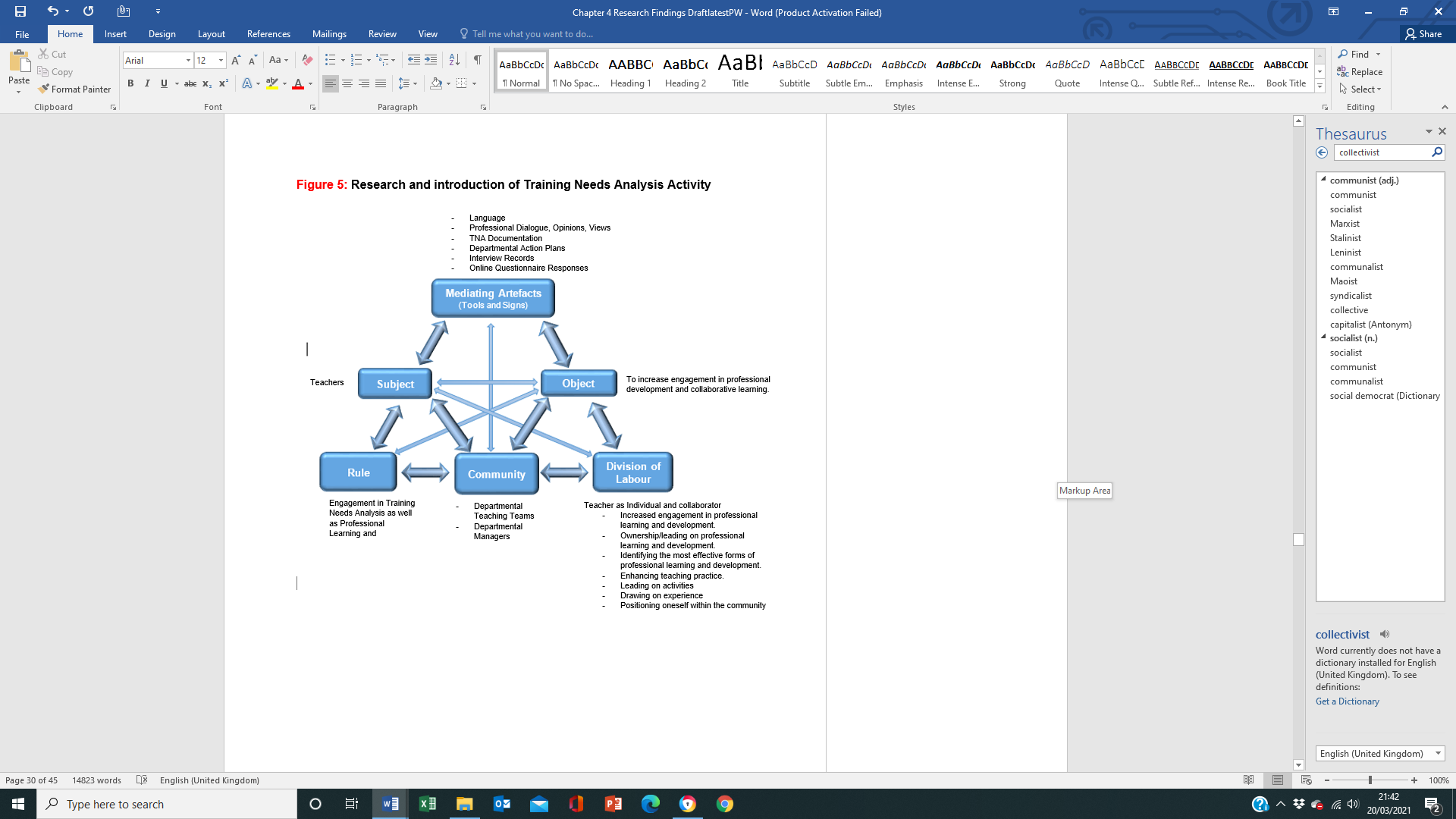
In cycle 1, 2012-2013 during the interview with PM4 it was identified that teachers felt as though professional development was being taken seriously by the organisation. Managers were asked in cycle 1 if introducing training needs analysis to the professional development process had created more work for them: 3/5 (60%) said no. The two who identified that it had, PM2 maintained that it ‘*was worth the extra work’* acknowledging it was easier to monitor teaching teams with departmental action plans being in place. PM4 also added that it was ‘*good to hand some of the responsibility back to teaching staff to take the lead on their professional development’***.**

***Wider discussions on professional learning and development activities.***

Including the discussions with colleagues outside of the sample group was important. It enabled the research to gain information on how the wider research population was interpreting the changes introduced. The activity, as a researcher conducting action research as well as in my professional role introducing the training needs analysis meetings across the whole organisation assisted with achieving the *object* (see figure 5). The *object* was to increase professional learning engagement and collaboration. The *subject,* teachers as individuals and collaboratively as a *community* followed the same *rule* which lead to a division of labour to achieve this.

**Figure 5: Research and Whole Organisation Training Needs Analysis Activity**

**Research & Whole Organisation TNA Meetings**



**Research & Whole Organisation TNA Meetings**

Research Activity

**Research & Whole Organisation TNA Meetings**

During a conversation (PD4) with one of the course team leaders (this was a teacher who also had responsibility for managing a particular course) a suggestion was made. The course team leader enquired whether teaching staff could ‘*have more time for CPD instead of just during the February and July CPD windows as she found them ineffective and restrictive to her development’.* This discussion was in contrast to another conversation (PD5) where the teacher claimed that he had been teaching for twenty-four years and did not need to go back out into industry as he was ‘*fine and well up to date’*. This statement was discussed at length, the counter argument posited with regards to the validity of his assurances, given that he had not been back into industry for twenty-four years. These and other conversations which were held with teachers and managers outside of the sample group add to the findings on the multitude of the mixed feelings, mind sets, meaning building and variants of teacher agency.

***So what did teachers identify as effective professional learning and development and did introducing the training needs analysis have an impact on it?***

During the course of this study teachers identified that collaboration with colleagues was one of the most effective forms of professional leaning and development. Teachers also highlighted the importance of keeping current and up to date with their subject specialism which involved going back into industry.

During cycle 1, 2012-2013 teaching team collaboration events were introduced into the annual professional learning and development days which continued in cycle 2, 2013-2014. These collaboration events were the result of the training needs analysis meetings as well as information gathered from the self-completion questionnaires and 1-1 interviews. Teachers identified working collaboratively with colleagues as being one of the most effective forms of professional learning and development which had a positive impact on their practice. However, it was also identified that time was a constraint which stopped this from happening. With this in mind it was important that time was allocated for teaching teams to work collaboratively during the professional development days. This also assured teachers that their thoughts and opinions were now starting to inform and influence the professional learning and development on offer. During cycle 1 the annual professional development days remained the same as in previous years, three days in July and three days in February. The important factor during the first cycle was that the training needs analysis meetings with each curriculum department informed these days. This made the professional learning sessions more specific to individual / departmental needs. As mentioned previously the professional learning and development days had formerly been led from the top down, previous continuous professional development managers had decided on the themes for each meeting with no discussions with curriculum managers or teachers.

Cycle 2, 2013-2014 involved two major changes to the professional learning and development process which was the result of cycle 1. Firstly, and very importantly weekly afternoon meeting slots were introduced. Every Wednesday afternoon from 3pm teachers in the vast majority of curriculum areas were taken off timetabled teaching sessions. This was supposed to be introduced across all campuses; however, the vice principal of one decided 4pm was early enough for his teachers to meet. This did have a detrimental impact which was discussed with participants and noted earlier in this chapter. The weekly meeting schedule was to be allocated to teaching teams so they could meet and work collaboratively on a regular basis. The focus of the meetings was informed by the discussions which took place during the training needs analysis meetings at the beginning of cycle 1. The structure of the meetings was shared in a scheduled meeting with the vice principal for quality and standards. Once it was approved a meeting was held with the programme areas leaders and heads of faculty (curriculum managers). The weekly meetings were to include; reviews on student progress / concerns; developing learning and assessment resources; standardisation of marking, quality assurance of assessment decisions, sharing best practice, professional learning and development.

The second change saw the traditional, annual two allocated professional learning and development windows in February and July removed. They were replaced with one day each half term allocated for professional learning and development. These allocated days would include both mandatory college-wide training such as health and safety, safeguarding, equality and diversity. Specific professional learning and development opportunities were also included which were informed by the training needs analysis meetings. The three days in February and July (which had previous been allocated to mandatory CPD) were identified as good openings for teachers to go back out into industry (where appropriate) for specialist updating as they fell on non-teaching days. Teachers had identified during the training needs analysis meetings that for industrial updates to be effective a minimum of three days, ideally five days per year would be very beneficial and have the most impact on their practice.

**4.3.3 Q3: *Why do some but not all teachers engage in communities of practice?***

There were several questions posed to both teacher and manager participants to assist with gaining feedback of whether teaching staff had engaged in teaching team collaboration. The training needs analysis meetings led to the introduction of teaching team collaboration events (see appendix 2) during cycle 1. The aim of introducing these events to the professional learning activities was to encourage teachers to work collaboratively in communities of practice. The events were scheduled into the professional learning days in cycle 1 and 2. The programme area leaders facilitated these meetings.

***What did teachers and managers say in relation to working with colleagues in communities of practice throughout cycle 1 and 2?***

During both cycle 1, 2012-2013 and cycle 2, 2013-2014 1-1 interviews were carried out with both teacher and manager participants. The second question in the teacher interviews in cycle 1, enquired whether or not the teams had identified any individual strengths. If they did were these shared and developed to make them departmental strengths. 18/23 (78%) of the responses maintained that they had identified individual strengths during the training needs analysis meetings. PT 18 asserted; ‘we *all have individual strengths with skills and knowledge and we all know who to go to within the team for development and to get refreshed’*. This identified how individual (*subject*) strengths through activity as *community* resulted in *division of labour* to achieve the *object* which was to develop individual strengths into departmental strengths through collaboration. From a chat perspective, individuals’ capacities were amplified by the shared intellectual and practical tools

During cycle 1, 17/23 (74%) of teachers had meet twice or thrice throughout the academic year for teaching team collaboration events / meetings. During these meetings they shared ideas, resources, best practice and industrial updates. However, there was an issue, firstly with the occurrence of these meetings as well as the fact they were taking place over lunchtimes informally or towards the end of the academic year. During the 1-1 interviews 5/23 (22%) of teachers stated they did not have time to meet as a team to use the individual strengths to develop which was a barrier to development. 18/23 (78%) stated that they did have time which was due to the programme area leader ensuring the all teaching timetables were blocked out on a Wednesday afternoon from 3pm. This enabled teachers time to attend the meetings. Teachers having various teaching timetables plus teaching across different campuses made it impossible to meet as a team on a regular basis, in some cases unattainable at all. The managers interviewed all confirmed that the teaching team collaboration events had taken place across curriculum areas with PM2 confirming she was:

*Surprised at how open teaching teams were being at sharing things…planned learning to learn together…working very well. Team asked to do TTCE with support staff, a very good meeting, well received. The TTCE have been really productive, staff want to talk and work with each other both departments and teams across my curriculum areas.*

This contradicted what 22% of the teacher participants had stated. On further investigation one of the managers had included the teaching collaboration events into the meetings they usually held with their departmental teams. Again we see here where the lack of clarity with the regards to the activity *object* is lost in interpretation to the point where the teachers did not know that they were taking a part in them. This was not the way the teaching team collaboration events were supposed to be executed.

A brief report was produced at the end of cycle 1, 2012-2013 for the college executive management team. It identified the difficulty teaching teams were having with regards to organising and attending meetings and collaborative events. One of the recommendations of the report was to have an identified afternoon slot where all teaching staff were off timetable, allocating a regular time to meet. A Wednesday afternoon was suggested and this was scheduled into 2013-14 academic year which coincided with the second cycle of research commencing. The same question was asked with regards to teaching team collaboration events / meetings in cycle 2 where 21/23 (91%) of teachers identifying they were meeting up on a regular basis PT3 stated that ‘*We collaborate quite a bit, really benefitted the team massively pulling us all together. We are developing more and more resources and ideas plus co-teaching some of the HND units which both the staff involved and students really enjoy, it is now written into the SoW, as it gives students the experience of live debates.’* PT5 affirmed *‘we have had several events where members of the team have taken the lead to develop all our skills and knowledge. We have also invited industrial experts in to train us on certain aspects to keep our skills up to date and current.’* All five managers included in this study confirmed this in cycle 2 stating;

These *have happened on the Wednesday afternoons and I have shared the good practice to wider departments across college. These meetings have seen individuals who have been identified during the observations or learning walks as having good practice, share it. Their confidence has definitely grown as a result o*f it (PM2).

PM4 confirmed;

*They took place but I just dipped in and out of one or two as the programme area leaders (middle management) lead on them. The feedback from both staff and managers was positive with regards to the ideas that were exchanged and developed*.

Teachers in the cycle 2 were asked in question 3 if the introduction of the Wednesday afternoon meeting slots had assisted with collaborating as a team 16/23 (69%) stated it had. PT2.claimed;

*These have been great for getting together to share information on students to ensure they are supported and kept on track. We also do moderation, Internal Verifying and share ideas as well as developing our resources*

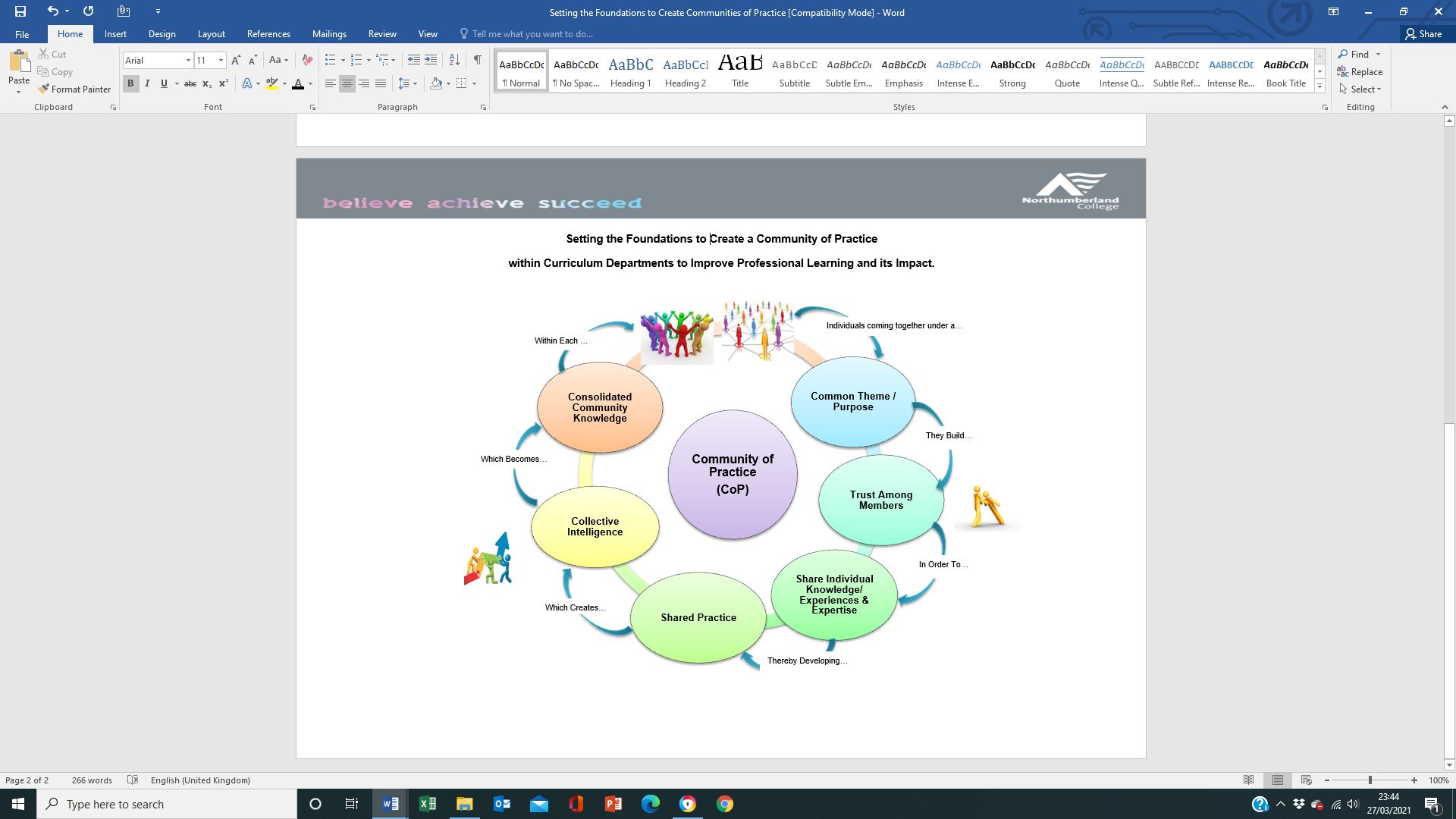
PT8 acknowledged;

*The course team meetings work really well inducting new NVQ tutors. More organised so everyone can attend including the Learning Mentors, Learning Advocates, Functional Skills tutors and Apprenticeship Team. It has also helped colleagues use the same format for their internal BTEC paperwork and NQF qualifications are brought up to speed. The Wednesday slots have enabled us to have an identified time where we can all meet as a team. The team didn’t have the time beforehand; however; everyone seems more committed to improving what we deliver.*

7/23 (31%) of teachers who reported they were not engaging with the collaboration meetings confirmed that their managers had decided they would commence at 4.15pm on the Wednesday. This was instead of the proposed 3pm so they were not benefiting from the longer meeting their colleagues in other departments were benefiting from. PT13 confirmed that; *‘we do not get the Wednesday afternoon together so I feel we miss out on what other departments are doing.’* PT15 shared their frustration*; ’I hate Wednesday afternoons as we don’t start till 4.15 and it often runs over, it’s the end of the day and you are exhausted and can do without attending meetings. If we finished at 3pm like other areas that would be much better as we would have longer together instead of it being bolted onto the end of the day.’*  The decision by some managers not to give some teachers dedicated, regular time to collaborate could have a negative impact on their agency. As individuals they were not afforded the time to collaborate (like their colleagues). This may have lead to them feeling as though they were not valued as professionals. As Archer (2003) highlights individuals reflect on experiences and make their own perceptions so this may well have been the case. This could in turn contribute to the actions they took towards their professional learning and development. This is an example of how social forces can influence thoughts and actions. Again all five managers confirmed the Wednesday scheduled meetings were having a positive impact though two did profess that they did not have full engagement from whole teams. It was surprising that some of the active participation was in the areas where teachers were not allocated the 3pm onward meeting schedules. Could this be the resilient teachers who against the influencing factors which restrict their time and flexibility still display the determination to engage and collaborate with one another?

It was important to share a visual representation of a community of practice (see figure 6) with the participants before they answered question 4 in the first cycle and again when the same question was posed in cycle 2.

**Figure 6: Community of Practice**



(Allan, 2008)

Teacher and manager participants may have had their own ideas and interpretations of a community of practice. It was imperative to establish a common ground on which the question was based and discussed. It was important not to assume that all individuals would share the same interpretations or be aware of the fundamentals of community of practice. The discussion surrounding the community of practice visual aid included the intricacies and complexities which often arise. Interviews were conducted with both teacher and manager participants to establish if there was any evidence of departmental teams working as a community of practice. The community of practice visual was used in both cycle 1 and 2 to initiate the discussion with participants (see figure 6). In cycle 1 it was to establish if teams thought they were already collaborating and working as a community of practice as this would enable any change to be identified when discussed again in cycle 2.

Both teachers and managers in cycles 1 and 2 were asked if the community of practice visual resembled what they believed was occurring. This was regards to the teaching team collaboration events as well as any other occasions where they felt as though they were working in a community of practice. In cycle 1, PT14 stressed whilst discussing her team ‘Definitely *got trust and we are very close. New starters in team so finding out up to date information. D… shares ideas, new members of staff coming in fresh from industry so they are sharing their updated knowledge whilst long term members of the team support them with teaching skills and strategies’.* PT20 maintained *‘I feel as a team we do work within a community of practice. This, however, is not always done as a conscious decision. It is how things must and can only work, particularly in a small team such as ours working in such a potential high risk industry’.* In cycle 1, 16/23 (70%) of teachers confirmed that they thought were working in a community of practice. However, 6/16 (37%) of these verified that this was happening in pockets within teams rather than the whole team together;

*Not everyone in team, some are reluctant to fit into this. It tends to be those who are experienced in industry and new members of staff who have a passion for learning; this establishes modern ideas for all. New staff are good for long serving ones as they constantly question why things are done in certain ways and suggest alternatives and these sometimes offer more up to date ways of doing things, good for all involved’ (*PT3)*.*

When the same question was asked in the second cycle 16/23 (70%) felt as though they were working in a community of practice as a whole team with 6/23 (26%) still working in small groups not as a whole team and 1/23 (4%) which was one department stated not at all. PT3 discussed an improvement in the second cycle ‘‘*without realising it we are now working as a CoP both within and outside of the department*…’

During cycle 1, Managers also confirmed there were elements which resembled a community of practice evident. However, quite often they were made up of small pockets (groups) rather than a whole team approach. PM1 emphasising that they were ‘*more reactive than proactive due to staffing issues. Lots of planning that can’t be done. Capacity, staffing – don’t have time to do all the things that would be good to do’.* It became apparent whilst analysing the responses that time was one of the main factors restricting the development of a community of practice. When the same question was asked in cycle 2 following the introduction of the weekly Wednesday afternoon meeting slots, PM1 confirmed that ‘*Most were, well, all except one department are working much better together which is really important and key to a successful department and making sure the students are the focus and having a good experience with us’.* Wenger (1998, p.9) proposes that to develop and encourage community of practice the following must be acknowledged:

*Communities of practice do not usually require heavy institutional infrastructures, but their members do need time and space to collaborate. They do not require much management, but they can use leadership. They self-organize, but they flourish when their learning fits with their organizational environment. The art is to help such communities find resources and connections without overwhelming them with organizational meddling. This need for balance reflects the following paradox: No community can fully design the learning of another; but conversely no community can fully design its own learning.*

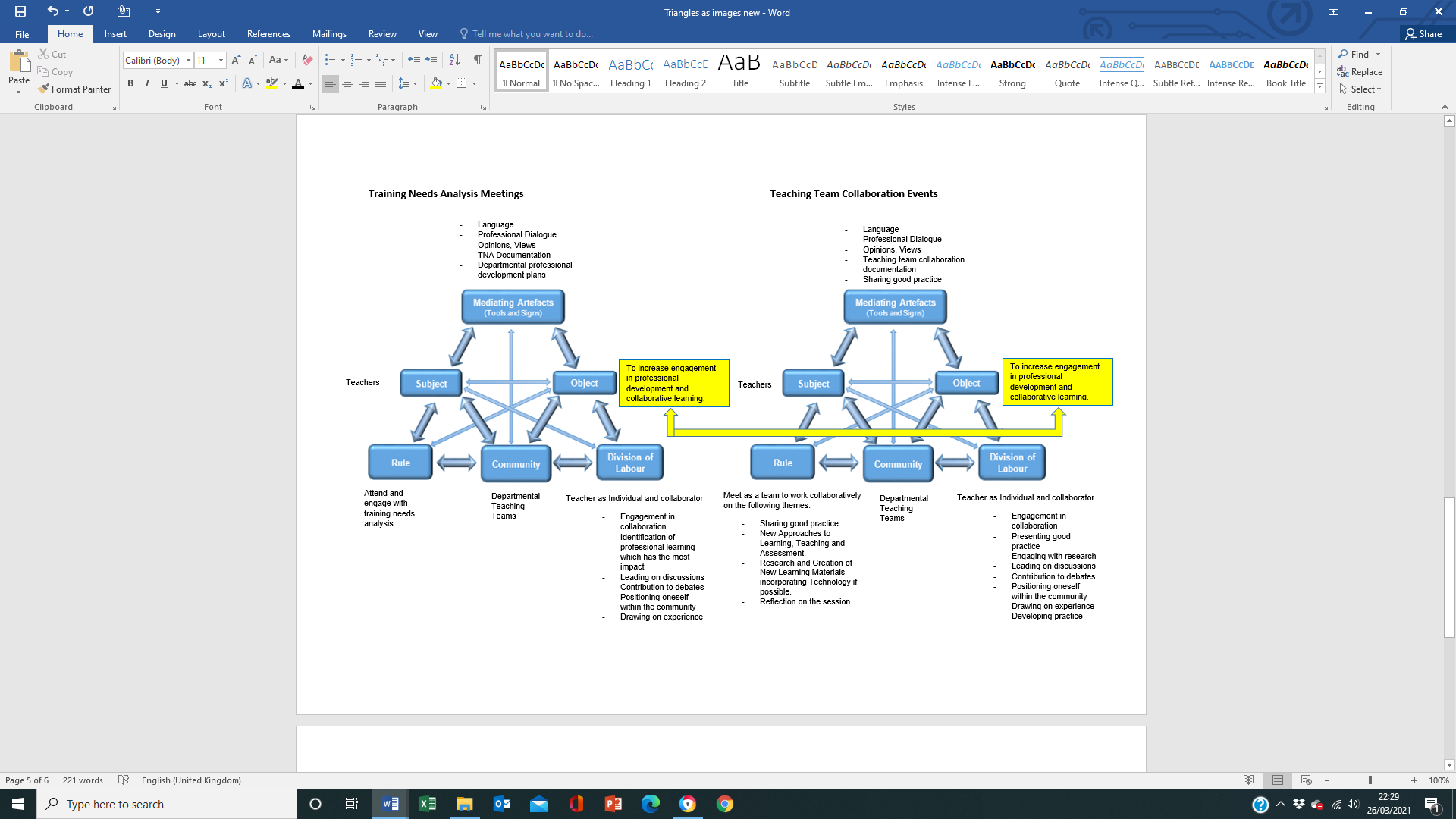
When we give consideration as to why some but not all teachers recognise and apply agency it all seems to begin with the individuals’ interpretations of the world around them. This is influenced by past and current experiences and interactions with others. This impacts on where the individual places themselves within a departmental team, the position the incumbent feels they occupy within the structural hierarchy according to the environment they are working in. Sociocultural theories maintain that individuals learn from one another by sharing practices in social situations. Lave and Wenger (1991) define this as situated learning where the focus is on social interactions to form learning environments. However, the complexities sit with individual perceptions of these interactions and how individuals view the world around them. It is the individuals’ thoughts that will play a key role in whether or not they decide to apply agency. And, as Vygotsky’s ‘conceptualising *conscientiousness’* invokes, minds are shaped and individuals’ worldviews are constituted in situ (Edwards, 2010, pg.2).

An individual’s confidence as a learner is a crucial element of how and when they apply their agency, if ever. Higgins *et al* (2015, p. 13) emphasise the importance of professional development programmes creating ‘*a rhythm of follow-up, consolidation and support activities’* all of which are supported by leaders. The support offered by departmental managers varied across college. Some were proactive and valued their staff engaging in continuous learning and development, whilst others did not share the same enthusiasm. Considering this through the CHAT theory, if the activity is not supported well. If the *object* of the activity is not shared effectively which includes sharing the rule with teachers. The *object* which was to engage teachers in collaborative professional learning would not be achieved. The focus of CHAT is on the *subject* (individual teachers) collectively as *community*. The various activities they engage in to achieve the *object* creates the *division of labour*. None of this is possible without, as stated previously, clarity, support and time. During a discussion (PD10) with a teacher, they stated that their manager advised them against completing the expected 30hrs per annum of professional learning. The manager stated that they didn’t need it because they were very experienced and well established. This teacher had been in post for twenty-two years. He wanted to go out to visit other colleges and schools to see how they approached certain topics and subjects. During a conversation (PD16) with the manager from this curriculum area he claimed that he could not see the benefit of his team engaging in continuous professional development. The manager had taught in the department before being promoted. He claimed that he did not need additional learning and development to improve his practice. So he believed his teaching team did not need it. This links closely to CHAT theory where a culture has been developed as a result of learnt behaviours. The behaviours were established as a consequence of the routines individuals take, which was then endorsed by the manager. It is in part then, how the individual responds to the social forces which may restrict their choices and whether or not they become victims of the environment they are part of, becoming *‘passive agents’*. Or on the other have they become ‘*active agents’* and take control of their own choices with regards to professional learning and development (Archer, 2007).

***So, did introducing the training needs analysis meetings and allocating time for teachers to collaborate in communities of practice have an impact?***

Introducing the teaching team collaboration events during cycle 1 was the response to the training needs analysis meetings which had been carried out at the beginning of the academic year. The events were to ensure some of the professional learning and development days included adequate time (2-3 hours) for teachers to collaborate. These meetings worked well in the curriculum departments where managers supported the concept and there were good working relationships within the team. Teaching staff confirmed this during the 1-1 interviews, the data from the self-completion questionnaires also identified an increase in collaboration. Some curriculum managers decided to organise additional shorter teaching team collaboration meetings (1hour) throughout the academic year without giving much thought to how much time was required to enable collaboration and reflection.

Both the training needs analysis meetings and teaching team collaboration events were activities to improve engagement with professional development and collaborative learning (see figure 7). That being said, the *object* of these activities could not be achieved if there was a lack of understanding of it. This has been discussed throughout this chapter.

**Figure 7: CHAT Activities: Training needs Analysis meetings and Teaching Team Collaboration Events**

**4.4 *Did introducing training needs analysis and changing the approach to professional learning and development increase engagement and collaboration?***

The findings of this study confirm much of what research is telling us from across the further education sector. These are:

Firstly, leading on the professional learning and development of teachers is problematic which is often due to time and financial constraints brought about by continuous new government agendas and the policies which follow. This is discussed in depth in sub-section 2.2 of the literature review. The literature review contends in further education there are continuous cost cutting exercises being carried out to ensure budgets meet the new funding guidelines. Curriculum departments are streamlined to make the curriculum offer more efficient and cost-effective; however, this comes with a cost to human resource. The teaching structures within curriculum departments rely more and more on term-time only, zero hour contracts which has a negative impact on professional learning and development.

Secondly, professional standards for teachers in further education do acknowledge the diverse service teachers in sector offer. However, they do not give consideration to the teacher as a whole person or the need for a personalised approach to meet their specific needs. The current as well as the history of professional standards for teachers in further education are discussed further in the literature review chapter in sub-section 2.2. Both the teachers who were participants in the sample group as well as those who attended the training needs analysis meetings identified training needs specific to their curriculum departments. During cycle 1 2012-13 and cycle 2 2013-2014 as the professional learning and development became more personalised and time allocated for collaboration teacher engagement did increase.

Thirdly, there has been a performativity and accountability culture across further education since incorporation. This has become the key focus for managers which has, at times, a detrimental impact on their relationships with teachers. The history of further education since incorporation is detailed in the literature review chapter 2 in sub-section 2.2. Following incorporation, the focus of managers became financially driven as colleges became independent of the local education authorities which brought with it efficiency challenges. Colleges were to manage and progress independently which included financially as they became part of the policy driven culture relying on centrally imposed funding. This brought with it disparaging focus on performativity and performance (Lucas and Crowther, 2015). When the training need analysis meetings were introduced in cycle 1 2012-2013 managers describe some teaching staff as being sceptical and anxious. Teachers were worried that discussing and revealing their developmental needs may be used against them by the executive leadership team in the next round of restructures and redundancies.

Introducing the training needs analysis meetings utilising the activity theory for the approach gave the *tools* (mediating artefacts) for the activity. It also allowed for the *subject* (teachers) to be viewed collectively as *community*. CHAT develops people because of the cultural amplifiers. It allows personal engagement and development but within a social environment. As an action researcher working alongside colleagues, I was part of the social environment and a user of the tools and rules that constitute it. The research gave teachers the opportunity to both discuss what they considered to be effective continuous professional development as well offering the opportunity to take the lead on their own learning. Teachers identified that learning in collaboration with colleagues had a positive impact on their practice. The National Staff Development Council (2001) support this arguing that ‘*The most powerful forms of staff development occur in ongoing teams that meet on a regular basis, preferably for the purpose of learning, joint lesson planning and problem solving.’*  Teachers discussed the need to have regular industrial updates, going back into their specialist profession. Teachers of vocational studies are expected to uphold dual professionalism which encourages development on pedagogy as well as subject specialism which is discussed further in the literature review chapter in sub section 2.2.2. Once they enter the teaching profession it is important that both sets of skills and knowledge are under continuous development. This falls in line with the professional standards initially set by the LLUK (2007) in the New Overarching Professional Standards for Teachers, Tutors and Trainers in the Lifelong Learning Sector. These standards were revised by the Education and Training Foundation in 2014; however, they still endorsed collaboration and vocational specialist updating as key components of development.

**4.5 In summary…**

**4.5.1 Time and Support**

As discussed, time and support are crucial to the development of teachers; however, it must be acknowledged and, most importantly, valued by senior college management. If college leaders do not invest time and consideration into how continuous professional learning and development can be embedded throughout the academic year, teachers could receive unclear messages of its importance and necessity.

**4.5.2 Clarity of Expectations (Activity)**

Lack of clarity with regards to the expectations of teachers engaging in professional learning and development has been identified as having a negative impact on engagement. This has been discussed throughout the chapter when analysing the activities which took place.

**4.5.3 Cultures and Structures**

Cultures that have been established within departments can have an impact on whether teachers chose to engage or not in collaborative learning and development. In departments where professional learning and development were supported and encouraged engagement was good. However, where the managers did not support professional learning and development there were examples where this had a negative impact on teachers engaging. This is discussed throughout the chapter.

**4.5.4 Individual Interpretation and Agency**

Although the CHAT framework utilised focused on individual teachers as collective it is importance acknowledge the importance of the individual within the community. This is discussed in detail in the literature review in sub-section 2.3. How individuals view themselves as learners as well as where they positon themselves within a departmental team influences how and when they choose to engage in professional development and collaborative learning.

These four key findings will be discussed further in the concluding chapter along with recommendations to be considered.

**Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations**

**5.1 Back to the Beginning…**

This action research set out to change and evaluate the approach to continuous professional learning and development for teachers within my organisation. This chapter will define the conclusions with regards to what the research discovered. It will then discuss the implications of the professional development of teachers in further education. The recommendations will then offer possible solutions to the challenges identified.

**5.2 Conclusions**

The conclusions which were identified in the findings chapter in sub-section 4.5 were; Time and Support (4.5.1); Clarity of Expectations (4.5.2); Cultures and Structures (4.5.3); Individual Interpretation and Agency (4.5.4). The conclusions are threaded through the discussions which follow and will be referenced throughout.

**5.2.1 Changes introduced during the research and their impact.**

Both the executive team and curriculum managers were very surprised at the two key themes which were emerging from the training needs analysis meetings in the first cycle 2012-2013. Firstly, the majority of teachers discussed how they valued working in collaboration with their colleagues which developed their practice. They wanted time allocated so they could discuss and solve issues as well as share ideas on developing the curriculum and delivery of it *(4.5.1 Time and Support)*. During cycle one, 2012-2013 teaching team collaboration events were introduced as an immediate response to what teachers were saying during the training needs analysis meetings. These events were added to the annual professional learning schedules which were still three days in February and three days in July. Although, due to the curriculum managers not sharing the *object* (intended outcomes) clearly they had minimal impact *(4.5.2 Clarity of Expectations).* This was due to the lack of clarity about what the meetings were focused on, which left participants confused as discussed further and illustrated in chapter 4 sub-section 4.3. The positive feedback from the meetings came from curriculum areas where managers supported the idea of teaching teams’ collaboration events, took part in them and gave clear guidance *(4.5.1 Time and Support)*. When the weekly meeting schedule was introduced in cycle two 2013-2014 to give teachers time to meet and collaborate the feedback on them was very positive. It must be mentioned again it was where managers supported the teaching teams with the meetings which had the most impact and positive feedback (*4.5.1 Time and Support/4.5.2 Clarity of Expectations*).

Secondly, teachers stressed the importance of keeping their subject specialism up to date which included going back into industry (4.5.4 *Individual Interpretation and Agency)*. During the training needs analysis meetings, discussions took place which identified that a minimum of three days annually would be required. Allowing three days would have a positive impact on their practice. Ideally, five days would have the maximum impact. During the second cycle 2013-2014, it was discussed that the three days in the February half term and three days in July which traditionally had been professional learning days would be a good opportunity to engage in this as teachers were all off their teaching timetable (*4.5.1 Time and Support)*.

The discussions with teachers during the training needs analysis meetings demonstrated that the teachers were not expecting nor requesting large sums of money being spent on their professional learning and development. Neither were teachers insisting that they needed to go on secondment back into industry for months on end to update their subject specialism. Both of the key themes identified during the training needs analysis meetings were achievable outcomes which would have a positive impact with the minimum financial support required (*4.5.1 Time and Support)*.

**5.2.2 The importance of considering the teacher as a whole person and how it influences agency.**

The findings from this research revealed that teachers in the further education sector (indeed in any sector) arrive at the starting point of their teaching career with diverse life experiences. These experiences could influence how they engaged with continuous professional learning and development. This leads to the conclusion made in the findings chapter in sub-section 4.5.4. with regards to *Individual Interpretation and Agency* which are influenced by experiences. This is discussed further in the literature review, sub-section 2.8.1. This finding is supported by Jarvis (2006), Curzon (1983) and Cooper (1990) who highlight the complexities of human learning.

The importance of looking at teachers as a whole person in their context not just as a professional became apparent during the research. There are many factors which may impact on their professional self and the way they engage with colleagues, managers and professional learning and development (*4.5.1 Time and Support)*. Looking at the whole person including the emotional labour which impacts upon both professional and private lives and the working environment has been highlighted in the work of Hochschild (2003), Denzin (1984); Hargreaves (1999); Goodson and Hargreaves (1996). Teaching involves a great deal of emotional labour which is often not understood or taken into account by those outside of the profession. Teaching encompasses the role of pastoral support where most teachers dedicate a great deal of time and empathy to support learners both young and old through often personal issues. These issues, if left unresolved would have a negative impact on their learning and progression (Fellenz, 2015; Hargreaves, 1998; Salisbury *et al*, 2006) Teachers are constantly being reminded to be inclusive and differentiate learning to ensure all learners can successfully engage and develop their skills and knowledge. Research in the field supports the recognition that human learning and development is complex.

During the research project (and thereafter) some teachers within the organisation increased the hours of engagement in continuous professional learning and development. During the second cycle 2013-2014, 74% of teachers in the sample group engaged in 31+hours of professional learning and development. The most notable increases were in; 1) Working collaboratively with colleagues developing resources and curriculum. 2) Vocational / subject updating. It was during the training needs analysis meetings as well as the responses from the online questionnaires that teachers across the organisation identified these as having the most impact on their practice.

**5.2.3 Culture, relationship and structural impact on further education teachers**

***There is a lack of research considering the ‘whole’ teacher not just the ‘professional’ in further education.***

Acknowledging that teachers are individuals who arrive at the point of starting a teaching career with a diverse range of life experiences and how this influences their adulthood has been discussed throughout the previous chapters. This connects to two conclusions; *Time and Support* as well as *Individual Interpretation and Agency.*  Teachers should be afforded the time as well as support made available to develop both personally and professionally. This could be a crucial factor which affects their agency including how they engage with colleagues in communities of practice. It also influences how they perceive the world around them and in turn how they interact with others. It also affects where they place themselves within a team, department or organisation *(4.5.3 Cultures and Structures).* How teachers in further education view themselves, as discussed in the literature review in sub-section 2.7.1 is often established by previous experience including their time in specialist occupations. This supports the idea that life experiences influence an individual's professional identity as a teacher as well as how they engage with professional learning and development. It may also impact how they cope with the constant changes brought about by policymakers in the further education sector (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006; Jephcote and Salisbury, 2007).

Lingfield (2012) did acknowledge the diversity of teachers who teach in the further education sector and how government policy has hindered their progress as professionals. It is how curriculum managers have interpreted government policies that will have influenced the structure and cultures they have formed within their departments. If curriculum managers are more focused on continuous changes in policy, than supporting the individual needs and development of the teachers in their departments teachers may feel undervalued and demotivated. There is limited research in the study of the whole teacher in further education; however, there have been numerous studies in the compulsory sector which resonate the concerns at hand. Hargreaves (1993, p. viii) asserted;

*Teachers don't just have jobs. They have professional and personal lives as well. Although it seems trite to say this, many failed efforts in in-service training, teacher development and educational change more widely are precisely attributable to this neglect of the teacher as a person - to abstracting the teacher's skills from the teacher's self, the technical aspects of the teacher's work from the commitments embedded in the teacher's life. Understanding the teacher means understanding the person the teacher is.*

Another factor to consider is that there is an absence of understanding and acknowledgement from policymakers of the emotional labour associated with the teaching profession. Following incorporation, the Government's attempt at professionalising the teaching workforce in further education with a lack of understanding of its entirety led to continuous policy and change. Avis (2003) contends that during this time and thereafter teachers have witnessed their professionalism slipping away. The constant change and expectations of teachers in further education brought on by policy take no consideration of the additional anxiety they are adding to an already stressed workforce. During the training needs analysis meetings, it was evident how stressed and anxious teachers were. This was due to the constant restructures within their curriculum areas brought about by changes in policy and funding streams.

Teachers and some managers, both inside the sample group as well as those outside discussed, on almost a daily basis, how emotionally draining teaching can be. This is often because most teachers go above and beyond to ensure learners are supported through difficult times in their personal lives and the social problems they may be dealing with. This pastoral care does not come with set time scales and can consume much of a teacher’s time which researchers often refer to as the 'emotional labour’ teaching roles encompass (Fellenz, 2015; Hargreaves, 1998; Salisbury et al, 2006; Hochschild, 2003; Robson et al, 2004). It is this commitment which leads not only to learners successfully achieving but also developing, as Robson *et al*, (2004, p.189) confirm the ‘*whole person*’.

**5.2.4 *Cultures which may influence engagement and collaboration***

How social forces could play an either detrimental or empowering factor in the learning and development of teachers is discussed at length in the literature review in sub-section 2.8.1 as well as the findings and analysis chapter. The research demonstrated that teachers were influenced by departmental cultures and the social forces which played their part within them. This had an impact on whether or not individuals chose to collaborate as well as with whom the chose to collaborate with. These findings support the research already undertaken in this field. The findings are also substantiated by the socio-cultural learning theories which are discussed at length in the literature review in sub-section 2.8.1. During the training needs analysis meetings as well as the one to one interviews with teachers it became apparent that there were pockets of teachers working in collaboration whilst others chose not to engage. The relationships and dynamics (which could be the result of social forces) between teachers within various departments did have an impact on whether they all worked collaboratively or not. The teaching teams involved individuals who all had own unique life experiences and more importantly interpretation of who they were and where they placed themselves socially within the departmental team. In some cases, teachers acted as Archer (2007, p.6) would suggest ‘*passive agents’* where the environment led to what they did whilst others chose to become ‘*active agents’* pushing against departmental cultures to take control of what they wanted to do. Whether the teachers were active or passive agents depended on how they viewed themselves via personal interpretation within the department with colleagues. It depended on the professional relationships they had built with colleagues. There were definitely departmental cultures and structures in place which influenced how individuals interpreted them and applied agency. (*Cultures and Structures 4.5.3*/4.5.4 *Individual Interpretation and Agency)*.

Any robust analysis of teacher development must attend to the constraints and affordances in situ at any point in time. How cultures develop within departments and organisations can change both the environment and individual which again will have an impact on the teachers’ agency and engagement. The ecological view of agency which Biesta and Tedder (2007) introduce discusses how even if individuals have capabilities to achieve agency it rests on their interactions and the ecological conditions the interactions produce. Priestley *et al* (2012) presented a paper at the Oxford Ethnography and Education conference which support Biesta and Tedder’s (2007) view;

*Viewing agency in such terms helps us to understand how humans are able to be reflexive and creative, acting counter to societal constraints, but also how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments’* (Priestley, 2011, p. 3).

Archer’s (2007) reflexivity in which individuals have inner conversations with regards to experiences and situations highlights how someone with low reflexivity may unwittingly be subject to forces which shape them. This contrasts with those with high reflexivity having more control over where to place themselves within social groups and environments. The complexity of the locus of control underscores the necessity of understanding the whole person in their context and not just looking at the teacher and the role they play. Day *et al* (2007, p. vi) assert that; *‘Teachers’ capacities to be effective are influenced by variations in their work, lives and identities and their capacities to manage these’.* This research into the *Variations in Teachers’ Work, Lives and Effectiveness* which was conducted within primary and secondary education echoes the issues with the further education teacher as they highlighted that;

*Commitment and resilience. It is neither intrinsically stable nor unstable but can be affected positively or negatively by different degrees of tension experienced between their own educational ideals and aspirations, personal life experiences, the leadership and cultures in their schools, pupils' behaviour and relationships and the impact of external policies on their work (ibid, p. xix, 2007).*

These factors may have a detrimental effect on the morale and motivation of teachers across the educational sectors. This, in turn, could have an impact on teacher agency, professional learning and development. This assists with explaining why some but not all teachers engaged with professional development and collaborative learning. The research findings establish that there was an increase in engagement more substantially in collaboration in sub-section 4.3.2. The increase in engagement ascertained that whilst there was an increase there were still teachers who were not engaging. The increase in collaboration was often the result of pockets of teachers rather than whole departments. The teachers collaborating already had good working relationships with one another which influenced their decision to work collaboratively.

Time restrictions due to increasing pressures attributed to the culture of performativity and audit mechanisms were identified as being a barrier to professional learning and development which is discussed in the findings chapter in sub-section 4.4. This finding corresponds with other research in the field (Orr, 2008, 2009; Steer *et al.* 2007; Tummons, 2016). It can be concluded that during this research I gained substantial insight into the complexities inherent within the responsibility for the professional learning and development of teachers within the organisation. It has confirmed that the organisational issues with regards to continuous professional learning and development are actually part of a wider issue across the sector.

**5.3 Implications**

The implications are drawn from the whole research and all of the conclusions in the findings chapter. However, *4.5.1 Time and Support* as well as *4.5.4 Individual Interpretation and Agency* have the most immediate implication for policy and practice*.*  The impact of government policy on the professional development of teachers as well as the impact of incorporation is examined in the literature review in sub-section 2.7.1. The complexities of adult, socio-cultural and collaborative learning are explored in the literature chapter sub-section 2.8.

***5.3.1 The impact of government policy on the professionalism of teachers in further education.***

The research findings identified that constant changes to government policy on teacher development and professionalism did have a detrimental impact on teachers in the sector. Government policy and it impact is discussed in-depth in the literature review, sub-section 2.7. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) suggest that there is a difference between teachers’ professionalism and their professionalisation. They believe the latter involves government control which in the case of school teachers led to their deprofessionalisation which could be linked to what has occurred in the further education sector. Goodson and Hargreaves (1996) also propose that the enforcing of professional standards disregards the emotional facets of a teachers’ role and the empathy they have for both the learners learning as well as their lives.

*To ignore what teachers tell us is to accept ongoing reform as prescription. Rather, listening to what teachers tell us is to challenge the dominant power relations that exist between policy communities and their over concern for performativity, FE college managers and their managerialist perspective, and teachers’ own interests, which work to reposition and re-label both ‘worker’ and ‘manager’* (Gleeson, 2001).

**5.3.2 The *influence of incorporation on the performativity and accountability culture in further education.***

The research findings imply that the accountability culture increases performativity which is discussed further in the literature review, sub-section 2.7.2. Colleges became independent businesses which brought with it many challenges as it was introduced to ‘*a marketised economy*' (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2007) and so a quasi-business culture began. The government constantly linking the further education sector to the economy and social inclusion is bringing with it changes to funding rules. Fiscal imperatives see managers and teachers grappling to ensure they meet the audit requirements to draw down the funding which they prioritise over personal and professional development at no fault of their own (Jephcote, 2007,2009; Leitch,2006; Gleeson, Davies & Wheeler, 2005).

**5.3.3 *Lack of connection between the complexities of adult learning and the continuous learning and development of teachers in further education.***

The research confirmed that the professional development of teachers is complexed. Firstly; due to the diverse nature of the sector in which they serve. Secondly; because of the diverse starting points at which they enter a career in teaching, which is discussed in-depth in literature review, sub-section 2.8 and findings chapter, sub-section 4.3.1. If we were to consider the complexities of human learning it may assist with clarifying why the professional learning and development of teachers brings with it challenges which are often investigated by educational researchers. Lave and Wenger’s (1991) legitimate peripheral participation highlights the intricacies of people working in communities of practice. This could be associated with teachers working together within their curriculum departments. The relationships and how they develop would have an impact on individuals and their learning.

Research carried out by Jarvis (2006) and the concluding academic papers and publications examine the human learning process. Jarvis believes that it is these processes that define who we are and how we place ourselves and function in society. He maintains that human learning is an existential process. To think of teachers solely as teachers which, is simply defined in the Cambridge dictionary as ‘*someone whose job is to teach in a school or college’* and not as adult learners demonstrates a lack of commitment to understanding adult learning and the complexities associated with it. This links back to the argument that people who arrive at the point of entering a career in teaching and continue to do so do not share the same life’s experiences and learning processes. Whilst carrying out the training needs analysis meetings across various curriculum departments the different levels of confidence amongst teachers as adult learners became apparent. Whilst some engaged and enjoyed the changes and new ways of learning others found them, at first, quite stressful.

This is why teachers should not be characterised as all having the same experience or confidence when it comes to planning their professional learning and development. Both managers who hold the responsibility for professional learning and development within a college, as well as policymakers who plan to upskill and professionalise the workforce, should maybe consider carefully. It seems apparent that it is important for managers who hold the responsibility for professional learning and development should engage with and get to know the teachers both on an individual basis as well as a member of a curriculum team. This would ensure they were better informed when it comes to personalising learning and development. At best it means understanding how an individual’s perceptions of how they view themselves within a department/organisation impacts upon their response.

The research demonstrated that involving teachers and encouraging professional dialogue with regards to their continuous learning and development did, on the whole, have a positive impact with ‘*some*’ but not ‘*all*’ teachers. The annual involvement of teachers in the training needs analysis meetings has and still is a crucial element of the research and its ongoing progress.

**5.4 The limitations of the research…**

During the research curriculum managers acknowledged the importance of keeping teachers current and up to date with both their subject specialism as well as developing pedagogies. However, they too are under extreme pressure to perform successfully which encompasses having outstanding student retention and achievement rates as well as closing down their annual business plan without overspend. This is a very demanding and unpredictable working environment where priority must always be on data and finance with little room for manoeuvre. The continuous learning and development of teachers should be given serious consideration by policymakers and further education managers as research conducted by the OECD (2005) reported that teachers were the most important factor that influenced learner achievement. Day *et al* (2007, p.1) take this a step further suggesting that teachers not only assist with achievement, they develop the learners social and personal well-being so they ‘*learn because of them – not just because of what and how they teach, but, because of who they are as people’.* This research was conducted with school teachers; however, it supports the findings of the TLRP (2005). James and Biesta (2007) also supports the findings in the further education sector which stated that teachers are a *‘major influence on the quality of learning’*. It could be said that without effective teaching which includes teacher support, guidance and classroom activities learning and progress cannot be achieved (Munro, 1999; Creemers,1997; Schreerens & Bosker,1997). Inspiring teachers according to the research of Sammons *et al* (2014, p.114) *are ‘typically highly proactive in managing their own development…’*

Due to the action research being carried out as an insider and holding the responsibility for professional learning and development within the organisation there were both benefits and challenges (Costerly et al, 2010). My focus and priorities often, in everyday practice and not only during this research often conflict with the priorities of the curriculum managers who manage the teaching staff. There is great respect held for the curriculum managers accountable for curriculum planning, learner enrolment and the generation of the income leading to the pressures they have. However, that does not make the situation we find ourselves in, in the sector/organisation any less frustrating when it comes to affording the time and commitment to the professional learning and development of our teachers.

The research was restricted by time, teachers’ workload, lack of teachers to cover colleagues to attend conferences, conventions, workshops as well as going back out into the industrial setting. The constant changes in policies and funding mechanisms for the further education sector which, is discussed earlier in this chapter and further in the literature review chapter, sub-section 2.7 has seen the teacher staffing structure suffer greatly. There are fewer full-time permanent staff with more reliance on zero contracts, there is very little or no flexibility when it comes to time for attending professional learning and development events. (UCU, 2017: Bailey and Unwin, 2014).

Great care has been taken concerning ethical considerations, and my positionality and potential influence on how the findings may have been interpreted, were important to highlight to the reader. It could not be ignored that I engaged daily with not only the sample group but the whole of the teaching community across the college. It was crucial that the research gained the backing of firstly the executive management of the college via the, then, assistant principal quality and standards. The opportunity for teaching staff to become participants in the sample group was offered to teaching staff across each curriculum area. This was to ensure a good representation was sourced; male, female, full-time, part-time and hourly-paid from each curriculum area across college and campuses. An ethical statement was shared with participants (teachers and managers) to give clarity and reassurance of anonymity unless specific permission was obtained. The ethical statement ensured that participants knew that I acknowledged my duty of care towards them which was crucial with this being conducted as insider research within the workplace where teachers at times already felt vulnerable and under pressure (May, 2003; Anderson and Arsenault, 2004; Cohen *et al,* 2007). Even though great care was taken during the research it cannot be completely ruled out that my role within the college affected the research process.

The transparency of the research was vital not only for the sample group but to the wider teaching community across the college. There was, in the first cycle, during the initial training needs analysis meetings reassurance given to teachers with regards to how the information gathered was going to be used. The meetings were to discuss, listen and note the teachers' ideas and thoughts on what continuous learning and development activities would have the most impact on their practice. The concerns were that the areas for development discussed and recorded may be used as a deciding factor in the next round of redundancies and restructures. This is an example of where conducting action research within the workplace may have influenced the participants’ contributions. This was due to reassurance being given that this was not the case. Participants may not have been so trusting and forthcoming with an external researcher they did not know. The training needs analysis meetings have become common practice, an annual event now within the organisation. They take place while senior managers try to adjust the curriculum design to meet the latest policy demands and funding cuts which leaves teachers often feeling at risk and vulnerable (Avis,2003; Lucas,2004a&b).

Caution has been taken throughout the research and writing up the subsequent findings. It must be acknowledged that limitations to any research which involves the study of people lends itself to competing interpretation. This includes those involved within the research and their personal ideas about their world which leads to making meaning as well as the researcher and the reader. It must be remembered that we only truly know our own thoughts and feelings from experiences which link to our own interpretation (first-person perspective) and can only presume how others are interpreting the same experience (third-person perspective) (Robson, 2011; Arici and Toy, 2015; Thomas,2013; Mckenzie *et al,* 1997).

**5.5 Further Investigation**

This research has been of huge benefit to deepening personal knowledge with regards to the complexities to adult learning, learning theories, agency and the continuous learning and development of teachers. Nonetheless, it has opened up new avenues of interest which would also inform and hopefully improve the personal practice. The areas which are listed below were touched upon within this study; however, a greater examination is required to gain a clearer understanding of the whole teacher and not just the professional I see before me.

Ongoing research (beyond this study) should investigate:

1. How teachers within the organisation arrive at the starting point of their teaching career and why they aspire to join the teaching profession.
2. How teachers across the organisation view their professional identities and the factors on which they are established.
3. The culture both within departments as well as the whole organisation towards professionalism and continuous learning and development.

Further investigation would hopefully enable me to compare the life experiences and starting point of entering a career in teaching with establishing professional identities and cultures across the organisation. It would also assist with ensuring appropriate approaches are taken when working with various cross-college teaching teams, planning professional learning and development. The findings would add to the research already in the field and would be disseminated via further education networking events and possible publications such as ‘*inTuition*’ which is the journal for professional teachers and trainers in the further education and training sector published by the Society for Education and Training.

**5.6 Suggestions and Recommendations**

**5.6.1 Acknowledgement of the complexities for teaching in further education**

The research confirmed that teaching in the further education sector is complexed, partly due to the continuous changes in Government policy on its purpose and place within education. Teachers in further education colleges serve a very diverse sector, offering numerous qualifications from entry level to level 6. Ranging from part-time entry to employment to full-time access to higher education; work-based learning, apprenticeships and traineeships. The evolving role of further education is well researched and is discussed further in the literature review, sub-section 2.7.2. All of the conclusions from the findings chapter can be threaded through this recommendation. Time and Support (4.5.1); which is essential to ensure teachers individual development needs are identified, discussed and plans agreed to develop practice effectively. Clarity of Expectations (4.5.2); Teachers must have clarity of what is expected of them to enable progress towards professional development. Cultures and Structures (4.5.3); There are departmental cultures and structures to consider whilst working with both teams and individuals. The importance is to identify any detrimental influence they may have on teacher development. Individual Interpretation and Agency (4.5.4) which is to be mindful of individual interpretation and how that can influence agency.

It was the government commissioned Lingfield (2012) review on professionalism in further education which acknowledged the complexities for teachers who served within it (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012c*)*. Lingfield (2012) asserted that government policies had actually hindered the upskilling and professionalise the further education workforce. He acknowledged that teaching in further education is a complex profession, one which is not easily understood (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2012c*).* The diverse range of expectations of teachers in further education, which are well documented in policies and research, require consideration to gain a thorough understanding of what the role requires and the demands attached to it (Avis, 2007; Coffield 1999; Orr, 2009a&b). A ‘*one size fits all’* to either upskilling the workforce or introducing professional standards will never gain commitment from the teachers in further education. They, more than anything else, clearly illustrate the lack of understanding from Westminster of the sector and those who serve in it. (Belfield et al, 2017; Hodkinson, 2005; Tummons 2017). The teaching standards were open to individual interpretation which would influence teacher agency.

College managers with the responsibility for the professional learning and development of teachers should give attention to the whole teacher and not just the teaching role. It should be acknowledged that teachers have personal lives and responsibilities outside of their teaching role which could impact on their motivation, morale and teaching practice. As individuals, teachers will have a history of experiences and events which shape who they are and how they perceive the world around them. It is the daily activities they engage within their teaching role and departments which become common practice. These activities soon develop into expectations and that is when social forces, structures and cultures interplay (Garfinkel, 1984, Giddens, 1984, Pierson, 1998). Once these factors and the impact have been established, personalised professional learning plans could then be discussed and agreed. The primary focus of teachers is to ensure learners successfully engage with learning and achieve their goals by supporting individual needs. Teachers in the first instance are learners and so the same rules should be applied to ensure they are given the best opportunity to engage and continuously develop their teaching role. (Higgins *et al*, 2005; Hendriks *et al;* 2010).

**5.6.2 Professional learning and development as continuous**

Professional learning and development across educational sectors have been well researched and one of the important factors for effective professional development which has also been identified within this study is the duration it is given. This informed the conclusion relating to dedicating *time and support (4.5.1)*. One-day training events are deemed ineffective if they are not followed up and/or consolidated regularly. Teachers within this research, as has been found previously (Villeneuve-Smith *et al*, 2009; Jensen *et al,* 2016; Higgins *et al,* 2015) identified that more time

collaborating with colleagues or for example, going back out into industry would have a positive impact on their practice. Teachers identified that three to five days throughout the year would have the greatest impact as one day would have little or no impact. They confirmed that their learning would be consolidated with continuous visits into industry. This is discussed further in the findings chapter, sub-section 4.3. The implications that arise here are due to the skeleton staffing structures in further education sector due to the continuous changes to funding requirements. It has been identified within the research that teachers engaging in prolonged professional learning and development is hampered by the lack of colleagues available to cover meetings.

**5.6.3 Dedicated time**

As the result of the action research findings as well as the literature reviewed, conclusion *4.5.1 time and support* was established. In response to this, teachers in further education should be afforded the time to:

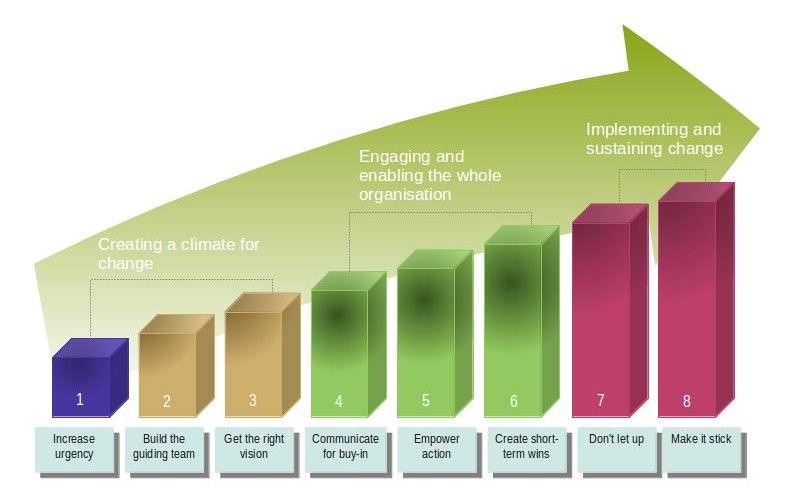
* Meet and collaborate with colleagues regularly engaging in Communities of Practice
* Return to industry on an annual basis
* Engage in action research to improve their practice.
* Participate in professional dialogue with regards both personal learning and development as well as that of the learners they are responsible for.

This would assist in creating a rhythm to professional learning and development in which there is ‘*follow up, consolidation and support activities’* (Higgins et al, 2015, p.13). Jensen *et al* (2016) point out that time is a constraint highlighted by teachers in their research on teacher professional learning in high performing systems. Bolam *et al* (2005) discuss the importance of leaders giving teachers the time to meet and talk regularly to enable professional learning communities to be established. While Stoll and Earl (2003), as well as Hopkins (2001), argue that time is fundamental for any learning that is not superficial. This research was carried out in schools as was Higgins *et al* (2015); however, a lot of the findings resonate with teachers’ professional learning and development in the further education sector.

**5.6.4 Support, drive and clarity from college leadership**

The findings chapter highlights the significance of supporting teachers enabling them to develop their practice. It was evident that the managers who valued the importance of the professional learning and development had a positive impact. Ensuring there was clarity with regards to the *object* (intended outcomes) of the professional learning activities was crucial to their success which is discussed further in the findings in sub-section 4.3.1. With this in mind, college senior leaders should actively and visibly encourage and support professional learning and development. It should be explicit in daily practice and college strategies. According to the IfL (2010, p. 12) ‘*evidence from Ofsted shows that brilliant teaching and training is more likely to occur where organisations and leaders focus on continually improving teaching and learning’*. It is the role of the college leaders to set the tone, prioritising improving learning and teaching above everything else. The sector is demanding, professional learning and development often conflicts with other demands such as funding cuts and performativity. Continuous professional learning and development should be a priority for college leaders to ensure teachers are highly skilled in both their subject specialism as well as developing pedagogies. Then again, as discovered during this research, ensuring clarity, giving a clear message to middle managers and teachers with regards to supporting professional learning and development activities is imperative. The importance of giving clarity to any activity is discussed and illustrated in chapter 4, the findings chapter, sub-section 4.3.2, figure 2.

Harwell (2003, p. v) argues that ‘*professional development can only succeed in settings that support it’* and emphasises the role that leaders have in establishing this. Harwell also asserts that the buy-in from senior leaders is crucial to its success. In her research titled ‘*Teacher Professional Development: It’s not an Event, It’s a Process’* she discusses the necessity of ensuring professional learning and development opportunities are available. This would alter teacher behaviour which in turn leads to improvement in learner achievement. Professional learning and development are to bring about change in practice. Nonetheless, before it can be effectively implemented there must be a shared sense of the need for that change. If teachers do not buy into the need for change to bring about improvement in practice it will not occur. Kotter (1996) introduced an eight-step change model for assisting managers to successfully lead on transformational change. Further research in 2002 examined the core problems managers/leaders faced when leading change within an organisation and the central issue was the behaviour of people. He concluded that successful change occurs when speaking to people’s feelings. The eight-step change included; creating a climate for change; engaging and enabling the whole organisation and implementing and sustaining change (see figure 1).

**Figure 1: Kotter’s (1996) Eight-step change model**

Fullan (2002a, p.2) supports this maintaining that:

*The key to successful change is the improvement in relationships between all involved and not simply the imposition of top-down reform. The emphasis in educational change is based on creating the conditions to develop the 'capacity' of both organisations and individuals to learn. The focus moves away from the emphasis on structural change towards… culture… and an emphasis on relationships and values.*

Fullan believes that ‘*creating and sharing knowledge’* is fundamental to effective leadership (Fullan,2002b, p.18). It is important for both managers and individuals to understand the impact that change can have which links to the theories on reflexivity, agency, social development, communities of practice, constructivism, cultural-historical activity theory as well as symbolic interactionism discussed throughout the previous chapters. It is how an individual perceives the changes that will initiate the impact it has on feelings and emotions. Any change that individuals encounter regardless of how small they are may have an impact as well as possibly conflict with their existing values and beliefs. This is why it is vital that any manager leading change must ensure they assist and support staff through the transition curve providing clarity and support.

**5.6.5 Funding**

Funding is an ongoing issue in further education which leads to annual restructures resulting in a reduction in full-time permanent teachers. This is discussed at length in the literature review in sub-section 2.7.1. The reduction in funding and full-time teachers makes engaging in professional learning and development a challenge. This is due to the fact that firstly; part-time/zero contract teachers are often not afforded the time to engage in collaboration with full-time colleagues. Secondly; teaching contact hours for full-time teachers have increased over the years as managers try to make efficiencies staying within their departmental budgets. Teachers throughout the research, in both the sample group as well as the wider population identified that time to collaborate as well as to go back out into industry would be ideal for their professional learning and development. That being said, time to do this presents funding issues. Fulltime teachers would require cover to go back out into industry as well as part-time staff receiving additional contractual hours to attend collaboration events.

The further education sector, on the whole, is a place for learners who have been let down by other parts of the education system acting as a critical pathway to employment and/or further/higher education. The majority of teaching and support staff in further education demonstrate an unwavering commitment, empathy and determination to make a difference to the lives of the people who engage with it. The sector is under-researched which leads to it often being misunderstood, unlike school and universities which may be one of the reasons why the further education sector is always hit hard and left feeling the full force of the government cuts. It may be the lack of research into the positive impact further education has on the economy and society that leaves it vulnerable to funding cuts (Ravenhall, 2014,

Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009; Salisbury *et al,* 2006). Recent research conducted by Belfield *et al* (2017, p.3) for the Institute for Fiscal Studies concludes that:

*16–18 education spending has been the relative loser from education spending changes over the last 25 years. It experienced larger cuts in the 1990s than other sectors, smaller increases during the 2000s and is currently experiencing the largest cuts. This long-term squeeze in resources is a major challenge for the sector as a whole.*

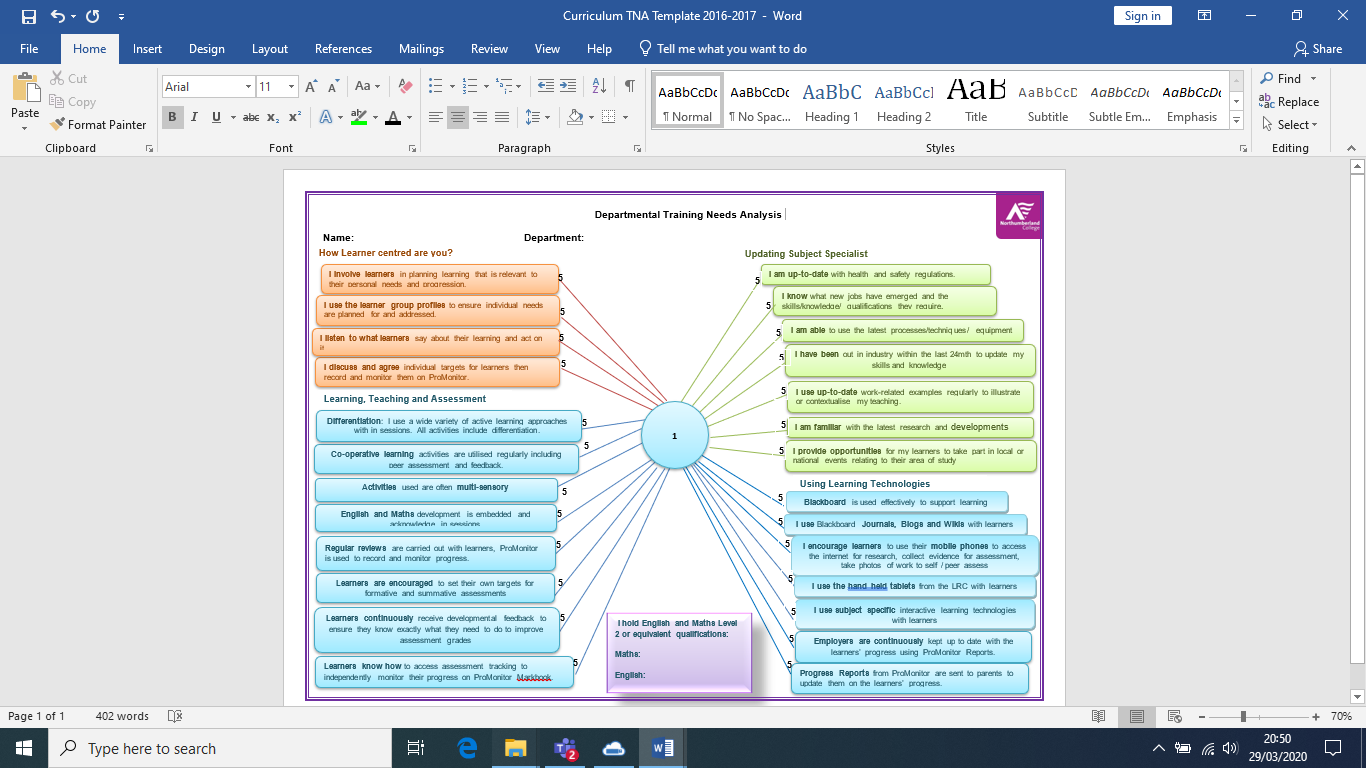
Sibieta, one of the report authors maintained that “*The actions – as opposed to the rhetoric – of both Labour and Conservative governments suggest that they agree 16-18 is a low priority area for spending. Why they think that is unclear”.* The report concludes that

*The overriding challenge for the 16–18 sector concerns the long-run stagnation in the level of resources available. By the end of the current Spending Review period in 2019–20, we expect that spending per student in further education will only be just above the level seen 30 years ago at the end of the 1980s* (ibid, 2017, p.31).

The OECD (2017) report on the socio-economic divide confirms the United Kingdom remains as one of the countries which has the highest income inequality. So one may ask why the government continues to devalue the work of the further education sector. Continuously prioritising 16-19-year-olds and apprenticeships although very important, by cutting adult funding is not valuing that there is a need for learning and development outside of this zone. Further education has always supported individuals including adults who re-enter the education system to learn new skills and upskill, plugging skills gaps for employers. These employees could be any age and contribute to the productivity of the company often leading to salary increases. If we truly believe in the rich and diverse society we live in, supporting equality and celebrating its diversity we can never accept a *‘one size fits all’* approach in the further education sector*.* College leaders are continuously being pressed into thinking creatively on how to make efficiency savings due to the endless funding cuts. It is the pressures that come with efficiency savings and the time it consumes which takes leaders away from thinking innovatively on how to challenge the government with regards to the funding cuts. This is, as well as, establishing further educations valuable position within education, (Ravenhall, 2014).

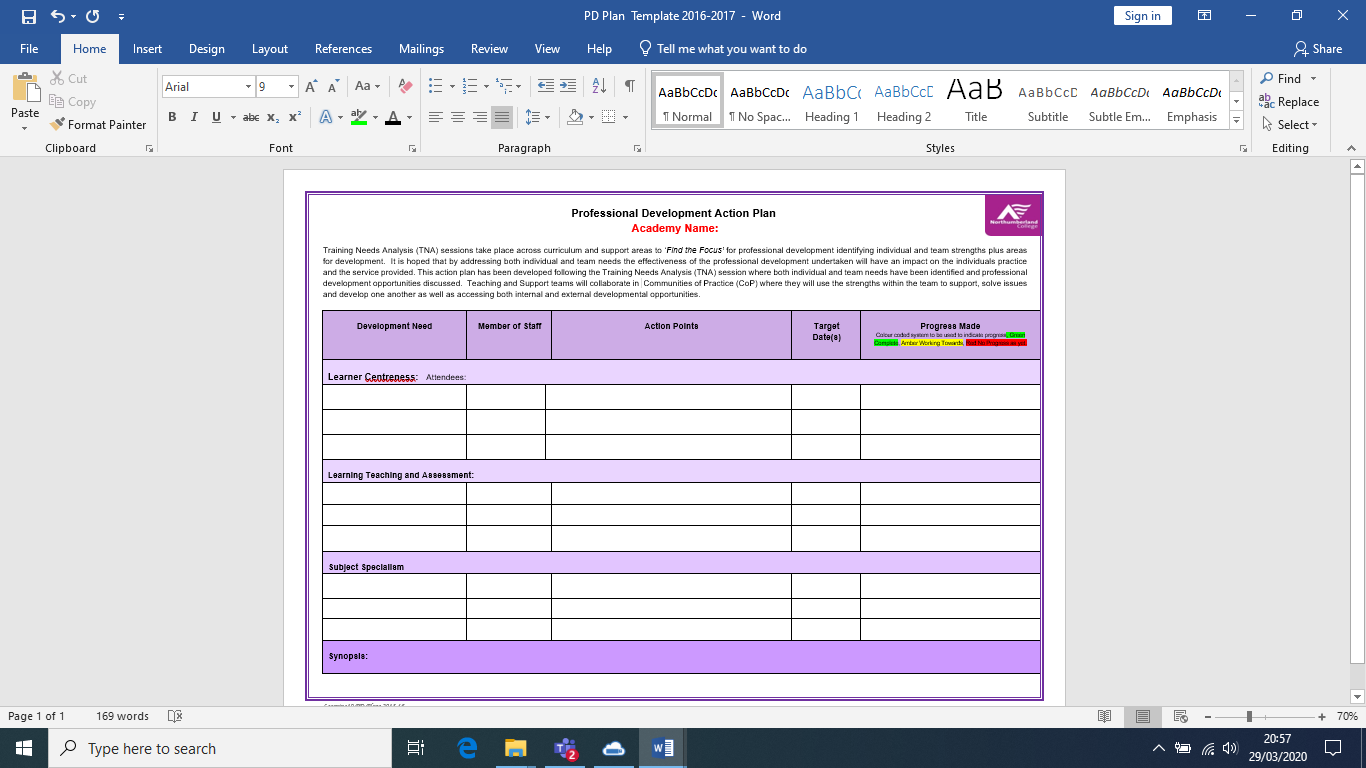
The government should, which is supported by the AoC (2017, p.3) increase spending in the further education sector ‘*to introduce fair funding for colleges’*. This will allow a wider range of qualifications both technical and professional to be offered. The funding should be for both improving the physical resource as well as creating new places for learners both young and old. Changes to funding should move from an annual process to a 2/3-year plan to give a little more stability to teachers and managers in the sector.

The research has been an invaluable mechanism for gaining a more informed understanding of the sector, the teachers within it and the day to day challenges they face. It has answered the questions which were posed whilst simultaneously raising further questions to be investigated. Thesis completion does not mark the end of the journey but the beginning of new territories to investigate which will –it is hoped - further enhance my professional learning and development.



**Appendix 1a**

**Appendix 1b**



**Appendix 2**

**Teaching Team Collaboration Event**

Teaching Team Collaborative Events (TTCE) have been implemented to allow time for teaching teams to come together to share good practice as well as

engage in conversations and debates on approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The TTCE are to assist with developing new strategies to enhance the learners' experience. They can be used to research and create new learning materials (using technology where possible) to enthuse and motivate learners. Curriculum teams are to work collaboratively engaging in Communities of Practice (CoP) as part of their professional development. The template below can be used to capture and record the professional development of teams involved in this process.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Teaching Team Department(s) involved:** | | | | |
| **Teaching Staff involved:** | | | | |
| Date: | **Time:** | | **Location:** | **Professional Learning and Development Hours Accumulated:** |
| **Sharing Good Practice** | | | | |
| **Name of person sharing Good Practice** | **Description of Good Practice shared:** | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
| **New Approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment Discussed** | | | | |
| **New Approaches** | **How and When are they to be Implemented** | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
| **Research and Creation of New Learning Materials incorporating Technology if possible.** | | | | |
| **New Learning Materials** | **How and When are they to be Implemented** | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
| **Issues Raised** | **Solutions** | | | |
|  |  | | | |
|  |  | | | |
| **Reflection on Session:** | | | | |
| What have been the benefits of the event? Has the event assisted with focusing on areas for development to improve practice collaboratively? Has the event given the opportunity to discuss issues and collectively find solutions?  What could be improved for the next event? | | | | |
| **Teaching Team Signatures:** | | | | |
| **Programme Area Leader Signature:** | | | | |
| **Further Comments:** | | **Impact of Event** (This is to be completed at the beginning of the next TTCE when the impact can be measured) | | |

**Appendix 3**

**Letter of Consent**

Theresa Thornton

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Co-ordinator

Northumberland College

(5th April 2012)

Louise Kinghorn

Assistant Principal Quality and Standards

Northumberland College

College Road

Ashington

Northumberland

NE63 9RG

I am undertaking a research project to investigate whether changing the approach to Professional Development will improve its effectiveness and set the foundations for creating Communities of Practice. I would be grateful if you would grant permission for my research to proceed.

With Thanks

Name.....…………………… Signature ……………………………… Date ………......

Two copies of this letter are enclosed. Please sign and date both. Keep one for your files and return one copy.

I hereby give permission for Theresa Thornton to undertake her research in Northumberland College.

Name ……………………… Signature…………………………… Date ………

**Appendix 4**

**Email Correspondence to Teaching Staff/Managers regarding participation**

**From:**

**To:** Thornton, Theresa

**Date:**  11/02/2013 10:55

**Subject:**  Re: Analysing The Impact of Changing the Approach to Professional Development

>>> Theresa Thornton 07/02/13 9:46 AM >>>

Hello

As you are aware the approaches to professional development have changed during this academic year initiated by meeting with each department to carry out Training Needs Analysis. It is my intention to research and examine the impact (if any) of these changes across the college curriculum areas and campuses during 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. I will also be investigating whether these changes will encourage teaching staff in curriculum departments to work in communities of practice which will be discussed more in-depth if you decide to take part in the research.

The changes have involved all curriculum teaching teams and curriculum managers however, due to practicalities and time restrictions I am hoping to work with a research sample group. This group will include seven HoFs / PALs and twenty-eight teachers which will be representative of the whole college. This will include two teachers from each department (in a very small number of cases where departments only have one or two teachers I will combined them) and where possible one male and one female teacher also full-time, fractional and sessional teachers.

I am hoping you will agree to become a member the research sample group, your involvement would commit you to the following activities:

**This academic year 2012-2013**

Completing 1 Questionnaire of 10 questions in either July/ August or September 2013 (15-20mins)

Attending 1 Interview consisting of 5 questions in July / August or September 2013 (15-30mins).

**Academic Year 2013-2014**

Completing 1 Questionnaire of 10 questions in either July/ August or September 2014 (15-20mins)

Attending 1 Interview in July / August or September 2014 (15-30 mins).

***Your participation in this research would be greatly appreciated however, I am aware of the huge workloads everyone has so no offence will be taken if you decline to take part.***

Could you please email confirmation of your decision so I can move forward with this project.

Many Thanks

Theresa Thornton

Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator

Quality Team

Room 021

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Statement of ethical conduct:** |

**Appendix 5**

**From Further Education College to Learning Community**

*‘Will changing the approach to Professional Development improve its effectiveness*

*and set the foundations for creating Communities of Practice?’*

**To whom it may concern:**

I am undertaking a research project to investigate whether changing the approach to Professional Development will improve its effectiveness and set the foundations for creating Communities of Practice.

**This statement requires your signature if you agree to be a participant in this research.**

**I will give priority to your interests at all times.**

***I guarantee the following:***

* Your identity will be protected at all times unless you give specific permission to use your name.
* You are free at all times to withdraw from the research, whereupon I will destroy all of the data relating to you.
* I will check all data related to you before making it public.
* I will make a copy of the research report available to you prior to its publication. I will remove anything you are unhappy or disagree with.

You will receive two copies of this statement. Please sign and date them to confirm that the intentions of this research have been openly communicated and discussed including a clear explanation of its purpose and the duration.

**Keep one and return one copy.**

Name ……………………… Signature…………………………… Date ……………

**Ethics statement received from:**

Name: Theresa Thornton Signature: TThornton

(Adapted from McNiff & Whitehead, 2008)

*The project recognises that researchers have a duty of care to ensure that the psychological, physical, social and economic wellbeing of individuals contributing to the research is not adversely affected by their participation and that all research is conducted with participants’ fully informed consent.*

*To this end, participants will receive communication providing a clear explanation of the purpose of the research, the funding body and an introduction to the researcher(s) undertaking it.*

*This statement is based upon principles set out by the British Educational Research Association (2011), and the British Psychological Society (2009). It describes a framework of practice to which all researchers should adhere during the course of the project and forms the ethical basis of a contract between the researcher and the research participant.*

**References:**

Bera. (2011)  *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2004). [Online]. Available at:http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/pdfs/ETHICA1.Pdf..(Accessed 18th May 2012)

McNiff, J. Whitehead, J. (2008) *All you Need to Know About Action Research*. London. Sage.

The British Psychological Society. (2009) *Code of Ethics and Conduct*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.bps.org.uk/sites/default/files/documents/code_of_ethics_and_conduct.pdf>. (Accesed: 18th May 2012).

**Appendix 6**

**Sampling Frame**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Curriculum Area | Full-time | Part-time | Zero hour Contract | Male/  Female | Experience/  Inexperienced Teacher | Participant Coding PT/PM |
| Construction |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Engineering |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Hair and Beauty |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| HSC |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Early Years |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Catering |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Art |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Business &IT |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Access/Education |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sport /Outdoor Education/ PS |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Travel and Tourism |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Animal Care |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Equine |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Veterinary |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Horticulture |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Agriculture |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Arboriculture |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Floristry |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LDD |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Maths & English |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Appendix 7a**

**Survey Questions**

**Q1 Which Curriculum Area do you teach in?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices** | **Responses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Construction and Engineering** | **0** |
| **Creative and Lifestyle** | **0** |
| **Health, Care, Sport & Foundation Learning** | **0** |
| **Land Based Industry** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |

**Q2 Are you male or female?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices** | **Responses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Male** | **0** |
| **Female** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |

**Q3 What is your teaching contract?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices** | **Responses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Full-Time (permanent)** | **0** |
| **Part-Time (permanent)** | **0** |
| **Hourly Paid** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |

**Appendix 7b**

**Q4 How many hours of Professional Development did you engage in during 2012-2013?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices** | **Responses** |
| --- | --- |
| **1-10** | **0** |
| **11-20** | **0** |
| **21-30** | **0** |
| **31-40** | **0** |
| **41+** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |

**Q5 Was this Professional Development:**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices** | **Responses** |
| --- | --- |
| **Self Initiated** | **0** |
| **College lead** | **0** |
| **Mandatory** | **0** |
| **Total Respondents: 0** |  |
| [**Comments**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/L4l_2BVWTZth3VaJWGeUHTq_2FD_2BKhvE06QPE4xtQ1AZT5E_3D) | |

**Q6 How often have you used the following professional learning activities to enhance/improve your classroom practice and personal development?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

**Appendix 7c**

|  | **Alot** | **Quite Alot** | **Not Often** | **Never** | **Total Respondents** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Accredited Programmes** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Workshops** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Seminars** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Action research / Documentary Research** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **External Events** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Working collaboratively with colleagues developing resources and curriculum** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Online learning** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Working with the Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Working with the Learning and Teaching Advocates** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **The Learning and Teaching Area on Blackboard** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Industrial/Vocational updates** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Peer Observations** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Internal whole college professional development Sessions** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Online forums** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Industrial Placement** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |
| **Regional Networks** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** | **0** |

**Q7 Please identify which professional learning activity has had the most impact on your personal development and classroom practice and give a brief explanation why**.

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

[Responses (0)](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/L4l_2BVWTZth3VaJWGeUHTq_2FD_2BKhvE06QPE4xtQ1AZT5E_3D)

**Appendix 7d Bottom of Form**

**Q8 Has there been any barriers preventing you from engaging in professional learning activities? If yes, please expand on your answer:**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices –** | **Responses –** |
| --- | --- |
| **Yes** | **0** |
| **No** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |
| [**Comments**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/L4l_2BVWTZth3VaJWGeUHTq_2FD_2BKhvE06QPE4xtQ1AZT5E_3D)**(0)** | |
| Bottom of Form | | |

**Q9 Did you complete an Individual Development Plan (IDP) with your line manager? If no state, the reason why.**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices –** | **Responses –** |
| --- | --- |
| **Yes** | **0**  **0** |
| **No** | **0**  **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |
| [**Comments**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/L4l_2BVWTZth3VaJWGeUHTq_2FD_2BKhvE06QPE4xtQ1AZT5E_3D)**(0)** | |

**Q10 Did you know your departmental professional development priorities for 2012-2013?**

* Answered: 0
* Skipped: 0

| **Answer Choices –** | **Responses –** |
| --- | --- |
| **Yes** | **0** |
| **No** | **0** |
| **Total** | **0** |
| [**Comments**](https://www.surveymonkey.com/analyze/L4l_2BVWTZth3VaJWGeUHTq_2FD_2BKhvE06QPE4xtQ1AZT5E_3D)**(0)** | |
| **SEARCH TIPS**   * Exact Phrase Searching:   Use quotation marks to search for exact phrases. Search results must match exactly what you type between the quotes. Example: "yellow flowers"   * Searching With OR:   Type 'OR' between words or quoted phrases to find results that match either of the two words or phrases. Example: rose OR carnation OR "red flower"   * Excluding Words:   Type '-' directly in front of any word or phrase that you do not want to include in your search.  Example: red flower -rose (to find responses about red flowers that do NOT include the word 'rose')  Top of Form  Bottom of Form | | |

**Appendix 8**

**Individual Development Plan**

**Name: Curriculum / Support Team:**

Please agree your Professional Development needs with your Line Manager.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Identified Needs** | **Priority**  Mandatory, Essential, Desirable | **Details of Development Activity**  (including cost, if known) | **CPD Hours**  (Approximate) | **Date when Required** |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Agreed By:**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Staff member) Date:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Line manager) Date:

**Copies to:**

Staff member

Line manager

Quality Officer (Curriculum staff)

HR Manager (Support staff)

**Appendix 9a**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1-1 Interview Questions: Teachers**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Declaration:** I have been an active participant in an interview with Theresa Thornton (dates and time recorded below) as part of her research on analysing the impact of Professional Development to improve its effectiveness.The notes below are a true reflection of the discussions which took place and were recorded during the interview. | | | **Teachers Name:** | **Date:**  **Time:** | | **Signature:** |  1. What were your first thoughts when asked to attend TNA session with the Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator at the beginning of the academic year 2012-2013? 2. Did you and your departmental team identify individual strengths? If yes did these individuals share their strengths, experiences and expertise with the whole team assisting them to be departmental (whole team) strengths? 3. Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-2013 where you worked with colleagues within your department sharing ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developing solutions to issues raised by those present?   If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?  If no … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place?   1. Looking at the CoP diagram shared does it resemble what happens at the TTCEs. Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP? 2. Has the introduction of the TNA session at the beginning of the academic year allowed professional development to be more personalised to your specific needs and requests??   If Yes… Has this lead to an improvement and what has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think this has not taken place? |

**Appendix 9b**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **1-1 Interview Questions: Managers**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Declaration:** I have been an active participant in an interview with Theresa Thornton (dates and time recorded below) as part of her research on analysing the impact of Professional Development to improve its effectiveness.The notes below are a true reflection of the discussions which took place and were recorded during the interview. | | | **Managers Name:** | **Date:**  **Time:** | | **Signature:** |  1. What were your first thoughts when the TNA sessions were introduced at beginning of the academic year 2012-2013? 2. How did your departmental teams initially react when they were informed about the requirement to attend the TNA sessions? 3. Do you think it has had a positive, negative or no impact at all on the professional development undertaken during 2012-2013? 4. Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-2013 with your departmental teams where they shared ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developed solutions to issues raised by those present?   If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?  If no … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place?   1. Were teachers with particular strengths identified during the TNA session?   If yes did these individuals share their strengths, experiences and expertise with the whole team assisting them to be departmental (whole team) strengths?  If no what was the reason for this?   1. Has the new approach to the professional development process created more work for you as a manager?   If yes has it been worthwhile?   1. Do you think teachers have benefited from a more personalised approach to professional development?   If Yes…How, why and what has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think that they have not?   1. Looking at the CoP diagram shared does it resemble what happens at the TTCEs. Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP? |

**Thematic Table for Interviews with Teachers Appendix 10**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1: What were your first thoughts when asked to attend the TNA session with the Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator at the beginning of the academic year 2012-2013? | | | Q2: Did you and your team identify any individual strengths? If yes did these individuals share their strengths making them departmental strengths? | | | Q3: Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-13? If Yes what was the impact on individuals? If no was there a particular reason? | Q4; Looking at the CoP diagram does it resemble what happens at the TTCE? Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP | | Q5: Has the introduction of the TNA session allowed professional development to be more personalised to your specific needs and requests? |
| PT1 |  | | |  | | |  |  | |  |
| PT2 |  | | |  | | |  |  | |  |
| Thematic Table for Responses from Managers | | | | | | | | | | |
|  | **Q1:**  **What were your first thoughts when the TNA sessions were introduced at beginning of the academic year 2012-2013?** | | **Q2:**  **How did your departmental teams initially react when they were informed about the requirement to attend the TNA sessions?** | **Q3:**  **Do you think it has had a positive, negative or no impact at all on the professional development undertaken during 2012-2013?** | | **Q4:**  **Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-2013 with your departmental teams where they shared ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developed solutions to issues raised by those present?**  **If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?**  **If no … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place?** | **Q5:**  **Were teachers with particular strengths identified during the TNA session?**  **If yes did these individuals share their strengths, experiences and expertise with the whole team assisting them to be departmental (whole team) strengths?**  **If no what was the reason for this?** | **Q6:**  **Has the new approach to the professional development process created more work for you as a manager?**  **If yes has it been worthwhile?** | **Q7:**  **Do you think teachers have benefited from a more personalised approach to professional development?**  **If Yes…How, why and what has been the impact?**  **If No…Why do you think that they have not?** | **Q8:**  **Looking at the CoP diagram shared does it resemble what happens at the TTCEs. Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP?** |
| PM1 |  |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |
| PM2… |  |  | |  |  | |  |  |  |  |

**Appendix 11**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Professional Dialogue** | |
| **Declaration:** I have been an active participant in a discussion with Theresa Thornton (dates and time recorded below) as part of her research on analysing the impact of Professional Development to improve its effectiveness. The notes are a true reflection of the discussions which took place. | |
| **Name(s):** | |
| **Signature(s):** | **Date:** |

**Professional / Industrial Learning Log**

**Appendix 12**

Completing the professional /industrial learning log will record the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) you have committed to throughout the academic year. CPD is any activity engaged in by a qualified professional through which they continue to develop professionally. It is about learning and development that enhances the participant’s effectiveness in their professional role. This should maintain and enhance existing competences as well as developing new knowledge and skills. It should not be exclusively about formal courses or qualifications. Teachers enhance their learning, teaching, assessment and subject specialist skills and knowledge to ensure they are current and up to date

**What can be used as CPD?**

CPD includes a wide variety of activities such as Online / Open learning, Workshops, Short Courses, Seminars, Lectures, Reading, Action Research, In-house training, Shadowing, Working with the Director of Learning10 / Learning Advocates / Head of Learning Technology, Joint Practice Development (Peer Observations), Team Teaching, Educational Visits, Work Experience, Industrial updating and so on.

**Benefits of Cascading New Knowledge and Skills**

‘*Learn and Share*[[2]](#footnote-2)) is a platform for sharing information and skills with colleagues. It also provides a vehicle through which colleagues can meet together to share effective practice, explore challenges and identify solutions.

**Impact**

Developing new skills and knowledge usually results in a change of behaviour this could be how you approach / think of something differently within your practice. Recording this soon after you have gained the new skills and knowledge enables you to revisit it throughout the academic year as you build upon your professional learning you will have a record of all the developments made to your practice.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date/Time** | **Duration** | **Title of CPD Activity** | **Nature of CPD / Industrial Update**  Online, Workshop, Short Course, Seminar, Lecture, Reading, Action Research, Practitioner Enquiry, in-house training, shadowing, Joint Practice Development (Peer Observations), working with Director of Learning10 / Learning Advocates. | **Cascading**  How do you plan to share what you have learnt with colleagues? | **Impact**  What have I learnt from the training and how has it/will it affect my teaching / role |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Thematic Table 1a: Interviews with Teachers: Cycle 1: 2012-13 Appendix 13a**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1: What were your first thoughts when asked to attend the TNA session with the Learning and Teaching Co-ordinator at the beginning of the academic year 2012-2013? | Q2: Did you and your team identify any individual strengths? If yes did these individuals share their strengths making them departmental strengths? | Q3: Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-13? If Yes what was the impact on individuals? If no was there a particular reason? | Q4; Looking at the CoP diagram does it resemble what happens at the TTCE? Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP | Q5: Has the introduction of the TNA session allowed professional development to be more personalised to your specific needs and requests? |
| PT1  C&L | Thought it was a good idea so training could be looked at per department instead of generic courses. So something could be developed as own needs in department. | **Yes** while team have their own strengths and always sharing resources not so good on Bb at sharing. Two main people in department leading on sharing and developing resources and Bb area with whole team contributing once ideas put forward. | **Yes** designed initial assessment pack together as it required improvement and HoF wanted a whole team standardised approach. This worked well as whole team had input on the development of the pack so it gained joint ownership. | **Yes** it does but not the whole team as some sessional staff don’t attend this needs to be looked at as team split into curriculum areas so this is not a reluctance but a time constraint issue. | **Yes** good session especially good session on behaviour management was a result of TNA. |
| PT2  HCFL | Pleased because it felt as though you were being listened to this time and helping to move because it was specific to the team. Much better than having two yearly slots for generic CPD. | **Yes –** Shared experiences and expertise with whole team. I gained First Aid train the trainer and was then able to train colleague in development week. Now whole of HSC and Early Years are trained first aid which we have needed for a long time and can help support learners in 2 units on paediatric 1st Aid | **Yes**. F/S was the focus of one session and how to embed it. Mixed impact some will be embedding it not sure about whole team. Moderation / standardisation session mixed impact again which has been picked up and session will be running again. | **Yes** - Doing this all of the time in team meetings and staff room conversations. Not just restricted to HSC it involves Access, Foundation Learning and Early Years too. Sharing good practice is natural occurrence. | **Yes** I did a lot more personalised training this year. Went on First Aid course, went out to first school Abbeyfileds for specialism updates. This year did a lot ore and thought outside the box for development as session helped focus on wider activities. |
| PT3  LBI | Open minded about attending, heard me (Theresa) speaking about it at Ashington so knew it wouldn’t be irrelevant. | **Yes** following the session on reflection the discussions what followed brought it highlighted that each member of the team had different strengths but everyone had them. | **Yes** we do it unofficially in ------ in a lunchtime is common practice. No whole team but majority. | **Not** everyone in team some reluctant to fit into this. Those who are experienced in industry and new members of staff who have a passion for learning more, modern ideas for all. New staff good for long serving as they constantly question why things are done in certain ways and should alternative sometimes more up to date ways of doing things, good for all involved. | **No** Time, Money, assumptions, not sure what management wants from us. No strategic plan to move department forward so nor sure what I should be doing. |
| PT4 | ***Etc.….*** |  |  |  |  |

**Thematic Table 1b: Responses from Managers: Cycle 1: 2012-13 Appendix 13b**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1:  What were your first thoughts when the TNA sessions were introduced at beginning of the academic year 2012-2013? | Q2:  How did your departmental teams initially react when they were informed about the requirement to attend the TNA sessions? | Q3:  Do you think it has had a positive, negative or no impact at all on the professional development undertaken during 2012-2013? | Q4:  Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2012-2013 with your departmental teams where they shared ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developed solutions to issues raised by those present?  If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?  If no … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place? | Q5:  Were teachers with particular strengths identified during the TNA session?  If yes did these individuals share their strengths, experiences and expertise with the whole team assisting them to be departmental (whole team) strengths?  If no what was the reason for this? | Q6:  Has the new approach to the professional development process created more work for you as a manager?  If yes has it been worthwhile? | Q7:  Do you think teachers have benefited from a more personalised approach to professional development?  If Yes…How, why and what has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think that they have not? | Q8:  Looking at the CoP diagram shared does it resemble what happens at the TTCEs. Are there any other occasions where you feel as though you are working in a CoP? |
| PM1 | Fantastic idea something which had never been done before and needed to be done. Great knowing something we should do for development and what we need to up skill on to pass onto learners. | Very enthusiastic, liked the idea- that goes for the competent staff –shyer ones weren’t so keen wanted to stay clear of the initiative. | Goes back to the individual, made them aware of training need and it had an impact on the more positive staff and they saw it in a positive way. But the negative staff didn’t. | **Yes The** PAL GB doing the TTCE updating on IV procedures and process, CSkills training in construction. Wrote all process for IVing, sharing good practice with CSkills and team. | **Yes** but not very well. A lot of staff with good practice didn’t have the confidence to stand up and take the lead on sharing good practice. | **No** not really, the PALs do the plans Whenever anything is done I like to do it myself before asking others to do it. If someone is given a job I like to think it through. This process was not complicated to follow. The problem came when some staff didn’t take responsibility for doing CPD and passed it back to the manager for responsibility. | **Yes** 100% benefited good idea for those who took up the initiative. Look at TNA and know it’s getting personalised. | **Yes** in pockets, more reactive than proactive due to staffing issues. Lots of planning that can’t be done. Capacity staffing – don’t have time to do all the things that would be good to do |
| PM2 | Wondered how helpful it would be. Knew team were reflective in first instance. Whether it would be a productive way of reflecting. Nervous incase it wasn’t taken seriously. | Quite pleased that it was consultative instead of manager putting plans in place. Perhaps came with pre-conceptions. | Little negative at first because of agenda staff approached it with (some of team members) They felt it was about going on courses and gaining resources instead of thinking about how they could work together. Opportunity to highlight to managers that they were being limited due to money. Over the year has become very positive move forward for developing staff. | **Yes** Surprised at how open they are being at sharing things – planned learning to learn together- working very well. Team asked to do TTCE with support staff, a very good session, well received. Rolled into FD learning very honest and frank discussions to shape the year. The TTCE have been really productive, want to talk and work with each other both departments and teams in my areas. Put themselves forward to be LTAAs | **Yes** Didn’t come into it with an agenda of who was doing what. Asked them to bring files and IVs picked strengths and assisted less experienced staff then lead onto support staff training. F/S tutor led on this session teaching team brought examples of what they used and good practice was shared. Had topics but no set timings went with the flow of how the session developed. Different leads for sessions. | **Yes In** term of writing up and following things through. So frustrating when can’t do all the things we’d like to. TTCE good to focus on Key Themes throughout sessions. | **Yes** Undoubtedly benefitted linked in well with appraisals going on. 1st Aid Training went ahead and all got trained which is something which was identified and worked out well. This was structured into Paula’s teaching hours. Teachers are now starting to ask to go to conferences, networking events etc.  Helped them think about focus and prioritising CPD. Learnt more about lead IQA and IQA assessors and leads can do it didn’t realise never thought about it previously. Jenny building a portfolio for food hygiene. | Yes The trust – shared practice has been working well which has developed into CoP over the year. Teaching teams are playing to each other’s strengths on course organisation etc. – team working well together linking Eyrs and HSC teams. People linking together from across departments. Sharon come forward to keep assessing up to date forming little CoP which are coming together talking to LDD teams. F/S helping one another, very open about sharing, more productive. Sharing Bb development good practice too. |

**Thematic Table 2a: Interviews with Teachers: Cycle 2: 2013-14 Appendix 14a**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1: Now we are in the second year of TNA sessions being carried out do you feel as though professional development has been more personalised to your specific needs and requests??  If Yes… Has this lead to an improvement and what has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think this has not taken place? | Q2: Have you taken more of a lead with your own professional development since the TNA sessions have been introduced?  If Yes…Has this had a more effective impact on your development and practice?  If No…Why have you not took the lead? | Q3: Has the introduction of the Wednesday afternoon meeting slots assisted with meeting up with your colleagues to develop practice more often?  If Yes… What has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think this has not taken place? | Q4: Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2013-2014 where you worked with colleagues within your department sharing ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developing solutions to issues raised by those present?  If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?  If No … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place? | Q5: Looking once again at the CoP diagram shared do you feel as though your department are working more like this than you were?  If Yes….. What impact is it having on individuals and the team?  If No … Was there a particular reason why this is not taking place? |
| PT1 | *No ‘I have reduced my hours to part time and so do not participate in as much CPD as I used to. I just attend what the college offers as I feel it suits my needs and keeps me up to date with new requirements.’* | *No’ I am only working part-time and I am happy with the CPD the college offers.*’ | Yes ‘*We get time to work together on new resources for the students some weeks. It saves us all working on resources individually which is sometimes duplicating work. It also gives us time to discuss any issues with students.’* | *Yes ‘We use the 3 days in the February CPD window to plan and develop resources for the new qualifications which were due to start in the September. This gave us the opportunity to organise who was teaching each unit, playi9ng to the teams’ key strengths, plus levels we were teaching.’* | *Yes ‘We have always been a very close, supportive team helping each other as and when needed. I think we have work as a CoP for a while but not realising it as we do trust, respect and know one another’s strengths.’* |
| PT2 | *Yes ‘we do bespoke training which is specific to our specialism. This ensures we are current and up to date with, our specialist skills and knowledge to pass onto student’* | *Yes I have been back into industry several times, ----,---- and ---- which has been great for updating and sharing experiences with colleagues and students. I find that students are really keen to hear that you go back out into the profession.’* | *Yes These have been great for getting together to share information on students to ensure they are supported and kept on track. We also do moderation, Iving and share ideas, developing our resources.’* | *Yes We have shared lots of ideas across departments, all the things which have worked well. This includes with the Functional Skills tutors too so it helps them contextualise sessions into our profession so students can see the relevance of completing F/S qualifications.’* | *Yes We have new members in the team now and they have just slotted in and say they enjoy working as a team sharing ideas and coming up with solutions to student issues etc. Good supporting mechanism for new members of staff.’* |
| PT3 | *No ‘No capacity to utilise. We do not have enough staff to cover one another’s sessions to allow someone to for example go back into industry to work for a week or two which would be great experience.’* | *Yes I have taken the lead as a result of discussions during the TNA session. I am currently researching in my own time and it looks very likely I am going to progress onto studying at MA level.’* | *Yes ‘We do not have the Wednesday allocated slot from 3pm we have from 4.15-5pm which cuts it short compared to our colleagues at other campuses however we still manager to get together as a team to discuss things which would make a difference and improve the student experience. It then becomes frustrating at times when we can’t implement the changes’* | *Yes ‘Quite a bit, really benefitted the team massively pulling us all together. We are developing more and more resources and ideas plus co-teaching some of the HND units which both the staff involved and students really enjoy, it is now written into the SoW, as it gives students the experience of live debates.’* | *Yes ‘without realising it we are now working as a CoP both within and outside of the department.’* |
| PT5 | ***Etc.…*** |  |  |  |  |

**Thematic Table 2b: Interviews with Mangers: Cycle 2: 2013-14 Appendix 14b**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Q1:  Do you think teaching staff in your area took more of a lead with their own professional development during 2013-14? | Q2:  Do you think the introduction of the Wednesday afternoon meeting slots has enabled teaching teams to meet up and work together to develop practice?  If Yes….. What impact has this had on individuals and the team?  If No … Was there a particular reason why you think this did not happen, can you give suggestions to improve this? | Q3:  Do you think teachers have benefited from a more personalised approach to professional development?  If Yes…How, why and what has been the impact?  If No…Why do you think that they have not? | Q4:  Were you involved in any Teaching Team Collaboration Events (TTCE) during 2013-2014 with your departmental teams where they shared ideas, experiences, good practice, resources and developed solutions to issues raised by those present?  If Yes….. What impact did the TTCE have on individuals?  If No … Was there a particular reason why these did not take place? | Q5:  Looking at the CoP diagram shared does it feel as though your teaching teams in departments are working more like this with the introduction of the TNA process and scheduled meeting slots? |
| PM1 | Yes ‘*They are requesting to go back out into industry as CPD and are approaching employers which has not happened previously, They are coming back into college more enthusiastic and confident about what is happening. They are ready to share their newly gained knowledge and skills with both colleagues and students’* | Yes Most of ‘The *teams in my faculty work together following the schedule set out for staff. They are developing processes as well as systems (assessing, Internal Verifying etc.) plus resources and ideas together’.* | Yes ‘*It’s good that the meetings at the start of the year focus on each departmental team and individual needs. Before it was nearly all mandatory and generic. They have been following deferent routes to improve their teaching which is good’.* | Yes *‘These tend to happen on a Wednesday in the PM meeting slots… the improvements are there to be seen in the departments and having time allocated each week makes a difference’.* | ‘*Most, well all except one department are working much better together which is really important and key to a successful department and making sure the students are the focus and having a good experience with us’.* |
| PM2 | Yes ‘*The staff have always engaged in the CPD provided by the college and have regularly gone out into various professional organisations to keep their skills and practice up to date. The main difference is the number of staff engaging in research and higher education studies which is great for our area.’* | Yes ‘*It gives both individuals and teams’ time to take stock of what is happening regarding courses and students as well as solving any issues. They also share and develop ideas the team are really good at working collaboratively to both solve problems as well as sharing good practice’.* | Yes ‘*Most of the team are sourcing a lot of their own training which suits their individual needs, I am supporting it as their manager and the CPD panel support them financially when need be. Staff feel more valued being a part of the CPD process from the start with the TNA sessions where the discussions begin about what they deem as important and would impact on their teaching and expertise.’* | Yes ‘*These have happened on the Wednesday afternoons and I have shared the good practice to wider departments across college. These sessions have seen individuals who have been identified during the observations or learning walks as having good practice to share it. Their confidence has definitely grown as a result of it’.* | Yes ‘*The teams in my area are now all working together both within their own team and colleagues for other team. They are sharing ideas, resources, frustrations as well as working on solutions to common issues that arise.*’ |
| PM3 | Yes ‘*The team is very proactive in taking ownership in both updating their specialist skills as well as going back out into industry… staff are requesting to go out on a regular basis which can only be of benefit to the their expertise and the students they teach.’* | Yes/*Where it is being used well, Some teams are using it more effectively than others. Where it is being used standardisation looking at work and sharing good practice have been very useful to all members of the team’*. | Yes *The teams are committed and are sourcing a lot more CPD themselves. I can see an improvement in classroom practice during my unannounced learning walks-through. The learners seem a lot happier with the service they are receiving.’* | Yes ‘*Wednesday afternoons mainly as everyone could attend. Standardisation sessions ran with all staff new and experienced mainly around assessing and IVing to ensure they were good quality and fit for purpose for the students’*. | Yes ‘ *Teams are working well together and new staff are being mentored to ensure they become fully involved in meetings etc.’* |
| PM4 | Yes/ ‘some *areas have engaged more than others. The ones who have, have gained a lot more personalised training and development which both they and I are very happy with. It is reflected in how their teaching has improved. The ones who have been less involved tend to generally lack motivation and drive for some reason which maybe I need to look into further’*. | Yes ‘*This is a good idea to allocate time for teams to meet and the schedule helps keep the focus. Not all curriculum areas have been allocated this time due to the commercial aspect as well as timetabling so that causes some issues for staff to meet’.* | Yes ‘*the ones who have engaged with the process. This has definitely seen their confidence, skills and knowledge increasing which is great to see when they are in the classroom or RWEs. Again it’s the ones who don’t and never have engaged that we need to work more on next year.’* | Yes *‘they took place but I just dipped in and out of one or two as the PALs lead on them. The feedback form both staff and managers was positive about the ideas that were exchanged and developed*’. | ‘Most *departments are now working well together, I think this is as much to do the the funding cuts and redundancies as anything else. Staff know that to make their jobs more manageable, effective and effective they need to work closer together to ensure the success of the learners as well as making sure they have good learning experiences. This will assist with securing numbers for next academic year through word of mouth. This is definitely a touch time for our sector which isn’t going to end soon due to the Governments lack of understanding of FE.’* |
| PM5 | ***Etc.…*** |  |  |  |  |

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1. Some would label Archer and Giddens as interpretivist and others would say that they are ‘third way’ – that is, they lie between the interpretivist and structuralist traditions. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. LSIS. (2011) *Enhancement of Learning Support – “More than just Course” Using alternative forms of CPD to support practice and development.* Coventry. LSIS [↑](#footnote-ref-2)