

Towards an understanding of the construction of the professional identity
of vocational further education college teachers.

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Abstract.

This thesis presents findings of a research project that was carried out within the field of Further Education (FE). The broad aim of the study was to gain a greater understanding of the professional identity formation process that vocational FE teachers undergo as they progress from the role of industry practitioner to teacher. The thesis develops and builds upon Robson's work and seeks to answer her 'call' for a better understanding of this complex identity development process that FE teachers undergo.

In order to realise this aim, practising vocational FE teachers were interviewed across four different general FE colleges located in the south east of England. Responses were analysed using Illeris' (2011) theories of workplace learning. The findings of the study were grouped together to form themes and then distilled to establish how vocational FE teachers view their identity and what the key influences on the identity formation process were. The thesis presents two key assertions about the professional identity formation process.

This study concludes firstly, that contrary to previous studies, formal initial teacher training is not highly valued by vocational FE teachers, it is placed second to experiential work-place learning on the job with the support of practitioner peers. This learning process, instigated by the practitioners themselves, involved various types of networking with peers and was encouraged by managers.

Secondly, Illeris' workplace learning theory can be used as a lens to explain the rich learning process and the key elements that contribute to the formation of vocational FE teachers' professional identity. Professional identity formation takes place in a learning space influenced by workplace production, the individual, work practice and the community within the workplace.

The work suggests that these findings make a contribution to knowledge in the field of FE and should be used to inform future discussions concerning the professional formation of vocational FE teachers and the development of their practice.

Declaration of Word Count

The exact number of words in this thesis is 49,578. The abstract, table of contents, statement, references and the appendices are excluded from the word count.

Declaration of Own Work

I, Mark Richard Smithers hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Signed _____

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Sadly, my second supervisor Dr Deborah Mainwaring lost her battle with cancer during the writing of this thesis, she helped shape and funnel the work so much, and I am truly sorry she never got to read the final work. My thoughts and prayers are with her family.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Declaration of Word Count	3
Declaration of Own Work	3
Acknowledgements	4
Table of Contents	5
List of Diagrams, Tables and Figures	13
EdD Reflective Statement	14

Chapter 1 Introduction Context and Rationale

1.0 Introduction	20
1.1 The further education sector	20
1.1.1 Employment and a second chance	20
1.1.2 The importance of its vocational teachers	21
1.2 Definitions of key terms	21
1.2.1 Vocational education and vocational teachers	21
1.2.2 Professional Identity	22
1.3 The study's' key assertions	23
1.3.1 FE vocational teachers are professionals	23
1.4 Context	24
1.4.1 Vocational FE teacher professionalism	24
1.4.2 The political agenda: austerity	24
1.4.3 Ofsted	24
1.4.4 A professional body	25
1.4.5 New entrants	25
1.4.6 A resilient sector	26
1.5 Rationale	27
1.5.1 The researcher	27
1.5.2 FE's Success	27
1.6 A qualified workforce?	28
1.7 A call to research FE teachers' professional identity formation	28
1.7.1 Building on previous work	29

1.7.2	Why teacher identity is important	29
1.7.3	Summary of the research questions and methodology	33
1.8	Summary of the thesis' chapters	30

Chapter 2 The Discourse of Professionalism within Further Education

2.0	Introduction	33
2.1	Professions and professionalisation	33
2.1.1	The classical professions	33
2.1.2	The trait and power theories of professions	34
2.1.3	Challenges to the 'professions'	34
2.1.4	Professional formation	35
2.2.	Ideological and social construction arguments	36
2.2.1	Professionalism is a socially constructed discourse	36
2.2.2	Differing contemporary uses of the term	37
2.3	The further education sector	37
2.3.1	The diversity of FEs' purpose	37
2.3.2	Technical and vocational qualifications	38
2.3.3	Providing skills for the country's workforce	38
2.3.4	Delivering higher education through widening participation	39
2.3.5	Increasing participation	40
2.3.6	Diversity in FE courses	40
2.4	The FE workforce	41
2.4.1	FE Teachers' Journey to Professional Teachers- Unplanned Entry	41
2.4.2	The influence of former occupations	42
2.4.3	The long interview and part-time teachers	43
2.4.4	Teacher training and qualifications	43
2.4.5	The IFL	44
2.4.6	FE teachers' contracts	45

2.4.7	FE teacher turnover	46
2.5	Incorporation and its impact on FE professionals	46
2.5.1	New further education funding and ‘New Public Management’	47
2.5.2	New contracts	48
2.6	FE teacher professionalism post-incorporation	49
2.7	Chapter Summary	50

Chapter 3 Theories of Professional Identity and its Formation in FE Teachers

3.1	Professional identity definition	52
3.1.1	Differing components: knowledge and skills, work and others (colleagues)	
3.1.2	Knowledge and skills	52
3.1.3	Work	53
3.1.4	The impact of colleagues on professional identity	53
3.1.5	Identity within the professionalism discourse	54
3.2	The influence of former occupations on professional identity	55
3.2.1	Dual professionalism	55
3.2.2	Professional identity conflict	57
3.2.3	Occupation and teaching practice	58
3.2.4	Professional values: from a former occupation and teaching	59
3.2.5	FE Teachers as role models	61
3.2.6	FE Teachers and learners’ shared educational identity	61
3.3	Significant influences on FE teachers’ professional identity formation	
3.3.1	Professional identity is fluid	62
3.3.2	Commencing teaching part-time	63
3.3.3	The role of teaching qualifications in FE professional identity formation	
3.3.4	Arguments supporting mandatory teaching qualifications	64
3.3.5	Criticism of occupational standards and theory in teaching qualifications	65
3.3.6	Critics of mandatory qualifications and professional development	67
3.3.7	The influence of modes and content of FE teacher training on identity	68
3.3.8	The tacit nature of teacher’s knowledge, skills and practice	69

3.3.9	The impact of teaching placement and mentoring on professional identity formation	70
3.3.10	Formal mentoring within FE has been ineffectual in developing professional identity	70
3.3.11	Formal mentoring and ITT can have a negative impact on professional identity	
3.3.12	Views on the place of observation in developing teaching practice	71
3.3.13	Learning to be an FE teacher by ‘doing’	73
3.4	Chapter Summary	74
Chapter 4 Theories of Learning and their Application to Workplace Learning in FE		
4.0	Introduction	77
4.1	Learning	77
4.1.1	Definitions and meanings of learning	77
4.1.2	Learning theories	78
4.1.3	Illeris’ three dimensions of learning theory	78
4.2	Workplace Learning	81
4.2.1	Learning in organisations	81
4.2.2	Illeris’ Theories of workplace learning	82
4.2.3	The development of competencies	82
4.2.4	Assimilative learning	83
4.2.5	An individual’s motivation to learn	84
4.2.6	A culture of learning and expansive learning environments	85
4.2.7	An environment that supports ongoing individualised competence development	
4.3	The role of experience and identity formation in work-based learning	
4.3.1	Learning environment and learning potential	86
4.3.2	Production and Community	88
4.3.3	Content of work	89
4.3.4	The position of Identity formation in workplace learning	89
4.3.5	The position of workplace practice in workplace learning	91
4.3.6	The domain of interaction	92
4.4	Discussion and application of work-based learning theory to the FE context	
4.4.1	Competence development, assimilative learning and motivation	94
4.4.2	Application of Illeris’ advanced theory of workplace learning to the FE context	

4.5	Chapter Summary and theoretical framework for the thesis	97
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Chapter 5 Methodology

5.0	Introduction	98
5.1	The research questions	98
5.2	Social science research	100
5.3	The author's position: practitioner researcher	100
5.4	Methodology and research design	102
5.4.1	Qualitative, social constructivist's position	102
5.4.2	Rationale for the research design and participant selection	102
5.4.3	Justification of the chosen research method: semi-structured interviews	
5.4.4	Rationale for the sample	104
5.4.5	Ethics	105
5.5.	Data Analysis and Interpretation	106
5.5.1	Coding and interpreting data – application of Illeris' theoretical framework	107
5.5.2	Reliability and validity	108
5.5.3	Possible limitations of the methodology: generalisability	109
5.5.4	Truth and credibility	109
5.6	Chapter Summary	110

Chapter 6 Findings: FE Teachers' Perception of Their Professional Identity

6.0	Introduction	111
6.1	FE Teachers' Perception of Their Professional Identity	112
6.1.1	The link between a former occupation and professional identity	112
6.1.2	FE teachers' description of their job- teacher first	113
6.1.3	Influence of time in teaching	114
6.1.4	FE teachers' description of their job- vocation first	114
6.2	FE teachers have a distinct professional identity	115
6.2.1	Different to school teachers	115
6.2.2	Experience of work and life skills	115
6.2.3	Lack of qualifications	116
6.2.4	School and college has different goals	116
6.2.5	Preparing their students for work	116

6.3	Dual professionalism	117
6.3.1	Benefits of dual professionalism to teaching	118
6.3.2	FE Teachers as role models	119
6.4	FE teachers' professional values	120
6.4.1	Preparing for work	121
6.4.2	Imparting knowledge and skills	122
6.4.3	Improving Life Chances	122
6.4.4	A second chance	122
6.4.4	Passion for teaching and learning	123
6.4.5	The influence of the former occupation on professional values	124
6.5	Chapter summary	124

Chapter 7 Findings: The Construction of FE Teachers' Professional Identity

7.1	Differing reasons for considering entry to the FE teaching profession	
7.1.1	Training others in their previous vocation	125
7.1.2	Entering teaching unintentionally	127
7.1.3	Lack of a purposeful career plan	126
7.2	Entry points to FE teaching	127
7.2.1	The long interview- starting part-time	127
7.2.2	Gradual progression to full-time teaching	128
7.2.3	Remaining in the 'industry'	128
7.3	The role of teaching qualifications in FE teachers' professional practice	
7.3.1	Commencing unqualified	129
7.3.2	Commencing a formal teaching qualification	130
7.3.3	Respondents views on their formal teacher training	130
7.3.4	Poor quality of teaching	131
7.3.5	Lack of practical teaching skills	131
7.3.6	Just a 'necessary' process	132
7.3.7	An essential job requirement	132
7.3.8	Positive Responses	133
7.4	Possible influence of the workplace on the findings	133
7.5	Chapter summary	135

Chapter 8 Findings: Significant Influences on FE Teachers' Professional Identity Formation.

8.1	The significant influences on FE professional formation	136
8.1.2	Learning from other teachers	137
8.1.3	Discussing with other FE teachers and observing their practice	138
8.1.4	A consistent theme in their vocational background	139
8.2	The influence of the FE College	139
8.2.1	Mentoring and Team teaching	139
8.2.2	College staff development	140
8.2.3	Being observed by other teachers	140
8.2.4	Learning through reflecting on your own teaching practice	140
8.2.5	Reactions from students	141
8.3	Findings of the second set of interviews	141
8.3.1	Initiating the interaction with others	142
8.3.2	Engaging with other teachers' practice through observation and discussion.	143
8.3.2	Benefits to professional practice from learning off others	145
8.3.3	The regularity of interaction, and the length of learning from others period	
8.4	Possible impact of the college workplace and managers on the findings	
8.5	The influence of participants' demographics and occupational background	148
8.6	Chapter summary	151

Chapter 9 Discussion of the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

9.1	Propositions that form the work's contribution to knowledge	153
9.1.2	Summary of the work's contribution to knowledge.	154
9.2	How do FE teachers view their professional identity?	154
9.2.1	Is it distinct to other education professionals? and if so how?	155
9.2.2	Do they ascribe to the notion of dual professionalism, if so how does it impact on their practice?	156
9.2.3	What professional values shape this identity	157
9.3	How is an FE teacher's professional identity constructed?	158
9.3.1	What is the role of formal teaching qualifications in this process?	160

9.3.2	What is the most significant influence on FE professional identity formation? professional teacher identity?	165
9.3.3	The Influence of the workplace: college and the managers	166
9.3.4	Possible influence of participants' demographics and occupation on identity	
9.3.5	To what degree does an FE teacher's former occupation impact on their professional teacher identity?	169
9.4	Application of workplace learning theories to FE professional identity formation.	170
9.4.1	Competence development and assimilative learning in new FE teachers	
9.4.2	Motivation to learn to become a teacher	171
9.4.3	The formation 'point' of FE professional identity	172
9.5	Potential improvements to the thesis and limitations	172
9.6	Implications of the findings for wider professional practice	173
9.6.1	Informing future FE teacher training	173
9.6.2	Creating an ongoing CPD strategy embedded in industry	175
9.6.3	Application and dissemination of the findings	175
9.6.4	A new FE teacher training model	176
9.7	Contribution to the researcher's professional development	177
9.8	Further possible research	179
9.8.1	FE teachers as role models	179
9.8.2	FE teachers' construction of their own pedagogy	180
9.9	Concluding Comments	181
	References	182
	Appendix 1: Research participants' details	194
	Appendix 2: Schedule of Interview Questions	195
	Appendix 3: Follow up Interviews Schedule of Questions	197
	Appendix 4: FE Colleges used in the Study	198
	Appendix 5: Summary of Lecturers' Background and Responses	199

List of Diagrams, Tables and Figures

Figure 1 Tripartite commitment to professionalism.

Figure 2 Individual's psychological makeup and view of self.

Figure 3 Significant influences in an FE teacher's formation of professional identity.

Figure 4 Illeris' Three dimensions of learning

Figure 5 Illeris' Fundamental elements of workplace learning

Figure 6 The position of identity in the structure of learning

Figure 7 The position of work practice in the field of workplace learning

Figure 8 Illeris' advanced model of workplace learning

Figure 9 Analysing qualitative data

Figure 10 Respondents' description of their job role.

Table 1 Respondents' values

Table 2 Significant themes in FE teacher identity formation

Reflective Statement: Reading for a Professional Doctorate in Education

Introduction

One of the unique requirements for reading for a professional doctorate is writing a statement which encourages the student to reflect upon the professional ‘journey’ that the individual has undertaken over the whole course of study. This statement provides a summary of my journey on the Doctor in Education programme (EdD) and encapsulates my learning experience and specifically how the course has contributed to my professional development and knowledge.

I will first briefly reflect on the taught modules of the course, then the institution focussed study (IFS) and finally the thesis. During this reflective account I will outline how my thinking and focus for my final and most substantive piece of work: the thesis, which immediately follows this statement, formed over the years of study.

In my account I will try to be honest about the struggles that I encountered, what I learned from both an academic, but also most significantly from a professional perspective, as a middle manager working in further education.

The taught modules

The course commenced with the module Foundations of Professionalism, which I found the most engaging, in terms of where my own thinking and professional practice was developing compared to all the other taught modules. I became intrigued firstly with the historical and sociological debates over the classic professions and the social capital, autonomy, self-regulation and esteem that has been afforded to them, and secondly, applying these debates to the field of education and the struggle that teachers had undergone to gain ‘full’ professional status. This was a theme I would return to at the IFS stage of my study and ultimately explore most fully in the thesis.

The time that I studied the professionalism module was hugely significant for the FE sector, and my practice and the module was very pertinent for this. During this period many FE teachers were questioning the effectiveness, validity and cost of belonging to the professional body- the Institute for Learning (IFL). Many teachers were refusing to pay a fee for membership, and seriously questioning the impact that it was having on

professional development and training. The result was a thorough review led by Lord Lingfield (DBIS:2012 a,b) which culminated in the closure of the IFL. At the time that this was happening my engagement with the EdD from a learning perspective, was causing me to question *why* this had happened and to consider the implications for the sector and its teachers. It also led me to form some embryonic research questions centring on the issue of professionalism in FE which I would return to. My assessed work explored critical incidents in my own practice, exploring the pervasive influence of targets and performativity within FE and how this was creating perverse incentives to 'pass' students at all costs.

The next two modules on methods of inquiry were perhaps the most challenging for me in terms of stretching my academic knowledge and skills. The complex research paradigm debates were areas of research that I had only very briefly considered before the EdD. It was at this point, when I reflect back on my own learning and development that I was really beginning to consider the rigour and depth to doctoral work. It made me realise the considerable jump that I was undertaking from completing a Master's degree.

Whilst these modules were really challenging me, it was during this period I found myself applying some key FE 'mantras' to research and inquiry. In FE we ascribe to the belief that learning new skills and gaining new knowledge should have a purpose and lead to employment, thus improving life chances. This belief was something I felt should be true for research also. During these modules as I was reflecting on the debates on methodology and positions of researchers, which we discussed in lectures, I found myself more and more ascribing to the professional doctorate model as opposed to the PhD model of doctoral research. The convincing factor for me was the 'so what' question of research. I recognised that for me, questions of what is the value and *impact* of research were of key importance in my own beliefs and thinking about research.

In these modules I was particularly struck by an interview held in a lecture with an ex-EdD student who described how she had managed to pursue a theme throughout her research particularly at IFS and thesis stage. She explained how this had brought many benefits to her research, firstly to being able to really explore a particular area in detail

but also enabling her to become an expert or authority on the subject. At this time I considered that I had really enjoyed the professionalism module and it was particularly pertinent to my sector-FE and the teachers that I was working alongside in my college. It therefore seemed sensible to try and develop this area of inquiry at the IFS and thesis stage.

The course then progressed to the final taught module; I chose post-compulsory education and training and lifelong learning. Much of the content of this module considered contemporary issues in the sector which when compared to the other modules I was most familiar with. I focused on higher education delivered in colleges. I critiqued the argument that significant changes in the funding mechanism of undergraduate degree course outlined in the 2011 government white paper 'Higher education: students at the heart of the system', will lead to more and more higher education (HE) courses being delivered in further education colleges rather than universities. I really enjoyed investigating this area as my current place of work delivered a lot of HE.

Now as I reflect back on what I learned from the taught modules and how I developed my academic and research skills I can see that doctoral study really is a journey in which, when looking back, it is evident to see where progress was made and where key areas for development emerged. My early assessed work on the doctorate clearly demonstrates that I struggled with some of the shorter essays. I was often overly prescriptive and lacked criticality in presenting arguments. I feel that the very clear honest feedback from tutors was helpful in preparing for the later larger pieces of work which had a greater focus on integrating theory and primary research. I believe that I was able to accept the comments as useful criticism. This is something where I feel the EdD has undoubtedly benefitted my professional practice in my job. It has really highlighted to me the importance of learning from mistakes, defending a position adopted in a given situation and supporting a point with evidence not just because 'I think' something is the case. The shorter pieces of work also brought me to the conclusion that I am more 'comfortable' in writing lengthier pieces of work than short essays.

The IFS and thesis

At the IFS stage of the course I really began to enjoy and engage with the research element of the programme. It was very rewarding to design research tools and then use them to gather data and write up the research. I decided to try to ascertain what my institution's teachers believed were the key elements of their professionalism. On the whole this was a successful project. I learned valuable lessons about running focus groups with research participants. This was something I had not tried before. Reflecting on this I learned how the facilitator of the group was crucial in managing the discussion and contribution from participants, specifically in ensuring the discussion remained focused on the key area and that one or two individuals did not 'dominate'. The focus groups also forced me to face the challenge of clustering responses to form themes which accurately represented the majority of the participants' views and beliefs and did not exaggerate these. The groups and subsequent follow-up interviews yielded a rich source of data, which took some time to analyse.

The IFS equipped me with several research lessons which proved valuable at the thesis stage. These lessons included being realistic about the amount of data to gather and allowing time to write up and analyse the data in an efficient manner. Another area of learning that the IFS brought into focus was the importance of clearly worded interview questions and not making assumptions about a participant's understanding of an academic concept.

The conclusions of the IFS helpfully created further research questions to explore within the field of FE professionalism. Many of the participants spoke very candidly about and ascribed to the concept of dual professionalism as an accepted trait of FE professionals, often using the phrase 'dual identity'. This word identity enabled me to crystallise and bring forth my earlier thoughts and ideas on FE professionalism into a key thesis investigation question.

At the proposal stage for the thesis I began to question what the formation process of this professional identity encompassed. I resolved to create a research design that, within the parameters of the size and scope of the thesis, would enable me to discover what the key factors are in FE teachers' professional identity formation.

Completing and writing up the research for the thesis has been a rich learning experience for me. From my own professional perspective, visiting four other colleges for a significant period of time and listening to a diverse range of FE teachers describe their own professional journey has been fascinating and intellectually stimulating. It has afforded me opportunities to critically explore and assess the impact of various political interventions and attempts to influence and further develop FE teacher professionalism. Crucially it has allowed me to see the engagement of theory and practice.

The broad conclusions of the study have given me a greater understanding of the hugely significant influence that the teacher and his/her previous industrial and occupational experience can have on the learning of FE students. They also led to the central tenet- that when new FE teachers start, their experienced colleagues play a hugely significant role in their professional identity formation. This is something that the wider FE sector should consider when training new teachers.

Concluding remarks

Reading for the doctorate has afforded many benefits to my own development. Perhaps most importantly, as a practitioner and researcher in the field, it has allowed me time and *space*, from my day- to-day work role, to reflect critically on what I encounter within the FE sector, from a political, theoretical and practical perspective. I believe that this is of key importance to my own development and lifelong learning as a professional in further education.

I recognise that the doctorate has also aided my career progression. Over the course of the programme I have been promoted to a senior leadership position in my organisation, and in terms of my teaching, I have been delivering a module on professional practice on a BA in Education degree at my institution as a result of gaining new knowledge skills and practice through the doctorate.

My own personal aims for commencing the doctorate were two-fold. Firstly, I was keen to secure a higher degree so if the opportunity to teach in a university arose one day I would have a higher degree on my curriculum vitae. Secondly, I wanted to

continue studying and engage in lifelong learning post-masters level, as I enjoyed research very much. I believe that I have realised these two aims.

The whole experience has been incredibly demanding, and required a degree of sacrifice, as all worthwhile things in life do. However, as I reflect now on the last seven years, finally at the end of the process, I believe it was worthwhile for the many benefits gained from the course.

Chapter 1

Introduction, Context and Rationale

1.0 Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the formation process of the professional identity of vocational teachers working in the Further Education sector. This introduction presents a broad overview of the key objectives of the sector and the current context within which its teachers work. It describes the rationale for the study, explaining why it is important to gain a better understanding of vocational further education teachers and their professional identity formation. It concludes with the main research questions and methodology adopted.

1.1 The Further Education sector

Further Education (FE) is “fascinating, turbulent, insecure but desperately important” (Coffield et al, 2008:4). FE colleges are a presence in all large towns and cities across England as well as some rural areas.

1.1.1 Employment and a second chance

FE colleges have sought to create a strong link between education, training and the workplace, thus becoming a ‘bridge’ for many young people between school and work. FE colleges have also been described as offering a ‘second chance’ for all the school-leavers who did not achieve in compulsory schooling (Robson, 2006, Broad, 2016). FE is also viewed as a ‘remedial ground’, for all those excluded from compulsory education (Lucas, 2004), and so is used as a political lever to raise the participation of young people in education (Perry and Davies, 2015). As a result of the sector providing students a second chance at formal education, FE has been described as working on a ‘deficit model’ (Robson, 2006 and DBIS, 2012a) and is typically seen as having a lower status than “academic general education” (Broad 2016:144)

In 2017 FE colleges in England trained 2.2 million people, of whom 1.4 million were adults and delivered higher education (HE) and technical courses to 151,000 (AOC 2017). As a result of this HE and technical qualification delivery, the sector has been identified by successive governments as a key driver in the challenge to create a highly

skilled workforce able to compete in the global economy (Orr and Simmons 2010, Moodie and Wheelahan, 2012, Gleeson, 2014).

1.1.2 The importance of its vocational teachers

In order to equip FE learners with the workplace skills required, FE colleges have actively sought to recruit teachers primarily on the basis that they have worked in the occupation, trade or profession that they subsequently teach, as opposed to their skill in teaching (Maxwell, 2014). The primary premise is that for example in order to teach plumbing, you need to be an expert plumber with experience of working in that occupation. Teachers are vital to the success of learners studying in colleges, recognised in many government commissioned papers such as *Equipping our Teachers for the Future* (DfES, 2004), *New Challenges, New Chances* (DBIS, 2011) and *It's about work, Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning* (CAVTL, 2013).

1.2 Definitions of key terms

In this introduction it is important to define the meaning of some key terms used throughout the thesis, to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity.

1.2.1 Vocational education and vocational teachers

In this study the term FE college is consistently used to describe colleges located in England offering a broad range of courses. Within published literature these are often referred to as 'general' FE colleges. This definition does not include 6th form colleges and 'specialist' FE colleges which have a narrowly focussed range of courses.

Throughout the thesis, when describing the teaching practitioners in FE colleges they are referred to as *teachers* or *lecturers*, as these are the terms that are most commonly used and understood by the sector.

This study is specifically concerned with researching teachers who are known as 'vocational' FE teachers, and not those who teach academic subjects in FE colleges or who teach a subject not closely linked to an occupation. In this case vocational education (VE) is that which prepares students "directly for work" (Moodie and Wheelahan 2012:318), it offers courses of learning that have "a clear line of sight to work" (CAVTL, 2013). The aim of such courses is that learners should develop

“occupational expertise” (ibid) and be able to orientate themselves to an occupation in its fullest context. According to Crowley (2014b:120) “vocational refers to learning and teaching focussed on some form of employment” and the “application of relevant knowledge and skills to that employment”.

Negatively VE is sometimes seen as inferior, “a second choice, alternative to general subject based academic education” (Broad 2016:144).

The vast majority of teachers in FE are to be found in this VE category, having had significant careers in their former occupations prior to entering teaching (Maxwell, 2010a, Gleeson et al 2015). According to Avis et al (2011:116) vocational FE teachers have “more work-based craft and or technical backgrounds”

Fejes and Köpsén (2012:266) assert a key argument for this thesis which is concerned with identity formation, that vocational teachers have an identity that is related both to their ‘occupation’ and to that of a ‘teacher’. They assert that FE / VE teachers work at the “intersection of occupational and educational practices” (ibid:266). In summary whenever the thesis refers to FE teachers it is primarily referring to vocational FE teachers.

Within FE, vocational teachers commonly refer to their time working in their vocation as time spent in ‘industry’, it is also used by teachers when they explain to students certain behaviours, skills and expectations that will be expected from them in the future when they leave college to progress to work. This phrase ‘industry’ is used throughout the thesis.

1.2.2 Professional Identity

The term professional identity has a myriad of meanings and definitions. Here, within the introduction to this thesis, it is important to make clear the definition that is to be adopted throughout this work.

In this study the phrase professional identity refers to vocational FE teachers’ identity which is shaped and influenced by what they ‘do’ in their everyday job role. This definition of identity is therefore very much grounded in an occupational understanding

of professional identity, not a philosophical understanding of identity. This thesis argues that what vocational FE teachers ‘do’, is a very tangible concept, which throughout the thesis is described as their professional *practice*. This thesis asserts that professional practice flows out of their professional identity and is underpinned by a definable set of values which have been influenced in various ways.

This definition is akin to the work of two American sociologists researching the occupational group of medics and physicians in the 1970s, who asserted that:

“professional identity can be defined as the perception of oneself as a professional and is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has, the work one does, and the work- related significant others or the reference group”

(Bucher and Stelling, 1977:8)

This definition clearly links the knowledge and skills that an individual holds with the concept of professional identity, but also the work they carry out and with whom they work.

1.3 The study’s key assertions

1.3.1 FE vocational teachers are professionals

A central position adopted throughout this study is that vocational FE teachers are recognised as professionals with the education sector in the same capacity that school teachers and university lecturers are deemed to be professionals. I argue that vocational FE teachers view themselves as professionals, together with other stakeholders in FE. A previous piece of research, Smithers (2013), provided qualitative data, albeit on a small scale, that supports this position. Also government and FE sector-led organisations such as the newly formed sector’s professional body the Society for Education and Training adopt this assertion, which is clearly seen in their mission statement:

To promote the professionalism and status of those working in the post 16 education and training sector; ensuring our members gain wider recognition for their expertise and practice.

To bring together our members into professional communities of practice.

Society for Education and Training (2017)

Larger scale government instigated reports such as Lord Lingfield's interim (DBIS, 2012a) and final (DBIS, 2012b) review of professionalism in FE would also support this view. The conclusions of which, argue for a change in the discourse for FE professionalism, “from ‘professionalisation’ of FE *to* supporting and enhancing the professionalism which we consider already exists” (DBIS, 2012a:8). The reports argue that whilst a pithy ‘tight’ definition of FE professional identity is difficult, they suggest that FE teachers see the term ‘colleague’, those with whom they work as a key aspect to their recognisable professional identity:

Is there a sufficient sense of shared identity, of solidarity, among those who teach across the wide variety of organisations in FE to justify their regarding one another as colleagues? Our answer to that question is an emphatic ‘Yes’.

(DBIS, 2012b:21)

To support this assumption, currently at the time of writing, there are 47 ‘recognised’ professions listed on the UK government’s website, the members of which are eligible to sign UK passport photos. Teachers and FE college lecturers appear as one of the 47 authorised signatories.

1.4 Context

1.4.1 Vocational FE teacher professionalism

There has been much discussion concerning the professionalism of FE teachers, much of it written during the period post-incorporation (Robson, 1998, Gleeson et al, 2005, Clow, 2006, Gleeson and James, 2007). The discussion suggests that FE teacher professionalism has been buffeted by several external factors. These include changing legislation over teaching qualifications, lack of a unifying professional body and the perception that FE is invisible with a low political profile (Hodgson et al, 2015). These factors which impact on FE teachers’ professional identity are explored in chapter three.

1.4.2 The political agenda: austerity

It is currently a highly pertinent time to carry out a new inquiry into the FE sectors' teachers and their professional formation, identity and practices. Currently FE teachers are facing uncertainty in their future as education professionals due to the significant financial challenges facing the sector. The result of year-on-year funding cuts for FE from central government led to the Commons public accounts committee revealing in Dec 2015 that 70 FE colleges in England have been declared "financially inadequate" by the skills funding agency (Independent, 2015). To try to remain financially stable colleges across the country are engaging in staff restructuring and making teachers redundant. Colleges and their teachers are also fearful of closure or mandatory mergers as a result of government-led 'area based reviews' carried out in 2016/17.

1.4.3 Ofsted

These area based reviews are happening at a time when the quality of students experience in FE is being questioned by Ofsted's previous chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw. In a speech to the CentreForum he stated that when he was a school head teacher, his local FE colleges were "large, impersonal and amorphous institutions", and in his experience his ex-students "did badly". He continued that "educational provision, for the many children who do not succeed at 16 or who would prefer an alternative to higher education, is inadequate at best and non-existent at worst", in summary he stated: "our vocational education is not good enough" (Wilshaw, 2016). Fear of redundancy, and this public criticism of FE's teachers has had an impact on their professional identity, relative worth and value. It exacerbates the argument that as education professionals their status is second to that of schoolteachers and university lecturers (Colley et al, 2007). Their perceived status is also affected by the lack of a strong professional body.

1.4.4 A professional body

Professionalism within FE has historically been concerned with its teachers' former occupational technical, skills, knowledge and experience (Gleeson et al 2015). The New Labour government of 1997 sought to embark on a significant project to professionalise the FE teacher sector and placed a focus of teacher training at the centre of it (Orr and Simmons, 2010).

Despite this and other government- led initiatives (described more fully in the next chapter) teachers in FE have always struggled to gain a unified voice through membership of a recognised professional body (Fletcher et al, 2015). Currently the professional body for FE teachers is in a period of flux. In 2014, the former body the Institute for Learning (IFL) was replaced with a new voluntary professional membership body for FE, the Society for Education and Training (SET), which is part of the newly formed FE guild which has been named the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). In light of these significant issues impacting on the FE sector it will be a huge challenge for these new professional membership bodies, the ETF and SET, to encourage commitment and the pursuit of meaningful practitioner-led professional development from its existing members. Furthermore they face a significant struggle to encourage new members from a workforce of teachers concerned over the current turbulence within the FE sector, with many more concerned about whether they will have a job, as opposed to developing their professional practice.

1.4.5 New entrants

The huge challenges of redundancy and pay freezes facing the sector also contributes to the debate over how to encourage new entrants into the sector, and the task of making FE teaching an attractive career choice for a new generation of professional teachers. Encouraging new FE teachers, particularly graduates and experienced professionals from various industries, is an area of concern raised by the outgoing IFL and the ETF in a paper produced in 2014. In it they argue that advice offered to graduates for careers in FE teaching is inadequate, dated and not easily understandable (ETF, 2014). In the report they found that graduate recruitment initiatives that have had a positive impact in the past have included work experience, high-level professional qualifications and offers of sustained employment (Ibid).

1.4.6 A resilient sector

However there is cause for optimism, the one word that FE is repeatedly described as is 'responsive' (Gleeson and James, 2007). The sector, and more importantly its professional teachers have historically had tenacity, a resilience to face and adapt to change. In the past FE teachers have been described as 'learning professionals' (Guile

and Lucas, 1999) able to change, to adapt to their environment, perhaps more so than schoolteachers (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006). Further optimism can be found in the government's acceptance and adoption of Lord Sainsbury's recommendations from the Independent Panel on Technical Education (DFE, 2016). Within which, FE colleges are placed at the centre of a strategy to deliver fifteen different technical education pathways, to offer a robust and high-quality suite of qualifications as an alternative to the established academic route (DFE, 2017).

1.5 Rationale

1.5.1 The researcher

My reasoning for researching FE teacher professionalism has been influenced by a number of factors. Firstly there is my own professional journey. During my time studying and working in FE, as student, teacher and manager I have become a keen advocate for the sector and its teachers. I have seen first-hand the many benefits that their knowledge and experience from their former occupation affords to their learners and believe that FE teachers are a critical success factor in students' successful progress into work. It is the 'journey' that FE teachers undertake towards 'becoming' an FE teacher (Maxwell 2010a, Orr and Simmons, 2010, Gleeson, 2014,) which fascinates me and stimulates my desire to research the process, the following quote summaries my own beliefs on that journey.

“A journey is a powerful way of conceptualising the complexity of developing a professional identity and the accompanying process of understanding one's own learning that goes to the very heart of what it means to be a teacher. It is a metaphor that practitioners and teacher educators use all the time to chart progress from the initial stages of the trainee to the seasoned teaching professional”

Colquhoun and Kelly (2014:55)

1.5.2 FE's Success

FE provides a much needed second opportunity for thousands of learners who for many reasons do not make good progress at school and as a consequence are labelled as failures. Some simply do not fit many schools' academic environments, others have complex education support needs and many have chaotic hugely challenging home

environments which have impeded their schooling. A real strength of the sector is that it is often able to change the situation of a learner with low academic attainment and ensure they achieve successful employment.

1.6 A qualified workforce?

There is much academic and policy discussion about the role and importance of formal teaching qualifications for teachers in FE (Lucas and Nasta, 2010, Lucas et al 2011, IFL 2012, Fletcher et al, 2015). The discussion questions the relative success of the central policies and legislation that have been passed in the last two decades in raising achievement and skills of students (DBIS 2012 a, b and c). In this period the acquisition of a teaching qualification has fluctuated between voluntary and mandatory. Therefore it is hoped that this study will report how current FE teachers view the debate and importance of the teaching qualification in their development of professional identity and practice.

1.7 A call to research FE teachers' professional identity formation

The key focus area for this study arose from Robson's (1998a, :604) argument that FE teachers, were "a profession in crisis". She said:

"further research is needed into the current values, the status and experiences of FE teachers and the nature of their work, into the formation of occupational identities in this context, the nature of transition from one occupation to another".

She continued that only a fuller understanding of this professional identity formation would counter the narrow view of FE professionalism, and that it was time to "attach a proper value to the FE teacher's professional role". VE academics in other countries such as Sweden are also concerned with this transition process, arguing that vocational teachers are engaged in a process of 'boundary crossing' (Fejes and Köpsén 2012:266) from their former occupation into teaching. They argue that this process has a significance influence on the strength of identity in terms of allegiance.

“the vocational teacher needs to have both an identity as a teacher and an identity related to the occupation about which he or she teaches. Thus, it is important to further develop knowledge about vocational teachers’ identity formation in relation to these two different socio-cultures

Fejes and Köpsén 2012:266

It is the phrases used by Robson above: “the nature of transition from one occupation to another” and by Fejes and Köpsén “develop knowledge about identify formation” that is the central rationale for this study: to gain a better understanding of the professional identity formation that FE teachers undergo in their journey into teaching.

1.7.1 Building on previous work

In my previous work on FE professionalism (Smithers, 2013), Robson’s suggested research was started, through in-depth interviews and focus groups with FE teachers. That study presented and described some consistent traits or attributes of FE teacher professionalism gathered from a case study in one institution. However conclusions from this study were limited and created questions for further research. Firstly it raised questions around what Robson described as the ‘transition’ process from occupation to FE teacher. Specifically: what had formed the key elements of teachers’ professional identity? Did these key elements arise from teacher training, the FE workplace or a former occupation? Is an FE teacher’s professional identity distinct from that in other sectors of education? It is this important professional ‘transition’ process that FE teachers undergo, from work to teaching that has shaped and informed the research presented in this thesis.

1.7.2 Why teacher identity is important

Teachers in all sectors have a crucial role in delivering good quality teaching and facilitating learning. There is also an argument that suggests that teachers themselves and who they are is important, so their ‘identity matters’ (OECD, 2005) and also contributes to learners’ social and personal wellbeing (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009). Within all forms of education students “learn because of them – not just because of

what and how they teach, but because of who they are as people” (Day et al, 2007:1). Gleeson et al (2015) assert that FE teachers often come from similar backgrounds to their students facilitating empathy with their position and experience of compulsory education. FE teachers are therefore able to ‘add value’ going above and beyond the prescribed curriculum and are concerned for the development of the whole learner (Robson et al, 2004) and according to Gleeson et al (2015:79) FE is responsible for so much “personal development” that helps “students change, gain confidence and grow”. Past studies of FE teachers assert that they display a real sense of altruism towards their students’ needs (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009) and “their main preoccupation is to serve their students well” (Clow, 2001: 410).

Many FE teachers retain the values that they held from their previous occupation and seek to bestow them on their learners (Clow, 2001), and therefore become powerful role models for their learners (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009). Therefore it could be argued that gaining a better understanding of the identity formation process will aid future training of FE teachers and in turn improve teaching and learning in the sector.

In summary FE is desperately important (Coffield, 2008) and so are its teachers. FE teachers’ identity matters and impacts learners in a positive manner, therefore it seems pertinent to gain a better understanding of how FE teachers construct their professional identity in their journey from doing their job to teaching others how to do that job.

This new knowledge and understanding can then contribute to the debate on how best to facilitate the identity formation of new practitioners coming into FE to ensure that FE teacher training and development is as effective as possible. This is explored in the concluding chapter of the study.

1.7.3 Summary of the research questions and methodology

In order to gain a better understanding of the professional identity formation of FE teachers the following two main research questions will be answered.

How do FE teachers perceive their professional identity?

How is an FE teacher’s professional identity constructed?

These broad questions are broken down into six sub-questions in chapter 5 section 5.1.

In order to answer these questions a qualitative methodology was adopted. This involved semi-structured interviews being completed with twenty different experienced FE teachers, drawn from various vocational backgrounds, across four different general FE colleges in the south east of England. A further five follow-up interviews were completed with a selection of the original participants.

1.8 Summary of the thesis' chapters

This introductory chapter has described the current context for the FE sector in 2017, some key assumptions adopted in the thesis and argued a rationale for the importance of the study of FE teachers' professional identity at this time.

The subsequent chapter illustrates some of the complexities contained in the different historical and sociological discourses of professionalism, including the trait, power and more recent, social construct theories. It then describes the broad FE sector, its purpose and 'typical' teachers. Then it presents the key historical periods, arguments and political interventions found within the professionalism discourse of its teachers.

Chapter three explores the theoretical and practical elements of FE teachers' professional identity from published literature, including a critical discussion of the significant elements of the FE teacher professional identity formation process.

Chapter four introduces the key theoretical framework that is used to interpret and bring meaning to the study's findings. It contains a particular focus on Knud Illeris's learning theories and specifically how his theories concerning workplace learning and identity formation are to be applied to the findings of this thesis.

The fifth chapter revisits the key research questions that the thesis seeks to answer which are introduced at the end of this chapter. It then highlights the methodological position from which this research has been carried out. It discusses the rationale for the

chosen method of data collection and considers how the author's position as research practitioner in FE influences the study.

Findings of the thesis are presented in three distinct chapters. The first, chapter six reports the respondents' views on how they *perceive* their professional identity. This includes how they describe their own identity to others and which professional values they hold. The second chapter, seven, articulates respondents' beliefs on *how* their professional identity was constructed including their thoughts and feelings about formal teacher training and qualifications. Chapter eight reports what the respondents believed was the most significant factor in their professional identity formation.

The concluding chapters of the study identify and summarise the new knowledge that the thesis brings to the field of FE teacher professionalism. These chapters include an analysis and discussion of the central findings through the lens of FE professional identity and Illeris's work-based learning theories. It also highlights the importance of these findings for the sector and its professionals. The thesis concludes with possible forums to disseminate the study's key tenets and introduces a potential framework to improve the development of FE teachers' professional identity and practice formation.

Chapter 2

The Discourse of Professionalism within Further Education

2.0 Introduction

This chapter introduces the theoretical concept and various meanings of the sociological term ‘profession’ and how professions have become a desirable state or *label* that different occupational groups aspire to. The chapter then summarises the FE sector in terms of the breadth of its purpose and the diversity of its teachers, to demonstrate why the professionalism of FE teachers is complex and fragmented. It explores the impact that the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and subsequent incorporation had on FE teacher professionalism. The main body of the chapter explores the FE teachers’ ‘journey’ including a discussion of entry points and introduces the debate over initial teacher training qualifications.

2.1 Professions and professionalisation

It is important to briefly trace the historical and sociological arguments surrounding the ‘classical’ professions (Crook, 2008), specifically exploring how the term is used in contemporary society. This will facilitate understanding and bring meaning to the term professional identity when applied to FE teachers who have been researched in this study.

2.1.1 The classical professions

Crook (2008) argues that the word profession was first used to describe the ‘classical’ medieval occupations of clergymen, medial physicians and early practitioners of law. Consistent traits of these roles included a significant amount of formal training and gaining experience, and the *profession* of an oath declaring a deep commitment to one’s clients. In return for their knowledge and expertise society bestowed esteem, status and freedom from “lay supervision” on these occupations and they rapidly became regarded as elite occupations (Rueschemeyer, 1983:41).

As modern society developed, further occupations sought the same professional status. The impact of the industrial revolution in Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries had a

profound impact on work. During this period engineers and architects were added to the classical group of professions. The term used to describe occupations seeking professional recognition became known as professionalisation (Johnston, 1972).

2.1.2 The trait and power theories of professions

A definitive definition of a professional, or what occupation is deemed a profession, is hugely contested (Friedson, 1994, Hoyle, 2001). Studies of professional groups have broadly adopted two main approaches to analyse their behaviour, these are the ‘trait’ and ‘power’ approach (Friedson, 1994). Within the trait approach, historically sociologists have sought to create a list of consistent traits found within professional groups (Johnston, 1972), which according to Robson (2006:7), include “autonomy, altruism, specialist knowledge and responsibility”. The other consistent trait that is found in professions is a formal collective membership body or institution, to which all individual professionals must belong (Crook, 2008). Within this corporate body, professions take responsibility for their own members in terms of their practice and conduct.

According to Eraut (1994) a weakness of applying this trait model to different occupations is that lists are subjective. He argues some occupations will ‘score’ highly in some areas, and lower in others. He also argues that some traits are culturally specific. Occupations that score most highly when using the trait model, he argues, are the classical professions, and those deemed by society to hold the most power (ibid).

2.1.3 Challenges to the ‘professions’

The ‘power’ approach to studying professionals rose to the fore in the mid-20th century. Up until the 1960s it was generally argued by sociologists that professions’ power was legitimate, due to their high sense of moral probity and altruism in relation to wider society (Friedson, 1994). However during the 1960s and 70s some political and social scientists such as Gilb (1966), Johnston (1972) and Larson (1977) argued that the power professions held was not always used to serve the best interests of society and individuals. They argued that professionals, gathered together in a ‘body’ or association, used their power and autonomy to serve the interests of their members, increase their own status and act as ‘gatekeepers’ to those entering the profession. Successive governments of the late-20th century and early-21st century have broadly

accepted this view that certain professions have become too powerful, and sought to challenge their power over who enters certain professions, and their self-regulation (BBC 2008).

Despite some negative perceptions of the classic professions' power, many occupational groups have purposefully sought to professionalise and become recognised as a professional group. One of the key drivers for this is the status, prestige and esteem that is bestowed upon the 'higher' professional groups by society together with higher remuneration (Hoyle, 2001).

2.1.4 Professional formation

This thesis is primarily concerned with gaining a better understanding of the professional formation process that FE teachers go through in their journey from work to FE teaching. One way of doing this is to discuss this process from research carried out into other professional occupations.

Professional formation is the process that new entrants complete to achieve their full recognised professional status. It has been described as "the beginning of a journey into professionalism" (Colquhoun and Kelly, 2014:64). There are consistent components of the formation process seen in the classic and 'new' professions which according to Eraut (1994) can include the following. Firstly, there is a period of learning their 'craft' from an expert, known as pupillage or internship, which may involve spending time at a professional college outside the HE system. Secondly there is usually a qualifying examination set by or formed in consultation with the professional body, which will involve a period of study at an academic institution such as a college or university leading to a recognised academic qualification. Thirdly a collection of evidence of achievement of practical competencies in the form of a logbook or portfolio is often used as part of the formation process (Eraut, 1994:6).

Historically when occupations have sought to be recognised as professions, they have been assessed either formally by an organisation, or informally by society against certain criteria. Part of this is having their professional formation process closely scrutinised. A further characteristic of professional formation is the mandatory joining of the occupations' professional body, mentioned briefly above as a key trait of the

traditional professions. The complex and often disputed professional formation journey that FE teachers undergo is the central theme of this study, which will be examined in much detail later in chapter 3.

2.2. Ideological and social construction arguments

2.2.1 Professionalism is a socially constructed discourse

Having presented a brief outline of the classical definitions and theories of professionalism, it is important to summarise opposing views which adopt the belief that the term is problematic and contested in contrast to much of the professional theory described above. Research such as that by Becker (1970) has questioned the legitimacy of seeking to maintain traditional definitions of professions. He argues that the term professional should be understood as a symbol, it means different things to different people depending on context, individual values and societies. He suggests that it is a way of thinking about occupations. Larson (1990) and Seddon (1997) agree, arguing that professionalism should be seen as a ‘discourse’, a cultural and social practice for organising individuals. These arguments present the terms professional and professionalism as socially constructed terms and would question the value in occupations pursuing professional recognition and individuals undergoing a professional formation process (McCulloch et al, 2000).

Johnston (1972) and Eraut (1994), view professionals from a ‘functionalist’ model developed by Parsons (1968) and Goode (1969). They argue that professionalism is best viewed as an ideology, an ideal *state* that occupations are seeking to achieve. Within this ideology there are various fundamental tenets, the most important being knowledge and skills. This research into professions and professionalism suggests that professional knowledge and skill is acquired predominantly during a significant period in a higher education institution.

This latter assertion about professional skills and knowledge acquisition is pertinent to this study which questions how FE teachers develop their identity, skills and practice, and it shapes and informs the key research questions.

2.2.2 Differing contemporary uses of the term

Considering how the terms professional and professionalism are used in contemporary society supports the view that the terms are socially constructed. Within this view, “professionalism reacts to the dictates of society and political will” (Appleyard and Appleyard, 2014). The term professional can be used to describe a preferred type of behaviour expected of someone. If a teacher swore at a learner, that behaviour and use of inappropriate language would be deemed ‘un-professional’ (Tummons, 2010:4). The term ‘professional’ is used extensively within the realms of courses and qualifications, for example ‘professional’ football coaching or ‘professional’ cookery qualification. Within this context there is a perceived extra value to the qualification because the word professional is in the title. Both these examples demonstrate that society agrees, supports and ‘constructs’ the meanings of professionalism and professional and to a certain degree the desired behaviours of professionals.

2.3 The further education sector

The chapter has presented definitions of professionalism both from the ‘classical’ model approach and the more contemporary discourses based on social construct arguments. This work now focuses on the further education sector and the professionals who work in it. As made clear in the introduction, this thesis makes the assumption throughout that FE teachers are professionals, whilst recognising that some scholars will also view teachers in both colleges and schools as part of the ‘questionable’ or ‘semi’ professional groups (Hoyle 2001, Robson 2006, Crook 2008, Tummons 2010), as they do not hold the power, autonomy or traditional status of classical professions.

2.3.1 The diversity of FEs’ purpose

The English FE sector is broad, in the sense that there are 181 general FE colleges with a presence in every major town and city in the country (AOC 2018). FE colleges are different to other education providers, because they seek to serve multiple purposes (Orr, 2009), for this reason colleges have been described as “not school and not university” (Kennedy, 1997:1).

Understanding the diversity of the FE sector and its’ teachers is important when exploring the professional identity of its teachers. Its diverse nature has led to a plethora of different types of individuals working in colleges, with many different job

roles and responsibilities (Maxwell 2014), including teachers, assessors and trainers, each of which are described in detail in section 2.5.

2.3.2 Technical and vocational qualifications

Historically FE has provided technical and vocational education specific to a particular job and industry (Gleeson, 2014). In the 20th century this was on a very local level dependent on the industrial needs of the community that it ‘served’ (Hodgson et al, 2015).

The aim of a typical FE college’s practical learning environment is to be an accurate representation of the work environment that the learner will progress to upon completion of their course. This is known within FE as the ‘realistic working environment’ (RWE). As a result, FE learners will undertake activities in garages, kitchens, beauty salons, gardens or workshop RWEs (Tummons, 2010).

FE has also been the main provider of adult education in the English education sector where adults have re-trained in a new occupation or improved their own qualifications (Pratt, 2000). FE’s adult education provision has also traditionally offered courses and training that adults undertake as an area of interest or enrichment to their lives and not necessarily linked to their job (Unwin, 1999).

2.3.3 Providing skills for the country’s workforce

In the late-1990s and early-2000s the FE sector was charged with equipping the UK’s workforce with the skills and knowledge it needed to remain competitive in the global marketplace (Colley et al 2007, Orr, 2008, Avis et al 2011). During this time seminal reports such as the Foster review (2005) and Leitch’s review of skills (2006) identifying that the UK was falling behind other nations added weight to this discourse. Successive policy initiatives have sought to raise the profile and perceived worth of vocational qualifications and skills delivered in FE and bring parity between academic and vocational qualifications.

For example, Tomlinson in 2004 was commissioned to carry out a wide- ranging review of education for 14-19 year olds and make recommendations for reforms,

though these were largely rejected (Nash and Jones, 2015). As a result FE temporarily was re-branded as the skills sector. A key tenet of the reform was that a significant amount of the skills and knowledge required by the economy was to be delivered by level 3 technical qualifications, particularly in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) and vocationally related higher education (HE) qualifications. Arguments for raising skills of the countries' workforce discourse, particularly STEM are still prevalent today within FE and HE.

Recently, key government publications have again highlighted the importance of developing the skills of the UK's workforce, for example The Industrial Strategy (DBEI, 2017). This strategy calls for investment in technical education especially in STEM subjects and re-training of individuals in digital and construction industries. Lord Sainsbury's recommendations from the Independent Panel on Technical Education (DFE, 2016) has placed FE colleges at the centre of a strategy to deliver fifteen different technical education pathways, to offer a robust and high-quality suite of qualifications as an alternative to the established academic route (DFE, 2017). Apprenticeships delivered in partnership with colleges continue to be a key pillar in the national skills agenda

These reports highlight how FE colleges' close links with industry and employers make them the ideal vehicle to deliver and assessing these qualifications and training in partnership with employers

2.3.4 Delivering higher education through widening participation

The delivery of HE in FE colleges is growing. In 2016 there were 159,000 HE learners in FE colleges across England (AOC, 2016) which represents approximately 10 percent of the country's total HE cohort. Courses offered are predominately foundation degrees, sometimes known as lower degrees, where many graduates are able to progress on to achieve a full bachelor degree by 'topping up' in a final year at a university (although an increasing number of FE colleges are now offering full bachelor degrees). FE is particularly effective at offering higher education opportunities for learners from more disadvantaged backgrounds thereby widening participation into HE, by providing 'local' opportunities for studying (DfES, 2006). Many of these

entrants would not have been able to access ‘traditional’ HE delivered in some university settings (AOC, 2017).

2.3.5 Increasing participation

FE colleges, some theorists argue, have changed from providing narrow specific industry related education and skills to being used as a significant ‘inclusion’ social justice lever to increase participation in education (Gleeson et al, 2005), with a particular focus on the post -16 age group and those younger who have disengaged with formal schooling (Perry and Davies 2015). FE is described as the “second chance” for many not achieving in formal education (Bathmaker 2013).

2.3.6 Diversity in FE courses

To service all these demands, colleges offer a huge range of courses taught by a variety of teachers working in very different capacities (Clow 2001, Huddleston and Unwin 2013). Many colleges offer vocational ‘tasters’ to 14-16 year olds, usually once a week, when schoolchildren come to college.

Demand for these courses within FE changes from year to year (James and Biesta, 2007), therefore colleges have become highly responsive to their student and community needs (Gleeson and James, 2007, Orr 2013). The diversity of the FE sector and its provision of “education for all” (Huddleston and Unwin, 2013) has fuelled the argument that it lacks ‘distinctness’ as a sector of education. There has been a blurring of boundaries between “school, college and higher education” (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006:172, Moodle and Wheelahan 2012). However this point is contested by some who assert that actually FE is unified precisely by being different (Gleeson and Mardle, 1980). It is different to higher education, in that it delivers tangible ‘feet on the ground vocational skills’ (Appleyard and Appleyard 2014), different to schools, as learners are treated as adults with no uniform or mandate to attend (Orr 2013), it delivers work-based training but operates on a different model to private training providers (Gleeson 2014).

2.4 The FE workforce

Having reviewed the various meanings and definitions of the sociological term ‘profession’ and explored the size, scope and purpose of the FE sector this chapter now focuses on the FE workforce; its teachers and their professionalism.

FE’s diverse course provision has led to a plethora of different job roles, contracts and titles for its staff. The largest proportion of the workforce are its teachers, often referred to as lecturers. Statistics however, show that the total numbers of lecturers in FE colleges has been gradually falling over the last decade and now is just below 50 percent of the total FE workforce (Fletcher et al 2015). This, Fletcher et al argue, is due to a rise in the number of assessors, facilitators and instructors, often not deemed as ‘fully’ qualified teachers who are now employed in colleges. This rise in assessors, facilitators and instructors is due to colleges having to save money on face- to- face teaching hours because of reductions in post-16 funding. Colleges have sought to adopt different less costly models of course delivery, including increased online learning and encouraging greater number of learners into work-based apprenticeship provision (Hodgson et al, 2015).

The other growing significant role in the FE workforce is the learning support assistants, charged with individual and group support for learners with specific needs. FE colleges also employ ‘technicians’ who set up and manage the practical teaching areas, a range of management and administration posts and various security and facilities positions.

2.4.1 FE Teachers’ Journey to Professional Teachers- Unplanned Entry

According to Clow (2001) and Maxwell (2014) the diversity of FE’s learners and its courses is reflected in its teaching workforce which can be seen in the myriad of different individuals working in colleges and their diverse skills, experience and knowledge. Compounding this diversity in knowledge and skills is the fact that some historical studies on FE teachers suggest that many practitioners never pursued a strategic career plan to become a teacher in the FE sector. In fact some FE teachers have referred to themselves as “accidental tutors” (Coley et al 2007, James and Biesta 2007, Gleeson 2014), where, particular unforeseen life events and unplanned circumstances have influenced their journey to FE teaching.

James and Biesta (2007) summarise this point clearly:

“if some accounts of practitioners are associated with an altruistic desire to put their expertise and experience back into the community, others talk of sliding into FE through part time work, often regarded as an unofficial apprenticeship into FE teaching”

(James and Biesta, 2007:127)

Gleeson (2014) in his research of FE described teachers who cite illness, divorce, redundancy and changing labour markets as the most significant reasons, for some, in pursuing entry into FE teaching. In summary becoming an FE teacher “is for many, less a career choice or pathway than an opportunity at a particular moment in time” (Gleeson et al, 2005:449). This moment, for many, comes later in life. In Jephcote and Salisbury’s (2009) study, FE teachers described themselves as late entrants into the teaching profession. This is confirmed by the average age of entry into FE teaching being 37 (Gleeson 2014), which is higher than that in the compulsory schools sector.

These reasons for entering the FE teaching profession are in stark contrast to the traditional philosophical definitions of professionals, described in 2.1.2, which assert that the historic professionals hold a prolific altruistic trait, a desire for the good of clients, this altruism is not typically cited as a reason by those entering FE teaching.

2.4.2 The influence of former occupations

A further reason for this higher average age of FE teachers when commencing their career is the consistent assertion, that the vast majority of ‘typical’ FE teachers have entered college teaching after a significant amount of work in another occupation (Maxwell 2010a, Orr 2011 and Gleeson 2014). One of the key reasons for this is that historically FE colleges have expected a high degree of occupational expertise and experience in their teachers to facilitate their teaching of those skills. As far back as the 1940s, McNair in the Board of Education Report (cited in Robson 1998a:589) placed huge value on industrial experience, technical practice, knowledge and skills. Historically the argument FE colleges have presented is that the best practitioner to teach plumbing skills, will be a qualified plumber who has worked in that industry, doing the job gaining experience and knowledge. It is this type of person who is competent to pass on those skills and knowledge to others. The underlying “assumption

has been...that if I know my subject, I can, by definition, teach it to others” (Robson 2006:14).

According to Broad (2016) maintaining links with their former occupation remains a key priority for FE teaching professionals, as it ensures the currency of their knowledge and skills together with facilitation of their learners’ progress towards work. What Huddleston and Unwin (2013: 206) called re-visiting and exploring “your area of professional expertise”.

2.4.3 The long interview and part-time teachers

Many FE teachers start their careers on a part- time contract and maintain their employment in their former occupation, also part-time (James and Biesta 2007, Gleeson 2014, Fejes and Köpsén 2012). Then as college staffing and course requirements change these part-time contracts convert to full- time teaching posts. This process has been described as the “long interview” (Gleeson and James, 2007:454). However, some lecturers maintain this part- time teaching and employment in their occupation over prolonged periods of service and currently teachers on variable and fractional contracts remain a huge part of the sector’s workforce (Huddleston and Unwin, 2013). This flexibility in the workforce enables colleges to be responsive to the ever growing demands of policy, particularly the workforce skills agenda for FE, see DFE (2016 and 2017). It also allows colleges to be responsive to their local social and economic needs within the communities from which they draw their students.

2.4.4 Teacher training and qualifications

As a result of this core belief in the importance of industry skills and knowledge FE colleges have always valued them over and above teaching experience and qualifications (Robson 1998a, Fejes and Köpsén 2012). Therefore historically (and also now after Lingfield’s 2012 review) FE teachers have been able to commence working in colleges without any teaching knowledge. According to Clow:

“there is no guarantee that an FE teacher has any theoretical knowledge about teaching, although they have theoretical knowledge about their original *profession/ vocation /subject*”

(Clow 2001:409, author emphasis)

The arguments and debates over the various merits and requirements for initial teacher training and teaching qualifications have been contested within FE over many decades, and written about extensively, see Avis and Bathmaker (2006), Jephcote and Salisbury (2009), Lucas and Nasta (2011). Debates on teaching qualifications for vocational teachers in other countries also continue (see Moodie and Wheelahan 2012, Fejes and Köpsén 2012). It remains a pertinent debate for the sector, and forms a key question of this research: ‘to ascertain what the impact of teacher training and qualifications has on the professional identity formation process of FE teachers’. The debate is explored more fully in chapter 3 section 3.4.3.

The variation in the ‘journey’ that FE teachers undergo from work to teaching creates heterogeneity in the FE workforce (James and Biesta 2007). This has led to arguments that it lacks cohesion, organisation and a unifying professional voice (Colley et al 2007, Robson 1998, Clow 2006). This diversity has also impacted on the organisational culture of FE colleges, which is also vastly varied, “all recent policy initiatives to regulate FE teachers have taken place within a fragmented and impoverished culture” (Lucas et al 2011:453). Robson (1998a:588) argues that the multiple routes into FE teaching have produced a “weak professional boundary” and this in turn weakens the professions status overall.

2.4.5 The IFL

Arguably, for many researching and working in FE, the most crucial time period and political intervention in the FE teaching workforce came in 2007, under the New Labour administration. Tony Blair’s government sought to professionalise all FE teachers through making membership of the sector’s professional body: the Institute for Learning (IFL) mandatory- together with gaining a formal teaching qualification. In the previous work to this thesis, a small-scale study of FE professionalism and the impact of the IFL, cite Lord Lingfield’s 2012 review findings, concluding that the IFL ‘experiment’ had failed to achieve its broad aims (Smithers 2013). The result of this was the repealing of the statutory nature of the teacher training and qualifications for FE lecturers leaving it largely to individual organisations to monitor and manage. It was argued that the sector was mature and beyond the need for central government regulation (Fletcher et al 2015).

The reasons for the IFL's failure are complex. Lucas and Nasta (2010) assert that historically in the sector there has been a lack of broad discussion on teaching and learning in FE, and that the IFL encountered an ongoing tension between the emphasis placed on subject knowledge over pedagogy within FE (ibid). As already described, FE teachers are extremely diverse, coming from many different backgrounds, which Lucas (2013:394) argued has led to an "impoverished professional culture". The task of unifying these teachers with a common purpose, under one such central body proved too challenging. In the previous study, FE teachers involved in the research argued that the IFL had become too focused on all its members gaining QTLS (qualified teacher, learning and skills) and equivalency with compulsory schoolteachers (Smithers 2013), and that this was to the detriment of effective professional development.

Further criticism of FE teacher training has been aimed at the subtle changes that it underwent during this period. A new emphasis was placed on teachers achieving certain standards or demonstrating competencies, which Hayes (2007) argued started in the shift in name from ITE (initial teacher education) to ITT (initial teacher training) and the philosophical importance of the word education as opposed to training. The impact of the 2007 teacher training qualification reforms and their impact on FE teacher professional identity are explored further in chapter 3.

2.4.6 FE teachers' contracts

As well as the diversity in job roles, teachers in FE work varying contractual hours. The sector employs a significant number of part-time teachers to respond to fluctuating demands in student numbers and courses, and many teachers maintain working in their former occupation initially on a part time basis whilst beginning to teach in a college (Tummons, 2010). Accurate statistics on the FE workforce are difficult to compile, because of its size and diversity and a lack of central data. According to Fletcher et al (2015:95) in 2014 there were approximately 40,000 full-time teachers in FE colleges and 6th form colleges, where approximately 62 percent of all FE teachers are on part-time contracts, but only 30 per cent of all teaching was carried out by part-time teachers as they only teach on average 5.4 hours a week. The reason for this is the nature of FE teachers' link with their occupation discussed in 2.4.2 and in depth in the next chapter on professional identity.

2.4.7 FE teacher turnover

A paper produced by the new professional body for FE, the Education and Training Foundation (ETF 2014), suggests that staff turnover is high within the FE teaching sector at 20 per cent annually. The paper presents a range of strategies to actively recruit new entrants into FE teaching, firstly from graduates and secondly from highly qualified and experienced industry professionals. This focussed strategy contrasts starkly with research which shows that for many, entry to FE in the past, has been largely adhoc and unintentional (Gleeson et al 2005, Gleeson 2014).

In summary, the diversity of FE's purpose, its responsiveness to change and its teacher demographics are significant, because they support the argument that its teacher professionalism is "fragmented and impoverished" (Lucas, 2013:393), that FE teachers as a professional group are weak and lack status (Robson, 1998a): and that their diverse backgrounds results in a lack of a unifying voice (Lucas and Nasta, 2010).

2.5 Incorporation and its impact on FE professionals

After describing the FE sector and its diverse professionals, it is important now to summarise arguably the most significant piece of legislation to impact the running of colleges and its teachers in the history of FE: The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (Randle and Brady 1997, Hodgson et al 2015). This legislation is important because it impacted so profoundly on the professional practice, identity and management of FE teachers (Briggs, 2005). The Act removed colleges from local authority control, thus enabling them to form 'corporations' that had their own legal identity and governance. The accepted term used within education for the introduction of this act and the period after its introduction is 'incorporation'.

The Act was introduced to make colleges more efficient in their financial management, improve the numbers participating in FE and reduce the numbers dropping out of college courses (Hodgson et al, 2015). Two significant documents that highlighted these issues and created a rationale for the act were: the 1991 white paper *Education and Training for the Twenty First Century* (DES/ED, 1991) and *Unfinished Business* (Audit Commission and OFSTED, 1993). These highlighted the inefficiency, waste and poor completion rates for students within the sector (Green and Lucas, 1999).

The 1992 Act placed colleges into “a competitive market situation” against other local providers and they were expected to “use management practices adopted from the private sector” (ibid: 13). Tummons has argued that incorporation, for many working in FE at the time, created a paradigm shift where “education is not so much a right or obligation, but a product, and “learners are re-defined as consumers” (Tummons, 2010:18). The legislation had such a profound impact on the sector that research within the sector refers to two distinct periods within FE, pre-incorporation and post-incorporation. It had a hugely significant impact on the management of colleges and their teachers.

2.5.1 New further education funding and ‘New Public Management’

Following the Act, the funding changes for students arguably had the biggest impact on the sector’s teachers (Randle and Brady, 1997). Funding was removed from local authorities to a central body the Further Education Funding Council England (FEFCE) formed prior to the introduction of the act. Its influence rapidly became significant across the sector. Now colleges’ funding from the FEFCE was weighted towards students staying at college and achieving their courses, with penalties imposed through less funding in the following year for students who left without achieving. This became known as ‘lag’ funding. Within this new methodology funding was awarded by ‘unit’ with the aim that it followed the student learning, therefore colleges were set unit targets (Lucas, 1999:46). In order to maximise funding, colleges had to meet their student recruitment targets, this became known as the ‘demand-led element’. If they did not meet the target, then the following year their allocation of funds was effectively capped and reduced (Hodgson et al, 2015). This methodology, created by the FEFCE, was extremely complex and called for rigorous administration and audit trails, the use of the phrase ‘data’ became pervasive. New departments were created such as Management Information Services (MIS) and consultants brought in to run and train new staff, all at a significant cost to colleges (Lucas, 1999). To satisfy the complex auditing regime within the new funding methodology colleges were placing new demands on course managers and all college lecturers for specific data and information on each individual learner (Randle and Brady, 1997) - which led to some lecturers complaining that “auditing demands were out of control” (Lucas, 1999:49). Ball, 2008 argued that the wider education sector including FE colleges were experiencing ‘new

public management' with a focus on marketization, performativity and managerialism. This new form of public sector management was designed to reduce inefficiency, introduce competition and allow consumer choice to be at the centre (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009).

It is important to emphasise the impact that incorporation and specifically the FEFCE had on the sector and its far-reaching consequences for FE teachers and their professional practice and identity. According to Randle and Brady (1997) in their case study of a college post-incorporation

The FEFCE, therefore, is a crucial agency in influencing the management of the college at both the strategic and operational levels, and it could be argued that it has driven the scale, shape and pace of change in the FE system in England since incorporation.

Randle and Brady (1997:123)

2.5.2 New contracts

Post-incorporation, colleges had to compete for students. At the same time funding per student was effectively reduced, so colleges had to save money and sought to reduce teaching costs (Fletcher et al, 2015). Lecturers were expected to sign new contracts that dramatically changed their conditions of service, including increasing teaching contact hours and reducing paid holiday whilst increasing key performance indicators (Randle and Brady 1997, Robson 1998a). This created huge resistance from unions and for a period of many years post-incorporation an ongoing bitter dispute ensued (Taubman, 2000). This led to many FE teachers having negative perceptions of incorporation and the benefits that they were led to believe would flow from it (Lucas, 1999).

Many lecturers struggled to adapt to the new management ethos experienced after incorporation, citing a clash of values between their "student centred pedagogic culture" and managers who held a "pervasive market ideology" (Randle and Brady, 1997:127). Shain and Gleeson (1999) argued that the marketisation and managerialism agenda had created a steady de-professionalisation of lecturers who held traditional views of professionalism. Many lecturers saw their pay reduced, felt that their academic freedoms had been challenged and their workloads increased (ibid). This led

to a fifth of the entire workforce leaving the sector either voluntarily or through compulsory redundancy (ibid).

2.6 FE teacher professionalism post-incorporation

Incorporation changed the FE sector and its teachers' professionalism significantly (Robson 1998a Shain and Gleeson 1999, Gleeson et al 2005). In the decade following incorporation research was undertaken into this new professionalism; see Randle and Brady (1997), Shain and Gleeson (1999) Briggs (2005). Much of this work asserts that incorporation had affected FE teacher professionalism detrimentally, specifically arguing that it had removed autonomy and "de-professionalised" the workforce (Shain and Gleeson, 1999:460). Randle and Brady's (1997:131) research highlighted lecturers who felt that post-incorporation they had suffered a "loss of professional control" over how they were to teach and particularly in new assessment methods. Robson's (1998a) hugely influential paper concluded that the FE teacher profession was in 'crisis', that it was marginalised and lacked status. Colley et al (2007:174) argued that these factors resulted in an "exodus amongst FE professionals in England" from the sector in the ten years after incorporation.

However, Shain and Gleeson (1999) argued that in response to the changes in funding, contractual terms and conditions, increasing accountability and new styles of college management, many FE teachers found new patterns of professionalism or what Seddon (1997) called "professional reconstruction". Guile and Lucas (1999) used the phrase new 'learning professional' to describe this emerging professionalism, arguing that now FE teachers worked in multiple different contexts across both vocational and *academic* settings. They argued that the 'learning professional' reflects

"a new and extended concept of professionalism that relates traditional professional concerns about teaching and learning to emerging managerial and inter-professional demands on FE teachers."

Guile and Lucas (1999:204)

Central to their argument were five key shifts in the knowledge base within FE teacher professionalism and practice. These were distilled from research carried out by the post-16 Education Centre. The first change concerned teachers' specialist knowledge, now there was a growing need for it to be related to other subject and vocational

specialism. The second was the shift from a teacher-centred pedagogy to a learner-centred strategy, with greater emphasis on the learner managing their own learning. The third concerned a change from intra-professional knowledge to inter-professional knowledge, with an emphasis on networks formed with other professionals. Fourthly FE teachers were expected to work in multi-specialist teams and liaise with external bodies such as other providers and employers. Therefore, there was a growing need for teamwork and collaborative skills. Fifthly, they argued that there was a shift from insular knowledge to connective knowledge, where college students' progress and their destinations post their courses became more significant. Shain and Gleeson (1999:445) and Guille and Lucas (1999) acknowledged however that this new professionalism was not found or embraced by all within the sector, and that "residual elements of 'public sector' or 'old professionalism' are continually drawn upon and re-worked" in very familiar ways.

Broad (2015) argues that incorporation had a hugely significant impact on the continuous professional development (CPD) of FE teachers post incorporation. Responsibility for FE teachers' CPD transferred to the college that employed them. Levels of engagement, quality and funds spent on CDP for FE teachers varied considerably. She argues that as a result the "levels of CPD activity seen in the 1970s and 80s have never again been reached" (Broad 2015:18)

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter sought to provide an overview of the wider discourses of the terms profession and professionalism. It summarised the diversity and purpose of FE, vocational qualifications and its' teachers, including a review of the work written about FE teacher's entry to the profession through the 'long' interview and different degrees of teacher training.

The chapter has highlighted the historical FE teacher professionalism research produced in the decade post-incorporation: the 1990s. This study's findings will contribute to the growing contemporary FE professionalism field by airing more recent views from the voices of FE teachers who have joined the profession in the last decade who have only ever known the FE sector post incorporation.

The focus of the next chapter is theories of professional identity and learning, specifically within the field of further education.

Chapter 3

Theories of Professional Identity and its Formation in FE Teachers

This thesis is concerned with establishing how vocational FE teachers' professional identity is constructed. It explores the journey that FE teachers have undertaken whilst moving from the realms of doing a job to teaching others how to do that job.

This chapter seeks to describe the different theoretical frameworks that underpin FE teachers' professional identity. It commences by analysing the definition of professional identity adopted for this thesis, it then progresses to a critical discussion of the significant elements of FE teachers' professional identity and the formation process.

3.1 Professional identity definition

3.1.1 Differing components: knowledge and skills, work and others (colleagues)

Throughout this thesis the following definition of professional identity, created by two American sociologists is used.

“professional identity can be defined as the perception of oneself as a professional and is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has, the work one does, and the work- related significant others or the reference group”

(Bucher and Stelling, 1977)

This definition highlights that there are three main components to professional identity; one's own knowledge and skills, work and work- related others or colleagues.

3.1.2 Knowledge and skills

According to Bucher and Stelling's (1977) definition, a further significant component of professional identity, is knowledge and skills. Knowledge and skills are linked very closely to work. Work has to be underpinned by knowledge of how to do that job and having the required skills to do the work. This again is significant for this thesis and its research participants, as prior to commencing teaching, FE teachers will have gained a plethora of knowledge and skills from their main occupation (see Gleeson and Mardle

1980, Robson 1998a and Gleeson et al 2005). For example a plumber will typically have studied a qualification encompassing the acquisition of key practical skills required to do the job as well as the relevant underpinning knowledge. However as the practitioner progresses towards teaching a different set of knowledge and skills will be required which in turn will impact on their perceived professional identity.

3.1.3 Work

A significant component of professional identity described in the above definition is work. Work is what one does typically on a day to day basis in an occupation. Work in many occupations is also described as ‘practice’. This term practice is used when describing what teachers typically do in their job. This definition states that how one perceives one’s professional identity is intrinsically linked to what teachers ‘do’. This work component is extremely pertinent for this study, as the study is seeking to understand how FE teachers’ identity is formed, as they transfer from practitioner to teacher, or from one ‘form’ of work to another. The link that Bucher and Stelling make between work and identity, suggests that an FE teacher’s professional identity will change, since what they do in their job changes in their journey to becoming FE teachers. Professional identity is also linked to workplace *learning*, and according to (Illeris, 2011:40) is “typically developed through a combination of vocational education and work”.

3.1.4 The impact of colleagues on professional identity

Bucher and Stelling (1977) refer to the “work-related others” as one of the three key influences of professional identity. They argue that working alongside others in an organisation can provide a rich source of learning and development, particularly at the initial training period of a new job. This training process in many organisations is referred to as mentoring, which, in FE teacher training, encompasses new teachers being assigned a dedicated experienced practitioner, primarily for support and guidance (Cunningham 2012).

Research on the impact of mentoring and learning from others on new FE teachers’ identity is limited, which is a factor in the rationale for this thesis highlighted in section 1.8. Some of the research published on trainee FE teachers’ engagement with experienced FE teachers has reported negative experiences on the part of the new

teachers (Bathmaker and Avis 2005, Lucas and Unwin 2009, Maxwell 2010a), in which trainees felt as though they were treated as “outsiders”, and, rather than being welcomed into the community of FE teachers, were “marginalised” (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005:55). Lucas and Unwin (2009) asserted that colleges had failed to recognise that new teachers are both “workers and learners (trainee teachers)” and would benefit from “greater support from more experienced colleagues” (Lucas and Unwin, 2009:431).

The influence of others and colleagues in communities is discussed in more detail in section 4.2.6 of the chapter concerning workplace learning. Bucher and Stelling’s (1977) definition provides the theoretical position this work adopts and illustrates the key components of professional identity that will be explored in the thesis. The position of professional identity within the wider discourse of FE professionalism is examined now.

3.1.5 Identity within the professionalism discourse

A significant aspect of the psychological concept of professional identity is how the individual articulates or ‘professes their identity’ and how their *individual* view of identity relates to the ‘body’ of professionals within an occupational group (Illeris 2011). Briggs (2005:20) argues that professionalism concerns primarily a conscious act of professing a set of values. These values or codes are then monitored corporately through the organisation that the professional belongs to, and also individually through individual reflection. She argues that within FE, teachers are committed to professionalism in a tripartite manner, the three key elements of which are illustrated in Figure 1. This profession of identity- ‘the profession which I belong to’ is particularly significant for this research, as this thesis is concerned with how a change in professional identity occurs and what the most significant factors in that change process are. Evidence that will be examined now suggests that this ‘change’ process is fragmented and non- linear, primarily due to FE teachers’ commitment to their former occupation or profession.

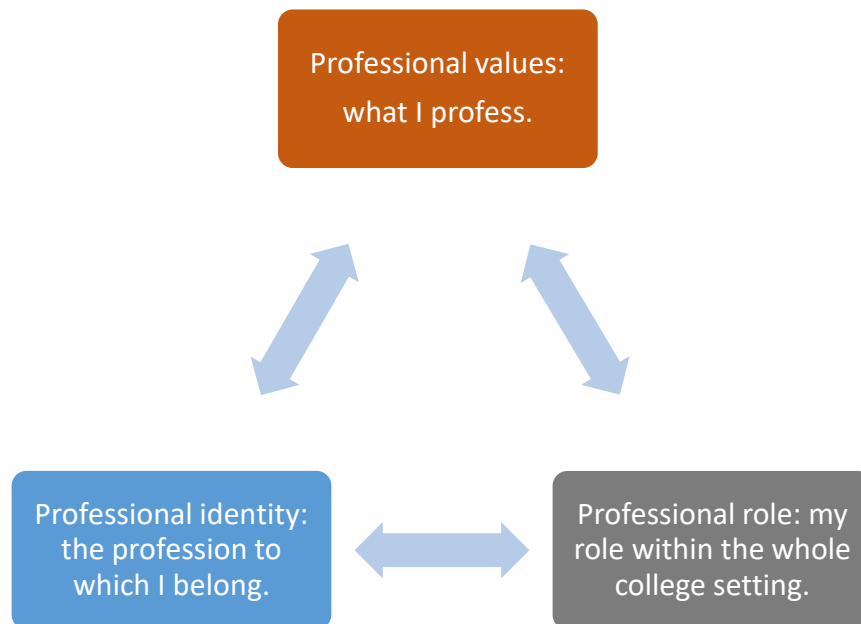


Figure 1 Tripartite commitment to professionalism (Briggs 2005:20)

3.2. The influence of former occupations on professional identity

3.2.1 Dual professionalism

As already highlighted in the previous chapter, in section 2.4, many FE teachers retain a strong commitment to their former occupation. They also retain a sense of professional identity from their former job which in turn impacts their emerging teacher identity (Robson et al, 2004, Colley et al 2007, Maxwell 2014, Gleeson et al 2015). According to Fejes and Köpsén (2012) for some, this allegiance to their former occupation is stronger or weaker to that of teaching, depending on the years of occupational and teaching service. A strong allegiance and professional identity to their former occupation, can prevent some FE teachers from viewing themselves as “professional teachers” (Orr, 2011:4). In Australia, Moodie and Wheelahan (2012) assert that there is an ongoing debate over whether practitioners delivering vocational education should be called teachers for similar reasons to those cited above.

There is also evidence which suggests that some FE teachers have been “reluctant to be identified with school teachers and have defended their industrial past and differences

with other sectors of FE” (Lucas and Nasta, 2010:448). One of the key reasons for this is that FE teachers have stronger links to industry and a greater commitment to preparing their students for employment than their school counterparts (Robson et al, 2004). Hence the competing identities and loyalties that many FE teachers hold has created an argument that in one sense FE teachers hold ‘dual’ professional identities. This concept has often been described as dual professionalism. The phrase was first used by Jocelyn Robson in her early research into FE professionalism. Plowright and Barr offer a helpful definition:

“a dual professional in the learning and skills sector is one who, on the one hand, is qualified in a vocational or academic specialism, and on the other, is teacher trained and committed to developing skills and knowledge in teaching”

Plowright and Barr (2012:8)

Orr (2011:4) advocated that dual professionalism “may tacitly reveal a significant aspect of the tradition of FE”, which he argued links colleges back to their nineteenth-century roots providing early forms of apprenticeships, where skilled craftsman passed on their knowledge and skills.

Dual professionalism and its benefits were accepted as a key strength of FE teachers and strongly advocated by the Institute for Learning (IFL) during its time as the recognised professional body for FE. Although much maligned as having failed to achieve its broad goal (DBIS, 20012a,b), the IFL were very successful at ensuring dual professionalism was accepted as a key component for FE teachers’ professionalism. It asserted that FE teachers have “deep knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning processes”, matched with “expert subject knowledge and skills” (IFL, 2012). Another significant piece of research that supported the concept is the Commission on Adult and Vocational Teaching and Learning’s report: ‘It’s About Work’ (CAVTL, 2013:3). This report asserted that one of the characteristics on which excellent teaching and learning within the sector depends is: “dual professional teachers who combine occupational and pedagogical expertise” (CAVTL, 2013:3). These positions argue that the concept is perceived as a very positive aspect to FE teachers’ identity and contributes to the students’ learning and progress.

3.2.2 Professional identity conflict

In contrast, Orr (2011) and Fejes and Köpsén (2012) have asserted that some FE teachers prioritise their professional identity from their industry and never fully subscribe to being a professional teacher. Dual professionalism can also be seen as a negative concept, creating conflict in the way that FE teachers perceive their identity, especially within the transition process to becoming a teacher (Robson 1998a, Robson et al 2004, Gleeson 2014). This identity conflict occurs as a result of a number of factors. According to Robson and Gleeson, one of the factors is the argument that the transition period is not linear. Many of the teachers in their research described their entry into teaching as unplanned and for some even ‘accidental’. Secondly for many teachers the transition process has involved a significant amount of part-time teaching, again causing a divide in loyalty and identity between their occupation or work role and their teacher role. This entry to teaching process, often described as the long interview, is discussed more fully later in section 3.3.

Appleyard and Appleyard (2014:29) question whether viewing the FE teacher “as a subject specialist who teaches” or a “teacher with a subject specialism” also causes identity ‘conflict’. This conflict is not something new and has been recognised before, Venables (1967 in Robson 1998a:596) writing about technical colleges and their teachers, fifty years ago argued that:

“the technical teacher appears to see him or her self chiefly as the engineer, the secretary, the welder, the fashion designer or the surveyor who happens to be teaching. The staff in such departments do not (either collectively or individually) consistently see themselves as educators”

Venables (1967 in Robson 1998a:596)

This identity conflict can cause on-going issues for FE teachers in some other key areas of their professional life and practice, for example professional development. Clow (2011) and Broad (2015) asserted that some FE teachers will emphasise developing new knowledge and skills in one aspect of their professional identity as opposed to the other, for example a lecturer gaining a qualification in their occupational field as opposed to engaging in a course designed to enhance their teaching practice.

Robson (1998a) postulated that a further issue with dual professional identity is the question of whether it is possible for “two professional identities to become compatible” (Robson, 1998a:46). She asserted that the move “from one professional role to another may be far from straightforward” (ibid:56), therefore, she argued, adopting the idea of holding two ‘distinct’ professional identities is preferable.

As highlighted in section 1.5.2 these FE professional identity debates informed and shaped the rationale and aim for this thesis, which is to add new understanding to the complex identity formation process and establish what the key factors are in the transition from work to teaching.

3.2.3 Occupation and teaching practice

Having described the influence that former occupations have on identity, the work now explores how occupations influence teaching practice. According to Avis and Bathmaker (2006) and Maxwell (2010a) former occupation and professional identity impact significantly on the professional practice that FE teachers adopt. They argue that their teacher development is influenced by their prior experiences of work and that their teaching practice is “shaped by previous experience” (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006:183). Trainee teachers in their research drew upon their previous vocational lives to inform their “preferred orientations to educational practice” (ibid:175); the premise being that FE teachers use training and teaching techniques commonly found in their previous industry or occupation, for example: “as engineers to inform their attitudes towards teaching building studies” and “as nurses to inform how they taught social care” (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009:969). FE teachers’ close links with their former industry lead them to believe that they are expertly placed to teach their learners in a way that best prepares them for work (Robson et al, 2004). The expectations and high standards of industry are used by teachers as benchmarks for their learners (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009) as much as qualification outcomes.

From their research, Robson et al (2004:192) argued that FE teachers “appear to be engaged in an active process of elaborating a personal pedagogy”, they are demonstrating autonomy in the selection of the teaching strategy in they use. This contradicts many of the arguments cited after incorporation (discussed in chapter 2 in

2.3) which asserted that teachers had been de-professionalised and suffered a loss of autonomy (Randle and Brady, 1997).

Robson et al's (2004) research also suggests that FE teachers often go above and beyond what the curriculum stipulates. This narrative of 'adding value' extends beyond skills and knowledge to attitudes, values and beliefs to benefit the 'whole' learner. In adopting teaching practices informed by their industry experience and going above and beyond a qualifications requirement to meet the demands of the occupation, FE teachers believed they were acting as "vanguards of professional practice" (Robson et al, 2004:190). They also believed that they were preserving "the status and identity of the professional group from which they come" (ibid).

3.2.4 Professional values: from a former occupation and teaching

As argued in section 3.2.3, FE teachers believe that part of their role is to instil their former occupation or professions' values and beliefs into their learners. Commitment to an agreed set of values is a key component of the historical professional discourse (Friedson 2001, Lunt 2008) and also found within previous research into key elements of FE professionalism (Smithers, 2013).

Personal and professional values are influenced by many complex social factors as well as those formed from occupational identity (Maxwell, 2010a). Appleyard and Appleyard (2014) reflected this in the diagram in figure 2 in which they position values alongside identity as key contributors to an individual's psychological makeup and view of self.

For the FE teacher their identity from their former occupations forms a powerful influence on their value base for further education. A key value that FE teachers draw from their former role is the importance of work and specifically *preparing* learners for work (Jephcote and Salisbury 2009, Gleeson 2014, Hodgson et al 2015). FE teachers cited by Gleeson et al (2005) asserted that FE is very different to schools" in that it provides "strong industry links" and "work-based training" (Gleeson et al 2005:447)

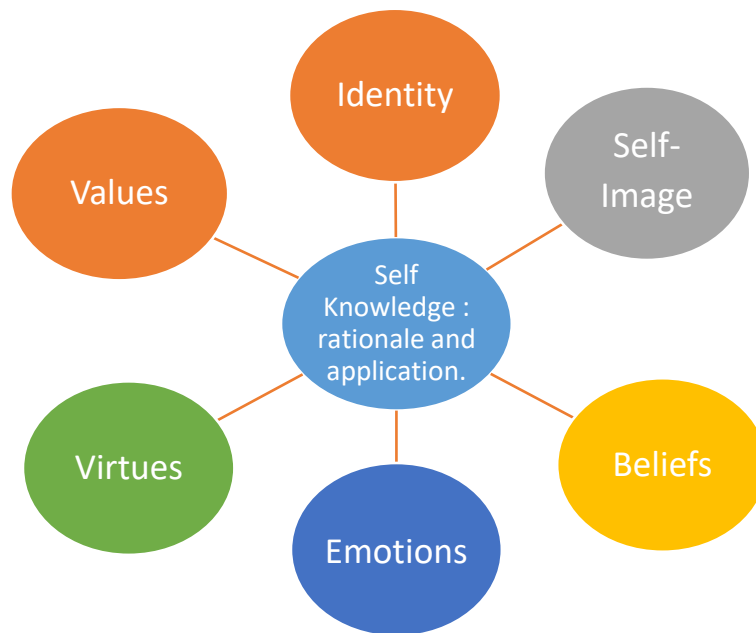


Figure 2 Individual's psychological makeup and view of self. Appleyard and Appleyard (2014:25)

A further value that it held by FE teachers is shaped by the widely held belief that the FE sector is inclusive of *all* individuals within society (Bathmaker 2013, Broad 2016). It offers educational opportunities and a 'second chance' at educational success to individuals described as 'hard to reach' (Clow 2000, Robson 2008a, Jephcote et al 2008) and who have disengaged or were deemed to have failed in compulsory schooling (Gleeson et al, 2005). Many FE teachers cited in the literature ascribe to this belief and have adopted a value centred on a commitment to developing opportunities and ultimately greater life chances for their learners (Robson et al, 2004). Jephcote et al (2008:166) argue that FE teachers in their research have asserted their belief in the "transformative capacity of FE" and the "power of qualifications" to provide learners with opportunities for employment and increase their lifetime earning potential. This value is driven by another, that of a deep commitment to their students (Robson et al, 2004) putting the students' needs above their own (Jephcote and Salisbury, 2009) and to serve them well (Clow, 2001).

Within research (see Robson et al, 2004) FE teachers have cited a value described as 'pride in their former occupation', which they try to instil into their learners. FE teachers are "concerned to conduct trainees into a world of practices and values that

they themselves esteem” (Robson et al, 2004). Teachers in FE have already achieved the goal, meaning the job role that their learners are wanting to achieve. This raises a further key FE teacher value; that of role modelling to learners.

3.2.5 FE Teachers as role models

There is limited evidence to suggest that effective FE teachers are role models to their students (Robson 1998a, Jephcote and Salisbury 2009). Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) asserted from their research with FE teachers, that their ‘biography’ of work, which details their occupational experience in doing a job can act as a significant role model for their learners. As described in 3.2.3 the fact that most FE lecturers have ‘done’ the job that the majority of their learners aspire to do, gains them a sense of credibility with their students (Gleeson and Mardle 1980, Robson 2006). The other significant part of being a role model is the passion that many FE teachers display for their first profession and how proud they are (Robson et al, 2004:191). In the most effective FE teachers, their occupational experience and role modelling have also developed a sense of altruism in regard to their professionalism- in which the tutors want to ensure that their learners achieve the status of “conscientious professional workers” (ibid:191) in their industry, as they once were. One lecturer cited in Robson et al’s (2004) research asserted that “a lot of what we are teaching here is experience that we have gained over many years”. Arguing that they as vocational teachers belongs to a special group, and that membership of that group is to be a goal for all their learners: to be “part of “ that “team” (ibid: 191).

3.2.6 FE Teachers’ and learners’ shared educational identity

A further role model ‘type’ is reported, albeit briefly, in the published research into FE teachers, coming not from their former occupation, but centring on FE teachers’ own experience of formal education. This suggests that some FE teachers have a shared ‘educational identity’ with their learners.

Avis and Bathmaker (2006:185) cite two of their participants who had been through FE, one of them “considered himself a role model for his students in that he, like many of them, had been disadvantaged and had considered university education out of his reach”. He had had a negative experience at school, and felt that after attending a local FE college, the teachers there had changed his view of education. He found them to be

much more positive, and this had increased his engagement with learning considerably, he especially liked the way students were treated as adults. Jephcote et al (2008) concurred, articulating that the FE teachers in their research had “chequered educational histories” and that they were late developers in the educational sense, in a similar vein to their typical FE learners. Other researchers confirm this in their findings, arguing that many FE teachers attended colleges themselves to gain their own occupational qualifications often through apprenticeships and not through study at university to gain a degree (Jephcote et al 2008, Jephcote and Salisbury 2009). The point is that this shared educational identity enables FE teachers to relate to their learners and form strong empathetic bonds with them. Gleeson and Mardle’s (1980) research, which while it is dated, summarises the role model concept within identity from their case study college particularly well:

“most (FE) teachers are recruits from industry, who have been through the system and who are therefore well placed to pass on the know- how to those who also want their ticket”

Gleeson and Mardle (1980:28)

3.3 Significant Influences on FE Teachers’ Professional Identity Formation

As highlighted in section 2.4, the journey from work to full-time teacher and professional identity formation typically involves various influences and key stages. The chapter now focuses on those key stages for an FE teacher.

3.3.1 Professional identity is fluid

Before examining the key influences on identity, at this point of the thesis it is pertinent to articulate the belief that the notion of *achieving* a new identity or to use another term, ‘completing’ a change in professional identity is unhelpful. Some studies suggest that identity and how one perceives oneself professionally can be ‘fluid’, changing regularly. Wenger (1998), for example, in his work on communities of practice uses the term ‘trajectory’ arguing that who we are, in essence our identity, is never fixed, but rather is confined to a particular period of one’s life. Fejes and Köpsén (2012:268) concur, in their work highlighting the social aspects of the process, “the trajectory of developing an identity as a vocational teacher may be shaped in and move between multiple contexts”. They referred to the movement between occupation and teaching as ‘boundary crossing’.

Some researchers such as Dixon et al (2010) Maxwell (2010a), Orr and Simmons (2010) describe the transition process into teaching more akin to the social process of ‘becoming’ first used by Colley et al (2003), in the sense of the result of learning is to construct a new identity, as a new person.

These arguments are highly relevant to this thesis because this fluidity to professional identity is seen in FE teachers. Colley et al (2007:177) argued that within FE, professional identities may be seen as “flexible and sometime scattered”, confirming the discourse on dual professionalism highlighted previously in section 3.2.1 where two identities; the occupational and teacher, can cause a tension in priority. So as influences are described in the following section it is important to acknowledge that there is an ongoing tension within many teachers in relation to professional identity.

3.3.2 Commencing teaching part time

The first stage of the formation process or trajectory towards becoming a teacher for the vast majority of FE teachers involves starting to teach in a part-time capacity whilst still working in their occupation (Robson, 1998a James and Biesta 2007, Gleeson 2014). During this period if the number of hours that the individual teaches is relatively low then the professional identity of the individual will be strong towards their work and their teacher identity will not be as significant (Fejes and Köpsén 2012). At this initial stage of the formation process the issue of formal teaching qualifications comes to the fore. The work now examines the teacher qualification debate as it highly significant in the identity of an FE teacher.

3.3.3 The role of teaching qualifications in FE professional identity formation

FE teachers can complete teaching qualifications and courses at different periods in their career, (see section 3.3.7). There is a lack of research into the experiences of students on FE initial teacher training (ITT) courses in both scope and scale (Maxwell 2014) and in volume when compared to schools (Dixon et al 2010).

However the complex and contested question of whether teachers in FE should have a formal teaching qualifications has been debated prolifically (Lucas and Nasta 2010, Lucas et al 2011, Fulford et al 2011, Moodie and Wheelahan 2012). During the last two

decades upon commencing teaching in FE, the requirement to obtain a formal teaching qualification has fluctuated from a voluntarist position to a mandatory position and back again to voluntarist (Lucas et al 2011, Fulford et al 2011). This key question needs examining for this thesis, as it will debate and question the degree to which studying towards and obtaining a formal teaching qualification supports and progresses the professional identity and professional skills of an FE teacher. Or to put the question in another way, can formal qualifications be imposed externally by policy makers on a group of teachers to raise their professionalism? This was the case for FE teachers between 2006 and 2012.

Historically, as already highlighted in sections 1.2, 2.4.4 and 3.2.1, FE colleges did not place a significant emphasis on their lecturers holding teaching qualifications. Teachers' occupational skills and knowledge were their most desired assets for teaching in colleges and gained them entry to teaching (Robson, 2006, Fulford et al 2011, Fejes and Köpsén 2012, Gleeson et al 2015). Until 2001, teachers within FE were under no obligation to achieve a formal teaching qualification (Huddleston and Unwin, 2013). Prior to 2001 the majority of lecturers working were qualified professionals in their own vocation or occupation with only approximately 40 per cent having voluntarily obtained a teaching qualification (Fulford et al 2011, Lucas et al 2011). Much of the ensuing debates on teaching qualifications centre on whether expert skills and ability in a vocational area are *sufficient* to teach that occupation effectively. These arguments are now examined.

3.3.4 Arguments supporting mandatory teaching qualifications

From 2000 onwards, many policies and white papers have espoused the importance of FE teachers holding recognised teaching qualifications to raise and improve teaching practice in the sector, the result of which, it was hoped, would increase the nations skills and ability to compete in the global economy (see DfES 2004, 2006). This has been discussed previously in section 2.3.3. Also, criticism from Ofsted (2003) on FE teaching and teacher training added weight to the argument in favour of all FE teachers acquiring formal teaching qualifications.

Therefore in 2007 the Institute for Learning (IFL) was elevated to becoming the recognised professional body for the FE sector, and the 2007 Further Education

Teachers' Qualifications Regulations (DFES 2007) were introduced. These regulations made it mandatory for all FE teachers to become a member of the IFL, hold or work towards a recognised level 5 teaching qualification and complete a period of 30 hours continuous professional development (CPD) annually. Part of the qualification suite was the opportunity to achieve a licence to teach, which came to be known as qualified teaching and learning status, (QTLS), akin to qualified teacher status (QTS) in the state funded school sector. The broad goals of these reforms and policies was, firstly to create a "national system" for the training and development of teachers in the post-16 sector which would be comparable to that of the compulsory school sector (Lucas 2013:390), secondly, to raise the "professional status" of teachers in FE (Ibid).

The belief that all teachers in the FE and the wider skills sector should hold a recognised formal teaching qualification is supported by the majority of FE teachers (Harkin et al 2003, Fletcher et al, 2015) According to Fejes and Köpsén (2012), for some FE/VE teachers achieving a teaching qualification enables them to feel they are legitimate members of the teaching 'community'. And from previous research, albeit on a small scale, many FE teachers believed it also to be an essential component of FE teacher professionalism (Smithers 2013). This research supported Lingfield's (2012 a&b) findings that the sector's professionalism has developed, that it is distinct in its roots in occupations and that this forms a key strength of the sector.

There is a small but growing body of literature on research into FE teachers' experiences and views on their ITT and qualifications. Orr and Simmons (2010) reported that FE trainee teachers in their study were on the whole very positive about the experience and the amount they had learned. They enjoyed the social experiences of learning with other trainees and commented on how their teacher trainers had contributed to their progress. Maxwell (2010b) and the trainees in her research asserted that participation in an ITT qualification was significant in shaping their practice as teachers.

3.3.5 Criticism of occupational standards and theory in teaching qualifications

There are however critics of FE teacher training and qualifications, especially around standards. One of the key levers used during this period of reforming FE teacher qualifications and development to shape and impose professionalism and influence

professional identity was the use of occupational standards introduced in 2004 and 2006. These standards describe what essential skills and knowledge a teacher in FE should hold (Tummons, 2010) or what an FE teacher was expected to know, how they were expected to behave and teach (Orr, 2008). The content and the plethora of different standards caused much debate and criticism. The 2006 Life Long Learning UK (LLUK) document ran to twenty pages with six different domains and 15 statements in each domain, in comparison to a one-page equivalent document used within higher education (Orr, 2008). Trainee teachers and their teacher trainers had to ensure that every standard and competence outcome was achieved or mapped across the qualification. Critics of the standards and their sheer number argued that there was an over-emphasis on ticking boxes, mapping practice to standards to show coverage (Lucas 2007, Orr 2012, Fletcher et al 2015) with less emphasis on real impact on practice and developing professional skills. Critics of the standards stated that they failed to translate into effective teaching practice for new or existing teachers (Lucas and Nasta 2009, Lucas 2013), and operate within a wider discourse of managerialism and performativity (Avis et al 2011). Teaching qualifications became more about 'compliance' than criticality (Orr 2012), and achieving the qualification more important than the process of teaching where paperwork is "prioritised over teaching" (Maxwell 2014:389)

Concerns have also been raised about the theory content of ITT qualifications and how it impacts practice. Wide scale research by Harkin et al (2003:35) into FE teachers' experiences concluded that the role of theory in ITT was "problematic", because of the manner in which it is "perceived, remembered and employed", and crucially whether it was effective in informing teaching practice. Trainees cited in Maxwell (2010a) agreed, asserting that the level of reading theory involved did not provide solutions to practical teaching issues. The lack of development of practice or vocational pedagogy is another criticism often levelled at FE teaching qualifications. Maxwell (2010a) argues that the potential solution lies in trainee teachers gaining greater exposure to workplace practices and teachers.

3.3.6 Critics of mandatory qualifications and professional development

The introduction of so many standards added to the belief amongst FE teachers that the imposition of qualifications, professional development and professional body membership, externally from the top down was the wrong approach. They felt that the government was “imposing a definition of professionalism which is more restrictive and prescriptive than in other sectors of education” (Orr, 2008:103). That this approach also contradicted traditional philosophies of professionalism which are practitioner-led. Orr summarised the issue clearly:

For FE in England, it (profession development) has been imposed from the outside which could itself deny the autonomy that definitions of professionalism include.

Orr (2008:102)

This was also one of the findings of Lingfield’s (DFE, 2012b) final review that the sector had matured beyond the need for so much political intervention in the professional development of its teaching practitioners and that the level of qualification that teachers held were matters best discussed between an employee and their employer.

Illeris (2011) in his research into understanding work-based learning, explored more fully in chapter 4, stated that competence for example teaching skills do not *necessarily* flow from the acquisition of a qualification. He claimed that there can be a weakness in applying knowledge and skills, gained *solely* from a qualification.

Other countries have experienced similar debates in their vocational education (VE) sectors, for example in Australia according to Moodie and Wheelahan (2012:320) there has been much criticism of the low level of mandatory qualification required again “its lack of attention to pedagogy” and that it does not prepare teachers for the rigours of VE.

The relative successes of the 2007 suite of qualifications and the IFL are explored in detail in Smithers (2013) which cites the findings of the 2012 Lingfield review of FE professionalism. To summarise, his final report criticised the 2007 teaching qualifications arguing that there had been little progress made: “decade long reforms

have had very little impact on the same faults in delivering teacher training in FE that were identified by the inspectorate in 2003” (DFE, 2012a:14). He stated that the 2007 reforms had not been successful in raising the numbers of those qualified or working towards a teaching qualification, which stood at only 80 per cent of the total teachers employed in sector. Crucially, however, for this thesis the reforms had also failed to raise the professional status of FE teachers or the standards of their practice (ibid). Commenting on whether the IFL had had any positive impact on FE teacher professionalism, the report concluded that it had actually been “weakened”.

At the time of writing this is the current situation, with FE colleges stipulating the desired qualifications of their employees. From the author’s experience and reviewing current specifications for FE teacher jobs, a teaching qualification and the willingness to work towards one form part of the essential criteria for all teaching posts in FE colleges across the UK. Those commencing teaching without one will be low on the remuneration scale.

This whole qualification debate is important for this study, as it seeks to identify what the key factors are in FE teacher professional identity formation. One of the key questions that the findings answer is how significant a teaching qualification is to FE teachers’ professional identity formation.

3.3.7 The influence of modes and content of FE teacher training on identity

Although mandatory requirements for all teachers to hold a formal teaching qualification within the sector has fluctuated, the numbers of teachers completing formal teaching qualifications has increased since incorporation (Fletcher et al, 2015). It is argued that that the different *types* and *modes* of studying towards an FE teacher qualification can each have an impact on professional identity (Jephcote and Salisbury 2009, Lucas et al 2012, Lucas 2013).

Some lecturers have taught for many years and then undertaken a qualification part-time whilst continuing to teach full-time, this is known as an ‘in-service’ mode of training (Lucas and Unwin 2009, Fulford et al 2011). Others have studied full-time at a university or college and undertaken regular placements in a college to get involved in the practice of FE teaching. The third option, involves commencing teaching part-time,

continuing to work part-time and studying a teacher qualification part-time, typically in the evening (Colley et al, 2007). Gaining accurate figures on the numbers of teachers that have followed each different pathway is very challenging (Fletcher et al, 2015). However, using data on the number of part-time teachers in the sector, in 2013 at 62 per cent would indicate that the option to teach and study teacher training part-time is the most prevalent route (ibid). What can be inferred from these figures is that based on their time spent in teaching, which is low compared to working in their occupation, teachers who start work part-time will retain a stronger identity commitment to their main occupation and a weaker one to their teaching identity. This argument is supported by research discussed in section 3.2.2. (e.g. Fejes and Köpsén, 2012).

The in-service model followed by those who started previous to 2001 and never had to gain a teaching qualification also presents a question as to whether a teaching qualification has a significant impact on identity formation. If the teacher taught for a considerable amount of time without a qualification then their identity and practice will have developed organically influenced by other factors over time. Consequently, it can be assumed that their identity as an FE teacher is not significantly influenced by a teaching qualification. This assertion will be tested in this thesis.

3.3.8 The tacit nature of teacher's knowledge, skills and practice

The 'should teachers be qualified?' debate raises a further significant question that literature such as that by Orr (2008), Lucas et al (2012) and Lingfield (2012a) also explore: can qualifications and a written list of competencies develop a strong, deep sense of professionalism and professional identity to the same degree as that seen in other professions? When considering this question, it is important to explore the tacit nature of much teaching practice and to question whether that can be codified into a list of standards, as "teachers may 'know' or 'do' much more than they can say or be written in sets of written standards" (Lucas et al, 2012:681). Lucas et al question further, whether it is possible to "capture in written statements the richness and complexities involved in the process of teaching" from teachers who are "professionals operating in complex teaching and learning environments" (ibid:683).

The limited literature is inconclusive as to the degree to which formal teaching qualifications and meeting standards have influenced positively in forming strong professional identities for FE teachers.

3.3.9 The impact of teaching placement and mentoring on professional identity formation

Part of the reforms to teacher training qualifications over the last two decades has included introducing a formal element of mentoring. This thesis adopts a very simple view of mentoring, defining it as a process whereby the trainee teacher is assigned an experienced individual to offer support and guidance (Cunningham, 2012). At the core of mentoring, Cunningham argued is a “trainable set of skills”, meaning it is more than just “help and nurture” (ibid: 10). The chapter now examines how mentoring has impacted on professional identity.

Full-time pre-service FE teacher training involves completing a teaching placement in college. This typically means working with a formal mentor, an experienced teacher already working in that college. This is the case also for the many FE teachers who complete a teaching qualification part-time whilst ‘in service’ either at the beginning or later in their teaching career. Research into the ‘lived’ experiences of new trainee FE teachers is limited; this review has quoted from the most prominent sources- Robson (1998b), Avis and Bathmaker (2005, 2006), Lucas and Unwin (2009).

3.3.10 Formal mentoring within FE has been ineffectual in developing professional identity

There is a limited amount of research that has been carried out into new FE teachers’ experiences that has examined the relative success of formal mentoring in the trainee teacher’s development. The sources that exist suggest that mentoring within FE is underdeveloped and not used to achieve its fullest potential (Fletcher et al, 2015). Mentors described in Lucas and Unwin (2009) and Lucas et als’ (2011) research were not given sufficient time to review and understand the details of their mentee’s teacher qualification, so often were not pro-active in identifying where theoretical concepts were applied in practice and sharing with their mentee. This, Lucas et al (2011) argued was due largely to a lack of resources within the college.

According to Lucas and Unwin (2009) and Orr and Simmons (2010), many in-service trainee teachers were not officially recognised by their college or manager as both a learner (trainee) and a worker (teacher). As a result trainees felt a lack of support (Maxwell 2014). Colleges often did not give trainees remission from teaching duties resulting in a lack of time to reflect on their own practice and development, leading Lucas and Unwin (2009:429) to conclude that trainee teachers had to demonstrate an extreme amount of “goodwill and determination” to complete and achieve the qualification

3.3.11 Formal mentoring and ITT can have a negative impact on professional identity

In terms of teacher identity formation, some full-time teacher trainers and those starting their FE teaching, when on college placement and working with mentors, reported *negative* influences on their teacher identity formation (Bathmaker and Avis 2005, Lucas and Unwin 2009). Bathmaker and Avis (2005:55) concluded that the trainee teachers in their research when in their placement college “were treated as outsiders”, feeling that they lacked status and crucially were “marginalised from the communities of practice” that they aspired to join. Orr (2012) summarised the key experiences of FE trainee teachers as ‘coping’ with the challenging nature of FE, growing in ‘confidence’ from unfamiliar to familiar and also alienation which he described as a lack of control over the set of circumstances being experienced.

In this research the trainee teachers were very disparaging of the teaching practice they had encountered. They had been sent to a college to learn and develop their teaching practice and paradoxically some were internally vowing not to teach in the way that these experienced lecturers were. The conclusion of research carried out by Dixon et al (2010:391) with FE teacher trainees summarises this section well. Their conclusion was that the FE colleges used for their placements could not provide an environment suitable “for the purposeful and deliberate development of new teachers”. Part of the mentoring process is observation of teachers, which is discussed below.

3.3.12 The place of observation in developing teaching practice

Formal lesson observations have been used in education primarily in three different contexts with differing objectives, firstly in ITT to develop teaching skills, secondly regularly with experienced teachers as ongoing forms of development and thirdly for

stakeholders to inform and make judgements on competence (O’Leary 2012). Wragg (1999:3) and his seminal study on observing teaching concluded that when the process is handled well it is a powerful form of development and can “enhance professional skills” but when executed poorly, it can be “counter-productive” and at its worst “arouse hostility, resistance and suspicion”. Wragg continues that one of the key issues in observation is that of power, and in particular an “imbalance of power” between the observer and observee (ibid:62). He maintains that the purpose of observation should determine how it is used.

Marriott (2001:46) asserted that grading of observation has caused much “anxiety” amongst teachers, and whether the teacher has “passed” has often become the sole focus of the exercise. Criticism of grading as a form of managerial surveillance has also been raised (O’Leary 2012). Therefore in the last decade there have been calls by stakeholders in education to move to a more professional developmental approach to lesson observation as Wragg (1999) suggested. O’Leary (2012) asserts that this has started in schools, through a format of ‘lesson study’ where a group of teachers explore together as a collegiate how a lesson may be delivered and then one delivers, one observes and discusses the feedback and possible developments. Learners are also involved in the feedback process.

Within FE, observation of teaching has also been criticised because it has widely been used as a managerialist tool of measurement of overall quality, underpinned by the custodians Ofsted (O’Leary 2013). According to Gleeson et al (2015), observation has become a system fixated with measuring teacher performance rather than improving it.

In his study of the observation process O’Leary (2013) identified that some college senior managers set the tone for *how* the process of observation was used. And that a minority used it to develop professionalism in its widest sense, that is where senior managers promote ungraded observations, give teachers greater autonomy to decide which lessons are observed and there is balanced distribution of power. In this approach to observation the observer was seen as a supportive mentor.

In the wider literature on FE teacher training there are sporadic references to *informal* observation being used by FE teacher trainees to develop practice. Maxwell (2010b) in

her research with FE teacher trainees cited the ways in which they copied practices of other teachers using a variety of different means including discussion and informal observations in the workplace, noting that this was a useful process. However, she found that in a further studies (2010a, 2014) these type of informal learning opportunities for trainees are too often very limited due to un-supportive FE workplaces.

Lahiff (2017) argued that research into the use of lesson observation in FE ITT is limited, she asserted from her research that observation can be a hugely beneficial process to pedagogic development. She suggested that for this to happen some key factors need to be considered. Firstly, the context needs to be considered, because observation is not a neutral exercise, and there is a relationship between the observer and observee. Secondly, the feedback session offers a powerful learning ‘space’, which can lead to development of “vocational teachers pedagogy” (Lahiff 2017:61).

The call for ‘developmental’ as opposed to ‘judgemental’ observation is not only being made in ITT, Gleeson et al (2015) cite a powerful quote from a senior manager in a large college which summarises the argument for supportive developmental observations as ongoing practice amongst FE teachers:

“if we could get a community of practitioners who actually valued the process of helping and supporting one another and would happily go in and out of each other’s lesson, and if we had daily conversations between teachers about what’s working and what’s not and idea sharing happening on an informal basis, not a formal basis, we will have won the battle. In my view that would be the best possible environment, a community of professionals, self-reflecting, sharing, talking, creatively thinking together and talking about their experiences would be wonderful.”

Gleeson et al (2015:85)

The work now focusses on FE teachers’ entry into teaching as unqualified teachers.

3.3.13 Learning to be an FE teacher by ‘doing’

The phenomenon of commencing to teach as an unqualified and inexperienced teacher is common to FE. Research from UCET (2009) cited by Orr (2012) stated that ninety

percent of new FE teachers commenced teaching without a formal teaching qualification. As previously highlighted in section 3.4.3 the main requirement for FE teachers historically was occupational expertise (Gleeson, 2014).

Commencing unqualified leaves new teachers little choice but to learn to teach by ‘doing’. In these circumstances new teachers start to form their own professional identity through their knowledge and experience gained in their former profession and use this to inform their teaching practice (Maxwell 2010a, Maxwell 2010b). In a sense they teach in a manner familiar to them, the way that skills and knowledge were taught in their industry. This is explored more fully earlier in the chapter in section 3.2.3. Jephcote and Salisbury (2009:967) refer to this type of professional learning as “learning on the job”. They argue that much is learnt through the apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975), and trial and error (Maxwell 201b). Some of this learning is also implicit and tacit, that which is difficult to define or ascribe to a certain practice, place or event.

Some of this learning is influenced by a teacher’s ‘biography’, this being a rich mix of “work and *life* experiences” such as schooling, values and upbringing (Jephcote and Salisbury 2009:969, Maxwell 2010b). This evidence supports the position of this thesis, that FE teachers forge their own professional identity, using a variety of means, some much more significant than others. In research into pre-service placement where FE teacher trainees undertook a prolonged placement, Dixon et al. (2010:391) found that during their placement, trainees grew in confidence, however this did not “develop into a more sophisticated conception of teaching or even more diverse teaching practice. Many trainees simply learned to “get by”

3.4 Chapter Summary

To summarise, this chapter has sought to describe what the key components of FE professional identity formation are. The key components are: work, knowledge and skills and others (colleagues). The evidence presented suggests that within further education, the transition process is complex and non-linear. One of the reasons for this is the significant influence that FE teachers’ former occupation has on their new identity, with many ascribing to the notion of a dual professional identity. And for

some, their allegiance to their former profession is so strong that they simply remain on a trajectory towards becoming a teacher. It is argued that others never actually make the transition to perceiving their professional identity to have changed to that of a teacher. Robson summarises much of the formation debate well:

In making the transition from one workplace to another, the mature but novice FE teacher can experience stress of various kinds and more is involved than the simple acquisition of new skills and knowledge, existing occupational identities may be threatened by such changes.

(Robson 1998a:597)

Successive policy reforms have sought to create a formal strategy for the introduction of initial teaching qualifications to raise the status of the FE teaching profession and to improve practice. These have largely failed and the government has now effectively withdrawn its influence, leaving the matter of FE teacher professionalism to the employer to negotiate with its employees.

It has emerged that there are three possible key influences on the identity transition process that FE teachers undergo. These are presented in the diagram below. The first of these influences is the individual's former professional identity forged in their previous occupation. The second possible influence is the teaching qualification that FE teachers undertake either at the beginning of their teaching career or later. This includes gaining knowledge and understanding of the theoretical aspect of teaching and learning delivered in a university or college as well as actively partaking in teaching practice either in-service or on a placement. The last element is the influence of other FE teachers encountered at the placement or in-service college the new teachers are exposed to. All these key suggested influences, drawn from the literature, illustrated in figure 3 below were used to inform the thesis' overarching research questions, summarised in section 1.7.4 and fully described in chapter 5.

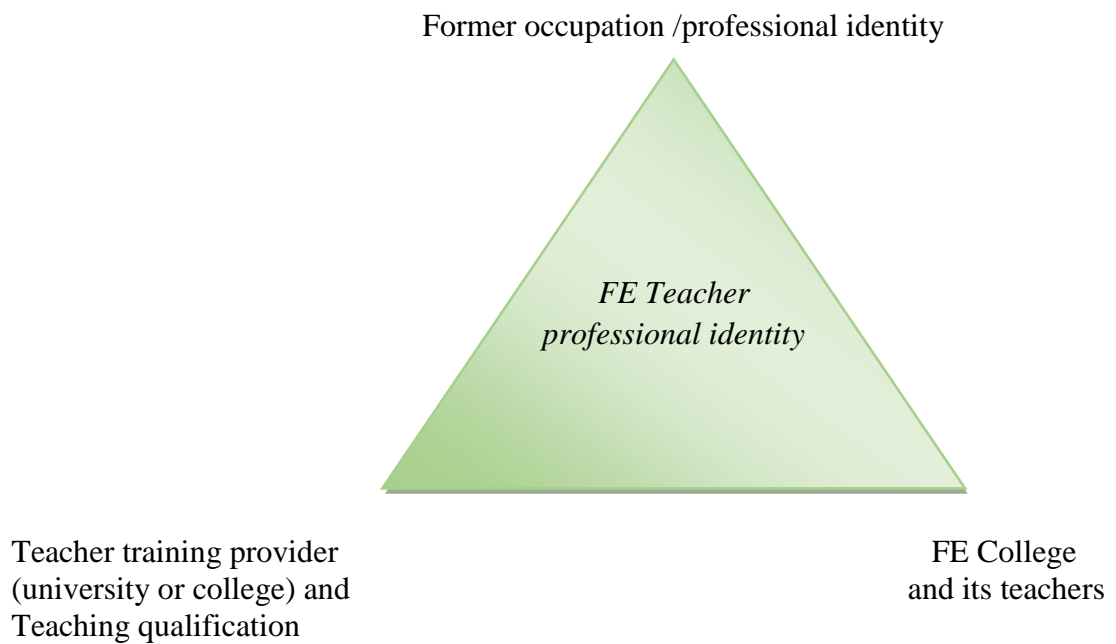


Figure 3 Significant influences in an FE teacher's formation of professional identity

Here, after reviewing the literature I suggest that a teaching qualification is not the most significant influence on an FE teacher's professional identity. This assertion about the influence of teaching qualifications on identity is a key question for my thesis and will be tested through the findings of the research in chapters seven and eight.

The work now focuses on the theoretical dimensions of learning and learning within the work environment.

Chapter 4

Theories of Learning and their Application to Workplace Learning in FE

4.0 Introduction

As presented in the previous chapter in section 3.1.4, according to Robson (1998b) and Jephcote and Salisbury (2009) the formation of FE teachers' professional identity takes place in the teacher's workplace, the college. Maxwell (2010a) argues that a better integration between teacher education and the workplace will be beneficial to FE teachers' professional identity formation. This identity formation and development of teaching practice is akin to the concept of 'learning to become a teacher'. Therefore *how* people learn at work is crucial to this thesis. Learning, and learning at work are the key foci of this chapter.

This chapter commences with a discussion of contemporary definitions of learning, it then progresses to discuss some theories of learning specific to the workplace. The main body of the chapter focuses on Knud Illeris (2011) and his workplace learning theories which are seen as potentially illuminating in terms of the FE context, but have not yet been applied in earlier research in this area. The chapter seeks to apply these theories to the FE context, its teachers and their learning environment- the college. It concludes with a discussion of how these theories and concepts will be used to bring meaning to the findings of this thesis.

4.1 Learning

4.1.1 Definitions and meanings of learning

Learning has been defined historically, in simple terms, as the acquisition of new knowledge, behaviours and skills (Galperin, 1965). However the learning *process* is complex, involving multiple interlinked components, such as the environment within which learning takes place and the individual involved in the process (Armitage et al 2003, Petty 2004). Illeris's (2009) definition confirms this complexity. He asserts that learning is "any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or ageing" (Illeris, 2009:7). In his definition Illeris highlighted the *agency* involved in the 'process' of learning, to

differentiate it from the 'natural process' of human learning. For example, a teacher in a school delivering a lesson, or studying a text book would be examples of agency. Illeris (2002:14) argued that the word learning is used broadly, often with four different meanings. He asserted that the word can refer firstly to "results of individual learning processes", in this context the word learning is used to describe "what is learned" (ibid:14). Secondly, the word learning can refer to the "psychological processes" that lead to the "alteration or result" of the learning, this learning is referred to as learning psychology. The third use of the word learning that Illeris (2002:14) described is "interaction processes between the individual and his or her material and social environment", which he argued are "direct or indirect pre-conditions of the internal processes" described in the second meaning. He argued that both the 'psychological' processes (meaning 2) and 'interaction' processes (meaning 3) directly influence the 'results' of the learning (meaning 1).

The fourth manner in which the word learning is used is "more or less identically with the word teaching" in official and professional contexts (Illeris, 2002:14). This may be as a result of a "short circuit" between what is taught and what is learned. He argued that the first three meanings of the word are perfectly valid, if however sometimes leading to confusion when not defined, whereas the fourth meaning is "inappropriate".

4.1.2 Learning theories

How individuals learn and the complex process involved, has generated much research, and the creation of many theories. Learning theories seek to bring understanding to the learning process. Crowley (2014a) argued that understanding how we learn and what influences the learning process is extremely important, because that will ultimately help us to learn more *effectively*. This will include gaining a better understanding of the 'barriers' to learning encountered in the process and crucially what may cause them. Illeris (2009) concurred, arguing that one of the key issues within the learning process is recognising that errors or distortions may occur which result in the intended outcomes not being realised.

4.1.3 Illeris' three dimensions of learning theory

This thesis applies the work of the educational scientist Knud Illeris, particularly his work-based learning theories to the primary research findings of the study. Firstly it explores some of his earlier work in 'three dimensions of learning' (Illeris 2002) which he then developed (2007) and applied to workplace learning theory (2011).

Illeris' (2002) original 'three dimensions of learning' theory, which he adapted in 2007 and 2011, suggested that there are three key areas or dimensions to learning illustrated in the model below. And that learning takes place as these dimensions: 'content' and 'incentive' then 'interact' with each other. Each of the three elements is now examined.

The first of these three dimensions is the "content" element of learning, which is concerned with cognitive learning, which includes both "skills, factual knowledge and motor learning" (Illeris 2011:14). This he argued is the dimension that traditional constructivist learning psychology has been positioned in, for example teaching and curriculum delivery. The second dimension he identifies is the "incentive dimension". This dimension of learning he argues covers the areas of human "feelings, emotions attitudes and motivations", which are positioned traditionally in the humanist domain of learning. The third dimension is "interaction", which is the social process which takes place in the "interaction between the individual and its surroundings". Illeris asserted that this domain interprets how learning is impacted by the individual learner's current societal context. This dimension is positioned in the behavioural domain of learning.

He stressed that during learning *all* three dimensions are present, that there is a "tension field" that operates between them and they are all integral components of the learning process.

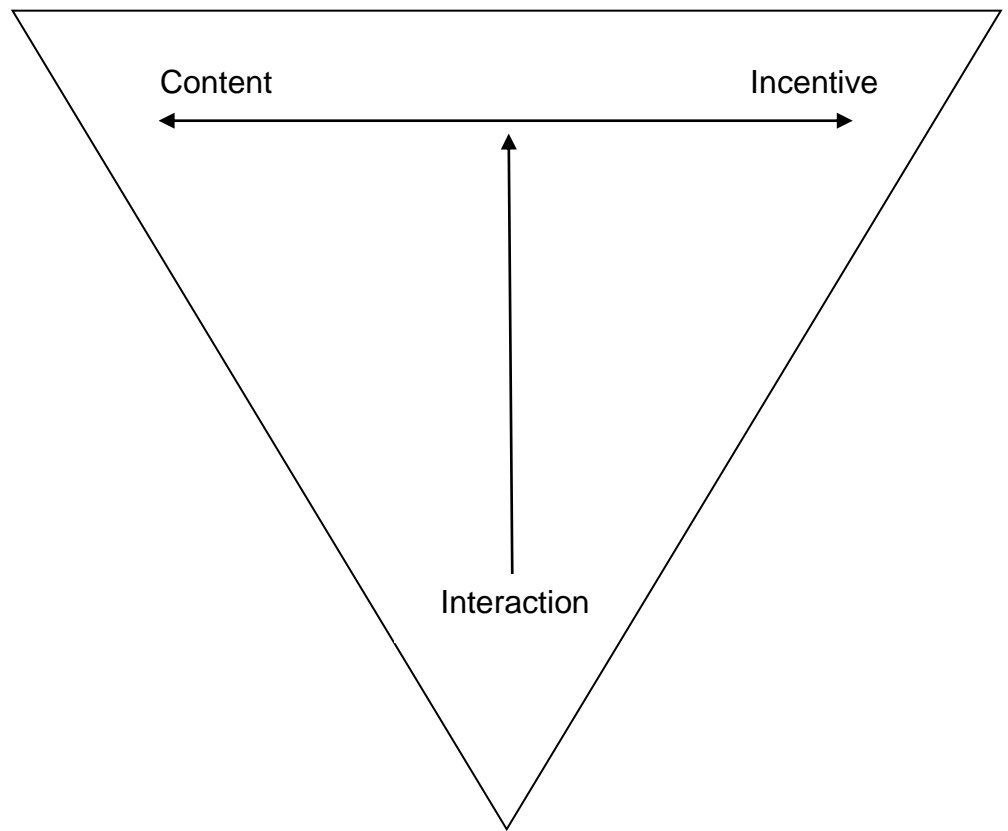


Figure 4 The Three Dimensions of Learning (Illeris 2011:14)

Illeris' three dimensions theory is built on the premise that “learning is fundamentally conceived as an integrated process consisting of two connected part-processes which mutually influence each other” (Illeris, 2002:16). The first of these two processes he described as the interaction between the learner and his or her environment. This interaction may take place through direct contact or through a secondary medium. An educational example of this direct contact would be a history teacher delivering a history lesson in a school with the students. A secondary medium would be a case study given to the students, by the teacher, to read after school and to make notes on.

The second process is the “internal psychological acquisitional and elaborative process which leads to a learning result”. This is the process where the human mind interacts with the body to create behaviour and deploy action to achieve the desired learning

result. For example learning to drive a car involves a complex interaction between the brain and behaviour.

The definitions of learning cited above, Illeris argues suggest that learning is situated within a particular environment and that the process of learning involves a complex internal psychological process. The environment that this thesis is concerned with is the FE teachers' workplace the college, which this chapter now focuses on. Specifically, I examine how the theoretical aspects of *workplace* learning are applied to new FE teachers' learning and development.

4.2 Workplace Learning

This thesis explores how new FE teachers construct their professional identity in learning to become a teacher. In chapter 3, section 3.1.4, evidence is presented which argues that this identity formation takes place within an organisation, the college. Hence the FE college and its members become the 'environment' within which the workplace learning is situated. For this reason how learning within organisations and workplaces takes place is particularly pertinent to this study.

4.2.1 Learning in organisations

Learning in the workplace has gained a considerable body of research and interest, particularly in the corporate business environment. Illeris (2009) argued that in the last two decades 'learning' as an important activity has become a pervasive theme among professionals and students within the fields of psychology, pedagogy and education, but also in the wider *economic* and political agenda. It has been argued that successful learning organisations can impact the commercial and financial results of the organisation (Mullins, 1999).

Theorists working in the field of organisational behaviour and management, such as Senge (1990) have adopted the phrase 'learning organisation' when writing about this phenomenon. A key element of the success of these organisations is developing a strong learning culture (Crowley, 2014), within which "people are continually learning how to learn together" (Senge, 1990:8). Illeris (2011), however, argued that learning organisation theory is *not* "primarily concerned with the employees' learning and

development” (Illeris, 2011:76). It places more emphasis on the wider organisation where employees are “agents acting on behalf of the organisation” (ibid). In his work Illeris places much more emphasis on the learning of the *individual*, over that of the organisation. The individual is at the centre of the process and the workplace organisation is the “learning space” within which the learning process takes place (Illeris, 2011:29).

4.2.2 *Illeris’ Theories of workplace learning*

Illeris (2011) asserted that throughout his lifetime’s work, he always sought to combine “practical research activities with continuous development of my theoretical understanding” (Illeris, 2011:10). He used this same premise when exploring learning in the workplace. He employed his previous theoretical models of learning, including his three dimensions explored in 4.1.3, to inform his work and construction of work-based learning theories.

According to Illeris (2011) there are different factors that impact on learning in workplaces. These include the development of competencies, assimilative learning, a desire to learn on the part of the individual, a culture of learning fostered by the organisation, the role of experience, collective or social learning and identity formation. The *most* salient factors of workbased learning to this research will be explored in more detail now. Factors will be summarised in the discussion in this section and then how they may be used in the FE professional identity discussion in the following section 4.3.

4.2.3 *The development of competencies,*

Illeris (2011) argued that a key goal of workplace learning is the development of “competencies” in employees. He asserted that it is important to view competence in a situational context, arguing that competence is “the requirements inherent to a specific situation”, to be competent a person must be able to “apply his or her professional knowledge and other attributes, such as insights, techniques and methods, in practice”, in a given situation (Illeris, 2011:50). This area of competence development is particularly pertinent to this study, as part of FE teachers’ professional identity construction is developing their competence to teach. This process is referred to as

developing their teaching practice, and the situational context for this development is the FE college workplace.

Competence, he argues, does not necessarily flow from the acquisition of a qualification; qualifications are “necessary but not sufficient for competence”. This is supported by research into the transfer of knowledge, demonstrating that there can be problems when learners seek to *apply* knowledge and skills gained from a qualification (Illeris, 2007). A key element in the discharge of competence is making a judgement or decision as to how and when to act. To give an example from teaching, a teacher must decide when to change a teaching strategy in response to learners’ responses or reaction to the teaching. Illeris (2011) asserted that when using formal education and training, to develop competencies within individuals in the work context, it must be combined with work practice and with a focus to ongoing continuous competence development.

Illeris argued that when seeking to understand competence, it is helpful to adopt a conceptual viewpoint, as in one sense it is an intangible concept. Competencies “do not achieve their concrete form until they are applied in appropriate circumstances”, often in the form of actions (Illeris, 2011: 50). For this reason listing and describing desired competencies can be problematic.

To summarise, competence development is a central pillar of workplace learning, it is an iterative ongoing process. It has to be since the demands and processes of work changes. I now explore the importance of assimilative learning.

4.2.4 Assimilative learning

For Illeris (2011) assimilative learning is learning which builds on previously learned knowledge. Developing competence links to the idea of assimilative learning, because as described previously in section 4.2.3, to be effective competence development must be a continuous process.

Illeris (2011:16) argued that assimilative learning is an everyday occurrence, sometimes called “ordinary learning” and it takes place extensively in working life. Over the course of our lives humans build “extensive, knowledge and skills and

capacities through assimilative learning”. He asserted that by attaching learning to a scheme or within a framework of other learning the human mind is able to recall quickly. An example from science could be in chemistry, where the understanding of chemical compounds begins firstly with gaining knowledge of elements and then progresses to how these can be ‘joined’ together. It then may progress to a practical experiment to build on the theoretical knowledge.

Assimilative learning is relevant to FE professional identity formation, because the majority of FE teachers have had significant experience in a former occupation, as discussed in section 3.2.3. They then use and build on their knowledge and skills gained in this former occupation to construct and build their professional identity and teaching practice within FE (Avis and Bathmaker, 2006). This thesis argues that FE professional identity formation is a rich complex process incorporating skills and knowledge assimilated in the FE lecturer over a long period. Applying assimilative learning to FE is explored more fully later in the chapter in section 4.6. To maintain this continuous process FE teachers must have a desire to learn, so the chapter now turns to motivation to learn.

4.2.5 An individual’s motivation to learn

What creates and drives motivation to learn is contested. Illeris (2011) argued that motivation is required to learn, because learning is not easy and requires strength and mental energy to drive the process. To increase motivation, Illeris asserted, individuals need to see the value of the learning and draw on experiences of how learning has improved their lives.

Desire to learn is one of the three dimensions in Illeris’ (2002) learning theory, in which he uses the term ‘incentive’ to learn. This requirement, for a motivation to learn is also applicable to effective workplace learning. He argued that due to the fluid nature of work and societal changes this learning cannot be limited to a fixed point in time within an individual’s working life, individuals must commit to “life-long, life-wide and life-deep learning” (Illeris, 2011:4).

How this element of learning theory applies to FE teachers' identity formation and what motivates individuals to enter FE teaching is an important element of this thesis and is explored in section 4.6.

4.2.6 A culture of learning and expansive learning environments

As described in 4.2.1 workplace learning takes place within a physical environment, the college, but also within intangible networks, processes and communities of people (Illeris, 2011:29). Illeris stated that for workplace learning to be effective, the workplace or organisation within which learning is situated needs to be an environment that supports and actively encourages learning.

4.2.7 An environment that supports ongoing individualised competence development

Illeris (2011) espoused the importance of the working environment in supporting the development of the competence of individuals mentioned in 4.2.3. He argues for this to be most effective there must be "commitment, practice and reflection" Illeris (2011: 140). Commitment to competency development, he argued, must come from the organisation and its leadership.

Of key importance within this environment is where the learner is situated in the learning activity. For example is s/he actively involved or a passive receiver, is the learning activity voluntary or mandatory, does s/he have a degree of ownership of her/his learning? This crosses over with Illeris' idea of motivation to learn. In his research Illeris (2011) asserted that learning is not always effective if it is imposed upon someone, as it impacts on their enjoyment. Important to this is the timeframe and extent of the activities are they project- based, over a long term or short-term and are they more extensive or limited activities? In terms of practice, here Illeris questions how the activities are integrated into the 'pattern' of working, do they take place within the day-to- day work, are they situated away from the workplace?

For the learning and competence development to be extensive, effective and useful Illeris claimed that there must be adequate and thorough reflection within and on the learning. This links to a further key area of environments that support effective work-based learning; time. How much time is made available for employees to undertake learning activities?

Interaction in a community also forms part of Illeris's three dimensions of learning theory. It is through this dimension he asserts that all cognitive and emotional learning is "mediated" (Illeris, 2011:24). He argued that a classical example of learning in this dimension is imitation, seen most commonly in traditional apprenticeships where the learner seeks to copy the expert and more experienced individual. He asserted that the two most significant aspects of social interaction within learning theory are participation and activity. Participation is the central tenet of Lave and Wenger's (1991) work. Learning takes place in workplaces through participation over an extended period of time in informal and formal groups of practitioners, as described above. Activities determine what the learner will engage within the workplace and how these are shared in the community formed within the workplace is highly important. It is suggested that these need to be goal-orientated activities. Illeris (2011) stated that the goal or overall outcome is necessary as it "promotes and qualifies the activity". Typical activities according to Lave and Wenger include stories, tools, experiences and strategies to negotiate problems and drive improvements.

Illeris (2011) developed the theory, contending that learning can also take place in informal communities where "traditions, norms and values" are exchanged, and form an important aspect of learning processes and outcomes (Illeris, 2011: 36).

4.3 The role of experience and identity formation in workplace learning

Illeris (2011) has applied his knowledge and understanding of learning, including his three dimensions of learning theory to the workplace context. He contended that when examining how learning takes place in workplaces, it is primarily concerned with the formation of work identity. However, before examining identity formation, the chapter now firstly explains each *element* of Illeris' (2011) model of workplace learning and how they link together to form this identity.

4.3.1 Learning environment and learning potential

The core tenet to Illeris' (2011) theory on workplace learning is that "fundamentally workplace learning takes place in the encounter between the '*learning environment*' of the workplace and the workers' and employees' *learning potentials*" (Illeris 2011: 29).

The learning environment, he argued, encompasses all the opportunities available for learning contained in the “material and social surroundings” (ibid:29). And employees learning potential refers to the “life of the individual as a continuous learning process”, which builds on all the life experiences that they have encountered (Illeris, 2011:29). The encounter between the learning environment and the learning potential becomes the workplace-related part of the interaction (Illeris, 2011:30). This interaction is plotted in a diagram illustrated in figure 5, where the individual is at the top of the model and the learning environment is at the bottom.

Illeris (2011) developed the theory concluding that learning within the workplace is concerned with “a dynamic relation between learners’ potential and the production and community elements of the workplace environment.

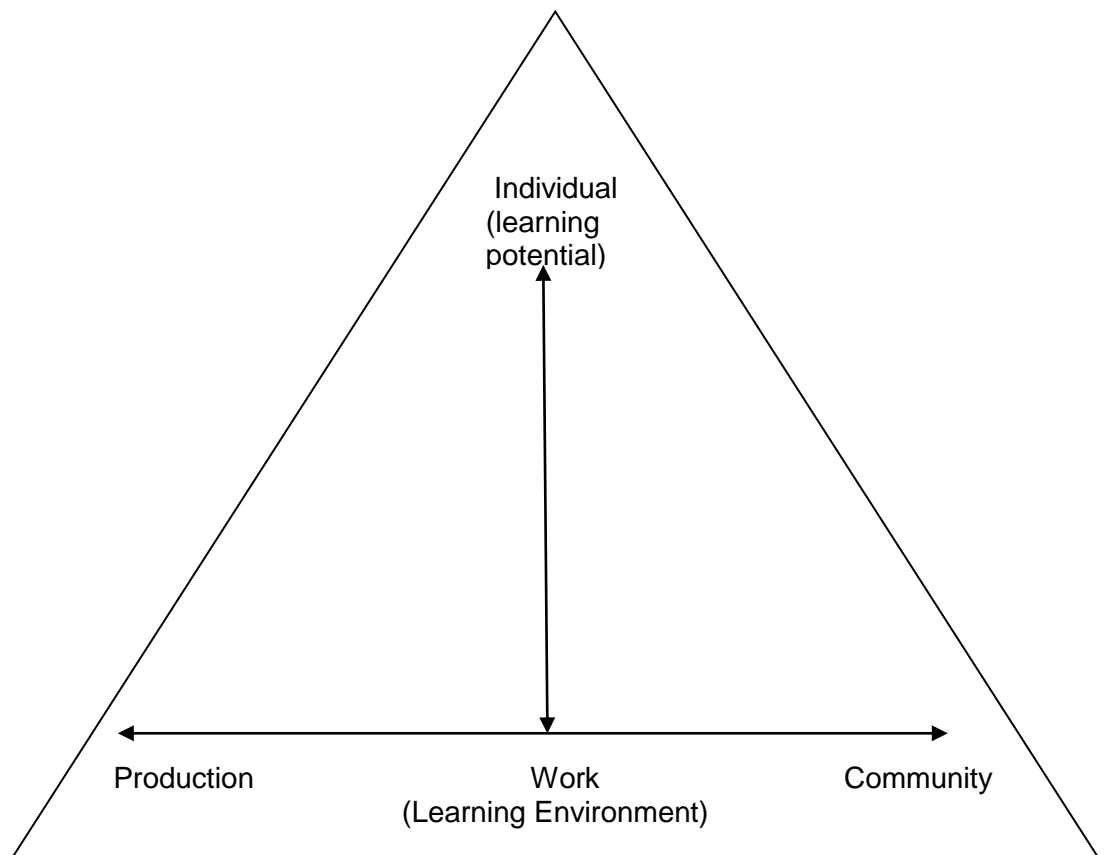


Figure 5 The Fundamental Elements of Workplace Learning (Illeris 2011:31)

This theory positions the individual, the employee at the centre of this dynamic interaction. When the environment provides ‘rich’ fertile opportunities for the individual to learn, then workplace learning will take place. Within the work environment Illeris (2011) cited production and community as two further important domains, which are explored now.

4.3.2 Production and Community

Within his theory of work-based learning Illeris (2011) asserted that the production dimension is concerned with the type of work carried out in any given workplace, how it is organised, structured and what fundamental elements or processes are involved. It is with this dimension that the field of management and organisation behaviour has traditionally been concerned with (Illeris 2011). For FE the production or work is the college providing courses and learning opportunities for students.

The community dimension in the model refers to the workplace community, described more fully in section 4.2.6 within the theories of communities of practice. The individual dimension is highlighted because, according to Illeris to a certain degree all workplace learning is individual in nature. As highlighted in section 4.5.2 in a rich workplace learning environment employees bring their own experience, attitudes and values from their own lives to the experience through a complex socialisation process. This process involves amongst other things “family, schooling, education and work life experiences” (Illeris, 2011:38). Illeris calls these individuals’ learning potentials. For FE this would apply to the college and its lecturers, also the networks and teams they work in. This particular aspect of Illeris’s theory also agrees with much of the theory presented in chapter 3 on FE teacher identity formation, in particular that FE teachers’ former occupation, professional identity and life biography have a significant influence on their teacher identity.

4.3.3 *Content of work*

Work in the theory refers to the ‘content’ of work, which Illeris argued is an important factor in workplace learning. Work is linked in the model to the ‘individual’, situated at the top of the illustration. For example he suggested that work that involves *people* has a very different subjective value to the individual than work with inanimate objects. This will in turn also impact on the emotional engagement that one has to work, as it will arguably be greater with human interaction than with inanimate objects. This is highly pertinent for work carried out within the field of education. Within FE, learners are at the centre of all the work colleges and their teachers carry out. As described in chapter 2 section 2.3 FE colleges’ broad aim has always been to serve individuals and their local communities, by providing educational opportunities.

Content of work also adds *meaning* to the work for the individual, depending on their own socialisation and life experience. It is acknowledged however that meaning is also influenced by the value that society bestows on a certain occupation. This can be seen in the classical professions discussed in chapter 2. If the individual views the content of their work as valuable to others then this can also increase the perceived value and increase the motivational force in their workplace learning (Illeris, 2011).

4.3.4 *The position of Identity formation in workplace learning*

As stated at the start of this section in 4.2, according to Illeris (2011) workplace learning is concerned with the individual learner’s identity, a point significant for this thesis which is concerned with FE teacher identity formation.

The diagram below illustrates how Illeris positioned identity in his original three-dimension theory. He places identity at the central intersection between the cognitive learning dimension-content, and the emotional dimension- incentive, because that is where he believes identity is formed.

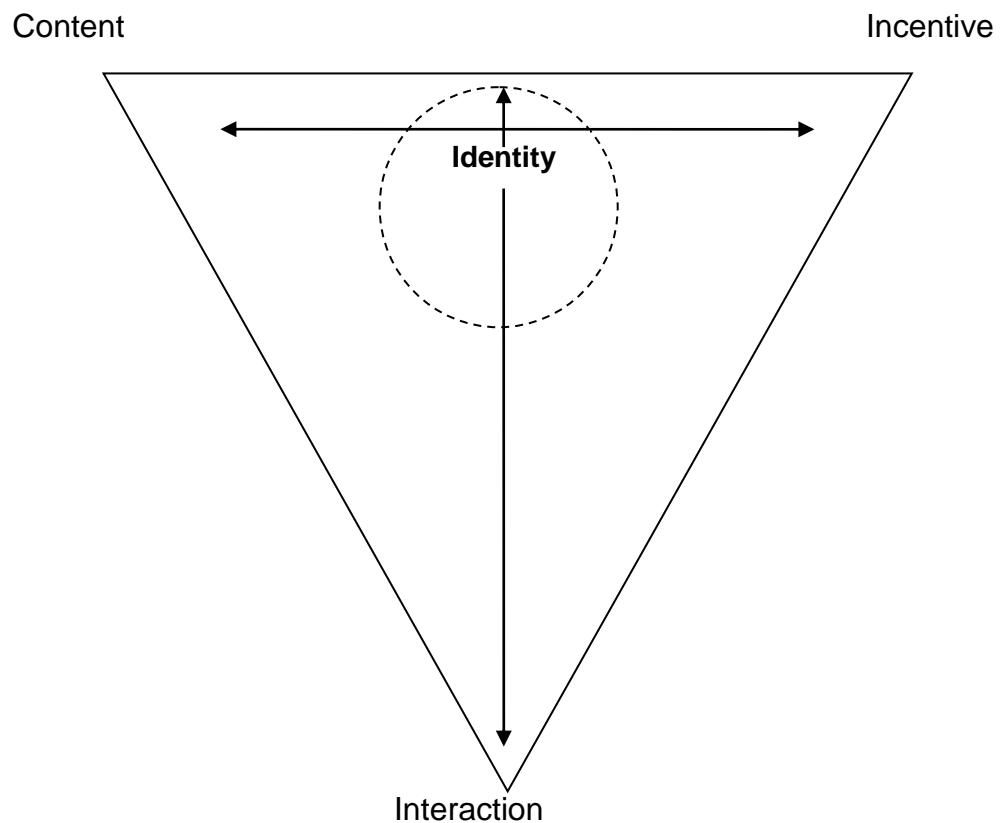


Figure 6 The Position of Identity in the Structure of Learning (Illeris 2011:27)

Illeris argued that ‘work’ identity is a “partial identity” concerned with our own experience as working individuals and as members of a working community (Illeris, 2011:27). Illeris uses the word identity as a psychological concept to describe the manner in which an individual perceives themselves and how they are perceived by others. Identity is used as a common premise upon “which we actively think and act (and learn)” (ibid:28). He suggested that professional identity is “typically developed through a combination of vocational education and work” (Illeris, 2011:40), which accords with the definition adopted for this study by Bucher and Stelling (1977) explored in chapter 3.

Workplace identity is not fixed, it changes in response to the pressures of ever-changing workplaces, practice and the influence of technology (Illeris, 2011). Individuals are facing a constant struggle to redefine their professional identity as they progress through their career (Olesen, 2001). Illeris asserted that they are faced with two alternatives, either to try to maintain their professional identity in spite of the developments in workplace practice and technology or to redefine their professional identity (Illeris, 2011).

4.3.5 The position of workplace practice in workplace learning

Illeris argued that the formation of workplace professional identity is influenced by *workplace practice*, agreeing with Bucher and Stelling's (1977) definition of identity, cited in full in section 3.1.1. This argument for the role of practice in identity formation takes a central tenet to this thesis. Illeris defined workplace practice as the "totality of the workplace environment as it functions in everyday working life" as it incorporates and is influenced both by "the dimensions of production and the community dimension of workplace learning" (Illeris, 2011:40).

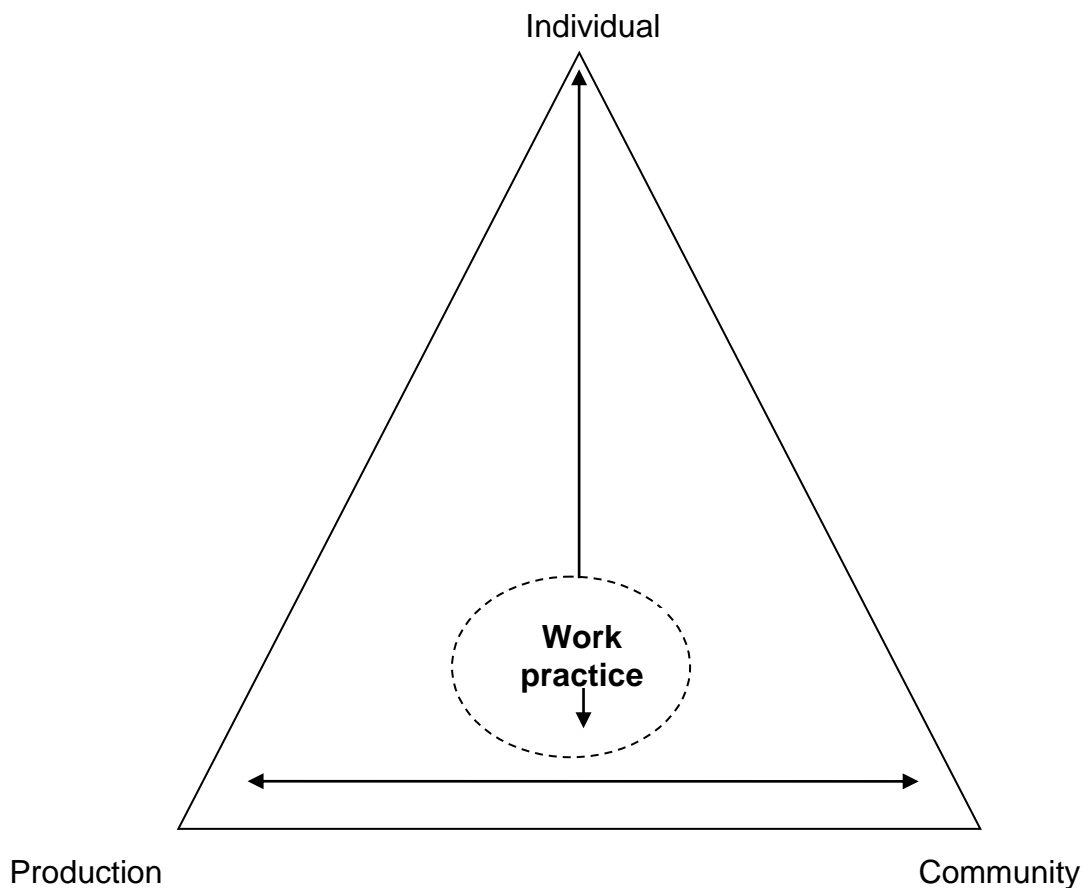


Figure 7 The position of work practice in the field of workplace learning, Illeris (2011:40)

To summarise these two subsections: 4.5.4 and 4.5.5. Illeris asserted that workplace learning always takes place as an *interaction* between the individual, which he defines as their “work identity” and their work production which he defines as “work practice” (Illeris, 2011:42).

4.3.6 *The domain of interaction*

Illeris (2011) then positioned identity and practice together in his theory ‘advanced workplace learning’, illustrated in figure 8, in which he demonstrated the complexity of work- based learning, and how the different dimensions all interrelate and impact on the overall process. The theory highlights the overlap that exists between work identity and practice, which Illeris defined as the ‘domain of interaction’. This is where in his view the “decisive activity” takes place. Within this area, he declared “important and

transcendent accommodative and transformative” workplace learning can take place (Illeris 2011: 43).

He concluded that what occurs in the “learning space” (the domain of interaction) is linked to the “performance of the work itself”, the “work-practice” that the learner is part of and is “filtered through the individual’s work identity”. He argued that this must occur before it becomes something that s/he processes and acquires as learning” (Illeris 2011: 43).

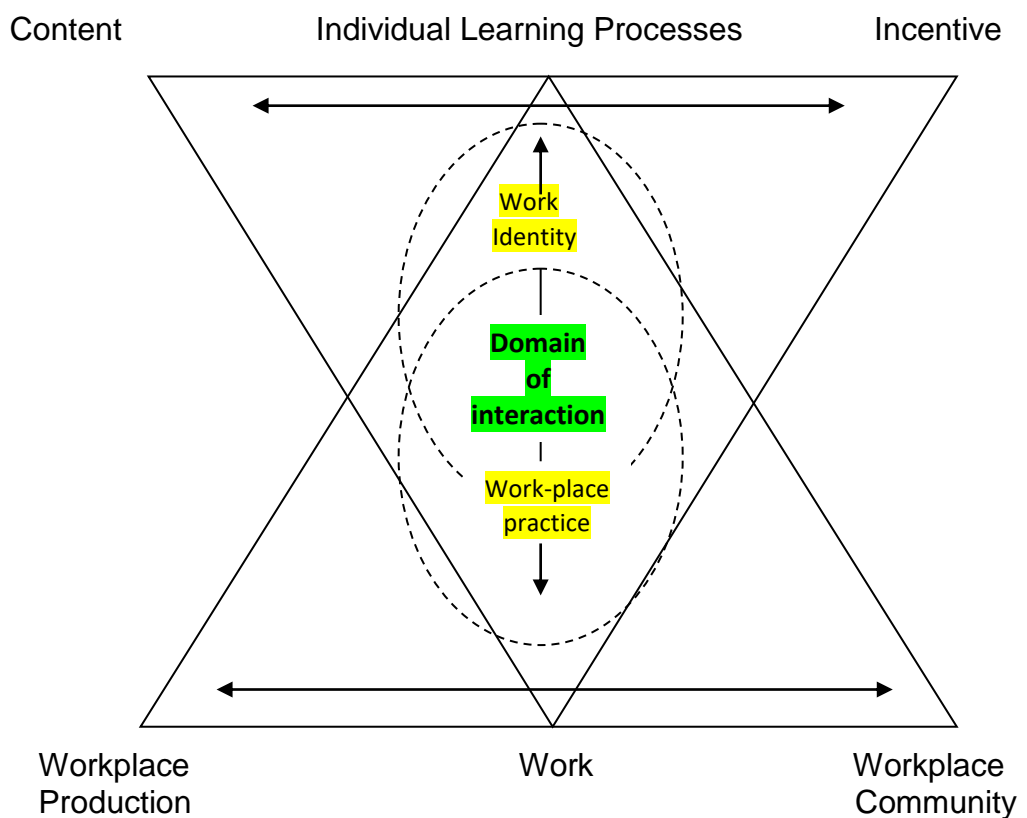


Figure 8 The Advanced Model of Workplace Learning (Illeris 2011:43)

This chapter now seeks to apply these theories of workplace learning to the further education context and to consider them in the light of the discussion on FE teacher identity theory in chapter 3.

4.4 Discussion and application of workplace learning theory to the FE context

4.4.1 *Competence development, assimilative learning and motivation*

When applying competence development in workplace learning theory to the key subject of this thesis, FE teachers' identity formation, it must be considered in light of the main accepted form of teacher competence development in the FE sector; initial teacher training, including the teaching qualification discussed in section 3.4.3.

Much of the evidence cited in section 3.4.6 is critical of the quality, content, structure and delivery of FE teachers' initial teacher training qualifications. A key aspect of that criticism is the use of competencies within the qualifications. Arguments cited in 3.4.5 state that there were *too many* competencies in the teaching training qualifications arising out of the FENTO (1999) and LLUK (2006) professional standards for teachers in the sector. Further the literature suggests that competencies were over- *prescriptive*, and did not translate into effective teaching practice (Lucas and Nasta 2009, Lucas 2013). When considering Illeris' assertion from his theory, that competence development must be ongoing, in relation to the FE teacher standards, the criticisms suggest that the competencies developed were *not* suitable to develop teaching practice in the long-term.

The amount of emphasis placed on the mandatory teaching qualification, as the primary 'tool' or influence used to train FE teachers (Orr, 2008) also contrasts with Illeris' assertion that there are other key influences, than just qualifications, such as peer influence or the environment in workplace learning. A central argument to this thesis is that there are multiple influences on FE teachers' professional identity formation, and that the teacher qualification is not the most significant.

Assimilative learning is very important for understanding FE teacher professional identity formation because this element of workplace learning theory brings meaning and explains how FE teachers' former occupation and biography (discussed in section 3.2.1) feed into and shape their newly emerging teacher identity. Historically, as highlighted in section 3.2.3, FE colleges have always valued the teachers' skills knowledge and experience their teachers have gained in their previous occupation above teaching qualifications (Green and Lucas 1999, Robson, 2006, Fulford et al 2011). However now it is recognised that having skills in teaching is as important as

occupational skills, and that together these dual professional skills can benefit learning significantly (Plowright and Barr, 2012). The challenge that colleges face, is to build and ‘assimilate’ new skills in teaching practice into this new and emerging professional identity of the individual. In seeking to address and bring new professional knowledge and practice to this question, this thesis presents a framework, cited in the final chapter and created from the findings, which proposes a new model for FE teacher professional practice development. This proposed model is much less reliant on achieving formal teaching qualifications in forming effective teaching practice.

What motivates individuals to enter FE teaching is complex and under-researched (Gleeson, 2014). The limited research suggests there are many differing reasons for entering. For some, as highlighted in 2.4.1 becoming a teacher in FE it is not part of a strategic career plan. It has been described as entering the profession by accident or responding to a change in life circumstances (Jephcote and Salisbury 2009, James and Biesta). In contrast, other research such as Bathmaker and Avis (2005) suggests that individuals enter FE with altruistic intentions to offer education and skills to those who have “missed out on formal education” (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005:55).

Practitioners moving from their main occupation into FE teaching face a plethora of differing motivating factors and challenges. The transition process involves effectively retraining to ‘do a new job’. This retraining involves gaining new skills and knowledge in teaching, in order to teach their occupational skills and involves completing a formal teaching qualification. For some, who may not have studied formally for many years, the taking of a formal qualification will create what Illeris (2011) called resistance to learning, a sense of having to overcome a barrier to achieve their goal. For some this barrier may be an academic one, particularly as research into typical FE teachers’ own educational background and attainment, cited in chapter 3, suggests that some lecturers struggled academically, in a similar manner to their students (Jephcote et al, 2008).

To build the motivation required to become well-skilled teachers in FE, individuals need to see and believe in the value of the teaching qualification. The findings chapter of this study questions current lecturers’ views and experiences of the teacher

training qualification and process, particularly whether they see it as valuable in constructing their professional identity. The study uses this information to inform its recommendations for future effective FE teacher training.

4.4.2 *Application of Illeris' advanced theory of workplace learning to the FE context*

Illeris' advanced theory of workplace learning provides meaning and understanding to FE professional identity formation. Illeris purported that in the workplace learning theory there are two vital components, *identity* and *practice*, the formation of both are central to the aim of this thesis.

When he used the term identity, he espoused that it is partial, meaning it is dependent on one's current work and the interaction involved in that, which is subject to change. This belief confirms the FE theory of dual professionalism cited in section 3.2.1. Partial identity is similar to the complexity and fluidity found in FE teachers' professional identity and its 'dual' nature. This, as argued in 3.2.1, stems firstly from their former occupation and secondly that of teaching. Illeris' assertion that identity is also formed through vocational education and work agrees with the premise that individuals bring their own life experiences to their FE teaching role explored in 3.2.2.

This rich identity process also flows into the production of workplace *practice*.

Workplace practice in FE is concerned with practical teaching skills. Illeris' assertions about what influences practice, again support and strengthen the ideas about learning to be an FE teacher, including teachers' life experiences and former occupations and the socialisation process that FE teachers have been exposed to, all of which have a significant influence on the 'formation' of the teaching practice they adopt.

Illeris' assertion that there is a struggle to maintain professional identity in the face of changes in workplace practice also offers a theoretical explanation for the complex 'formation' process that FE teachers undergo in which the nature of their working role changes, from 'doing' a job, to teaching that job. An example is the change an individual would encounter in moving from being an engineer to teaching engineering.

The most significant conclusion that Illeris postulated in his advanced theory is that the learning, which in this thesis is a key aspect of 'teacher identity formation', takes place

as both identity and practice interact with each other. The aim of this thesis is to bring new knowledge and understanding to what actually takes place within this domain of interaction to bring about the formation of *FE teachers'* professional identity and practice. Specifically, what is the most significant factor in this process.

4.5 Chapter Summary and theoretical framework for the thesis

In summary, this chapter has explored learning and how it applies to learning in the workplace. Illeris' theories of workplace learning and how they bring meaning to the question of teacher professional identity formation have formed the core discussion. Illeris argued that workplace learning is primarily concerned with developing competence, assimilating knowledge and skill and increasing motivation to learn. He asserted that communities of individuals working together have a significant influence on learning opportunities and their effectiveness in achieving the goals of their learning.

Illeris' theories of workplace learning suggest that powerful learning takes place within a tension of three dimensions: the individual, community and work production. At the core of this tension is a rich interaction between an individual's identity and practice.

When applying these theories of learning to the FE context specifically to the learning and development of FE teachers' identity and practice, they bring meaning to and confirm theories of dual professionalism found in FE teachers.

The literature on FE teachers' professional identity formation and Illeris' workplace learning theory will be used to frame, bring meaning to and provide a lens with which to interpret the primary research findings of this thesis.

Chapter 5

Methodology

5.0 Introduction

This chapter will describe the methodological position from which this research has been carried out. It will also discuss the rationale for the methods used to collect the data, and the various strengths and weaknesses of adopting those methods. Issues of reliability and validity, together with ethical considerations for the research, will also be highlighted, which will include consideration of the author's position within the field of education and its potential impact on the study. The chapter commences with the research questions that this thesis seeks to answer.

5.1 The research questions and formation

To recapitulate, this thesis is concerned with professional identity, specifically exploring and gaining a better understanding of the professional identity formation *process* that FE teachers undergo, in general further education colleges in England.

Throughout the thesis the definition of professional identity adopted has been derived from Bucher and Stellings' work:

“professional identity can be defined as the perception of oneself as a professional and is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has, the work one does, and the work- related significant others or the reference group”

(Bucher and Stelling, 1977:8)

The definition asserts that identity is intrinsically linked to the knowledge and skills that professionals hold, and the work or practice they do. So this definition is applied within the thesis because of its applicability to the principal aim of the study: i.e. to establish how identity is formed, *how* FE teachers have gained their knowledge and skills in order to *do* the work of a FE teacher,. In summary how did they learn to become an FE teacher and to take this on as their identity.

The learning process that FE teachers undergo takes place largely in the workplace and through undertaking a teacher training qualification, as they transition from established careers in 'industry', into teaching at a college, as discussed in chapter 2 section 2.4.

Therefore Illeris' learning theories, which he applied to the workplace context, explored in the previous chapter, were selected as the framework to shape and inform the study's research questions. Central to Illeris' theories were the individual element and the community element to workplace learning. So in this thesis the individual teachers' beliefs and stories of their teacher journey have been explored, together with ascertaining the potential impact that external influences, i.e. the 'community' around them, has had on their professional identity formation.

Illeris' work has also been used to shape and inform the participant questions used, see appendix 2, and again in the discussion chapter 9 at the end of the thesis, to bring meaning, explain and gain a better understanding of the research findings.

In order to satisfy the broad aim of the study the following key research questions have been designed in light of the review of literature in the previous chapter, Illeris' theoretical framework of learning in workplaces and the rationale for the research highlighted in section 1.8.

- 1) How do FE teachers perceive their professional identity?
 - a. Is it distinct to that of other education professionals? And if so how?
 - b. Do they ascribe to the notion of dual professionalism, if so how does it impact on their practice?
 - c. What professional values shape this identity?

- 2) How is an FE teacher's professional identity constructed?
 - a. What is the role of formal teaching qualifications in this process?
 - b. What is the role of the college workplace and its professional teachers in this process?
 - c. What is the most significant influence on FE professional identity formation?

Education and the study of its practitioners, is positioned within the broader academic field of the social sciences (Punch, 2005), which is discussed now.

5.2 Social science research

Social science is a term used to describe the study of people and their life contexts, including their view of truth and knowledge creation; epistemology and being; ontology (Somekh and Lewin, 2004). It is concerned with observing and understanding human behaviour (Punch, 2005). Social science research is influenced by disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, psychology and history (Somekh and Lewin, 2004).

Punch (2009) argued that in order to capture that human experience and thus produce 'data' with a view to distilling it into knowledge or bringing meaning to data, a number of strategies or methods of inquiry can be adopted.

Two approaches to collecting data, qualitative and quantitative are also used to inform different broader paradigms or positions at either end of a spectrum concerning research (Opie, 2004); these being: positivism and constructivism. Coe (2012) asserts that the researchers' methodological position adopted and their view of the nature of knowledge and how it may be found: epistemology, will influence the use of certain methods of research and rejection of others. According to Crotty (1998) the chosen methodology within research belies the chosen strategy, rationale and position behind the selected methods adopted for the work.

5.3 The author's position: practitioner researcher

The other key factor to consider when identifying appropriate methodologies within social research and especially qualitative research is the researcher's 'position'. This idea, Sikes (2004 in Opie 2004:18) described as "where the researcher is coming from". This simple definition concerns what assumptions, values and beliefs the researcher has, in terms of their ontology and the way they construct meaning of knowledge or epistemology, both of which are influenced by their life experience.

It is right to acknowledge, that within social science research both the researcher and the participant will interpret the research situation based on the suppositions that they hold (Coe, 2012). For some researchers this creates a potential problem in that the researcher's preconceived opinions and views may influence the research. However, within the post-modern qualitative research movement the researcher's presence and

viewpoint is seen as something of a resource (Holiday, 2007), that if correctly handled is something that may contribute to richer data and knowledge.

Constructivism employs an iterative process that encourages the researcher to respond to the social setting and participants involved in the study, adapting the research design if required in response to emerging findings (ibid, 2007). This is true for this thesis, as the research design has been changed in response to the key emerging findings, explained in section 5.4.4 of this chapter and in 8.3. in the findings chapter.

As the researcher and author of this study I have worked in various further education colleges for twelve years. Previous to that I commenced my working life in the private sector in the hospitality and catering industry as an operational worker and manager. Within FE, I have held various positions from lecturer, course team leader to head of department for multiple areas. The transition process from work to college lecturer for me initially involved some part-time teaching whilst also completing a formal teaching qualification. Then after twelve months of part time teaching I progressed to full-time teaching post.

My career trajectory of a considerable amount of time working in a vocation then progressing to FE to teach that vocation is typical of the 'average' FE teacher. To a certain degree, therefore, I can take a phenomenological position within the research as I have my own lived experience (Robson, 2011) of progressing from industry into FE teaching. I hope as Holiday (2007) suggested this knowledge and experience may contribute to rich data and insightful interpretation of it.

After I secured a course team leader role, I returned to education and embarked on a Masters programme in educational management. Now I am engaged with this research towards a doctorate in education. As I reflect back on the last decade of my career I realise that I have become a practitioner researcher (Punch, 2009), someone who is both working and actively researching a particular field, in my case that of further education.

So in terms of my position within the research, having worked and still working in the sector, I have been able to 'speak the language' of the participants and to a certain degree identify with their situation. Whilst at the same time, due to my current role as

head of multiple curriculum areas, I have also been able to view the research and its participants through the position of college middle leadership and management. Furthermore my research training has allowed me to recognise the importance of distance through theory and its use for reflection on data.

5.4 Methodology and research design

The chosen area of research for this dissertation is the formation process of professional identity and values of teachers in FE. As asserted in 3.1 this area of education inquiry is very much grounded in the domain of the social sciences.

5.4.1 Qualitative, social constructivist's position

As this study is concerned with exploring individual teacher's views, opinions, and thoughts concerning their professional identity formation, which, as discussed in 3.1 can be intangible and difficult to define or measure, the research therefore adopts a qualitative social constructivist's position.

Consideration of the current context of the FE sector was also of key importance in the methodology selection. As FE and its teachers' professionalism has been through such a period of change, over the last two decades, as discussed in chapter 1 and 2. A qualitative study was deemed most suitable because:

One of the strengths of qualitative work of any type is that is that it is contextualised –that the behaviours of participants can be understood only within an understanding of their particular circumstances.

Hatch (2002:79)

5.4.2 Rationale for the research design and participant selection

Context and chronology of published research concerning FE has also informed the research design, specifically, in the selection of the participants. As highlighted in section 1.8.1 there has been a plethora of research and inquiry into FE teachers' professionalism in the period immediately after incorporation, but a significant lack in the 21st century, particularly the last decade. This study, therefore is seeking to gain a better understanding and knowledge of how professional identity is constructed in *contemporary* FE teachers, who have all commenced working in colleges in the last ten years. These research participants will not have experienced a pre-incorporation era,

and it will therefore have no bearing on what they know or see in the sector now. In selecting who was suitable for interview, length of service teaching in FE was thus one of the criteria. All the participants selected were teachers who had ten years or less experience working in FE.

A further criterion used to select participants was their subject or vocational area. As highlighted in 1.2.1 this thesis is primarily concerned with researching FE teachers who work in FE's core provision-, 'vocational' education (VE). By this I mean those courses that have very clear occupational pathways, for example courses which equip students to become plumbers, chefs and hairdressers. VE prepares students "directly for work" (Moodie and Wheelahan 2012:318), it offers courses of learning that have "a clear line of sight to work" (CAVTL, 2013). The aim of such courses is that learners should develop "occupational expertise" (ibid) and be able to experience the job in its fullest context. Specific details of each participant, their vocational specialism can be found in appendix 1.

5.4.3 Justification of the chosen research method: semi-structured interviews

The chosen method used for data collection for this thesis was semi-structured interviews. This method was selected for a number of reasons. Firstly interviews are a very effective means of "accessing people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (Punch, 2009:144). This is suitable for this study, because is concerned with investigating FE teachers' perception of their professional identity and how they believed it was formed.

Secondly semi-structured interviews can provide a very rich source of data and also afford opportunities to explore themes and responses in different directions and in great detail (Burton et al, 2008). Bell (2003:156) asserts that a major strength of interviews and semi-structured questions is their "adaptability". As this thesis is concerned with teachers' individual *journeys* into teaching, semi-structured interviews allowed these sometimes complex and non-linear journeys to be explored in detail, affording opportunities to question, probe and seek further explanation of these narratives as and when deemed appropriate. Thirdly semi-structured interviews also offer the opportunity to "encourage informants to explain their *unique* perspectives on the issues at hand" (Hatch 2002:23), this is particularly pertinent for this inquiry, as it concerns

individual FE teachers' journey and professional identity formation, which is unique to them and their own experience. However, as the research literature warns care must be taken with interviews, there are many pitfalls to be avoided such as too lengthy questions which can lead to the interviewer talking more than the interviewee (O'Leary, 2010). She also warned against the danger of ill-conceived questions such as leading questions or vague unspecific questions. Semi-structured interviews demand a certain level of interpersonal skill from the interviewer (Opie, 2004). This involves keeping the discussion specific to the questions, ongoing engagement with the participant and offering visual signals demonstrating active listening (ibid).

The themes of the questions used for the interviews with the college lecturers were developed from the research questions, the rationale for the thesis and the review of the FE professionalism literature. The interview schedule of question is detailed in Appendix 2. To ensure that the respondents were at ease with the questions and to make the best use of the interview time, the questions were sent to the chosen participants before the interview.

5.4.4 Rationale for the sample

Due to the size, time permitted and consideration of the word count of the study, a realistic number of interviews had to be carried out. It was originally decided that 20 semi-structured interviews with FE lecturers would be achievable considering the constraints.

In order to achieve some generalisability of results, considered in section 3.4.6, and to question whether lecturers working in different colleges would produce different findings, it was decided to select lecturers from four different colleges, located in different areas of the south east of England. The details of these colleges are recorded in Appendix 4.

A distinct element of qualitative constructivist research is the flexibility of research design that it postulates, in response to emerging findings (Punch, 2009). This study has adapted the design from its original proposal of 20 interviews to respond to a significant finding that emerged. It was decided to carry out five further interviews with

participants to pursue further in depth beliefs and opinions regarding professional identity construction. This has added richness, greater understanding and importantly *strength* to the thesis' claim to bring new knowledge to the field of further education.

Interviewing people within social research involves building trust and carrying out the research in an ethical way, which the chapter now discusses.

5.4.5 Ethics

Within the field of social research there are stipulated agreed codes of conduct and research ethics that must be adhered to (Silverman, 2010). One such body that is responsible for social research ethics and has produced a framework is the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC 2017). Ethical codes within research are designed primarily to protect the participants involved from harm, to promote good, respect and fairness by ensuring anonymity, or if appropriate acknowledgement (Sieber, 1993). Researchers are primarily responsible for the integrity, both moral and legal, for all aspects of the process followed, and specifically the purpose and dissemination of the research (O'Leary, 2010).

In order to ensure adherence to these ethical issues a number of safeguards in this research were implemented. The principal of each college was contacted and permission to interview members of the organisation was sought. Once agreed, suitable participants who met the criteria in 3.4.2 were selected by the principal or a designated manager on their behalf to participate in the interviews. The recommended participants were then written to seeking agreement and given a copy of the interview questions.

Once the participants had agreed to be interviewed a suitable time was agreed. Prior to the interview commencing they were given clear information on what the research was concerned with, the purpose of it, and it was made clear how their contribution would be used. Assurance of their anonymity concerning any dialogue that was to be directly quoted in the research was articulated and each participant formally agreed to this. Interviewees were given the option of withdrawing from the research at any point.

Interviews were completed at the participants' college. They were recorded on a dictaphone and then transcribed. Once the interviews were completed the process of analysing the transcripts commenced.

5.5. Data analysis and interpretation

One of the challenges of collecting qualitative data is organising the data into themes or areas and extracting the significant pieces of information pertinent to the study. Watling and James (2007:350) defined analysis as “the elusive process by which you hope to turn your raw data into nuggets of pure gold”. They argued that analysis does not only take place at the end of a project but is carried out knowingly or unknowingly during the whole of a research project. Each time an interview is carried out or an article studied the researcher is analysing, interpreting and forming opinions concerning that data. The format they suggest to analyse qualitative data is identified in figure 8

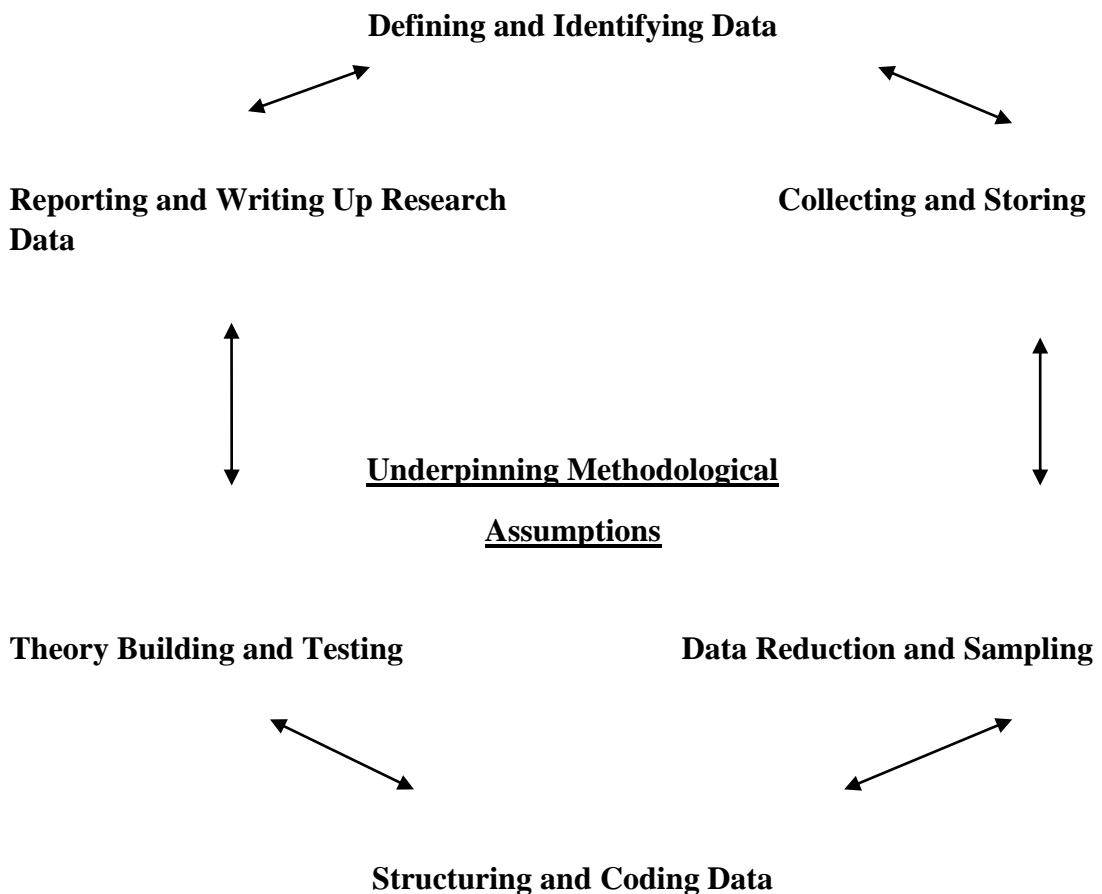


Figure 9 Analysing Qualitative Data (Watling and James 2007:354)

5.5.1 Coding and interpreting data – application of Illeris’ theoretical framework

The above diagram highlights the importance of coding. Coding allows researchers to “cluster data together” (Bell, 2003:214) and it may take the form of key words or themes. The process involves measuring, marking or noting each time a word or theme is mentioned and then clustering them together. However, care must be taken to ensure that when a term is used frequently the context and ‘interpretation’ is carefully considered, especially when research is qualitative and from an interpretivist viewpoint concerned with thoughts, personal views and opinions. As Eisner (1991, in Hatch 2002:185) stated “to interpret is to place in context, to explain, to unwrap, to explicate”. Within qualitative research it is questionable whether the term data should actually be used for the information produced (Briggs and Coleman, 2007). Watling and James’ method of analysis, displayed in the diagram above was employed to construct the broad theme that emerged in the findings section.

Once the themes had been established they were reviewed under the research questions and analysed using the lens of Illeris’ workplace learning theory described in chapter four.

The first part of the findings chapter is concerned with how FE teachers view their identity and explores to what degree their identity is positioned within their occupation background or teaching role. Illeris asserted that our work identity formation is part of the learning process, and that it crucially can change dependent on our experience as working individuals and the working community we are part of (Illeris 2011:27). Illeris defined the concept identity, as a psychological process which is fundamentally concerned with how individuals perceive themselves. So using Illeris’ concept participants were asked a range of questions about their own professional journey and how they viewed and described their professional identity.

The second part of the findings is concerned with how the identity that FE teachers believe they hold was constructed. As cited in 4.3.5 Illeris (2011) argued that this formation of identity has some key dimensions to consider; how the process of learning is influenced by the work or practice that one does and the influence of the work place community within which one works. To summarise Illeris believed that workplace learning always occurred on both a social and an individual level.

Illeris also postulated that the incentive to learn was also a key consideration in identity construction and to what degree formal qualifications that individual's held, could be used in the production element of work (Illeris 2011:34). So in light of Illeris' theory, firstly participants were asked to describe why they had decided to enter FE teaching: 'incentive', secondly to what degree had their formal teaching qualifications influenced their practice and identity formation 'qualification'. Thirdly the impact that the 'workplace community' in this case the college, had on the identity formation process was explored.

As highlighted in section 4.3.6 Illeris asserted that identity formation takes place in a space created by the inter-relationship of different 'dimensions' of learning. Therefore in applying this theory to shape and inform the final set of findings and create a model for FE teacher training, the participants were asked to explain what they felt were the *most* significant influences on their identity formation from the key dimensions described.

Once key findings emerge from the data the question of reliability needs to be considered.

5.5.2 Reliability and validity

Reliability is concerned with internal consistency, it poses the question will the same results be produced if the study were to be repeated? (Silverman, 2010). It is accepted, however, that in social science research, which is concerned with observing complex human behaviour, reliability cannot always be ensured. O'Leary (2010) suggested that a more suitable term to use in social constructivism is dependability, which questions whether systematic and well- documented methods have been employed. Closely linked to reliability is validity.

Validity or internal validity is concerned with asking the question "are we observing or measuring what we think we are observing or measuring" (Merriam, 2002:18).

Merriam argued that because of the nature of qualitative research, where the researcher "is the primary instrument for data collection" internal validity should be higher. Scaife (2004:86) however, suggested that an alternative more reliable view of validity should

be adopted, preferring to ask of the research: in view of the results of the data gathering process that was used, “is it valid to make this claim?” To ensure high levels of dependability and validity in this research several measures were implemented. These included consistent use of a structured list of questions for all participants in the interviews. Before the interviews commenced the language of questions was tested and amended with an independent academic colleague to aid coherence and understanding.

To build trust and develop rapport with the participants at the beginning of each interview the author’s position as an FE practitioner and researcher was highlighted. A standard format was adopted for each interview, with questions asked to clarify and confirm key responses throughout the interviews. At some interviews some questions had to be rephrased and explained further to ensure participants were clear on the meaning of the question and to reduce misunderstanding. The interviews were recorded on a dictaphone and transcribed, thus leaving auditable accounts of interviews.

5.5.3 Possible limitations of the methodology: generalisability

This thesis presents findings from a small-scale qualitative piece of research, which has limitations. The first limitation is the issue of generalisability of the results. As the study’s sample is only a relatively small number of FE lecturers, if the conclusions of the study are presented as applicable to the wider FE sector as a whole, they are open to be challenged as not representative. That does not mean that the findings are not insignificant. Punch (2004) argued that small scale-research findings can put forth a rationale for further larger scale research. He also asserted that findings from small-scale inquiries can be of great value and add insights into particular areas such as professional practice. This is of particular importance to this study which is concerned with FE teachers’ professional identity and practice formation. Punch (2004) also contends that small-scale research when executed proficiently and analysed well, can develop ‘propositions’. These are akin to hypotheses which can then be assessed for their “applicability and transferability” to other situations (Punch, 2004: 122).

5.5.4 Truth and credibility

As highlighted in section 3.1.3 the notion of truth: what is knowable, from the position of constructivism, considering the chaos of the world and the inconsistency of human

behaviour is infinitely complex (Opie, 2004). However truth, how it is constructed, interpreted and applied to create knowledge, needs to be carefully considered when assessing the relative value of social science research (Robson, 2014). Because the notion of truth is disputed, O’Leary (2010) argued that perhaps a more accurate phrase to use is ‘authenticity’. She recommended that when questioning the relative value of the knowledge that social science research purports to offer, questioning its ‘authenticity’ is more appropriate. Authenticity recognises that truth and knowledge is of value only in this particular case in time and context.

One of the facets of the notion of truth is credibility, which according to O’Leary, (2010) is concerned with belief. For new knowledge to be deemed valuable and credible it must be trustworthy, persuasive and stimulate attention (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Without credibility, research knowledge will not be trusted or acted upon to inform change, policy or practice, and ultimately is open to being discredited (Robson, 2014). Within social research, one of the key potential limitations to credibility and truth that must be considered by the researcher, is the subjects of its inquiry: people, specifically the fact that people are fallible, forgetful, unreliable and sometimes dishonest. If that limitation is applied to this research, it should be considered possible that the findings and knowledge presented in this thesis may have been produced from interviews that are inaccurate or exaggerated. However, the opposite is also entirely possible, that the participants’ accounts of their professional formation, to the best of their knowledge, may be entirely accurate, and that they worked hard at ensuring so and recognised that making up answers would be morally wrong. One strategy which is deployed in research to address this issue is to triangulate the findings with other studies and theories. This is used throughout the discussion chapter of this study. Further strategies used to overcome this limitation and increase validity and credibility are the safeguards described in 3.5.2.

5.6 Chapter summary

To summarise, this chapter has explored the broad methodological positions adopted in research and justified why a qualitative social constructivist approach was deemed most suitable for this thesis. It has explained the research design rationale and chosen sample size. Limitations to social science research and notion of truths have been examined. The following chapters report the findings of the participant interviews.

Chapter 6 Findings: FE Teachers' Perception of Their Professional Identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter, the first of three findings chapters, will present the first section of the key findings of the primary research.

Before commencing, to recapitulate, this thesis is concerned with exploring and gaining a better understanding of the professional identity formation process that FE teachers undergo, in general further education colleges in England. In order to satisfy this aim the following key research questions have been designed.

How do FE teachers perceive their professional identity?

Is it distinct to other education professionals? and if so how?

Do they ascribe to the notion of dual professionalism, if so how does it impact on their practice?

What professional values shape this identity?

How is an FE teacher's professional identity constructed?

What is the role of formal teaching qualifications in this process?

What is the role of the college workplace and its professional teachers in this process?

What is the most significant influence on FE professional identity formation?

As discussed in section 5.4.3, in order to answer these questions, initially semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 FE lecturers working in four different colleges in the south east of England. The questions used to elicit responses are listed in appendix 2. After the initial analysis of responses, a clear theme emerged from the findings concerning the most significant influence on FE teacher formation, this being: the significance of learning from other experienced FE teachers in the workplace. Therefore to explore this in greater detail a further follow-up interview was completed with five of the original participants.

The interviews produced rich data. The responses from the participants have been gathered, organised, clustered and coded as described in section 5.5. They are presented in the following three chapters under the themes of the research questions.

Chapter 6 presents the responses to questions under the theme of FE teachers' perception of their professional identity, specifically how they viewed their identity, what values they held and their beliefs about dual professionalism. Chapter 7 articulates the findings concerning the respondents' views on teacher training and qualifications and their influence on their professional practice. Chapter 8 summarises what the teachers interviewed believed was the most significant influence on their professional identity formation process. This chapter also presents the findings from the five follow-up interviews conducted.

6.1 FE Teachers' Perception of Their Professional Identity

As highlighted in the previous chapter Illeris' asserted that a key aspect of learning in the workplace is identity formation. In defining identity as a psychological process primarily concerned with how individuals view themselves, he asserted that identity is fluid and changes as our individual working situations change and as the working community around us shifts. Therefore, research participants were asked a series of questions about their perceptions of their own identity and influences on it. The findings from these questions follow below.

6.1.1 The link between a former occupation and professional identity

The respondents were asked a range of questions in order to establish whether they believed they had a distinct professional identity when compared to other education professionals. This included asking them what key phrases they used to describe their job title, and whether they included in that description a reference to their former occupation.

As illustrated in figure 10, when describing their job role the respondents were equally split between using their former occupation and teacher as their primary job title, with just two preferring to use a combination of both.

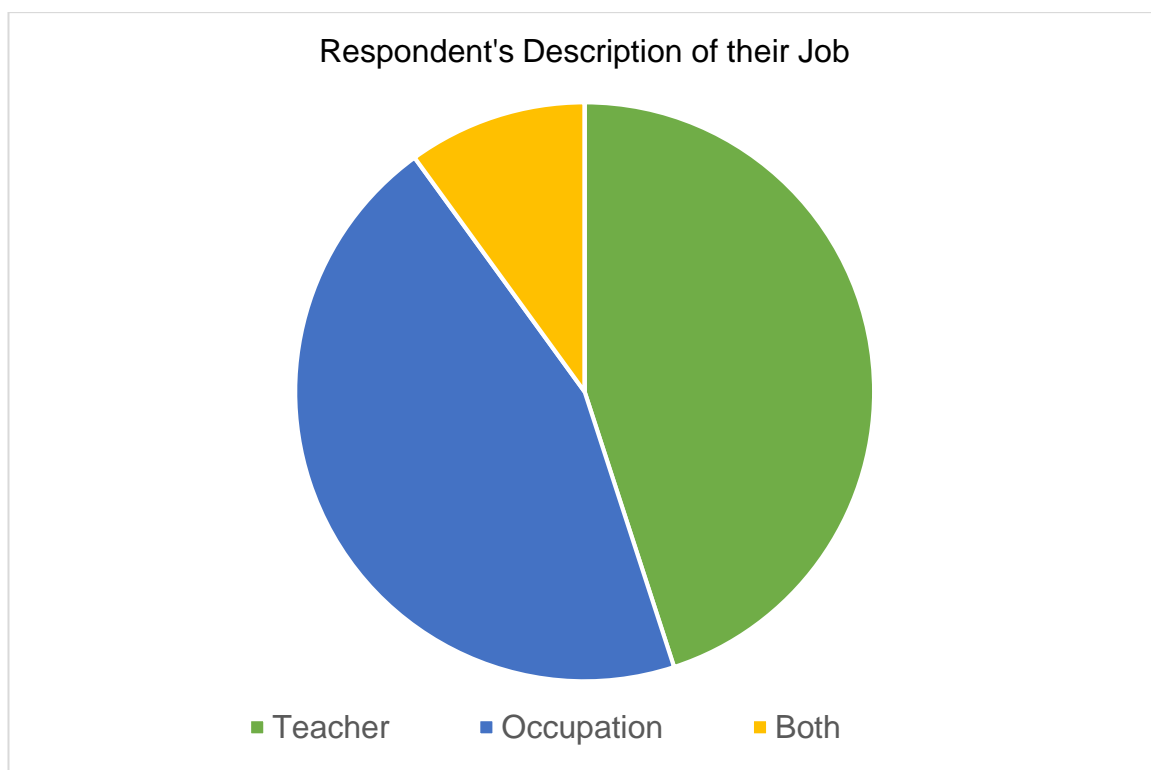


Figure 10: Respondents description of their job role.

6.1.2 FE teachers' description of their job- teacher first

Nine of the respondents affirmed definitely that they described themselves primarily as college teachers. They used a range of phrases such as lecturer, tutor or teacher.

I use the phrase college tutor, or sometimes coach.

(interviewee 3)

I just say I am a tutor I work with unemployed people in an FE college.

(interviewee 20)

Other respondents preferred to use the phrase teacher or I teach,

I train and assess 16+ learners in an equine environment, I see myself much more as a teacher than a practitioner.

(interviewee 11)

I teach construction in a college.

(interviewee 2)

Two respondents asserted why they do not use the term lecturer.

If anyone asks, I say I work in a college, as a teacher, I do not use the terminology lecturer. I think I always describe myself as a teacher. Or I sometimes say: "I work at a college".

(interviewee 13)

If someone asks me what I do I always put the teachers first, I normally use the word tutor, I think lecturer is.... when I think of lecturer, I think of what I did at university and the way they work.

(interviewee 3)

6.1.3 Influence of time in teaching

Within the responses, some teachers described time, specifically time spent in teaching and time spent in an industry job role, as a key factor in their perception of their own professional identity.

I see myself as a coach. Maybe because I have less experience in the industry than others, doing that job in industry five days a week. Compared to some I have not had a huge amount of time in the industry. Some of the guys we have got here have been plumbers for 40 years and then gone into teaching.

(interviewee no 3)

This quotation highlights the significant factor that the teacher's previous occupation is in FE teacher identity.

6.1.4 FE teachers' description of their job- vocation first

Nine respondents asserted that their former occupation or profession was the most significant aspect of their identity, and what they used to describe their job.

I describe myself as food and flavour scientist, primarily as a scientist who is currently doing some lecturing in culinary arts.

(interviewee 6)

I am a multi skilled gardener that runs programmes across curriculums in horticulture.

(interviewee 12)

The best way for me to answer that is I am a chef, I always feel that I am a chef first and a teacher second, when I was a full-time chef running hotels and restaurants I was teaching, I was still teaching people.

(interviewee 10)

The concept of identity and how that is viewed by the teachers in the research is something that one respondent and his close colleagues have actively considered before.

I am a plasterer and tradesperson first, we have had this conversation in the staffroom before and we all say our trade first and teacher second.

(interviewee 1)

The remaining two lecturers in the study described their role as a hybrid of the two. They saw their previous occupation and their current role as intrinsically linked choosing to use the term ‘chef-lecturer’.

I always say chef-lecturer never teacher, always chef-lecturer, because I am at heart still a chef. I still cook in the industry, I am chairman of the craft guild of chefs, we all work very closely with the industry we know most of the chefs in London.

(interviewee 8)

6.2 FE teachers have a distinct professional identity

6.2.1 Different to school teachers

Fourteen of the respondents asserted that FE teachers’ professional identity was distinct, that it is different to that of schoolteachers. They argued that there were varying reasons for this, including the close links and importance that FE teachers ascribe to their previous occupation and preparing people for work.

6.2.2 Experience of work and life skills

Three of the respondents felt that schoolteachers typically had not worked or had experience of life outside of education, to the same degree that FE teachers have.

The difference between us and schools is that we have more life skills, they've gone straight to uni, no disrespect to them, done their PGCE they've come out of uni and gone straight into teaching. Where we have life skills, most of us have gone out into the big wide world and been bricklayers, plasterers.. whatever, obtained those skills, obtained those experiences and brought them back. We are experienced people passing on our knowledge and skills.

(interviewee 3)

I think there are still a lot of people in education who have not necessarily worked in the field that they teach in other than the educational institutions that they were taught at.

(interviewee 13)

6.2.3 Lack of qualifications

One of the respondents cited the different qualification level that she believed typical FE teachers had when compared to schoolteachers, she cited examples of teachers from the department that she worked in.

FE teachers are different to schoolteachers, I don't see FE teachers as traditional teachers. A lot of the people who work in our academy actually don't even have degrees, a lot of the tutors do not have level 2 maths and English because they have been at the college so long. When they started it wasn't even a requirement, if you wanted to go and teach in other areas of education that would be a requirement.

(interviewee 18)

6.2.4 School and college has different goals

However respondents also argued that schools and colleges work to different priorities, therefore comparisons can be difficult.

Schools are concerned about learners obtaining GCSEs and then going. In FE, the sector and its teachers have to make sure students are well prepared for work, that is the main difference.

(interviewee 4)

6.2.5 Preparing their students for work

A consistent theme mentioned above by interviewee four, emerging from the interviews, was the desire and key objective of FE teachers to prepare their students for work.

FE teachers want to develop their students and help them forge a good career path, develop their skills so they enjoy a productive career and employment. School in my view is a very different environment. It is much more regimented and to do with discipline.. ‘do this, do that, wear your tie, don’t eat a Mars Bar in class’. I do not have time for that because I have been in business.

(interviewee 7)

FE teacher’s role is to try and change the kid’s attitude round to more adult facing attitudes preparing for work.

(interviewee 14)

6.3 Dual professionalism

It has been argued in this thesis that a significant part of FE teachers’ distinct professional identity is due to dual professionalism. For this reason respondents were encouraged to comment and reflect on the concept. Significantly two used the phrase in their initial description of their identity without any prompting.

Being an FE teacher is about dual professionalism, what I see it as, if you asked me before I got into education “what’s the difference between a college teacher or tutor and a school tutor?” I would say a school tutor knew geography, he was a geography teacher. Whereas at college a fellow was a tradesman first, and then a teacher. That is the main difference between a school and an FE college I would say was this dual professionalism.

(interviewee 1)

The two respondents who referred to their job as a hybrid role using the phrase ‘chef-lecturer’ were also highlighting this dual professionalism. Four of the respondents mentioned in their description of their professional identity that it had a dual nature. Two of the four respondents were very clear on what they believed dual professionalism was.

Dual professionalism is a phrase that has come through from people who are practitioners in the industry first and then come into a teaching role, whereas I think there are still a lot of people in education who have not necessarily worked in the field that they teach in other than the educational institutions that they were taught at.

(interviewee 13)

I do ascribe to dual professionalism that happens a lot in FE, I am a dual professional because I run my own company, I have worked in business for a long time and continue to do so. (interviewee 4)

This, from time to time, he asserted has caused some issues for his, and colleagues' professional identity.

It does make you think sometimes, you are in-between two stalls, -am I plasterer? am I a tradesman?, am I a teacher...? (ibid)

6.3.1 *Benefits of dual professionalism to teaching*

The respondents who acknowledged that they were dual professionals, also commented on the importance of it in their teaching practice, arguing that it helped them to ensure that what they are teaching and the way that they taught was in line with their industry demands and expectations.

Dual professionalism doesn't create any problems, it helps you in your thinking, it helps you in your teaching, it enable you to deliver what is current and what is new, it is a positive thing, something to be embraced. (ibid)

In FE our professional background helps a lot because we are teaching vocational courses, there are many practical aspects which you have to integrate from industry, so your industry experience helps a lot. (interviewee 16)

The way in which I teach is more in line with what industry wants, I have the qualification spec on one side, which tells me what I need to do but the way that I go about doing that is more aimed at industry. (interviewee 3)

One of the participants made a comment that develops the concept of dual professionalism to another, quite radical level. In it, he asserted that the typical FE teacher has to engage even *more* with the former occupation to the point where every FE teacher should only teach part- time and remain in their former industry part-time as well.

I firmly believe in some areas of the college the role of the tutor has to change, and I think this college is slowly coming around to this. I am not sure that a tutor should be in college five days a week full-time. I believe that industry has moved so quickly, I really believe that there is a need to stay with your profession. I do believe that you should do at least one day a week in your profession or 'doing your profession'. Because, one it keeps you fresh, two you earn a lot more respect as a tutor because you are there doing the job.. FE used to be seen as a hiding place for people who just used it, they wanted to top up their pension, you know your back would go, legs would go, and say "oh it's a bit easier to teach", sit here in FE for 10 years.

(interviewee no 3)

As this was just one response, and no other respondents mentioned anything like this, it must be made clear that this is not representative of all the respondents. However, it is a radical idea that could have further consideration and investigation in light of advances in industry and technology, and will be briefly explored in the final chapter of the thesis.

6.3.2 FE Teachers as role models

A further benefit of maintaining close links to former occupations and dual professionalism, to which three respondents referred, is the belief that FE teachers can be powerful role models.

I am still very much involved in sport and coaching to a high national level, I use that to apply to my teaching here, there is a lot of crossover. There are lots of guys in the sport team who have a huge amount of industry contact, I think that really helps in the environment here. It helps the students have a lot more respect for the staff, when I am talking about different training models, about nutrition about competition, the students know that we do that. They do find it a lot more interesting because I am a role model for them as an elite sportsman.

(interviewee 13)

He continued by saying that he had a colleague who was debating leaving FE teaching within sport because his fitness and ability to compete in the sport in which he was an expert was declining. The implication of this, he felt, would be that he would no longer be such a powerful role model to his learners.

One teacher shared how much empathy he had with many of his students, coming to FE for a second chance at education, as he had also experienced difficulties in compulsory education.

In the first lesson I have with new students I share a bit of who I am and the journey that I have been on with the learners... I got kicked out of school when I was 15, I couldn't read or write when I left school, - I see lots of students now who have got similar problems. My job is to reverse that process. I was the sort of person who should have gone into FE. My experiences of school are not that dissimilar to my students which helps me relate to them.

(interviewee 3)

6.4 FE Teachers' Professional Values

It is evident that interviewee 3 is also concerned with the issue of values. This teacher had a deep sense of believing in further education, and that one of his key values was giving students a second chance. In earlier chapters this thesis has asserted clearly that one of the clear roles of further education has always been to offer learners a second chance at education, as many of its cohort were not the highest attaining students, academically, in compulsory schooling. This together with the other key role of FE-preparing learners for work, was evident in the responses pertaining to professional values from the participants of the study.

The participants involved in the research described a wide range of values including passion, fairness, providing opportunity and honesty.

Professional Value	Number of respondents who mentioned it.
Preparing learners for work.	8
Imparting knowledge and skills.	5
Giving learners opportunities / a second chance at education.	5
Fair	4
Passionate	4
Professional	3
Innovation	2
Honesty	2

Table 1: Respondents' values

6.4.1 Preparing for work

The most common value described centred on teachers' desire to prepare learners for work, they wanted their learners to get a meaningful career.

Every student who leaves here I want them to be ready for work, I take that very personally because once they leave here and get into work they are representing me, in work someone may ask who taught you, and it's my name.

(interviewee 1)

I want to see young people get on, my motivation is 'give them something to take away', which they can use in life.

(interviewee 7)

My students know that I am getting them ready for work (interviewee 12)

I try and make them as employable as I can by giving them a standard.

(interviewee 14)

6.4.2 Imparting knowledge and skills

The second most frequently mentioned value, articulated by five respondents was learning and sharing the teachers' knowledge and expertise.

Each should be learning something in my classroom, I feel very passionate about each student learning. Imparting my knowledge.

(interviewee 2)

I am here to impart knowledge and give my students opportunities.

(interviewee 8)

The education, making sure that students understand the importance of learning science and that they understand the theory, making sure that the students' education is first.

(interviewee 6)

Facilitating people to use the skills and knowledge that I give them.

(interviewee 15)

6.4.3 Improving Life Chances

Three respondents recognised that giving people an education and skills was very powerful, its benefits reaching beyond the classroom and the college into the rest of their lives. This they described as the value of improving an individual's life chances.

The reason I got into this (FE) is that I have always wanted to make a difference to people, which is why I specifically work with adults.... It's all about helping people to change their lives. What's important to me isn't funding or money for the college, it's all about the quality of learning for that individual and have we given that person the skills that they can use moving forward in their lifetime.

(interviewee 18)

Imparting knowledge, to change a life, it is only when you know, that you can give out, I love the opportunity I have to impart knowledge.

(interviewee 4)

6.4.4 A second chance

Closely linked to imparting knowledge and skills and preparing for work is the value of offering individuals a second chance at education. This was mentioned by five different respondents. Two were quite clear in their responses that they believed many young

people had not had a positive experience at school for complex social reasons, and that it was FE's and their responsibility to remedy that.

Everyone gets a second chance, pretty much, that's it for me. Most of the students that I teach that I come into contact with, particularly in the area that I teach in ***** which is not an affluent area it has high rates of unemployment, teen pregnancies. Most of them have had a very negative experience of school and education even some of the adults you teach... their experience of education from thirty years ago was very negative and they still hold that. I firmly believe that it is my job to break that barrier down, to show that they can learn, that learning can be fun and enjoyable and inclusive. FE is about giving people that second chance. I struggled like many of my students.

(interviewee 3)

One of the respondents was very clear in his mind, and articulated strongly that he believed schools were failing to educate young people, that FE has to 'undo' a lot of that experience, and offer a second opportunity. He saw himself as a key part of that restoration process, and that underpinned one of his key values.

We give people a chance. These kids come out of school, I won't swear but schools are not doing them justice, they are being ruined by countless political parties of differing colours. They are being debased, not given opportunities. For example we are trying to undo five years of terrible English and maths teaching. I try and give them the best chance I can.

(interviewee 14)

6.4.4 Passion for teaching and learning

The respondents also described their enthusiasm and zeal as a key value that they held in their job, one of the words that was repeated four times was passion.

You have got to have passion, as soon as the passion goes out of you if you are not passionate as a teacher they will pick up on it straight away, you must be passionate.

(interviewee 1)

I feel very passionate about learning, that is a key thing for me.

(interviewee 2)

I have a real passion for my subject, I love cooking and science and have a desire to share that, I have discovered a job in which I can combine my passion and desire.

(interviewee 6)

6.4.5 The influence of the former occupation on professional values

Two main themes emerged from participants' responses to influences on their values. Three respondents were clear that their values had been shaped by their former occupation.

I think they were shaped by the particular time that I entered the construction industry as an apprentice, the trade was going through such a period of change, I realised that the new stuff I was learning a lot of experienced trades people did not know so I showed them, it was like the pupil becoming the master, I got the passion for learning and teaching at an early stage of my working life.

(interviewee 1)

My values have been shaped by people that I admired that I have worked with in business over many years.

(interviewee 7)

The next most common factor in shaping FE teachers' values was their upbringing and the influence of parents.

The way that I was brought up, what I was taught by my parents.

(interviewee 12)

Family background, my father was an architect and taught me the need to go out and achieve to be financial viable pay your way give to society, that's what I believe for my students.

(interviewee 2)

6.5 Chapter summary

In summary, this findings chapter has reported how the respondents describe their professional identity. The chapter's key assertion is that FE teachers' identity is still significantly influenced by their former occupation, with half of the respondents still referring to their current job, using language primarily from their former occupation.

The chapter has also asserted that FE teachers believe their professional identity is distinct and clearly different to that of schoolteachers. This identity is underpinned by a set of professional values consistent with the aims and role of further education. The work now moves forward to discuss the next set of findings centring on how this distinct professional identity is constructed.

Chapter 7 Findings: The Construction of FE Teachers' Professional Identity

Having established in the previous chapter that FE teachers have a distinct professional identity underpinned by a consistent value base, this chapter focuses on the respondents' description of their journey to becoming an FE teacher.

As highlighted in chapter 4 Illeris' workplace learning theories espoused that identity construction or formation takes place within a rich interaction between various dimensions. These dimensions include the influence of an individual's work practice, including qualifications, and the influence from their workplace community.

Illeris also asserted that an individual's incentive to learn and the environment that they were working in were also key factors in workplace learning, therefore the data were examined to see if there was a link between the workplace (in this case the college) that individual's worked at and the environment for workplace learning that managers had created.

To explore these aspects respondents were asked why they had first entered FE, their initial teaching contract and their views on the role of teaching qualifications in their professional identity formation. This chapter now reports their responses.

When respondents were asked to describe their journey from their former occupation to teaching, they all volunteered a rich narrative of their college working life, the first part of which, concerned *why* they had pursued a change in career.

7.1 Differing reasons for considering entry to the FE teaching profession

7.1.1 Training others in their previous vocation

The most common reason cited by eight of the respondents for entering teaching was being involved in training in their previous job. It was through this involvement in teaching that they had considered teaching as a fulltime job.

I would go from one Hilton hotel to the next helping to train the chefs in the kitchen, helping them to achieve an NVQ. One day the EV came in and

said “you are really good at this stuff, have you ever considered being a teacher?...you should”.

(interviewee 9)

I worked in retail as a store manager, within that I had to do a lot of training, which I really enjoyed, from there I progressed into training as a job working for a training provider.

(interviewee 18)

When I was a fulltime chef running hotels and restaurants I was teaching, anyone who has worked as chef de partie or head chef has been involved in teaching, you just don't realise it.

(interviewee 10)

My vocational background is working in aviation, for a lot of years, predominantly flying, during my time I was also trained as a ground school instructor taught emergency and safety procedures, cruise resource management and aviation security.

(interviewee 17)

7.1.2 Entering teaching unintentionally

Six of the respondents asserted that they had not been consciously planning to enter FE teaching. Two had seen an advertisement in a paper for their local college and had decided to ‘give it a go’, starting part-time initially.

I was a self-employed builder, I had worked in the trade for 30 years, I wanted to slow down, saw an ad in the local paper, part time construction lecturer.

(interviewee 1)

I never thought about being a teacher, it was through a friend she did a maths PGCE at university a year before I started, she encouraged me to become a teacher.

(interviewee 5)

A further respondent said that she had been headhunted by a college to do some part-time teaching because of the expertise and experience that she had in her particular job.

I did not wake up one morning and say that I want to be a teacher, I am going to train to be teacher and then get a job. No, I was approached by the college because of my skills set, because I am a scientist of food technology.

(interviewee 6)

One sport lecturer articulated that he had sustained a serious injury whilst working in the sports industry. This had led to him having to reconsider his job as he could no longer perform physically to the same level as he had previously.

I smashed my knee up, tore my anterior cruciate ligament, I was having it repaired in hospital and a friend of mine who did some part-time teaching here, visited me, he knew my background and suggested I try out teaching, I then went to the college on my crutches for a chat.

(interviewee 13)

The most intriguing comment for accidental entry, came from a catering teacher whose wife told him that he should get a job teaching at a college. He ignored her advice, however:

I didn't know it at the time but my wife had written off to college, she always said how patient I was at teaching people and that I should go into it. Then I came home from work one day and she said you have got an interview tomorrow at ***** college. The interview went well, they asked me to come in and shadow some classes.

(interviewee 10)

This unusual start to a career has led to him teaching in a full-time capacity.

7.1.3 Lack of a purposeful career plan.

Only two of the respondent spoke of a real purposeful career plan or desire to get involved in FE teaching. This indicates that the overwhelming response was that FE teaching was a second choice option and often a total accident or result of circumstances beyond their control.

7.2 Entry points to FE teaching

7.2.1 The long interview- starting part-time

Having discussed the reasons for entering FE, the participants then described in what capacity they had started in relation to their work conditions, the hours they worked and the contracts they had been given.

All of the respondents except for one started their first job at an FE college on a part-time contract. Fifteen remained in their first occupation or industry, doing part-time work at the same time as starting their teaching.

I was head chef at the Marriott County Hall, I knew the programme manager at the college and was asked by the college if I would come down and teach a few lessons, which I started doing regularly while still working in my main job at the hotel.

(interviewee 8)

7.2.2 *Gradual progression to full-time teaching*

Then over a period of time the participants in the study progressed into a full-time teaching contract. In their narrative the participants described their journey from part-time teacher to full-time, very much as a natural progression process.

I applied for a full-time job, never got it, I must have impressed because I got a call back after being told I wasn't successful, asking if I would be willing to come in one day a week and teach a certain aspect of plastering. And that grew from one to two days up to three and then in the end full-time.

(interviewee 1)

I had a call from the college asking if I was interested in some part-time teaching hours, just a few a week, which I started doing, whilst still doing my main chef job. Then after a few weeks a full-time teachers left and they encouraged me to apply and I got it.

(interviewee 9)

Having worked part-time for a while, teaching various hours, I was encouraged by my manager to apply for the full-time teacher role in motor vehicle, which I was successful.

(interviewee 19)

7.2.3 *Remaining in the 'industry'*

More than half of the participants responding in this study asserted that for them, the part-time teaching and working in industry continued for over a year and for three participants over two years. At the time of the research four participants were still working regularly in their former industry as well as having a full-time teaching job.

I am still involved in commercial gardening and run my own business doing landscaping, I do a lot at weekends, as do many of the teachers of horticulture here.

(interviewee 12)

Since working in FE I have still maintained my links with the aviation industry. I am a freelance trainer, I still deliver training in aviation security and emergency evacuation.

(interviewee 17)

I run a company of my own outside my college job doing business consultancy, I work with companies like the train operator C2C. It helps me in my teaching so that when I go into the classroom what I teach is current.
(interviewee 4)

I still cook in the industry, I am a chef through and through.
(interviewee 8)

7.3 The role of teaching qualifications in FE teachers' professional practice

In their narrative of their journey to becoming professional teachers, participants were asked to describe the influence of initial teacher training and the formal teaching qualification. Within the narrative participants were asked specifically whether they held a formal teaching qualification and at what point of their career it was achieved.

7.3.1 Commencing unqualified

Sixteen of the 20 participants started their teaching career in FE without any formal teaching qualification. Participants described different sources of experience to draw upon when forming their professional practice. Three described how they learned to teach by adapting previous training they had experienced and delivered in their former job. Another claimed it was more rudimentary trial and error and she learned to teach by going into the classroom and 'doing it'.

To begin with it was very much learning on the job through experience and practice, reflecting on what went well helped, I did also have a lot of help from other teachers at the college, my confidence grew.
(interviewee 6)

I delivered my teaching in the same way that I had taught others before when I was in the workplace.
(interviewee 1)

I taught the way that I was taught, I used my own experiences of teaching both academic and sports coaching and just got on with it, I have been teaching here ten years and only just done my teaching qualification.
(interviewee 14)

However not all participants were as positive, two stated that teaching was not as straightforward as they had first thought. They had struggled, but due to previous experience were able to adapt.

When I started I was on a big learning curve, it was different to what I expected, I delivered my teaching in the same way that I had taught others before when I was in the workplace.

(interviewee 1)

I was a little bit in at the deep end, however, I was confident because I learn a lot when am actually doing something.

(interviewee 13)

7.3.2 Commencing a formal teaching qualification

Differing starting points

Three of the participants had completed their full teaching qualification before they started teaching. Eight of the respondents interviewed commenced their formal qualification within their first year of teaching. Four commenced within two years and one after five years. The most common trigger point for teachers starting their level 4 formal teaching qualification was the offer of a full-time position.

Range of qualifications held

The sixteen teachers that were qualified above level 3 held a range of teaching qualifications. This range included the most traditional FE teaching qualification: the Certificate in Education (CertEd) and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) to one of the most recent the Diploma in Teaching in the Life Long Learning sector (DTLLS).

Unqualified teachers

At the time of interview, four of the twenty participants' highest teaching qualification was a PTLLS award (a small introductory level 3 teaching qualification described in the literature review), meaning they did not hold a level 4 teaching qualification. Due to PTLLS basic 'introductory' nature, most college human resource departments would assert that these lecturers are not fully qualified FE teachers.

7.3.3 Respondents views on their formal teacher training

Having established reasons for the participants entering teaching and noting those who held teaching qualifications, participants were asked to share their views and feelings about their experience of formal FE initial teacher training, with a view to establishing to what degree they ascribed their professional identity formation to their teaching qualification.

Overall 12 participants commented negatively about the skills they gained and the whole experience of studying towards and achieving a full teaching qualification. Within which, nine, when asked to what degree their teaching qualification had informed their teaching practice responded low or very low.

The negativity centred around two themes, firstly the skills and knowledge gained and secondly the quality of teaching experienced on the programme.

7.3.4 Poor quality of teaching

It really confused me, the level of care was weak, I found the person in front of me teaching me never actually did what they were preaching. They would come in late, the PC wouldn't be on, the projector wasn't working, they were running around trying to get their handouts. I thought if they did that in front of an inspector there's no way you would be able to get away with it. I was convinced that it was an experiment, and after a few weeks they would stop and say now you have seen me do it wrong.

(interviewee 3)

Teachers were poor, I had been teaching longer than the people who were observing me.

(interviewee 14)

Further comments received focused on the style of delivery and the dated nature of some of the educational theorists that were covered.

I found the CertEd thoroughly boring, because they were quoting people, old guys, things and ideas from the 50s, now things have moved on so much, multiculturalism, people learning in different ways. I found it all very difficult.

(interviewee 2)

7.3.5 Lack of practical teaching skills

Other participants, within the 12, were disappointed in their teacher training because of what they perceived to be the overly theoretical nature of the course. They thought there was very little emphasis on learning and developing the practical skills of teaching.

The teaching qualification does not give you the experience of teaching.

(interviewee 10)

It wasn't a hugely positive influence on my teaching practice.

(interviewee 12)

I didn't particularly enjoy it, I don't think it helped, I am not sure that it had any effect on my teaching or that it changed any of the practices that I was doing.

(interviewee 11)

My teaching qualification was 90-95 per cent pointless, only thing I found interesting was the philosophy of education, it was very dysfunctional, no real element of practical teaching was covered, very theoretical, no scope for what it is like in the working environment. It's not a very workable qualification. It just means that I have met a standard, bit like any other academic qualification.

(interviewee 14)

Most of the time the lessons had nothing to do with what I was doing day to day. We did a whole topic on classroom management, however not once did we ever mention issues that we had in our classes, not once did we share ideas, we just learned lots of theory.

(interviewee 3)

7.3.6 Just a 'necessary' process

Interviewee 14 indicated that the teaching qualification was about meeting a standard, which was mandatory with legislation for all teachers in FE between 2001 and 2012, as cited in chapter two. Two other participants stated that undertaking a formal teaching qualification was a necessary process that the sector or college expected:

To be honest with you when I was doing my PGCE, I found that it was just a process, I never felt a sense of achievement, I did not go to my graduation because I did not feel like I had achieved anything.

(interviewee 3)

The teaching qualification, you need it, but it doesn't give you the experience, it just gives you the language and terminology that you need to speak in education.

(interviewee 10)

7.3.7 An essential job requirement

Lecturers described how achieving a full level 4 and 5 teaching qualification was a necessity for getting a job and that it had become an essential requirement on job adverts and short-listing criteria.

It's a tick in the box, it opens doors, without it, it is incredibly hard to get anywhere.

(interviewee 15)

I felt it was a very procedural thing, I did not really get anything from it. Having a teaching qualification looks better for the CV and it looks good for the college.

(interviewee 13)

7.3.8 Positive Responses

As highlighted previously, the vast majority of responses about formal teacher training were negative. There were however four positive responses. Interviewee 7 asserted that his practice had improved significantly through being formally observed and assessed in his teaching practice whilst on his PGCE placement. However not all the participants had experienced this type of placement observation, as all the participants had experienced different types of teacher training programmes and qualifications as described in chapter two. Another respondent spoke highly of his PGCE course stating that it gave you:

Tactics or strategies that you could try to use in the classroom, for example around managing students' behaviour.

(interviewee 16)

7.4 Possible influence of the workplace on the findings

Although this is not a quantitative study, summarising responses can sometimes create themes worthy of examination. Therefore, a chart summarising participants' responses to some of the thesis' key findings was created in Appendix 5. The aim of this chart was to ascertain if there was any themes or consistency to certain participants' views and whether they were influenced by their workplaces: their colleges.

The chart suggests that lecturers who worked in college 1 and college 3 were the most negative in their comments on the effectiveness and overall experience of studying their teaching qualification. These were the colleges that participants numbered 1-5 and 11-15 worked in. It is also noted that all these lecturers had studied their teaching qualification in-service after commencing teaching.

Upon analysis of these two colleges and their lecturers' responses, there appears to be further commonality. These were the two colleges where most respondents who cited the biggest influence on their identity was the workplace or fellow teachers. This finding suggests that these colleges were deliberately fostering an environment of collaborative learning and development, where new teachers were exposed to other teachers and their practice regularly, confirmed by interviewee 13 from college 3

Learning off other people was a huge influence on my teaching, when I first started I was in a group staff room, I did not know really how to teach but because I was in a shared office all I needed was to turn and ask a colleague who would help me or show me. They were all used to helping new teachers like me, it was encouraged.

(interviewee 13)

In this response it is clear that the shared space the teachers used for their preparation, became a contributory factor in the formation this interviewee's professional practice, as it afforded him an opportunity to discuss teaching in a powerful way. Similar responses were collected from college 1.

It was my experience of teaching in the college that influenced my teaching the most, as I worked in college alongside other teachers I learned through my experience with them.

(interviewee 4)

Respondents in these colleges also spoke highly of a dedicated programme of CPD for teachers which also had a significant influence on their identity development, a teacher also from college 3 stated:

The college has really developed me particularly when we have college inset days, looking at areas such as differentiation of teaching for example and how to implement it. Even the college's observation strategy which some people do not like, I have found very useful when I was a new teacher.

(interviewee 15)

Sharing practice and ideas with colleagues on whole college staff CPD days was very powerful in my learning to be a teacher

(interviewee b)

The respondents working in these two particular colleges were also the ones who most described their identity as being ‘teacher’ focussed as opposed to being related to their former occupation.

The chart at Appendix 5 is used again in the following chapter 8 section 8.4 to describe the influence that managers had on these respondents, and the themes developed by it forms part of the discussion in chapter 9.

7.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has presented how respondents described their journey from their occupation to becoming an FE teacher. It has highlighted their motivation and differing entry points. The chapter has described the teachers’ thoughts and beliefs of their formal teacher training including the impact that their formal teacher qualification has had on their teaching practice. The next chapter now discusses the most significant factor cited by the respondents in their professional identity formation.

Chapter 8 Findings: Significant Influences on FE Teachers' Professional Identity Formation.

Having established why and when the teachers had first entered FE, and their views on the role of teaching qualifications in developing their teaching practice, this findings chapter now focuses on what FE teachers believed was the most significant influence on their professional identity formation.

Illeris (2011) argued that identity formation and learning is influenced by multiple key dimensions and their relationship with each other, explored in detail in chapter 4. In order to improve professional practice and the future training and development of new FE teachers this work has sought to establish what the most significant 'dimension' or influence on FE teachers' professional identity formation within their journey to becoming FE teachers. This chapter explores specifically two of Illeris' central tenets: firstly, the influence of the *individual*, including their demographics, desire to learn, and secondly, the *community* around them such as the environment and other teachers on their identity. It also explores the influence of formal teacher qualifications on the participants' professional formation.

8.1 The significant influences on FE professional formation

The participants were asked to articulate what they believed were the most significant influences on their professional formation in their journey to becoming FE teachers. Although this is not a quantitative study the following table briefly illustrates the most popular influences of professional formation from the 20 respondents who participated in the research.

Table 2 : Significant themes in FE teacher identity formation

Significant theme in professional formation	Number of respondents who mentioned the theme.	Comments
Learning from other teachers- colleagues / mentors	8	Including formal and informal working relationships
The wider FE college workplace	5	Including formal college staff development / training
Self-development / iterative reflection on own teaching development.	4	Described as learning on the job
A combination of a formal teaching qualification and the FE college.	2	
A combination of the teaching qualification plus other factors such as learner feedback	1	

8.1.2 Learning from other teachers

Thirteen of the respondents indicated that the most significant influence on their professional teacher formation, identity and practice was the FE workplace and its teachers. This exposure sometimes took place formally in the shape of a mentor assigned to them by the college, but very often was informal, where colleagues had invited them as new teachers into their lessons to observe.

Within this influence there were differing aspects of other teachers' practice that were influential, including managing learners' behaviour, teaching skills and teaching theoretical concepts. Learning from other teachers predominately took place through observing them teach and discussing practice with them.

Because learning from other FE teachers was the most cited significant factor in professional identity formation, a follow-up interview with five of the participants was conducted. These interviews had a specific focus to explore in greater depth and detail this notion of learning from others. The findings of these interviews are reported later in this chapter in section 8.3. The findings that follow here are extracted from the original 20 interviews.

8.1.3 Discussing with other FE teachers and observing their practice

When I started teaching here I watched and nicked ideas from a guy called *****, an excellent teacher, in classroom management he never raised his voice, he was always very calm. He has this way of staring at you, his style works, and I have nicked that 'manner' and use it in my teaching.

(interviewee 2)

Learning from other lecturers to see how they delivered their classes, sitting in their classes observing them was really powerful.

(interviewee 9)

In the beginning I had a lot of help and advice from some of the lecturers who had been teaching for a number of years, also ***** he was an advanced practitioner, he was especially helpful with issues like discipline in the classroom.

(interviewee 6)

All of my experience in teaching has come from other lecturers, the way I teach is from other role models in the college. I have been very fortunate to have worked with some senior figures in FE that have taught me a lot about how to communicate with young people, boundaries, little things you can pick up have all come from experienced members of staff.

(interviewee 3)

I did also have a lot of help from other teachers at the college, and my confidence grew.

(interviewee 6)

Many FE teachers teach predominately in the environments that they had previously worked in such as workshops, gardens, kitchens and garages. So when they were asked to teach theoretical concepts in classrooms some expressed feelings out of their comfort zone.

One teacher described how informally observing another teacher changed his practice beyond measure.

Learning off other chef-lecturers here had the greatest impact. When I first started I was told to go and see a guy called ***** deliver a theory class. When I watched him I thought “now I know how you do that”, before I was just waffling on about nothing really, when I saw him and he had prepared and structured his lesson I realised how I should be teaching. It was a very powerful experience for me.

(interviewee 10)

8.1.4 A Consistent theme in their Vocational Background

The table created in appendix 5 identified firstly that there was one college where four of the five participants cited learning from other teachers as the most significant influence on their identity formation and teaching practice, this proportion was higher than in the other colleges used in the sample. These lecturers all worked at college number 2. The data indicates that there was a common theme in the vocational background of the lecturers in this college. This college had a specialism for hospitality and catering courses and all the staff had worked for significant periods in that vocational area. The potential significance of this is explored in the next chapter.

8.2 The influence of the FE College

The respondents described how the college procedures for supporting new teachers had been hugely instrumental in their professional formation, especially in formal mentoring arrangements.

8.2.1 Mentoring and Team teaching

A respondent described how helpful she had found working closely with the mentor that the college has assigned to her when she started teaching.

When I first started teaching the college was very supportive of me, I was very fortunate I had a mentor, she was an advanced practitioner and every two weeks I would see her for an hour. She gave me tips on anything that I struggled with. There were also other staff members who were very supportive.

(interviewee 5)

One respondent described how helpful her start to teaching had been when she was involved in team teaching with a more experienced FE teacher.

One of the really good things here is doing paired teaching sessions, which has meant that I worked alongside a lot more experienced lecturers, that's been really useful; I have found myself saying "I do not do enough of that or I need to do more of that". (interviewee 11)

8.2.2 College staff development

Another respondent found the approach his college took to staff development, had impacted on the development of his professional practice.

The college has developed me in the sense that we have inset days and we hear things like differentiation, which when you begin you kind of half know what that means, but you don't know how to implement it, but as you discuss and develop ideas at the college you get more confident.

(interviewee 15)

8.2.3 Being observed by other teachers

Three of the respondents cited being observed formally or informally by peers at the college as being highly influential in their professional formation.

I found the observations that I had from my peers, where you wasn't always given an outstanding grade, more supportive, it was more 'when you did that- why did you do that?, why don't you come and watch me'.

(interviewee 3)

I love being observed, surprisingly, because I find it really helpful, I really do. (interviewee 7)

Even the observations which I am not a fan of, you know if they point out something that's good, yeah I will try it. (interviewee 15)

8.2.4 Learning through reflecting on your own teaching practice

The second most popular factor in teachers' professional formation was a process of iterative self-reflection on their own teaching development. Four lecturers described how when commencing their teaching they found themselves naturally reflecting on their own teaching practice. This was something that their workplaces also encouraged them to do. These four respondents argued that this process was a powerful factor in their professional formation.

I think you learn with experience, with practice, the more you do it. Each time you teach a class you reflect on what worked and what didn't work, so I had quite a good understanding before I did my PTLIS.

(interviewee 6)

8.2.5 Reactions from students

Within the reflection process teachers spoke of the key aspect of learner voice or reaction to lessons.

Feedback from my students, like asking do you enjoy this type of lesson, or would this one suit you more, through this I have discovered the best style of teaching for my learners.

(interviewee 11)

Once you start to teach, you see the students' behaviour, the attitudes and then you begin to put them in your lesson, you adapt your teaching to it. Everyday something unusual will happen and you take note of that, and then you change and then you improve.

(interviewee 16)

Watching others teachers yes, but I think more than anything else, just personally wanting to improve my teaching. I was confident when I first started, but then looking back I was doing too much, it was far too much teacher-led. Over the years I have learned through practice – seeing how things go, trying new ideas seeing what reaction you get from the students.

(interviewee 12)

8.3 Findings of the second set of interviews

As highlighted in chapter 5, section 5.3.1, further primary research was carried out with five of the respondents in response to the emerging key finding of the first 20 interviews. Those selected for a further interview had indicated strongly, through a detailed response, that the most significant influence on their teacher identity formation was learning from other teachers in their college. This final part of the chapter reports what the respondents believed were the key elements of that learning from others' process and how it benefitted their professional practice development. To prevent confusion the respondents are labelled as Interview A, B etc.

8.3.1 *Initiating the interaction with others*

The lecturers cited differing reasons for how the learning from others came about.

Three asserted that they had actively sought out experienced practitioners to learn from:

It was a natural process, I was the youngest member of staff and I felt that there was lots to be learned from the very senior lecturers that had done it for 15-20 years, so I approached a few of them, the really experienced ones who could teach with their eyes shut I identified them.

(interviewee A)

I was very confident of my subject knowledge, I wanted to know the best way to get my subject knowledge across.

(interviewee C)

I am an instinctive person, it's about sharing good practice, asked around so that I would know who to go to. If I wanted to know a particular thing I would bend that person's ear at that moment in time

(interviewee B)

Two of the lectures claimed that the process was encouraged by their line managers when starting at the college.

I was instructed by my line manager at the time to do some peer observations, then it was left to me to sort those out, it was difficult because I wanted to go and see other people but I did not want them to come and see me as I just wanted to try things out on my own.

(interviewee C)

At the time the manager of the department he was pretty good, the timetable he gave me there wasn't too much pressure on me, he booked me some extra hours in so that I could go and shadow an experienced tutor.

(interviewee D)

This teacher then took it on himself to do some extra activities that involved other teachers.

It was a two-way street, when I saw the value of watching other teachers if ever I had any spare time we had an agreement that I could drop in to various lessons and shadow people. I then asked around to find out who the most experienced tutors were, the pick of the bunch, not just in my vocation I went around the college and sat in various lessons.

(interviewee D)

One teacher said that he was also invited to come and watch experienced teachers:

Some members of staff actually asking me, you know would I like to go and watch them, to support me, and I always took up that opportunity.
(interviewee A)

8.3.2 Engaging with other teachers' practice through observation and discussion.

Observation of experienced teachers was the most common learning activity, cited by all five of the respondents. The observation took various forms, some purely from a distance:

I went in to lessons and shadowed other lecturers to see what they did.
(interviewee E)

I was able to observe teachers from a distance, it was very helpful to go and see what people did.
(interviewee C)

In the early stages I observed other teachers, I saw good and bad practice.
(interviewee B)

Some of it was just watching, pure observation with no comment at the end. There was one guy he was teaching into his 70s, he only came in once a week, he was phenomenal.
(interviewee A)

Three of the lecturers talked about actively participating during the observation, and one actually engaging in a team teaching situations:

After shadowing the next time I would go in and assist the lecturer with the lesson, part-teach it
(interviewee E)

I'd sit at the back of the class every now and again I was asked to go and sit at the front and sit next to the tutor whilst students were on a task we would be chatting, he was giving me an insight into what he was doing.
(interviewee D)

It would be like an observation and then in some cases, particularly with ***** , towards the end as I was becoming a bit more skilled it was coming into a bit more team teaching. So actually picking up from ***** * and then taking them onto the next level, and sometime ***** picking up from me, that is something I still do today.

(interviewee A)

The other key form of learning of others was discussion of practice. All teachers relayed how conversations about professional practice had been invaluable to their own learning. One espoused the importance of the 'staffroom' environment for this process.

It worked out well for me, when I started teaching I was in a shared staff office, this made a big difference, I would get to see and hear what the other members of staff were doing, many I knew, had good reputations for being strong teachers, these staff I knew were respected by the students. So I would be able to pick up from them what did they do, how they interacted with students.

(interviewee C)

Two others referred to the conversation as a professional discussion after the observation.

I was making notes and at the end of every lesson I was able to ask for the reasoning for why the teacher did certain things.

(interviewee D)

More often than not we got into a discussion, sometimes the lecturer would ask me after the observation so what did you think? you tell me, anything you picked up?, is there anything I could have done differently? It almost became something like peer assessment.

(interviewee A)

Lecturers described how they would seek opportunities to discuss good practice and problems that they were experiencing with other experienced teachers.

In the first year of teaching I think I was bending people's ear on a daily basis, and saying I have got this to do how would you go about doing it?

(interviewee B)

The tea room was a good place, because everyone would give an account of how their lesson went. Indirectly it wasn't a set aside time, just over a cup of tea.

(interviewee D)

8.3.2 *Benefits to professional practice from learning off others*

The teachers interviewed were very passionate about the benefits of learning from others in informing their teaching practice. They articulated specific strategies and tools for teaching they had gained:

Observing others is as powerful a tool as any to improve your practice.

(interviewee B)

I was able to have a discussion with the teacher about questioning techniques why he didn't tell them the answer and then move them on, he gave me the reasoning for it.

(interviewee D)

One really experienced teacher he never got out of his chair, I was always running up and down the classroom, yet he got the same result as I did, it appeared he was putting three-quarters of the effort in.

(interviewee A)

Through the staffroom, I would pick up how those experts were able to get their knowledge over to students, just by listening to them in a very informal way. I gained tips on questioning of prior knowledge and encouraging students to take ownership for their own learning, also on marking and assessment.

(interviewee C)

It was a great opportunity for me to ask questions of the experienced teachers, why did you do X,Y and Z they have a lot more experience than me to fall back on. A teacher from a different area to me in catering had a brilliant system for tracking students' progress.

(interviewee A)

After discussion, there were a few tutors in particular who I identified as people whose practice I liked to emulate. So I then made more time for them to have a one to one, something more structured with those tutors. I learned about behaviour management, that was a big thing in construction. How different tutors handled it, you know same incident, managed in two different styles.

(interviewee D)

Sometime teachers were exposed to poor practice, but they tried to use it as a positive experience, viewing it as things not to do. Some said it also encouraged them that their practice was not as ineffective as they believed.

Without wanting to be critical of other teachers you can use what you consider not necessarily good practice to boost what you do and how you would do it.

(interviewee B)

It is also nice as a trainee teacher to go along to watch an experienced teacher and he completely balls it up, it boosts your confidence as a young teacher as you are always making mistakes, you can learn more sometimes from mistakes.

(interviewee A)

I saw things that I thought I will not adopt myself, for example the games' approach to learning or the reward approach to learning, I accept they work for some groups, I did see it work well, but also appallingly.

(interviewee C)

I observed some poor practice during this period as well, around behaviour management, some tutors seem to escalate the problem, rather than dampen in down by the techniques they adopted.

(interviewee D)

8.3.3 The regularity of interaction, and the length of learning from others period

As highlighted in some of the quotations the five respondents offered different answers to how often interaction occurred. Interviewee A stated that he would observe a lesson or have a conversation with another staff member every other week, whilst interviewee B claimed he had an interaction every day. Interviewee C said it was quite intensive in the first term and then reduced.

Interviewee C and D stated that the learning off others period lasted for a year, and interviewee A said it was over the first two years. Interviewee B described himself as still engaging in the process after eight years working in FE.

All of the respondents, except one, referred to the concept of learning from others as akin to informal mentoring. Although the five teachers when they started had formal

mentors they did not view them as sufficient to equip them with the practice that they believed they needed:

I preferred the kind of, you know, not just getting the opinion off one person, if you can get a range of different ideas and a variety of opinions you're more likely to come up with a more rounded final answer, yes it was definitely informal mentoring. I felt really that people wanted to do it, staff at the college had an inherent sense of they wanted to help even though they weren't your formal mentor.

(interviewee A)

My mentor was the go to person in the first week, but after a while I could just turn around to four or five people in the staffroom and ask their opinions, thoughts on any issues. It was about having that informal access to them.

(interviewee C)

Actually I would describe it as collaborative learning, maybe it's a bit dis-establishment, the staff area a lot more collaborative in the way that they share than you've been in the job for 25 years therefore you can mentor me because you know what you are doing. I see it as a real 360-review process. I came in straight from industry with lots of ideas about the way things could be taught, and there were other people saying well this is the way that it is taught, and me going well does it have to be that way? Would not say mentoring, I did have a mentor but we quite quickly ended up sharing practice.

(interviewee B)

One of the respondents was very passionate about their approach to learning from others.

When I compare what I learned on the teacher training course with what I learned off that teacher ***** , for example on dealing with students and their behaviour and classroom management that's real advice, I mean Kolb's learning cycle yes it's important, yes there's a need for it. Have I taken more inspiration from that as I have from other peers? .. no way. Learning of my peers is by far.. by far and away more important.

(interviewee A)

8.4 Possible impact of the college workplace and managers on the findings

As highlighted in chapter 7 in order to ascertain if particular colleges and workplaces produced particular findings a chart was created (Appendix 5). Although this is not a

quantitative study this diagram has presented some consistent themes worthy of discussion.

The majority of the respondents who claimed they had negative experiences of teacher training and did not see teaching qualifications as effective appeared also to have produced the most significant comments on learning from other teachers. Again they worked at colleges 1 and 3. Respondents A and D worked at college 1 and respondents B and C worked at college 3.

The findings indicate that at colleges 1 and 3 managers had influenced the beliefs and assertions of the lecturers, the evidence for this is presented above in 8.3.1, in which respondents C and D stated that when commencing their teaching they had had supportive managers who had encouraged them to complete peer observations and that they had been given a limited timetable to allow for shadowing experienced teachers. These workplace and management themes emerging from the findings are discussed in the next chapter under section 9.3.2.

8.5 The influence of participants' demographics and occupational background

The teachers who took part in the research had a varied range of occupational backgrounds as well as age, gender and experience as listed in Appendix 5.

It is important to consider if there is any clear pattern, correlation or link between participants' heterogeneity and their professional identity formation. The following analysis of the findings seeks to do that.

When analysing the age of the respondents it can be seen that the majority, 11, were aged between 30-40, only two were under 30 and a further seven over 40. This finding confirms Gleeson (2014) who asserted the age of the average new entrant to FE was 37. There were two colleges that employed the most teachers in this age bracket (at least three individuals in each), these were colleges 1 and 3. As highlighted above in 8.4 these were also the same colleges that employed the teachers who were the most vitriolic in criticising teaching qualifications and also the most fervent about learning from others as the primary influence in forming their teaching practice.

Of the 11 aged 30-40, seven positioned their identity from the stand-point of a teacher, whereas in the oldest participant group the majority positioned their identity more to their former occupation, suggesting that time spent in industry influences an FE teacher's perception of their professional identity.

The participants' backgrounds in terms of their occupations were also varied, with 13 different jobs and industries cited in the data and listed in Appendix 5. As described in chapter 5 section 5.4.2, the participants were deliberately chosen because of the 'vocational nature' of the subjects they taught. The data were analysed to see if there was a pattern between individuals' occupations and identity formation. As already highlighted in section 8.1.4 there is a very clear link between teachers of hospitality and catering and the desire to learn from others as a way of developing and improving teaching practice. However these teachers, working at college two, whose background was hospitality and catering were not negative about teaching qualifications, it is clear that two were quite positive about their teacher training:

the cert-ed really opened my eyes to a lot of things that I did not know about teaching, it did influence me.

(interviewee 9)

the teaching qualification was useful, to have someone come and watch me teach I found really helpful.

(interviewee 7)

However, when comparing participants' occupational history, with espoused beliefs on influences on professional identity formation, there were no other really clear perceptions.

The location and size of college also did not seem to have an obvious influence on the key findings. Of the four colleges visited three were based in built up urban towns, one college labelled number 3 in the appendix 4 was a very land based rural college, which was reflected in the participants' backgrounds, for example equine studies, horticulture and sport.

The gender split of participants was 13 male and seven female. Gender did have an impact on the key findings of the study. In the female participants there was no consistent finding in relation to the most significant influence on teaching practice. There were three responses, each cited by two female teachers, these were: self development, the workplace and a combination of teaching qualifications and other influences. So no females agreed with the thesis' overall most consistent influence on professional identity formation: that of learning from other teachers. There was only one female participant who was negative about the teaching qualification.

No males cited the teaching qualification as the biggest influence on their professional development. It was the majority of male teachers (8 out of 13) who cited the biggest influence on their teaching identity and practice was other teachers. In male teachers in the sample more positioned their identity to a greater degree in their former occupation rather than in teaching.

The respondents who were most fervent about the influence of other teachers also described something inherent in themselves about learning, it could be summarised as a very proactive *attitude* to their own development and learning:

It came natural to me, I wanted to find out who the best teachers were so I could be like them, I wanted to be as good as possible.

(interviewee A)

I am an instinctive pro-active person, it (watching other good teachers) seemed obvious to me.

(interviewee B)

As a new teacher I was willing to give up my time to improve

(interviewee D)

After shadowing I picked it up pretty easily, for some reason it came pretty naturally, it was like learning in my former industry

(interviewee E)

This intrinsic desire or motivation did not appear to be linked to a particular occupation as these teachers were from different vocational backgrounds: building design (A), horticulture (B), construction (D) and chef (E)

Possible reasons for these links in relation to age, gender and occupation are discussed in the next chapter in section 9.3.2

8.6 Summary

This chapter provides evidence for the overall assertion that this thesis is presenting, i.e. that learning from other teachers and the FE college had had the most significant impact on FE teachers professional identity formation. This included both formal and informal relationships with experienced colleagues, self-reflection and the powerful impact of the wider college environment and its learners.

The second clear assertion of the research which this chapter supports is that formal teacher training and achieving a level 4 and 5 teaching qualification had failed to have a significant impact on the professional formation and practice of the majority of FE teachers in the study. The findings make clear that the majority felt it was just a necessary ‘hoop’ to jump through, that it was overly theoretical and did not equip them adequately with practical teaching skills.

The findings have been viewed and grouped through Ileris’ theories of workplace learning, firstly to form three distinct findings chapters, and secondly to bring meaning to the data produced.

Ileris (2011:42) argued that powerful workplace learning takes place both on a social and individual level. This has been demonstrated in these findings chapters, from the social perspective, particularly in 8.1.2, which identified the powerful influence of other teachers and also in 7.3.9 which demonstrated how workplace and managers also influence this social learning through the creation of opportunities. Findings presented here also support individual learning, seen in 8.5 highlighting the significance of the demographics of individuals and also for some teachers, an intrinsic motivation to learn.

The next chapter discusses these findings and concludes with their implications for the body of knowledge about FE teachers and their professional practice.

Chapter 9

Discussion of the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The broad aim of this thesis was to gain a better understanding of what the key influences are on the professional identity formation process of FE teachers. This chapter firstly assimilates all the findings of the research described in the three previous chapters into brief propositions or statements which are intended to contribute to the development of knowledge related to this area of inquiry. They are discussed in order of their significance.

The chapter then uses the findings to answer all the research questions. It also discusses the findings in the light of the FE and professional identity theory presented in chapters two and three. The findings concerning identity and practice *formation* are interpreted through applying Illeris' advanced model of workplace learning. The chapter includes a discussion of how the findings may be disseminated, together with implications and applications of the findings to professional practice in FE and for the author. It also reflects on the limitations of the study, how it may be improved if repeated, and concludes with recommendations for further research.

The concluding sections of the thesis recommend that the research findings are used to inform and create a new framework for FE teacher training, centred on learning from other teachers. Such a framework, I argue, will prepare and enable practitioners to make the transition from work to teaching and to form their professional identity, in a manner that is most beneficial to equip learners with skills they need for employment.

9.1 Propositions That Form the Work's Contribution to Knowledge

The findings of this study, produced through in-depth interviews with FE teachers suggest that:

Proposition 1.

The most significant influence on vocational FE teachers' professional identity formation was the influence of other experienced teachers and engagement with their professional practice in the college workplace. This influence involved two key elements- observation of experienced teachers delivering lessons, together with formal and informal professional discussions. This strategy of learning from others was instigated and actively encouraged both by managers and the new teachers through informal networking with peers. The teachers deliberately sought out expert practitioners in the college workplace and then engaged with their practice. This research suggests that some teachers had used this learning 'strategy' formerly in their vocational context.

Proposition 2.

Vocational FE teachers' professional identity formation happens in what Illeris' (2011) work-based learning theory referred to as the 'domain of learning'. This learning space is influenced by workplace production, work practice and the community within the workplace. This thesis argues that it is within this context, that teaching practice is developed and thus FE professional identity is *formed*.

Proposition 3.

The majority of respondents articulated a negative experience of their teacher training and teaching qualification. They believed that completing their formal teaching qualification did not have a significant impact on their professional identity formation. The reasons cited included that the training was largely ineffectual in developing effective teaching *practice*, and it was deemed simply as a necessary process that had to be completed, to "tick a box". Furthermore, all those lecturers who were negative about their teacher training had completed it in-service, after forming their own practice, and post the 2007 mandatory regulations. Therefore, what Illeris referred to as 'incentive to

learn' in relation to gaining a teaching qualification was not founded on an intrinsic desire in the teachers, rather it was imposed upon them by an external policy agenda.

Proposition 4.

The vocational FE teachers in this study appeared to take two different perspectives when describing their professional identity and this was revealed in the way that they described their role. The first group asserted that identity is primarily grounded in the teacher's former *occupation*. One respondent, for example described himself as "I am a chef and I teach culinary arts". For the second group, *teaching* forms the primary element of their identity, "I am a teacher at college, and my subject is sport". This study has found that the length of time spent in an occupation and the relative status achieved in that role impacts on these two distinct perspectives on professional identity taken by vocational teachers in FE. Those having long established, successful careers, prior to entering teaching assert that their professional identity lies in their former occupation. On the other hand, those who have had a shorter, much less well-established career, in terms of time spent or relative occupational status in their former roles, tended to position their identity more towards that of a teacher.

9.1.2 Summary of the work's contribution to knowledge.

This study concludes firstly that contrary to previous studies, initial teacher training is not always valued by FE teachers, it is placed second to experiential work place learning undertaken on the job with the support of practitioner peers. Secondly, Illeris' workplace learning theory can be used as a lens to explain the rich learning process, and the key elements that contribute to the formation of vocational FE teachers' professional identity.

The chapter now describes the answers to the research's key questions, which have been formed through analysis of the findings, are reviewed and discussed in light of the literature and Illeris' workplace learning theories.

9.2 How do FE teachers view their professional identity?

The succinct answer to this research question is: in two different ways. This study asserts that FE teachers view their professional identity from two differing

perspectives. The first is primarily from the position of their former occupation. The second is from the position of a teacher. Eighteen of the 20 respondents ascribed their identity as being-from either the first or the second, with exactly half adopting each position. Two ascribed to both. These findings broadly concur with Fejes and Köpsén (2012) that FE/VE teachers are positioned at the intersection of occupation and teaching and cross boundaries which in turn influence their professional identity. This also confirms Illeris' (2011) theory that identity changes over time, that it is linked firstly to our current experience as working individuals and secondly, as Bucher and Stelling (1977) also asserted, to the work we do.

The findings suggest that time and occupational status are key factors in the identity position that teachers adopt, as noted also by Fejes and Köpsén (2012). Some respondents claimed that because they had many more years of experience in their former occupation, this held the greater influence over their identity. One lecturer described a colleague who had 40 years of experience as a plumber before entering teaching. Some also described the high degree of passion and commitment they had for their industry as influencing their perspective on their professional identity. For example, the teachers interviewed, who had for many years occupied esteemed senior chefs' positions in hotels, held this view. These teachers with long vocational careers had built up rich vocational knowledge which influenced their identity and teaching practice, confirming ideas to be found in Maxwell (2010b, 2014).

In contrast, other participants, who had much less well-established careers in terms of time spent or relative occupational status in their former roles, tended to position their identity more towards that of teacher, a sports teacher who had a background in coaching, a business teacher with a small amount of banking experience and an equine lecturer who worked in a stable looking after horses were examples of this. This again supports the findings of Fejes and Köpsén (2012) on the importance of time in industry and position held.

9.2.1 Is it distinct to that of other education professionals? and if so how?

Findings from FE teachers in this study suggest that teachers in FE do have a distinct professional identity which is different to other education professionals. Illeris' workplace learning theories support this assertion, as FE colleges are different to

schools and have a different ethos, it will lead to differences in the professional identity of the teachers who work there.

A further reason for vocational FE teachers' identity being different, as cited by the FE teachers in the study, is the typical high degree of engagement they have experienced with work or an occupation, when compared with their counterparts in schools. This finding agrees with those noted in Coley et al (2007) and Maxwell (2010a). Participants argued that the reason for this was the fact that schools and colleges have traditionally had different priorities: colleges and their teachers have prioritised preparing and equipping their learners with skills to progress into work agreeing with Robson et al 2004 and Moodle and Wheelahan (2012), this is not the case for schools. Part of FE teachers' unique identity is the notion of dual professionalism.

9.2.2 Do they ascribe to the notion of dual professionalism, if so how does it impact on their practice?

Findings from the study suggest that dual professionalism is an accepted concept amongst existing FE teachers with the majority of the respondents acknowledging it. Some, however, had not heard this specific phrase used to describe the concept. Two of the teachers in their interviews made use of the term, before it was due to be mentioned in the schedule, when describing their identity. They argued that dual professionalism was one of the reasons that they were different to school teachers. The teachers interviewed described the benefits of it to their practice, stating that it equipped them to teach to a higher standard and to teach in "line with" the "expectations and demands" of their industry. This illustrates how their strong vocational identity has influenced their teaching practice and agrees with the findings of Maxwell (2010b).

Participants in the study also asserted that within very practical vocational courses dual professionalism helped them to incorporate the psychomotor skills they had to teach in their courses. One teacher claimed that he taught to a greater degree by focussing on industry job requirements over and above the course content specifications, believing that this was more important, concurring with studies such as Robson et al (2004), Jephcote et al (2008). This again supports the strength of 'industry' in vocational FE teachers' professional identity and concurs with Dixon et al (2010) that FE teachers' rich vocational experience is brought into their teacher identity and the assertion by

Bucher and Stelling (1977) that professional identity is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has.

In the responses to the question on dual professionalism, cited in section 6.3.1, one participant made a strong argument that could potentially instigate further inquiry into the *practice* of dual professionalism. He stated, that it was so vital for FE teachers to stay in touch with their former profession and developments in their industry, that it should be mandatory for them to regularly return to work. He suggested that one day every week, teachers should come out of college and go to work in their industry. His comments are in broad agreement with Broad (2016) who argued that the number of industry placements in which serving FE teachers engage is low and that further opportunities to engage in industry based CPD should be encouraged. This proposal is discussed in section 9.6.3 of the chapter along with other areas of further research identified.

The assertion that dual professionalism can cause identity conflict was specifically articulated by a small minority of the respondents. Expressing the feeling that FE teachers are caught between two ‘positions’, their occupation and teaching, confirming Orr (2011), Fejes and Köpsén (2012). The division in the opposing views or positions that FE teachers adopt when describing their identity in section 9.2 also suggests that professional identity is complex and not straightforward to articulate.

9.2.3 What professional values shape this identity?

The respondents in the study cited a range of values that they believed were important to them and had shaped their identity as an FE teacher. The most popular value cited being that of preparing learners for the world of work. The second most common response was imparting the knowledge and skills needed for work. These findings, cited in 6.4., build upon and in some cases concur with the finding of Robson et al (2004), Jephcote and Salisbury (2009), Gleeson (2014) and Hodgson et al (2015). One respondent was also conscious that her/his own competence as a practitioner was linked to this value, believing that the employer would in some sense judge his/her practice and teaching skills on the quality of the work produced by the student when they had left college and commenced work.

A further value cited by a quarter of the respondents was giving learners a second chance at education after their negative experience at compulsory schooling confirming findings by Tummons (2010). One respondent was very passionate about this value and saw it as a key element to his identity and role, as the detailed quote in section 6.4.4. highlights. This respondent argued that he believed that his job was to break down the “barrier” that many learners had towards formal education, and offer them “that second chance”. These findings agree with arguments in Robson et al (2004) and Gleeson et al (2015) that FE teachers are hugely committed, caring and passionate about their learners and ‘add value’ beyond just delivering a course of study.

Within the responses that articulated the value of preparation for work was the FE value of improving life chances. FE teachers believe that improving work and career opportunities also leads to greater life chances. An excerpt of the response cited in 6.4.3 summarises this well. This respondent argued that she got into FE to make a difference, she stated “it’s all about helping people to change their lives”.

9.3 How is an FE Teacher’s Professional Identity Constructed?

The answer to this research question is concerned with gaining a better understanding of the journey of FE teachers, specifically *why* and *how* FE teachers enter teaching. The findings in section 7.1 suggest that there is a variety of reasons for FE teachers entering teaching. The most common reason, which over a third of the respondents articulated, was that they were involved in training and teaching others in their previous role in industry. And upon reflection on their career, which the interviews invited, they saw progression into teaching as a natural next step, although for many it was not a conscious decision. The findings of this study support the notion that professional identity formation is a process of ‘becoming’ confirming the work of Coley et al (20003), Maxwell (2010a), and is akin to a ‘trajectory’ (Fejes and Köpsén 2012).

The findings also further develop the arguments on understanding FE teachers’ motivation to start teaching. Only two respondents, described in 7.1.3, were following a purposeful career plan. The rest cited accidental and unplanned entry to teaching, with reasons including a recommendation from a friend, seeing an advert by chance, being headhunted and sustaining an injury. These findings confirm and build upon those of Coley et al (2007), James and Biesta (2007) and Gleeson (2014) cited in section 2.4.1.

The motivation aspect of learning to become a teacher is also a key dimension in Illeris' theory illustrated in figure 8 of section 4.3.6. Findings from this study suggest, however, that if some vocational FE teachers' motivation is low, as the 'unplanned and accidental' entry route suggests, their professional identity position will err towards their former occupation.

All of the respondents, except one, commenced teaching part-time, and three-quarters carried on working in their former occupation during this period. For many of the teachers described in 7.2.3 this period of part-time work engagement continued for over a year and for three participants more than two years. Significantly four of the respondents asserted that they still worked in their industry. They argued that continuing to work only served to benefit their teaching practice and currency of knowledge. All the teachers in the study were then either encouraged by the college to progress into a full-time teaching role or saw it as a natural progression from part-time.

These findings demonstrate that for FE teachers with long-established careers prior to teaching, their work history and ongoing engagement with work is a powerful influence on the development of their professional identity, supporting Broad's (2016) assertions. Firstly, in their early years as a teacher they develop practice through using training and teaching skills which they had developed in industry, highlighted in section 6.3.1 and 7.1.1. Secondly, they use these in an ongoing capacity during the duration of their career, confirming the findings of Maxwell (2010b)

The findings also develop and build upon the limited research into the journey that FE teachers undergo from work to college. They demonstrate the importance of FE teachers engaging with their former occupation, both in the early development of their teaching careers but also in their ongoing professional lives and practice, confirming the work of Fejes and Köpsén (2012) who argued that there are some vocational teachers who retain strong links with their industry. FE teachers in this study believe it to be necessary and beneficial to *them* and ultimately their learners, supporting the proposal of Broad (2016) that FE teachers should continue to engage to improve the learner experience. For this reason, FE lecturer engagement with their occupation is something that needs to be actively developed. As a consequence, creating a national strategy for this within the FE sector forms the main recommendation of this thesis.

This is explained in greater detail in section 9.6.2. Now the discussion moves to teacher training and qualifications.

9.3.1 What is the role of formal teaching qualifications in this process?

Over three-quarters of the teachers reported that they had commenced teaching without any formal teaching qualification confirming statistics cited by Orr, (2012) and Maxwell (2014). The highest teaching qualification of four of the respondents at the point of interview was the basic level 3 proprietary teaching award, which under the 2007 regulations would not be deemed a full teaching qualification.

The majority of FE teachers asserted that their formal teaching qualifications had not impacted significantly on the formation of their professional identity, 12 overall reported a negative experience whilst on the course. The criticisms centred on the course content and lack of practical teaching development. FE teachers argued that the qualification was too theory-focussed, delivered poorly and that it failed to equip them with effective teaching practice or to develop their current skills and knowledge. For some, it was simply a tick box exercise that was required for them to teach.

This key finding can be explained using Illeris' work place learning theories, when examining the impact of learning through vocationally orientated educational activities, such as a teacher training course, he asserted that:

there is a great deal of evidence showing that it is often difficult for the employees to make the connection between the formal course learning and the workplace practices

Illeris (2011:115)

One of the reasons for this, he argues, centres on the contrasting learning environments and spaces that colleges / training providers and workplaces offer, in so much as they have very different "rationales, cultures and existential conditions" (ibid). Participants in the study agreed with Illeris, asserting that they could not make the 'connection' between some of the teacher training content, often overly theory based, and what they *did* in their teaching.

Teachers in this study were critical also of the learning environment and overall culture of the teacher training they received, again supporting Illeris' work mentioned above.

The findings of this thesis suggest that there could be three possible reasons for these perceived negative beliefs about the benefits of teacher training qualifications. The first is the fact that so many teachers began to form and establish their own teaching practice, prior to commencing their teacher training, as highlighted in 7.3.2. Illeris' work suggests that these teachers had already established some form of teacher identity, So in some teachers, when they were told they had to study teaching formally, an "identity defence" would have been triggered in them (Illeris 2011:22). This would have contributed to the negativity reported.

The fact that all the respondents who reported a low or very low opinion of their teacher training (as indicated in Appendix 5) carried out *in service* training would add weight to this argument. Orr and Simmons' (2010) participants argued that teaching and being a student on a teacher training course (in-service) was very demanding, which participants in this study agreed with, which again might well have contributed to the negativity.

Some respondents claimed that they had been teaching longer than some of their teacher trainers and were sceptical about what they would 'know' a view that concurs with Avis et al's (2011) research. Some participants claimed that the teacher trainers did not demonstrate in their own practice and delivery the techniques that they were teaching on the qualifications, thus were poor role models for them.

After reviewing their career trajectories most of the respondents would have been subject to the 2007 regulations making it mandatory to hold or work towards a level four or five teaching qualification. The compulsory nature of their in-service training could have led to some of the negativity held. Illeris argues that powerful workplace learning has to be in some sense driven and owned intrinsically by the individual and that "learning initiatives for adults that come from the outside frequently fail" (Illeris 2011:47). This point is explored further in section 9.4. later in the chapter.

The second reason for this negativity is the finding in 7.3.1 that many FE teachers brought training and teaching skills from their prior experience working in industry and used them when commencing FE teaching, discussed in 9.3.3. The third reason is the most important finding of this thesis: that the most significant factor in FE teachers' professional identity formation is learning from other teachers, which is explored in more detail in 9.3.2 when answering the next research question.

In summary, the majority of FE teachers believed that they had already formed, what they believed to be effective teaching practice before commencing their teacher training so completing a formal teacher qualification was not deemed necessary. Illeris' workplace learning theory on identity and practice formation would support this summary as he argued that identity and practice are not necessarily learned or developed through a qualification. These findings both conflict with and support some of the established literature on FE teacher training and qualifications.

The participants who argued that formal teacher training had not benefitted their teaching practice contradict the broad conclusions of Harkin et al (2003) who stated that on the whole, most FE teachers were supportive of ITT and Orr and Simmons (2010) whose research suggested that their respondents were overwhelmingly positive about their ITT, their teacher trainers and also the theory they had learned. ITT participants in Maxwell's (2010a) study concurred and asserted that their course and training had boosted their confidence and developed their understanding of the FE context.

However, the negative findings of this thesis are also supported by some other studies. Orr (2012) asserted from his research that ITT courses were constraining, too standards based, focussing on compliance as opposed to allowing autonomy and agency. Orr cited teachers who confirmed the findings of this thesis' that they felt it was a 'box they had to tick' to be 'allowed' to teach, agreeing with Fejes and Köpsén (2012). A teaching qualification was the badge that identified them as legitimate members of the teaching community.

Participants in the findings were critical of the amount and type of theory they were exposed to, agreeing with some of the findings of Harkin et al (2003) that theory was

problematic in ITT, and Maxwell (2010a) whose participants were ‘ambivalent’ about the usefulness of the theory aspect of their ITT course.

Maxwell (2010b) stated that teachers in her study saw paperwork as taking primacy over developing pedagogy and that trainee teachers were often denied access to teaching and support from experienced teachers in their workplaces. A study on Australian ITT carried out by Moodle and Wheelahan (2012) was also critical of the mandatory teacher qualification for vocational teachers because of its lack of attention to pedagogy and the manner in which it is delivered. The call for ITT to have at its core a focus on developing pedagogy is also a recommendation from Harkin et al (2003).

As explained in chapter 7, an analysis was carried out to see if there were patterns that lay behind the negative comments about ITT from teachers in terms of the teachers themselves, their workplaces and managers. This table is situated in Appendix 5. It suggests that those teachers who were most negative about ITT were the same ones who had indicated that the most significant impact on their professional identity formation was learning from other experienced practitioners. These teachers also all worked at two particular colleges.

This raised a possible question, had the teachers experienced teacher training from consistent providers? Is there a link between the nature of the ITT and negative experiences? After some investigation it transpired that one of the two colleges where teachers made the most negative comments: number 3 in the table, did not offer teacher training, so the teachers had studied at different institutions with different courses, so there was no apparent link there. The other college, number 1, however did have a teacher training course, with which some of the teachers had engaged. Therefore, broad consistent conclusions from the findings about linking the influence of ITT course and delivery to the lecturers’ negativity are difficult to draw.

Further possible explanations for their negative perceptions is that many of the teachers who participated in the study had different experiences of teacher education courses and modes of study. As Lucas et al (2012) highlighted, the 2007 suite of FE qualifications were of varying types with variations in interpretation of the standards.

Also, it is important to note that the 20 participants were representative of a ‘typical’ group of vocational FE teachers with a significant degree of heterogeneity in terms of demographics but also in experience of different vocations and experience if ITT. Thus the variety of teachers’ background might impact on trying to make general assumptions or conclusions on their training and identity formation, which Harkin et al (2003) found also to be true in larger studies.

9.3.2 *What is the most significant influence on FE professional identity formation?*

The central argument of this thesis is that the most significant influence on FE teachers’ professional identity formation is learning from other FE teachers. Nine respondents cited this as the most important or a significant factor in developing their teacher identity. What they learned, cited in 8.1 and 8.3, included: practical teaching skills, assessment information, communication skills, specific skills for teaching theory, questioning techniques and managing learner behaviour. The learning took place in a variety of situations and took different forms. The most consistent situation cited, was informal and formal lesson observation, in which the teacher was sometimes passive, but also on occasion an active participant, with rich professional discussion at the end. Informal discussion was also prevalent in this learning, where sharing ideas and practices from experienced teachers were passed on informally over a cup of coffee or in a staffroom. The majority of the new teachers actively sought out these learning opportunities and quickly found out who were the ‘best’ teachers to engage with.

Illeris’ theories explain and bring understanding to what the teachers in the study describe was happening. Learning from others through informal networking with peers Illeris’ describes as the ‘community’ element of workplace learning, illustrated in 4.3.2. In the community element he argued that:

The communities may very well be decisive for *what* is learned and not learned and *how* it is learned and thus the attitudes and feelings of learners towards the learning outcome

(Illeris 2011:36, my emphasis)

9.3.3 *The Influence of the workplace: college and the managers*

The findings in 8.4 indicate that at colleges 1 and 3, the managers of the participants when they commenced teaching had created and encouraged these learning opportunities. They had encouraged them to complete peer observations and gave them a reduced timetable to allow for shadowing experienced teachers, they effectively became a key agent in the process. These managers and the climate for development which they had created were examples of what Maxwell (2010a) described as key ‘affordances’ for workplace learning and creating a positive developmental culture (Maxwell 2014) and what Illeris (2011:43) referred to as a “transformative workplace” where learning *can* take place.

Fundamentally, workplace learning takes place in the encounter between the *learning environment* of the workplace and the workers and employees’ learning *potentials*

Illeris (2011:29)

Illeris’ work suggests that these managers had deliberately fostered this correct environment for ‘powerful workplace learning’ to take place as illustrated in his model in section 4.3.6. in what he deemed “the domain of interaction” (Illeris: 43)

Findings in 7.3.9 suggest that the transformative workplaces found in colleges 1 and 3 involve key managers positioning new teachers in staff rooms, with experienced practitioners, encouraging new teachers to shadow and work with experienced teachers. These colleges also had dedicated staff development opportunities including whole college staff development days.

These were the colleges which contained the highest number of participants who described their identity as primarily being ‘teacher focussed’. It is suggested that there is a link here - transformative college workplaces and managers purposefully investing in new practitioners are influencing the teaching identity and formation of practice in a significant way in new FE teachers. This point is further explored below in 9.3.4.

The length of the learning period differed for each individual, but all of the teachers in the follow-up interviews reported that it lasted throughout their first year of teaching.

What these vocational FE teachers were reporting can be described as a rich, organic learning process, created through informal networking with peers. Although each of them was assigned an ‘official’ mentor, many believed that this was not sufficient. Lecturers argued that they wanted to get a range of opinions and be exposed to a variety of teaching practice, not just limited to their formal mentor, so they then actively pursued experienced teachers and opportunities to learn from them.

Significantly, lecturers reported that they learned strategies from teachers outside their specialism or industry for example the construction lecturer who learned a lot about assessment from a catering teacher. These lecturers reported that they were willing to take risks to explore and utilise different techniques that they observed others deploying. They acknowledged that sometimes they observed poor practice, but this also enriched their understanding of FE teaching, and gave them confidence that others made mistakes, in the same way as they did. Two of the lecturers commented on the ongoing significance that their learning had had on their professional careers, asserting that they still actively sought opportunities to learn from others. One teacher still taught with his door open, believing that any peer should be able to drop in if they wished.

These findings support some of the recommendations made by academics working in FE teacher training which are discussed in chapter three, especially point 3.3.12, which cites Gleeson et al (2015), who argued that observation of teaching should be a supportive developmental process. This ‘ideal’ process was much more informal; it happened more regularly, it led to real, long-term changes in practice, a process that appears very similar to what participants described in this study.

Participants in this study also described learning, albeit in an informal manner, through the professional dialogue they engaged in after observation of teachers, a process akin to what Lahiff (2017) described as the ‘learning space’ of feedback. The majority of participants believed that this learning from others, primarily through observation, had developed their teaching practice in the most significant way, again agreeing with

Lahiffs' assertions. And for some, as discussed above, it had developed their practice to a greater degree than their formal teacher training.

This finding also confirms the professional identity theories, such as Bucher and Stelling (1977:8) who asserted that identity is closely related to "work related others or the reference group" and Illeris' workplace theory described this in more detail, as I have pointed out in 9.4.

9.3.4 Possible influence of participants' demographics and occupation on identity

As highlighted in section 8.5 of the findings, there is a link between age and professional identity formation. FE teachers aged between 30 and 40, the majority of the sample, were the teachers most negative about their teaching qualification and those also citing learning from other teachers as most significant in their identity formation. Of the ten teachers in this age bracket, 7 positioned their identity from a teaching standpoint. One possible conclusion for this is the fact that their identity formed in their former occupation was not as strong, and open to be changed, more so than with older practitioners who had spent longer in their former occupation, agreeing with Fejes and Köpsén (2012).

The gender of the teachers and their responses was analysed for themes, reported in section 8.5. The majority of the respondents were male, approximately two thirds. The female teachers' views on professional identity did not concur with the males, they were split quite evenly between self-development, the workplace and teacher qualification as the most significant influence on their professional identity. The males on the other hand were the teachers who were more negative about teaching qualifications and who cited learning from other teachers as the most significant influence on identity formation.

It is difficult to formulate potential reasons for the difference in beliefs in males and females as it was not part of the research questions and falls beyond the scope and scale of this work. However key questions to explore could be; firstly whether there is something in the differences between the way men and woman *learn* and their *attitude* to learning, throughout the course of their working life. Secondly, it might be useful to explore whether men and woman have different views on learning, through academic

qualifications as opposed to less formal learning opportunities. These questions could form the basis for an interesting further research project.

In this study it did not appear that the location (for example rural or urban) or student numbers and size of the college, influenced the findings. However, as mentioned above, managers and the college environment did. In college 1 and 3, leaders and local managers had created a 'transformative workplace' fertile for teacher development.

Learning Potentials

A further interesting finding to note is the data in 8.5, which suggests that in colleges 1 and 3 they were also attracting teachers who had an intrinsic desire to learn, develop and find the best practitioners in the college to aid their teacher professional identity. Illeris described the central role that the individual has in workplace learning, situated in his model illustrated in section 4.3.1, Illeris refers to this as learning potential:

The concept of learning potential refers to the life of the individual as a continuous learning process that builds on the complex experiences of the previous life course and which is given direction by the forward looking perspectives.

Illeris (2011:29)

Therefore the findings suggest, that these two 'ideal' scenarios or elements came together for the respondents in this study and produced what Illeris referred to as: 'powerful workplace learning' in the teachers.

A further hypothesis suggested for *why* the key assertion of this study has come about: that the most significant influence on FE teachers' professional identity formation is learning from other FE teachers, could be that vocational teachers have experienced this form of learning before, in their industry. As a result, this learning from others has become their preferred style or the learning they view as most beneficial, because it replicates what they did in their former occupation. Illeris refers to this in his theory around the individual element to workplace learning and learning 'potential' in the quote above in the phrase: 'learning process that builds on the complex experiences of the previous life course'.

This hypothesis can also be supported to a certain degree from a theme inferred from the data and described in the findings in section 8.1.4. and 8.5 that is that the college (number 2) which contained those lecturers citing this influence was the one in which the interviewees all came from one industry or occupation sector: hospitality and catering. Some of the participants articulated that they taught in college in the same way that they had learned in industry. It is also important to note that as an industry, hospitality and catering has always had a very high engagement with workplace learning and apprenticeships, indicating that a culture or ethos of learning from other experienced individuals exists. This hypothesis is a potential further area of enquiry that has arisen out of the findings. It should be noted however that the data analysis in section 8.5 apart from hospitality does not suggest any further links between the study's key findings and other specific teachers' occupational groups or vocations.

9.3.5 To what degree does an FE teacher's former occupation impact on their professional teacher identity?

Findings presented in 6.2 report that FE teachers believed that their professional identity is distinct to their counterparts in compulsory schooling, because of the fact that the majority have worked for a considerable period of time in their industry or occupation. This is significant, firstly in the way that lecturers perceive their identity, either positioned in their former occupation or within teaching, as explored in 9.2., and it is also significant in influencing the formation of their teaching practice when commencing their teaching career in FE. It is especially important when considered in light of the fact that over three-quarters of teachers commenced their FE teaching without any formal teaching qualifications or training, as highlighted in 9.3.1. To compensate for this lack of training, lecturers reported that they drew upon a range of experience and skills to develop their practice. The most common being was using their own experience of receiving and delivering training within their former workplace. They asserted, that in a sense they taught in the way that they had been taught in their industry and had taught others to do their job, see section 6.3.1 and 7.1.1. Some lecturers also reported that they had developed a hybrid teaching practice. This consisted of elements of their former occupation and experimental teaching using 'trial and error'.

Much of this was informed by the techniques and strategies learned from other teachers described above in 9.3.2.

Teachers in the interviews articulated their passion, firstly for the occupation that they taught, but also for sharing the knowledge and skills that they had gained in their industry with others. They believed that equipping learners with the skills and knowledge to work in their industry would ultimately improve those learners' life chances.

In summary the evidence presented in the findings suggests that FE teachers' practice is developed both informally through learning from others and using their own experience from former jobs. In this sense they are 'self-taught'. The chapter now analyses the findings in light of Illeris' (2011) theories of workplace learning.

9.4 Application of workplace learning theories to FE professional identity formation.

Applying theories of workplace learning to the findings of the study has facilitated a theoretical *understanding* of, and brought *meaning* to them. It has also contributed to *explaining* why these particular findings have emerged.

9.4.1 Competence development and assimilative learning in new FE teachers

Illeris (2011), cited in 4.2.2, argued that competence development and the application of competence in specific situations was a key goal of workplace learning. This thesis suggests that new FE teachers develop their competence to teach through exposure to other teachers' practice and building upon their own competence gained from their former occupation. Significantly Illeris asserted that competence does not necessarily flow from the acquisition of a qualification, which concurs with the finding presented here that teacher training and qualifications are not a significant factor in professional identity formation. Linked to competence is assimilative learning, described in 4.2.4. The concept of assimilative learning according to Illeris (2011) is concerned with placing new knowledge within a framework or structure of previous knowledge. This aspect is again particularly pertinent when analysing the findings of this study. Assimilative learning is what is being described by FE teachers in this study who

asserted, that when they commenced teaching, they drew upon the knowledge and skills of training that they had developed in their previous career and brought this together with their new teaching skills to inform their emerging teaching practice.

9.4.2 Motivation to learn to become a teacher

The findings of this study concerning what motivates individuals to enter FE teaching, cited in 9.3 are variable and inconclusive. FE teachers when questioned provided many different reasons for deciding to enter teaching, there was not one significant answer. Accidental and unplanned entry to teaching was a common theme, with individual reasons including a recommendation from a friend, seeing an advert by chance, being headhunted and sustaining an injury. An element of motivation is the qualification requirement for FE teaching discussed in 3.4.3.

The overall negativity that participants expressed when questioned about their experience and the usefulness of studying towards and achieving a teaching qualification may be explained by workplace learning theory. It is possible that for many experienced practitioners, the *mandatory* teaching qualification became what Illeris (2011) referred to as a barrier to learning, which created a certain degree of resistance and lack of motivation to achieve, especially because the majority of the teachers interviewed had successfully begun teaching at the time of commencing the qualification. Many teachers in the study argued they did not see the value of it, that it did not lead to better teaching practice, rather it became simply a matter of gaining a qualification or certificate. Therefore within this workplace learning the teaching qualification, was not viewed as a key ‘incentive’, which Illeris asserted it needs to be, in order to be effective. It is important to note that this assertion can only be inferred from the data, as the interview schedule did not ask specifically whether the requirement to gain a teaching qualification was a demotivating factor and a poor incentive for learning.

The findings from FE teachers in this study indicate firstly, that the environment for workplace learning in colleges is inconsistent. Opportunities for rich workplace

learning are variable and often dependent on individual managers to initiate and encourage.

Secondly, the evidence presented in the findings indicates that the majority of new FE teachers took the initiative and actively sought to develop their own practice through building on the skills learned in their former occupation and took opportunities to engage with other teachers. This desire to learn and grow, demonstrates what Illeris (2011) referred to as individuals' 'learning potentials', which is described in section 4.5.1.

What these teachers described in more detail in the follow-up interviews, was the development of informal networking with peers to discuss and share practice, which confirm Illeris' assertions about the importance of the community role in workplace learning, albeit in a more informal manner. The result of these interactions, the findings suggest, was professional identity formation.

9.4.3 The formation 'point' of FE professional identity

It is the central assertion of this thesis, that within this interaction with other teachers, as new FE teacher's practice develops, professional identity is formed. From a theoretical perspective this is the point Illeris (2011) referred to as the 'domain of interaction', which is the learning space, where in *reality* professional practice and identity is formed.

The findings presented in section 6.1 suggest that FE teachers' professional identity is complex and not fixed, confirming Illeris' (2011) assertion about "partial identity" described in 4.5.4. Evidence in this thesis supports the assertion that FE teacher identity is divided into two positions and the findings suggest that it is at this interaction point, when individual FE teachers adopt their identity position, either giving primacy to their former occupation or to teaching.

Having discussed the key findings of the study the chapter now considers improvements that could have been made, how the findings may be applied to FE professional practice and disseminated and used in the wider FE context.

9.5 Potential improvements to the thesis and limitations

If the research was to be repeated there would be some minor improvements that could be implemented, both to the design and timeframe for writing up the findings.

For a number of reasons there was a lengthy time-lapse between carrying out the interviews and the transcribing process. This led to a delay in analysing the findings and drawing out the key themes. When reviewing the findings some unexpected themes emerged. One, for example, was a relatively consistent motivating factor for entering FE teaching which is not mentioned in the literature. This was described as involvement in teaching others in their former occupation. If the analysis had been completed sooner a possible further set of interviews could have been arranged to explore this factor in greater depth.

If the research were to be repeated consideration would be given to changing the data collection method, possibly to a survey distributed on a large scale. This survey could be administered to a large number of teachers, who commenced teaching in the last ten years in the sector, in colleges across a wide geographical area. This would add greater external validity to the findings, shoring up the generalisability of these findings from many teachers in a greater number of colleges.

A limitation of the study and its findings which needs to be highlighted is the work or occupational background of the sample teachers used. All the teachers who participated were by their own definition ‘vocational teachers’ and had worked, many for considerable amounts of time, in the occupation area that they now taught. Therefore to assert that the study’s key tenets were representative of *all* FE teachers would be open to challenge, as there are a minority of teachers in FE who teach more academic or applied subjects not so clearly linked to an occupation. Thus the new knowledge that this study brings forth is applicable to vocational FE teachers only, not to academic or non-vocational FE teachers.

9.6 Implications of the findings for wider professional practice

9.6.1 Informing future FE teacher training

The findings bring new knowledge to the debate which considers how to effectively train and develop industry experts in their journey to becoming lecturers in the FE sector. No longer should the central premise be, that an FE teacher's identity and practice is wholly developed through completion of a largely academic teaching qualification. This thesis suggests that the emphasis needs to shift from teacher qualifications towards a more peer-focussed lengthy period of induction and training for new FE teachers. A process driven by the individual, as Gleeson et al (2015) suggest, and supported by these findings.

Furthermore, these findings suggest that fundamental to the process of developing practice in new entrants to FE teaching is exploiting fully the knowledge and expertise that is to be found in their peers: other experienced teachers in colleges across the sector. Central to this process is the formation point, the domain of interaction, when new FE teachers engage with experienced lecturers and professional identity and practice is formed. For this to happen, FE colleges need to provide meaningful opportunities in terms of space and time for this rich interaction to occur. The teachers in this study had unknowingly adopted the style of learning that the senior leader cited in Gleeson et al.s' work desired:

“ a community of practitioners who actually valued the process of helping and supporting one another and would happily go in and out of each other's lesson, and if we had daily conversations between teachers about what's working and what's not and idea sharing happening on an informal basis, not a formal basis”

“In my view that would be the best possible environment, a community of professionals, self-reflecting, sharing, talking, creatively thinking together and talking about their experiences would be wonderful.”

Gleeson et al (2015:85)

However, within this peer learning strategy I acknowledge that careful consideration needs to be made to the recording and evidencing of the interaction with others and its impact on practice, to ensure that the teacher has a meaningful record. This record will be especially important when teachers move colleges, so that it can be considered as credible evidence of teacher training for future employers.

The sector must acknowledge, as this study and others have asserted that FE professionalism is unique and different to other sectors of education. For this reason, the practice of trying to apply processes and initiatives used to train teachers from the compulsory schooling sectors to FE is unlikely to be successful.

9.6.2 Creating an ongoing FE teacher CPD strategy embedded in industry

The new training process must also acknowledge, recognise and most crucially *exploit* the rich professional identity, knowledge and practice that many practitioners have forged whilst working in their former industry. This needs to happen not just at the beginning of their teaching career as they look back to their immediate experience preceding their start to FE teaching. It must be ongoing engagement with their industry. Perhaps, even to the radical degree suggested by one respondent in the interviews in section 6.3.1 that every FE vocational teacher should spend one day every week working in their occupation.

This proposed strategy is particularly pertinent, as at the time of writing significant changes to post-16 qualifications in the form of a distinct Technical level pathway including degree level apprenticeships mentioned in section 1.4.6 are being introduced. In which FE colleges, their highly experienced vocational teachers and enduring links to industry are at the heart of the strategy. FE colleges and their teachers' industry focus will be central to the qualification delivery and ensuring that each learner successfully achieves the significant amount of industry placement required.

The proposed CPD strategy should also include *ongoing* peer review and sharing of practice between vocational FE teachers, this could involve the key elements presented by the participants in this thesis: informal observation of other peers' lessons, team-teaching in lessons, professional dialogue and discussion with other teachers. This should involve teachers visiting lessons and sharing practice with teachers across vocational areas, other than their own. Practically this CPD strategy could be encouraged in colleges by having dedicated sharing and development weeks spread across the academic year. One key element of the strategy would need to be a system of teachers logging and reflecting upon the new ideas, skills and practices being observed, discussed and then adopted.

9.6.3 Application and dissemination of the findings

There are a number of ways in which the findings of this thesis may be used to realise some of the implications described in the previous section within the wider discourse of professionalism in FE.

9.6.4 A new FE teacher training model

The first implication, as suggested in 9.6.1, is to inform future development of FE teacher training and specifically to create a model that centres on the two central tenets of this thesis: peer learning from others and exploiting previous teaching skills developed from industry and occupational backgrounds. Part of the new model would be to change the discourse on FE teacher training, which currently, places achieving a teaching qualification as the primary means of developing professional practice.

These findings also suggest that colleges and managers need to actively promote communities of learning, involving experienced teachers sharing with inexperienced teachers and provide the space and time for reflective discussion. To realise the following:

“establishing a culture across the FE sector in which the nurturing and development of new teachers is seen as an essential and integral feature of the FE workplace and, as such, is valued and supported by teachers and management alike”.

(Dixon et al 2010)

In addition, more meaningful CPD which involves extensive engagement with former industries needs be encouraged and championed by college leaders.

However, in order to achieve these recommendations and improvements, certain key FE stakeholders and organisations need to be made aware of the findings of the research and to see the credibility and potential usefulness of them in improving the effectiveness of FE teacher development. This raises the issue of dissemination.

The first opportunity to disseminate the findings of the study is to share it with the four colleges that were selected in the research design. The abstract and key findings will be

sent to the principals of the college and a meeting will be sought with them and their quality managers or the individuals responsible for staff development. The four principals may also be able to share the findings in their engagement with other principals and stakeholders in FE.

At the author's college, the case study organisation for the earlier institution focused study, the key findings will be presented at the scholarship platform event. This event is held termly and used as an opportunity for lecturers' research to be shared, questioned and critiqued by peers and senior managers at the college. The findings will also be submitted to the internal scholarship journal published twice-yearly

In order to influence the discourse of professionalism on a larger, national scale within further education, the findings will need to be widely circulated. To achieve this it is proposed that the thesis be developed into a shorter academic paper. Then there are several initial possibilities for dissemination. Firstly, it is proposed to gain exposure of the findings through the new professional body for the FE sector: the Society for Education and Training, part of the Education and Training Foundation, through publication in their quarterly journal 'Intuition'. The body is very active in encouraging its members to engage in research themselves into the skills and FE sector. The timing of this research is particularly pertinent as the body has just published its own research into career trends in the sector (ETF 2017), although this report does not comment on professional identity formation. It does however, concur with one of the findings of this study, that colleges are inconsistent in providing opportunities for rich work-placed learning, especially for new teachers.

The paper will be submitted for consideration by academics and researchers in the field of further education who are part of the Centre for Post-14 Education and Work based at the Institute of Education, University College London, with a view to it possibly being shared at a networking event for the Centre.

The key purpose of the dissemination is to generate discussion and feedback from experienced FE professionals on the conclusions and to encourage FE colleges to adopt or try out the proposed strategy for new teachers coming into their college.

9.7 Contribution to the researcher's professional development

This research project and the consequent thesis has been extremely helpful in how I view my own professional development as a practitioner researcher working in FE. During the thesis research and writing I have experienced the turbulence of the sector referred to in the introduction. My job role has been at risk of redundancy twice and changed three times, with each change incorporating greater responsibilities as a manager, thus causing me to empathise with the uncertainty of the FE teacher profession.

Engaging with the theory and practice of workplace learning and professional identity formation has forced me to interpret what I see at my college and workplace through a different lens. The more that I view everyday incidents in my college through the lens of my research conclusions, the more meaning I am able to construct into *why* they occur. For example, I see the frustration that occurs when FE teachers' workplaces do not support meaningful workplace learning and when teacher development is not prioritised. Positively, when teachers share ideas and practice I see the outworking of Illeris' theory, the domain of action and rich workplace learning.

In my capacity as a manager who is able to influence new teacher development I am actively moving away from simply organising teachers' progression onto a formal teacher training qualification. Now I am keen to encourage and prioritise the development of peer learning strategies through the development of informal peer-driven networks for new teachers in my department and recommend they be adopted across the college.

Having immersed myself in FE teachers' professional lives and experiences in this thesis, and my former research (Smithers 2013), I have learned much about FE teachers. I now recognise the richness, importance and value that a well-established career in a vocational area, together with key professional 'teacher' attributes, can contribute to learning for students in FE colleges across the country. I have come to realise that the professional identity, that teachers of vocational subjects hold, is a unique strength of the FE sector, and that it must be nurtured and encouraged. FE lecturers have so much to offer their learners from their own experience, knowledge and skills gained in their profession. It is for this reason that I want every vocational

teacher that I am responsible for to be regularly, actively engaged with their former industry, to maintain this strength, using the format highlighted in 9.6.2.

The thesis and engagement with the overall professional doctorate degree has been a very rich positive experience for my own professionalism. It has afforded me opportunities to meet contemporary professionals, engaging in professional dialogue, in various different colleges, and to have critical engagement with theory and practice. Perhaps most importantly it has afforded me time and *space*, away from my day-to-day role, to reflect critically on what I encounter within the FE sector. I see this as of key importance to my own development as a professional and it has aided my career progression in the field to senior leadership. It has also raised further research questions.

9.8 Further possible research

There are several areas of interest that have arisen from this research that warrant further detailed inquiry.

9.8.1 FE teachers as role models

Some of the lecturers in the interviews spoke of being role models to their students. They asserted that their former occupational role, their identity for example as a chef, plumber or business owner, was a powerful motivating factor for their students. Their achievement of a successful career was something that their students aspired towards. The concept of teachers being role models, as an element of FE identity, emerged from responses to the questions concerning dual professionalism. The lecturers who used the phrase saw it as a strength of dual professionals. This confirms the limited evidence in the literature, (Robson 1998a, Jephcote and Salisbury 2009) which suggests that FE teachers are role models. Furthermore, it was not just in their occupational and professional identity that FE teachers believed they were role models to learners, for some it was also in their educational history.

Further research in this area would be useful, especially if it could investigate this assertion from the learner's perspective, particularly to ascertain how exactly the lecturer's former identity is perceived and discovered. For example, is their biography

made available for the students to view, akin to a HE lecturer in university, or is it something learners actively pursue through questions? The other perspective of this research could be investigating the educational biography of the lecturers, specifically their academic attainment, whether they had engaged in further education or vocational training, and were thus able to empathise with their learners, as some of the findings in this thesis suggest.

9.8.2 FE teachers' construction of their own pedagogy

A further significant issue for FE teacher professional practice development, which has arisen from the findings, and could potentially warrant further research, is the belief that when vocational FE teachers start teaching, they construct their own pedagogy. They effectively 'learn by doing', suggesting that when they commence they are effectively self-taught. The inquiry could investigate what specific factors influenced this pedagogy formation. For example, how did their occupational background influence it? What were the barriers they had to surmount? And how did they manage teacher administration? Linked to this is the hypothesis mentioned in 9.3.2 which warrants further research- do vocational teachers adopt the same style of learning from others when commencing teaching because that is what they had experienced in their former occupation?

Differing views on teacher training qualifications

As highlighted in 9.3.4, the sample produced different views and beliefs from male and female FE teachers on the value and influence that FE teacher training qualifications have on professional identity formation and teaching practice. Further research could also be pursued on whether men and woman have different views on learning, whether one group prefers to learn, through formal academic qualifications as opposed to less formal learning opportunities. This further area of enquiry could be pursued possibly by researching a much larger sample of FE teachers.

9.9 Concluding Comments

Leading academics in the field in the last two decades have highlighted the need for a greater understanding of the journey that FE teachers undergo and the need for a better induction and support for new teachers (Robson 1998b). They have also suggested that during this process their learning is of primacy (Lucas and Unwin 2009). This was the rationale for this work as it began. This thesis presents findings that bring new knowledge to the understanding of the vocational FE teacher's journey and to the formal body of work concerning FE teacher professional identity formation.

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Appendix 1: Research participants' details

Number	College Number	Years in FE teaching	Vocational / Professional Background.	Age bracket
1	1	7	Construction- plasterer	50-60
2	1	10	Construction- brick	30-40
3	1	9	Building design	30-40
4	1	4	Business management	30-40
5	1	6	Business management	20-30
6	2	2	Culinary science	30-40
7	2	2	Hospitality management	50-60
8	2	2	Chef	40-50
9	2	11	Chef	30-40
10	2	10	Chef	50-60
11	3	1	Equine, stable manager	20-30
12	3	6	Horticulture and garden design	40-50
13	3	10	Sport	30-40
14	3	10	Sport	30-40
15	3	6	Photography	30-40
16	4	5	Engineer	40-50
17	4	9	Aviation, travel & tourism	30-40
18	4	7	Management	30-40
19	4	10	Motor vehicle	30-40
20	4	3	Life-skills & employability	40-50

Second Interview Details

Number 3 = Interviewee A

Number 12 = Interviewee B

Number 14 = Interviewee C

Number 1 = Interviewee D

Number 9 = Interviewee E

Appendix 2: Schedule of Interview Questions

- 1) Please describe what your day-to-day professional practices are? - those tasks and duties which you carry out in your day-to-day teaching role in college.

Prompt what are the main elements of your everyday teaching practice?

- 2) Can you tell me about your journey into FE teaching? or how did you learn to become a teacher?

-What was the role of a formal teaching qualification in that process?

-What was the role of the FE college workplace / peers / colleagues in that process?

-Which had the greatest impact on your teacher development?

- 3) Can you describe your professional values- What is important to you as an FE teacher?

-What do you believe were the key influences on shaping your values as a teacher?

-Influence of teaching qual – workplace , other..

- 4) What are the internal and external pressures found in FE that you feel impact on your professional practice most profoundly?

Prompt- Government policy, money, targets, economy, Ofsted.

-Students achievement and retention.

- 5) In your day-to-day teaching practice how do you cope with or negotiate all these pressures that you have?

- 6) What do you understand by Professional identity of an FE teacher, how do you describe your identity, for example to someone you have just met?

-What are the key elements of that identity?

-What do you think has shaped your identity?

Prompt:

Think about what is important to you, why you chose to be a teacher.

Are FE teachers 'different' compared to a teacher in School?

Are you aware of dual professionalism?

Does it create any issues for your practice?

- 7) Are there any critical incidents relating to your own professional practice, that you have experienced?

Prompt- with colleagues, managers, students etc

- 8) In your career has there been times when your professionalism has been challenged / undermined or your judgements questioned?

Prompt- by your line manager, parents, colleagues, senior managers

- 9) What are the everyday situations that you find yourself in that you have to make professional judgements?

Appendix 3: Follow up Interviews Schedule of Questions

In the original interview you described the most significant element of your journey to becoming an FE teacher as ‘learning off other teachers in the college’, I want to explore that in greater detail.

Q) How did the learning off other teachers ‘idea’ come about?

Sub Q: Who initiated / created the idea?

Q) What form did the learning take?

Q) How often would interaction take place?

Prompt- was it ad hoc, regular e.g. once a fortnight?

Q) Approximately how long did the ‘learning off others’ phase last?

Q) Would you describe this as informal ‘mentoring’?

Sub Q: Why / why not?

Q) Was there a difference to learning in this way to how you learned skills in your former industry?

Sub Q: How did you learn and gain your skills while working in your former industry?

Prompt- Individualistic / Collaborative / Hierarchical?

Any other comments?

Appendix 4 : FE Colleges used in the Study

College	Location	Size & Number of Students	Notes
1	East London adjacent big densely populated town, and wards of high social deprivation.	Large college with a cohort of 12,500 students	'Gazelle' college invested highly in STEM provision Specialist areas construction and business.
2	Central London college highly affluent area	Large college with a cohort of 14,000 students	Draws students from wide geographical area. Subject specialism, hospitality and catering.
3	Rural college in mid-Essex, surrounded by small villages.	Medium sized college with 8500 students, including over 1000 HE students.	Specialising in land- based curriculum and HE provision.
4	Located in the centre of a medium sized new town in north Essex. Surrounding areas of high unemployment.	Medium sized college with 7000 students, high percentage of adults at 46%.	Has a focus on adult functional skills. Access to HE

Appendix 5: Summary of Lecturers' Background and Responses.

No	College No	Years in FE teaching. Male (m) Female (F)	Vocational / Background.	Age Group	Teach Qualification & delivery mode	Position View Identity: Vocation/ Teacher	Biggest Influence on Teacher Identity	Degree of Influence of Teaching Qual on Practice / Identity: High, Med, Low
1 (D)	1	7 (M)	Construction - plasterer	50-60	Cert Ed In-service	Vocation	Other teachers	Low
2	1	10 (M)	Construction - brick	30-40	Cert Ed In-service	Teacher	FE workplace	Low
3 (A)	1	9 (M)	Building design	30-40	PGCE In-service	Teacher	Other teachers	V. Low
4	1	4 (M)	Business management	30-40	DTLLS In-service	Vocation	Self-development	High
5	1	6 (F)	Business management	20-30	PGCE Pre-service	Teacher	FE workplace	Med
6	2	2 (F)	Culinary science	30-40	PTLLS In-service	Vocation	Self-development	N/A
7	2	2 (M)	Hospitality management	50-60	PGCE Pre-service	Teacher	Other teachers	Med
8	2	2 (M)	Chef	40-50	PTLLS In-service	Both/Equal	Other teachers	N/A
9 (E)	2	11 (M)	Chef	30-40	Cert Ed In-service	Vocation	Other teachers	Med
10	2	10 (M)	Chef	50-60	DTLLS In-service	Vocation	Other teachers	Low
11	3	1 (F)	Equine, stable manager	20-30	PTLLS In-service	Teacher	Self-development	N/A
12 (B)	3	6 (M)	Horti-culture and garden design	40-50	DTLLS In-service	Vocation	Other teachers	Low
13	3	10 (M)	Sport	30-40	PGCE In-service	Teacher	Other teachers	Low
14 (C)	3	10 (M)	Sport	30-40	PGCE In-service	Teacher	Self development	V.Low
15	3	6 (M)	Photography	30-40	PGCE Pre-service	Both/Equal	FE workplace	Low
16	4	5 (M)	Engineer	40-50	PGCE Pre-service	Vocation	FE Workplace	Med
17	4	9 (F)	Aviation, travel & tourism	30-40	DTLLS In-service	Vocation	Combination Teach Qual +	High
18	4	7 (F)	Management	30-40	PGCE In-service	Teacher	Combination Teach Qual +	Low

19	4	10 (F)	Motor vehicle	40-50	PTLLS In-service	Teacher	Combination Teach Qual +	N/A
20	4	3 (F)	Life-skills & employ-ability	40-50	Undertaking DTLLS In-service	Teacher	FE workplace	N/A

Total Males 13, Females 7

Second Interview Details

Number 3 = Interviewee A

Number 12 = Interviewee B

Number 14 = Interviewee C

Number 1 = Interviewee D

Number 9 = Interviewee E