The Relationship Between Investment In Training And Frame Work For Excellence Indicators In An FE College

Bryan Davis & Gerry Darlington
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Disclaimer

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Contact Details

LSIS: Learning and Skills Improvement Service
Friars House
Manor House Drive
Coventry CV1 2TE
Switchboard: 024 7662 7900 Enquiries: 024 7662 7953 or enquiries@lsis.org.uk  www.lsis.org.uk
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Keywords: Training investment; Performance indicators; CPD

Executive Summary

New College Swindon has been awarded LSIS funding to conduct a practitioner project to investigate the relationship between investment in staff training and college performance.

Phase 1 of this project developed a Causal Relationship Model (CReM) describing New College’s key strategic inter-relationships and intra-relationships with its operating environment. This model has been used to refine the original scope of the project by identifying a key causal loop against which to test the hypothesis. The causal loop relationship selected for further investigation is that relating to the impact and return on investment (ROI) made in the development of Teaching and Learning practices within the college.

Phase 2 of the research project concerned testing the hypothesis against New College’s historical performance indicators and the views of lecturers collated from an online survey and focus group.

The research found that while there are positive correlations between investment in training and the Framework for Excellence indicators, that lecturers believe that targeted in-house, in-team training and sharing of best practice is more effective in improving performance than external training or graded observations.

Introduction

New College Swindon

New College Swindon is a general Further Education (FE) College of approximately 3100 full time 16-18 students and five thousand part-time and adult students, the majority of whom are enrolled onto Level 3 courses. There are approximately 200 full time teaching staff, 200 part time or casual teaching staff and 150 support and administrative staff. New College has an excellent record of supporting and developing its staff. Within the College’s annual calendar, fifteen days per year are devoted to staff development activities and most staff requests for external training are met on an annual basis. Currently New College invests a cash budget of more than £90k, and a soft “utilisation” budget of £262.5K in conducting and supporting staff professional development. New College facilitates a minimum of 30 hours of targeted CPD to all its staff annually, driven by overall college priorities, work force development goals and informed by performance review needs. It is, however difficult to link to the college’s overall performance.

There are over 400 FE colleges in England. Each college is unique, with its own history, community context, mission, curriculum mix, and learners who participate in the learning offered, which for New College is largely at Level 3 for full time 16-18 learners. Increasingly colleges have less choice and control over learner intake, as
Government policies change to reflect the perceived needs of the economy (Alton et al. 2007). Over recent years there has been an increasing focus on diversifying the curriculum offer and improving the quality and financial performance of the sector.

This has driven the development of more robust external inspection processes, delivered through OfSTED. Colleges have increasingly been expected to focus on “quality” and “quality improvement” and have to be able to demonstrate the “capacity to improve” if they are to achieve a successful inspection grade. This emphasis on quality has cumulated in the recent introduction across the FE sector (excluding Sixth Form Colleges or Schools) of the "Framework for Excellence" (LSC 2010).

Colleges in general and New College in particular, are investing considerable amounts in training their staff to ensure that overall performance maintains its current upward trend. What is not clear is how this investment is impacting on the efficiency and effectiveness of the college, both in terms of the Framework for Excellence scorecard, and the quality of provision. This paper is an attempt to clarify the impact that investment in staff development has on final outcomes.

Theoretical Approach/Research Framework

Research hypothesis

The hypothesis to be addressed in this paper is that:

"Investment in staff development contributes a positive return on investment (ROI), leading to improvements in New College’s overall performance as evidenced in the Framework for Excellence indicators."

Return on training investment in further education

The concept of "return on investment" in staff training as a topic for study and research in the private sector has developed markedly over the past 40 years. This is not the case within the Further Education sector where ROI for training spend is not well understood, although this is changing with the introduction of the Training Quality Standard (TQS). The range of published material relating to ROI derived from training and development spend has increased significantly, particularly since the introduction of the Kirkpatrick model in the late 1970's (Kirkpatrick, D.L and JD, 2006). This said it has proved very difficult to access any research describing the impact of training spend in the UK public sector and virtually no meaningful reference material relating the impact of training spend on the effectiveness of the FE sector in particular.

The conventional wisdom seems to indicate that staff training has played a key role in the improvement in quality within the sector over the past 10 years. What is very clear is that any such relationship has not been categorically established. Previously
the range of cross sector comparative indicators and measures used to grade college
effectiveness was considered by some to be "eclectic" (Kirkpatrick, D.L and JD,
2006) at best and misleading at worst. Further to this the concept of Return on
Investment (ROI) in a public setting has been difficult to define in a coherent cross
sector manner. It has therefore proved very difficult, if not impossible, for an
organisation to determine the relative value of training spend. That this "bottom line"
impact of organisational training spend has been practically impossible to compare
across the sector has proved a major limiting factor in establishing contribution. This
situation has changed with the introduction of moderated sector wide indicators
within the construct of the Framework for Excellence.

The introduction of the Framework for Excellence has provided a standardised
scorecard through which the impact of training spend can be assessed and also
benchmarked within the sector.

**Framework for Excellence**

The Framework for Excellence is the Government’s performance assessment tool for
FE colleges, post-16 education and commercial training providers who receive
funding from the Learning and Skills Council. The Framework was designed in
consultation with the FE sector and other key stakeholders including the Department
for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Department of Children, Schools and
Families (DCSF) and OfSTED.

The Framework has been in existence for several years and has now been
developed thereby improving its fitness for purpose. This development has been
strongly influenced by experience from piloting and feedback from providers and
stakeholders during implementation. The Framework now operates within the
commissioning and performance management arrangements of the sector.

From 2009, the Framework has provided a simple and more sensitive framework
which recognises the diverse nature of the further education sector. It has a small
number of core performance indicators that apply to all types of provider. The core
indicators are supplemented by specific indicators that are relevant to particular types
of provider and provision. The indicator that is principally relevant to this project is
Qualification Success Rate (QSR). QSR is a sector wide Key Performance Indicator
(LSC 2008).

QSR is a weighted indicator whose primary component is Basic Success Rate. Basic
Success Rate is derived as the product of Achievement Rate and Retention Rate.
Basic Success Rates are banded and awarded points dependant on the Qualification
Family (A Level, BTEC etc) and mode of delivery (FE Long etc). A second
component of Qualification Success Rate is Contextualised Value Added (CVA).
Contextualised Value Added measures the attainment of pupils within an academic
year in comparison to pupils with similar prior attainment. This measure is used in the
Achievement and Attainment Tables (formerly known as Performance Tables). Points
are added to the banded points derived from Success Rate and the result used to
determine QSR. QSR is one of the primary key performance indicators that
determine an OfSTED inspection grade.
Table 1 sets out the Framework for Excellence indicators for 2009/10.

**Table 1 The Framework for Excellence indicators for 2009/10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Core or Specific</th>
<th>Published or Unpublished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner and qualification success</td>
<td>Success rates</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Views</td>
<td>Learner Views</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learner Destination</td>
<td>Learner Destinations (including a statement of volume of employment outcomes)</td>
<td>Core</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness to employers</td>
<td>Employer Views</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training Quality Standard</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount of training (statement of volume for information; not graded)</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Published</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kirkpatrick (Kirkpatrick, D.L., and J.D, 2006) proposed a four level model for the evaluation of training. These levels are:

- Reaction of student - what they thought and felt about the training;
- Learning - the resulting increase in knowledge or capability;
- Behaviour - extent of behaviour and capability improvement and implementation/application;
- Results - the effects on the business or environment resulting from the trainee's performance.

It is the fourth level of Kirkpatrick’s model that concerns this project. The Framework for Excellence provides standard measures of outcomes – the question is, does investment in training have a causal relationship to those outcomes?

Evaluating Level 4 (Kirkpatrick 2010) is the key to establishing the impact of training on performance. The key characteristics of such evaluations for FE are suggested Table 2. It is possible that many of these measures are already in place via normal management systems and reporting within individual colleges. However this is not the case in the FE sector as a whole and as such a “cross sector” evaluation is not possible per se.
For senior managers annual appraisals and ongoing agreement of key business objectives are integral to measuring business results derived from training and this will become increasingly important as funding reduces at the same time as pressure to re-skill the sector increases.

Table 2 Level 4 Evaluation Characteristics (after Kirkpatrick 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation description and characteristics</th>
<th>Evaluation tools</th>
<th>Relevance and practicability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Results evaluation is the effect on the business or environment resulting from the improved performance of the trainee. Measures are typically business or organisational key performance indicators, such as: Volumes, values, percentages, timescales, return on investment, and other quantifiable aspects of organisational performance, for instance; numbers of complaints, staff turnover, attrition, failures, wastage, non-compliance, quality ratings, achievement of standards and accreditations, growth, achievement and retention, etc.</td>
<td>It is possible that many suitable measures are in place via normal management systems and reporting in many FE Colleges. The challenge is to identify a set of measures that is common to all FE establishments. With the advent of the Framework for Excellence it is now possible to relate individual Teaching and Learning Development to College Success Rate.</td>
<td>Individually, results evaluation is not particularly difficult; across an entire organisation it becomes very much more challenging, and across a sector preclusive without an agreed framework, not least because of the reliance on management, and the frequency and scale of changing structures, responsibilities and roles, which complicates the process of attributing clear achievement metrics.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their article “How a system of observation of teaching and learning relates to the SAR (NIACE 2001)”, the authors make the point that “a system of moderation, perhaps with observers and moderators making some joint visits, establishes consistency of feedback and grading of the OTL (Observation of Teaching and Learning) process”. This consistency is a key component assessed as part of OfSTED’s Common Inspection Framework (CIF) and is externally moderated across the FE sector.

As the OTL process is conducted across the FE sector it is a potential candidate to extrapolate and generalise any ROI model that links Staff Training to Quality and goes some way to providing a standardised and moderated framework to extrapolate the results of one college across the sector as a whole.

\(^1\) NIACE 2001
New College was assessed as “Good with Outstanding” features at its recent OfSTED inspection (New College 2009). Currently New College has achieved a teaching profile of 90% “Good or Better” teaching and the colleges "lesson and observation process is robust and reliable”. This represents a year on year improvement in the College's Teaching and Learning profile of 5-7% over the past 4 years. What is not clear is how this improvement in the teaching profile has impacted on the key Framework for Excellence indicator - Success Rate; and the component parts Achievement and Retention.

**Research Methods**

**Phase one - Developing the functional influence model**

This research project was carried out in two phases; the first phase developed a functional influence model (Appendix 1) describing New College’s key activities. The model shows the perceived causal links and feedback mechanisms that link staff training and development to overall college performance. The model was developed through consultation with college managers and other stakeholders and therefore represents the causal links they believed to be operating at the time.

**Phase two – Exploring causality using the functional influence model**

The second phase of the research aimed to explore probable causal links through analysis of current and previous performance data, using triangulated methods (Campbell, D T, and Stanley, J L. (1966), to test the research hypothesis.

The sector and operational experience of the researchers’ and College’s Management team has played an important role in the identification of each of the candidate relationships for examination.

Candidate systems were mapped to the key Framework for Excellence KPIs. In selecting a set of causal relationships for analysis significant care has been taken to ensure that these candidate relationships could be mapped relatively easily to the Framework for Excellence. Additionally candidate relationships were assessed in terms of access to data across at least two OfSTED inspections.

The causal relationship loop selected for analysis was:

- Teaching → Learning → Quality → Revenue

This relationship was selected because the staff training arising from the Observation of Teaching and Learning process mapped relatively easily onto the relationship loop. It also facilitated recognition of individual development; college-wide development, sector initiatives and other thematic training programmes aimed at improving the quality of Teaching and Learning within New College.
The key Framework for Excellence indicators and measures relevant to this research are:

- Qualification Success Rate;
- Contextualised Value Added.

The second phase of this research was designed to establish how the Observation of Teaching and Learning (OTL) process informs the staff development process and how the subsequent training arising impacts on these key performance indicators.

**Methodologies used**

The information used in Phase Two is all based on primary data, generated as follows:

- Quantitative analysis of historical management data, namely;
  - Success Rates, Achievement, Retention, Contextualised Value Added, Average Point Score per Student, Average Point Score per Entry, CPD spend (Hard and Soft),
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis of an online survey completed by lecturing staff. The survey was open to all lecturing staff for a short period of time. The sample was thus self-selecting.
- Qualitative analysis of a lecturing staff focus group. This group was based on a self-selecting convenience sample.

**Research Findings**

**Quantitative analysis of management data**

**Graphical comparison of original data**

Research conducted during Phase Two considered the relationship between training spend and hours, OTL profile and the key performance indicators identified in Phase One.

Over the past 5 years New College has invested a significant, and annually inflating, internal and external resource into the development of its staff (Figure 1). Of significance is the switch since 2007 to a more internal provision. This is significant insofar as the training programme delivered internally is targeted primarily at the teaching staff, and targeted to address systemic themes emerging from the OTL process.
Once all college requirements such as Safeguarding and Every Child Matters (ECM) together with other national initiatives have been removed, staff development is largely concerned with the development of Teaching and Learning skills.

The College’s OTL profile of lecturers achieving a “Good or Better” rating shows a similar upward trend as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2 OTL Profile (Good or Better)**

The relatively large improvement in the OTL profile was accompanied by upward trends in the Long Success Rate for all levels; however there are some differences between under 19 and 19+ provision as seen in Figures 3 and 4. NB. Long Success
rate has been selected to conduct the relative analysis because it is contended that this facilitates a consistent year on year impact of improvement in teaching and learning practice to be evidenced, but it should be recognised that the College also provides other courses. Long courses account for approximately 65% of the total provision. Short courses and provision for adult learners (New College has approximately 8000 adult learners when all courses are considered) will be examined in future research.

**Figure 3 KPIs for under 19 Long Courses**

![Figure 3 KPIs for under 19 Long Courses](image)

**Figure 4 KPIs for 19+ Long Courses**

![Figure 4 KPIs for 19+ Long Courses](image)
Contextualised Value Added (CVA) data has only been collected for 2 periods and follows a similar trend to the under 19 provision KPIs. APS appears to have fallen slightly, while APSE is level over the 5 year period considered. However, this is against a background of the national LSC average APS per student declining from 731.8 in 2007 to 721 in 2008. It rose back to almost its original position of 731.1 in 2009. New College was listed as fourth in the country for APS as measured by TES against a sample of 150 selected colleges. So, against benchmark this may show an increase in real terms and warrants further investigation.

**Figure 5 Contextualised Value Added**

![Graph showing Contextualised Value Added and Average Point Scores](image)

NB. CVA refers to Full (450 GLH) Level 3 courses which, at present, represent approx 65% of New College’s enrolments.

The model developed in Phase One indicates probable causal relationships. If a correlation exists between variables measuring activity in the loop(s) under consideration, this may imply causality exists. The results of correlation analyses are shown in Tables 3 – 5.

**Correlation analysis**

**Table 3 Rank order by correlation coefficient**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation with OTL performance</th>
<th>Rank order by correlation coefficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retention 19+</td>
<td>0.838940809</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement 19+</td>
<td>0.763407085</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Rate 19+</td>
<td>0.857803674</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention Under 19</td>
<td>0.473741803</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Under 19</td>
<td>0.885359628</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Rate Under 19</td>
<td>0.748450995</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total hours CPD</td>
<td>0.927610421</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total training spend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 Correlations between OTL, Retention, Achievement and Success Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTL (%)</th>
<th>Retention 19+ (%)</th>
<th>Achievement 19+ (%)</th>
<th>Success Rates 19+ (%)</th>
<th>Retention under 19 (%)</th>
<th>Achievement under 19 (%)</th>
<th>Success Rates under 19 (%)</th>
<th>Total Hours</th>
<th>Total Spend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>6750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>973</td>
<td>9675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>75</td>
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<td>82</td>
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<td>71</td>
<td>4646</td>
<td>107177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>85</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td>156709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6550</td>
<td>166937</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correlation with OTL

| Correlation with OTL | 0.838940809 | 0.763407085 | 0.857803674 | 0.473741803 | 0.885359628 | 0.748450995 | 0.924179547 | 0.927610421 |

Correlation retention v achievement

| Correlation retention v achievement | 0.629047714 | 0.512973125 |
Table 4 Correlation between Retention and Achievement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Correlation between Retention and Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19+</td>
<td>0.629047714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 19</td>
<td>0.512973125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commentary on correlations:

1. There is very strong positive correlation between both Total Hours of CPD and the Total Training Spend with Observation of Teaching and Learning. This could imply causality, suggesting that increasing the investment in staff training, whether through time spent in training or money spent on it increases their performance against OTL criteria when being observed. Causality cannot be established without triangulation i.e. other evidence to indicate a causal link. Hence the need for other methodological approaches such as focus groups, interviews and questionnaires.
2. The next two strongest correlations are found between OTL and Achievement under 19 and OTL and Success rate 19+.
3. For the under 19s, this relatively strong correlation for Achievement is coupled with a weak positive correlation with Retention. This results in a weakened correlation for Success Rates with OTL for this age group.
4. For the over 19s, retention has a stronger correlation with OTL than Achievement.
5. For both age groups the correlation between retention and achievement is fairly weak – more so for the under 19 group. This may be unexpected by some practitioners, who expressed the belief in recent meetings that “if students turn up for lessons, we can improve their results”.

Further work should be done to establish whether there is causality in points 1-5 through triangulation of research methods.

Online survey and focus group findings

An online survey to establish lecturers’ views about the Observation Process (OTL), Staff Development & Training (CPD) and Behaviour Management was developed by New College’s Advanced Practitioner Team using Survey Monkey. The final version of the survey is included as Appendix 2. The survey was reviewed after 17 respondents had completed it and minor changes made before other respondents replied. A total of 52 responses were analysed overall, including the original 17. The total number of lecturers employed by the college (N) was 200, giving a response rate of 26%. The sample was self-selecting and the survey was anonymous. Questions relating to Behaviour Management have not been analysed for this report. Results are summarised in Appendix 3.

The focus group consisted of 6 lecturers who were participating in a CPD event to share best practice on differentiation in the classroom. They were given two questions to consider, the second one being presented when the observer felt that discussion on the first question had run it’s natural course. The questions were:
1. Does the training you receive have any effect on teaching, learning and overall outcomes?
2. How does the observation of teaching and learning affect teaching, learning and overall outcomes?

Information from the focus groups has been categorised and blended with the qualitative responses received from the online survey.

Findings from the online survey combined with focus group responses

The link between Observations and the Quality of Teaching and Learning

New College carries out 4 types of observations:

- **Mentor observations**
  - Carried out with new staff by their mentors
  - Advance notice given
- **Peer observations**
  - Carried out by fellow lecturers
  - Advance notice given
- **Mystery shops**
  - Randomly selected, observer may be unknown to lecturer
  - No advance notice
  - Linked to disciplinary procedures
- **Main observations**
  - Carried out by line managers
  - Advance notice given
  - Linked to disciplinary procedures

Only the last 2, mystery shops and main observations are graded and counted in the OTL process. They are also linked with the disciplinary process. A Grade 3 assessment will trigger a repeat observation and multiple Grade 3s will initiate an improvement planning cycle, involving advance practitioner support. A Grade 4 assessment will trigger the disciplinary procedure.

There is a noticeable difference in lecturers’ views as to whether these types of observations are useful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. A significant number of lecturers either “Somewhat disagree” or “Strongly disagree” that mystery shops are useful in this context. The opposite pattern was found for all other types of observation. This may be in part due to the link to the disciplinary procedure, to the unplanned nature of mystery shops or the fact that these observations may be carried out by strangers. It is more likely to be the latter two factors, as these are the key differences between the mystery shop and the other types of observation.

Analysis of open-ended responses and the focus group’s discussion reveals that observation, particularly mystery shops, can engender emotive responses from lecturers. Some lecturers feel that they are observed too much and feel that they are not trusted to do their jobs. They query why other professionals, including other college staff are not put under this level of scrutiny. Observations themselves were
rarely described in positive terms. Descriptions of observations included terms such as:

- Judgmental
- Negative experience
- Demotivating and
- Stressful,

with comments such as the following revealing the apprehension some lecturers feel over observations:

“I dread them.”

“After I think – thank goodness that trial is over.”

“I view them with great apprehension.”

“Do managers feel it’s their job to make us feel stressful? [Observations] aren’t helpful in making better lessons.”

Mystery shops undoubtedly cause the most negative comments. For example, “I feel very strongly that mystery shops on our lessons add an extra pressure and lower the morale of teaching staff,” and “Random lessons observations have the potential to go seriously wrong. They fail to appreciate the relational and developmental nature of good teaching/learning over time. These kinds of observation rely on very subjective judgements or attempt to spot key features on a ‘good lesson’ which because of the place in a scheme may be irrelevant,” echo the sentiments of a number of respondents. On the other hand one respondent feels that, “For most staff the once a year fully planned and announced observation is of little value and should be replaced by random mystery shops.”

A repeated theme was the idea that observations are “performances” and they are “not representative” of other lessons done throughout the year. This causes lecturers to question whether they are reliable measures of quality and a number felt that results, such as Achievement were more relevant and less subjective.

There is a feeling among some lecturers that, “given the nature of external inspection it is necessary to have them, perhaps anybody scoring consistently 1 or 2 every other year. Apart from this they do nothing to improve teaching/learning and are a waste of resources.” The view was also expressed that, “The fact that there are no videos on FE [observed lessons] says it all. If this is so important, why aren’t there videos of all subjects, at all levels and interactive resources?” There are videos available at school level.

Although negative about observations per se, lecturers felt far more positive about receiving feedback from and being involved in both mentor and peer observations. These seem to provide a more supportive environment for discussing approaches to teaching and learning, with the focus being on a mutual searching for improvement,
while the other forms of observation are viewed as being almost punitive in some way. The issue however, seems to lie more with the impersonal aspects of the process, as one lecturer commented, “People who have observed me have been helpful. The process is not.” Lecturers clearly want to continue to improve their practice, as evidenced by comments such as, “Let’s spend less money on observation and more on training and sharing and on practical things [to improve].”

Another recurrent theme was that observation places the emphasis on the teacher delivering and encourages passivity on the part of the learner. Lecturers feel that “Learners need to engage and take responsibility.” This had already been recognised in previous years by the Advanced Practitioner Team and the observation template modified to take more account of learning rather than emphasising teaching. However, it appears that lecturers still feel that the bias of the observation instrument is too focussed on teaching. As one lecturer observed, “Results will tend to depend on the initial grades that students came in with and their intrinsic motivation to succeed. Factors seem to indicate that grades awarded for observations have little correlation to results obtained. Teachers need to be trusted. What is helpful is learning from colleagues who have tried and tested ideas that have worked for them.” The comment about the correlation of observation grade to results is not borne out by the correlations in this research, which show a relatively strong correlation between OTL and Achievement but not necessarily between OTL and Retention at the overall college level. However, it would be interesting to see if there are differences in correlations at other levels, such as curriculum area, subject level and qualification type.

When lecturers know they are going to be observed approximately 2/3 of them will change their lesson plans and other preparations, but only 43% will change their delivery.

Virtually all lecturers who commented on how they change their lesson plans said that they wrote far more detailed lesson plans than they usually do and a number made the point that they simply do not have the time to be so detailed in the normal course of events. Several suggested that planned lesson observations lead them to select “more interesting” topics and activities, again supporting the idea that these lessons are “performances”. The point was also made that “Ofsted provides conflicting objectives [on the one hand] there is the pressure to deliver large volumes of content [and on the other] different ways of teaching”. Some lecturers feel that this pressure has increased as students with learning difficulties have become integrated into mainstream education and requirements for differentiation and support have become more demanding.

Regarding other preparations, lecturers tend to check that there are multiple copies of paperwork, that schemes of work, lesson plans and student profiles are up to date and conforming to current standards and that the facilities are all in order. They place an emphasis on “double checking”. One concluded, “It is good to be seen at one’s best. However, it would be impossible to maintain the level of preparation for each and every lesson.”
With respect to delivery, several respondents commented that nerves can get the better of them resulting in stilted delivery, but no other common theme emerged, apart from that already mentioned of making the lessons more entertaining. Overall, a number of lecturers felt that observed lessons delivered less learning for the students than a “normal” lesson.

After receiving feedback from an observation however, again 2/3 of them will change their lesson plans and other preparations, but 75% will also change their delivery, implying that feedback from observations has a more significant impact on lecturers' delivery behaviours than the observation itself.

No common themes emerged regarding the way in which lecturers changed the lesson plans or other preparations after feedback. This appears to vary depending on the specific feedback received. However, open ended comments revealed that several lecturers felt that detailed lesson plans were not needed for experienced lecturers to deliver their classes successfully.

In terms of delivery, no consistent themes occurred, but several commented that discussions, often informally carried out with other staff persuaded them to change their delivery.

The link between the CPD process and Training and the Quality of Teaching and Learning

73% of respondents either “Somewhat Agree” or “Strongly Agree” that the college's CPD process and training is useful in improving the quality of teaching and learning. 21% either “Somewhat Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” that this is the case.

Most respondents who expressed a view felt that not all strategies “were relevant” either to their subject area or the type of class. Most respondents also felt that it was not necessarily the subject of the CPD that was important, but having the chance to exchange ideas and suggestions with their colleagues. A number of comments suggested that money would be better invested in enabling colleagues to spend more time together sharing views, as in the CPD session the focus group were working on, than in hiring external experts to come in. There appears to be a prevailing belief that there are untapped skills and resources already in the college. SMT recognises this and HR are working on a skills database to make improvements in this area. Comments suggesting a reallocation of spend to internal rather than external events appear indicate two things. Firstly, that lecturers are not aware of the changing trend in CPD spend from external to internal spend as shown in Figure 1.

Secondly, that lecturers feel they gain more from working with other members of their own curriculum team or recognised internal experts to share practical, best practice solutions than other approaches. As focus group members put it, “We need more sessions like [the ones we had today],” The session involved working in the curriculum team to develop practical exercises to offer improved differentiation and two lecturers gave a practical demonstration of one of their approaches, which others felt was inspiring and they could adapt to use in their own lessons. By the end of this 2 hour session every lecturer had contributed at least 2 suggestions to be incorporated into lessons and completed the materials to be used.
98% of respondents implement ideas and strategies relating to improving the quality of teaching and learning they have gained from CPD sessions into practice, with 23% saying they always do so, while 78% do this sometimes.

Most comments made here explained that strategies may not be relevant. This was most often the case when “the whole college” or “external experts” were involved in the CPD event, once again reinforcing the belief that lecturers benefit more from more targeted in-team CPD sessions.

When asked about what motivated lecturers to change their professional behaviour to improve the quality of teaching and learning 89% said “Professional pride” was “Highly motivating”. This was followed by “Having more time” – 73%, “Poor feedback from students” – 54% and “Praise/award/recognition” – 52%. This demonstrates the commitment and vocational attachment of lecturers to their role. Lecturers genuinely want to focus more on improving teaching and feel that if they can do this the other targets, outcomes or measures will improve as a consequence. As one respondent put it, “Customers (or students) know it is good teaching and opportunities to learn which will enable them to succeed, not teachers overly worried by end targets, funding and excessively burdened by tasks which don't give them time to prepare stimulating lessons, and talk with colleagues.” Several staff gave examples or responses which indicate they would prefer spend be allocated to revenue expense to improve teaching resources, time for preparation and support instead of to capital expense for new equipment and facilities.

96% of respondents are set targets for the training needs at their annual appraisal. For 50% of respondents this always happens, for 46% it sometime occurs.

Sharing good practice
Respondents were asked if they had participated in four different ways of sharing good practice, namely if they had:

- Led a CPD session on good practice;
- Been involved in sharing good practice;
- Provided exemplar materials for a CPD session;
- Shared ideas or experience with a colleague informally.

71% had never led or never been asked to lead a CPD session. 25% did this sometimes while only 4% did this often. This probably reflects the small size of the advanced practitioner team and indicates that the sample responding to the questionnaire is representative of the college lecturing staff as a whole in this respect.

Although only 29% lead the CPD sessions, 48% of respondents provide exemplar CPD materials, and 50% feel they are involved in sharing good practice. It would be interesting to know if there are differences between full time and part time lecturing staff in their views on sharing good practice.

Only 8% of respondents had never been asked to or never shared ideas with a colleague. 56% did this frequently and 37% sometimes did this.
Sharing good practice appears to be fairly well spread throughout the college, but further research might help to identify ways to embed this further throughout the whole of the lecturing staff. The most recurrent theme through this whole project was the desire of lecturers to have more time to be able to share good practice with colleagues.

One example was referred to by the focus group who recalled, “Remember when we were preparing for Ofsted – with Lecturer X’s little men? That was used by a Grade 2 teacher who then got a brilliant grade 1 – evidence that sharing works.”

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions fall into three main categories, namely:

- Practical suggestions for implementation within FE colleges;
- Validation of the research hypothesis;
- Suggestions for further work.

Practical suggestions for implementation within FE colleges

This research suggests that colleges may benefit from reviewing their in-house capabilities for delivering targeted in-team CPD training. This could lead to significant cost savings as well as improved performance. This is not to suggest that external training should be ignored completely, but that it should be carefully selected and monitored for its applicability, effectiveness and post training contribution to the organisation. The Kirkpatrick model for evaluating training could be of benefit here.

Specifically for New College it may be beneficial to make lecturing staff more aware of the shift in spending from external to internal training, as this would provide positive reinforcement for staff.

Colleges could consider how to make more time available for lecturers to collaborate and pass on their expertise through in team CPD events and peer and mentor observation and review.

Validation of the research hypothesis

"Investment in staff development contributes a positive return on investment (ROI), leading to improvements in New College’s overall performance as evidenced in the Framework for Excellence indicators"

The very strong positive correlation between both Total Hours of CPD and the Total Training Spend with Observation of Teaching and Learning could imply that increasing the investment in staff training, whether through time spent in training or money spent on it increases lecturers’ performance against OTL criteria when being observed. Evidence from lecturers suggests that internal training and particularly
sharing good practice within teams is more important in achieving good outcomes than external or more generalised training.

Lecturers believe that factors relating to the learner’s prior attainments, their willingness to engage and take responsibility for their own learning are also key variables affecting the key performance indicators.

Since respondents query whether those observations generating the OTL scores are representative of the classes which actually contribute to generating the Framework for Excellence results, it is debatable whether mystery shop or the main observations carried out contribute to improving performance. However, there is evidence that feedback from peer and mentor observations does contribute to improved performance.

The next two strongest correlations are found between OTL and Achievement under 19 and OTL and Success rate 19+.

For the under 19s, this relatively strong correlation for Achievement is coupled with a weak positive correlation with Retention. This results in a weakened correlation for Success Rates with OTL for this age group.

For the over 19s, retention has a stronger correlation with OTL than Achievement. This difference may be reflective of several factors, such as the fact that older learners have often been away from learning for some time and feel more of a need to attend classes, while younger learners feel more confident about being able to catch up if they miss classes. Younger learners in New College’s intake often have part-time jobs which cause conflict with their college timetable. Anecdotal evidence suggests this may have become worse during the recent recession as students can be more employable than parents in the current local environment. This could be further researched.

For both age groups the correlation between retention and achievement is fairly weak – more so for the under 19 group. This may be unexpected by some practitioners, who expressed the belief in recent meetings that “if students turn up for lessons, we can improve their results” and again could be the subject of further work.

Suggestions for further work

Further investigation of the mechanism by which investment in training can deliver improvements against the Framework for Excellence could include:

- Exploring the views of managers, learners, inspectors and other stakeholders. This paper has focused on the lecturer perspective.
- A more detailed model showing the different types of training and their effects on indicators could be developed and tested.
- Drilling down into curriculum areas could provide more insight into whether there are any differences between subject areas and vocational or academic courses.
Further analysis by course type, including short courses and very short courses could also be useful to see if different mechanisms contribute to success on these types of programmes.

In depth analysis of individual and team CPD records to evaluate internal and external training using the Kirkpatrick model, to establish whether and if so how, knowledge gained from training benefits the college and is implemented and cascaded through it.

The scope of the research could be broadened to include the role of the learner in performance against key indicators.
References


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