

**Rethinking professional development observations of  
HE lecturers: Cases of the unorthodox**

**Martin Compton**

**UCL: Institute of Education**

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## **Declaration**

I, Martin John Compton, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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## **Abstract**

Drivers for improving teaching in Higher Education (HE) may be slowed by convention, conservatism and a sense of academic autonomy but are nonetheless inexorable. Formal programmes, such as Post Graduate Certificates in HE (PGCerts) for teaching academics, are still relatively nascent. The tension between academic autonomy and accountability is mirrored by the core tension of purpose when it comes to all types of observation of teaching and learning (OTL) used in HE, including those used within PGCerts. In this climate, some Academic Developers (ADs) who lead training programmes are experimenting with approaches to observation that deviate from an orthodoxy characterised by an emphasis on observee learning through feedback by a colleague on a teaching session. This study focusses on three cases of unorthodox approaches to professional learning designed to develop those with teaching responsibilities in HE from three very different universities. Case one examines a model of observation that widens the vista of observation beyond face to face teaching and asserts particular value in observer learning. Case two explores a system that extends and revitalises 'microteaching' and Case three analyses a scheme where students review teaching and ancillary work of lecturers.

As a qualitative study, this exploration of cases of unorthodox observation seeks to understand how and why each is organised and the contextual drivers and impediments that shape AD thinking and the observation schemes they design and oversee. Of equal importance and fundamental for contrast and depth, within each case and comparatively across cases, is the experience of each observation system by those participating. Using Activity Theory as a framework for both data collection and analysis, the data has been used to narrate, interpret and critique each approach and then draw conclusions about actual and potential effectiveness. This, in turn, illuminates broader conclusions about academic development, professional learning in HE and the broader observation landscape.

The findings show that breaking from the orthodoxy necessarily reflects the culture of the institution, can lead to positive (and sometimes unanticipated) outcomes and reinforces the imperative to question underpinning purpose and design of all

observation schemes. Surveillance, compulsion, voluntarism, collegiality and developing self-efficacy are all key lenses of the analysis. Beyond these case-specific findings and conclusions, the thesis presents an original contribution to practice in the form of an analytical framework (The 4 Ms Observation Audit) for ADs (or anyone overseeing or designing OTL schemes) that can be used to appraise existing approaches and/or as a basis for the creation of new schemes, whether orthodox or innovative.

## Impact statement

I believe the thesis that follows contributes to knowledge and professional practice in a number of ways. The process and outcomes have had a significant constructive impact on my own professional role and I hope they will also positively impact on the work of others in HE.

The accounts of unorthodox approaches to OTL, in three cases from a relatively objective perspective, provide a framework, context, rationale and critique of each. Each on its own, when disseminated, may be of interest to ADs considering similar innovations or seeking to refresh existing OTL schemes. More broadly, the comparative conclusions, rather than the specifics, may be of interest to anyone involved in designing, promoting or facilitating observation as a developmental tool in any educational context from schools to further education and HE. I intend disseminating these conclusions via both publication and presentation at AD-oriented conferences and network events as well as in contexts where OTL is focal. AD participants in all three cases (plus the pilot) said the process had given them cause to consider more precisely the 'how' and 'why' of observations they use and promote.

I have asked questions about the purpose and potential outcomes of unorthodox OTL and in so doing provide a lens through which we can perceive *all* OTL. It reveals, for example, that observation anxiety and resistance transcend evaluative OTL but impediments can be diminished by positive experience, repetition and a clearly-articulated, subject-oriented rationale. In the same way that I have been informed by research from different educational sectors, I imagine these cases would be of interest beyond HE and certainly outside the exclusivity of UK HE lecturer education programmes. For example, I have already advised colleagues at two international partner HE institutions (in Trinidad & Tobago and Egypt) on the development of their peer observation schemes.

The thesis also adds to our understanding of three very different academic development contexts and, therefore, how the cultural milieu impacts the ways in which ADs need to work. It exemplifies the conceptual 'knife edge' (Brew, 2011) of AD work

by illustrating what can enable or constrain practice, notably in relation to OTL. This is an area where there is very little research, particularly from an outsider perspective and it has already been a useful prompt for discussions amongst colleagues at my own institution and beyond.

Whilst the focus here has been on unorthodox OTL used for lecturer development, this work offers a way of classifying and perceiving 'other' observations otherwise clustered in a singular fashion in the most oft-cited categorisation of OTL (Gosling, 2005). There is value in reflecting on the epistemology of any developmental OTL system and the ontological positions of those who are subjects and those meditating. Consideration of purpose and who can benefit should be central but, as will be shown in this thesis, the contextual and cultural milieu and the OTL mechanisms need deliberate consideration too. I hope HE colleagues find this classification a useful heuristic and, more importantly, can see how applying a critical eye (with a view to modification) could benefit entire cohorts of trainee lecturers or perhaps even colleagues across their institutions.

Those types of OTL that challenge the orthodoxy in some way can be seen as breaking from that orthodoxy according to one or more of the four elements: Milieu, Motive, Mediator and Mechanism. Whilst analysis of each case has been informed by Activity Theory, it has become clear to me that those four elements lend themselves more readily to a convenient heuristic for analysis. Although still in development, I have produced a framework in the form of the AD-targeted '4Ms Observation Audit' which provides a theory and research-informed structure for existing OTL appraisal as a mechanism for refreshing or completely overhauling practice.

From a methodological perspective, this research adds to the educationally-oriented studies that employ Activity Theory and offers a study that found value in conceptualising OTL schemes as activity systems. I anticipate disseminating through publication the individual cases and broader conclusions relating to the classification heuristic and OTL analytical/ developmental tool.

Above all, by embarking on this research and making the focus known at my own workplace, I have already effected considerable changes to the OTL used on our PGCert HE and have completely re-written the University's peer observation scheme. After the scheme's pilot stage is complete, it is likely that aspects of my research will touch every single one of my teaching colleagues. Above all, this process has had a significant impact on the way I perceive myself as an AD and has given me cause (and justification) to question the rationale of everything that I do.

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## Reflective statement

The reasons I applied for the doctoral programme in the first place are complex, though possibly not as complex as the reasons why I kept leaving an application for 'next year'. I was the first in my family to go to university and did so as a mature student after several years of retail work and lorry driving. I entered undergraduate study fearful that everyone else would be 'posh' and super-intelligent and that I'd be found wanting on day one. I soon learnt of course that my prejudices were ill-founded but that self-doubt afflicted me again when I procrastinated over starting an MA and again when considering doctoral study. Even as I type this there's a voice in the back of my head saying: 'There's still plenty of time for you to be found wanting mate!' When I eventually applied, it was partly driven by a desire to move away from Further Education (FE), which was in yet another funding crisis, and into full-time HE. All the jobs that appealed tended to insist on a 'PhD or equivalent'. This practical rationale was what tipped the balance but the underpinning reasons were related to a desire to break another personal glass ceiling and take the opportunity to develop my knowledge, understanding and research skills to the highest level. When a colleague showed me the promotional materials for the Doctorate in Education (EdD), I felt as if the programme had been written for me. It's never been about *credentialism* for me but it is about *credibility* which is of course related to my sense of self and how I think others perceive me. This has only increased over the last four years while working solely in an HE environment where doctorates and other status labels are, for many, held in high esteem.

In contrast, I found self-efficacy as a teacher easier to grasp and I remain confident in my student-facing abilities. I worked on level three 'Access to HE' programmes for many years and used my own experiences to persuade many of the students that they could achieve in HE. Later, when working in teacher education, I used the same techniques to help develop teacher self-efficacy in others and have always valued the opportunities that observations of teaching have afforded to do that. It's not so much I say what people *want* to hear but I do understand how debilitating self-doubt can be. The evaluative -even patronising- approach some colleagues have taken to

observation over the years has led to professional conflict and helped forge the beliefs I hold about both the potential and fragility of observation as a tool for development.

When I started the EdD, though, it was with a research proposal that focussed on professional development of teachers in terms of technology use. Self-efficacy here manifested in terms of applied technology use in the classroom by teachers and teacher trainers. As it turned out (and this started something of a theme) I had to rein in these ideas considerably for the practical application of the research skills taught courses and the final report (MOE2) was circumscribed and focussed only on fellow teacher trainer perspectives. I found it frustrating that after putting so much into the proposal (MOE1) and the already fettered research that I still had hardly any room to share the data. I have, though, been able to use some of that data as the foundation for a paper on technology-enhanced learning development (Compton and Almpanis, 2018) and a book chapter (Compton and Almpanis, 2019). Amongst the many significant lessons about access, practicality, protocols, theoretical frameworks and so on, I learnt that having limited words forces an expressive discipline that I needed to work on; that I enjoyed interviewing; I was absorbed by the subsequent analysis and I realised that I valued dissemination. Incidentally, I have recently realised that 45,000 requires similar expressive discipline. I also first encountered Activity Theory (AT) during the first year. I found a number of studies that used AT to examine how technology is used in the support of teaching, learning and assessment. AT can be employed across all areas of professional work and what held particular appeal was that the unit of study is the activity itself rather than individuals. Whilst there was not scope to use it then, it immediately suggested itself when I started to shape my thesis proposal.

Prior to the practical aspects in year one, the framing module 'Foundations of Professionalism' (FoP) provided the perfect antidote to my periodic self-doubting angst. In my submission, I considered my own professional values as a teacher (and teacher trainer) through the lenses of compliance, performativity, standards and managerialism. The very process of reflecting on these things was startling and genuinely helped me understand some of the 'maverick' things I did in my role and the deliberately provocative aspect I often took. In FoP I used graded observations of teaching as one exemplification of my argument. Again, the process of deliberate scrutiny of my own

beliefs and the reading I did around the subject showed me how to turn a values-driven, gut instinct into a far more unambiguous and rationalised position. As a former History teacher, I of course realise the importance of evidence when structuring argument but this experience gave me confidence in doing the same in my adopted discipline of Education.

I moved from an FE teacher training post to an HE Academic Development role towards the end of the first year of the EdD and prior to starting the Institutional Focussed Study (IFS). Since then, my wife has had a significant career move, my daughter started school and my son spent a tough year on a bulk carrier shifting iron ore around the globe. I lost my father near the beginning of the EdD and my grandfather a few weeks ago. I desperately wanted him to see me complete this but it was not to be. This is normal life of course. It has a relentless momentum. Throughout this time, and since much of the early scaffold of the first year was taken away, the EdD has been a companion. Like a troubled and needy friend, it has constantly poked me, texted me in the middle of the night, rapped me with its knuckles on my forehead as I try- in vain- to get to sleep. It has forced me to change the way I study, to abandon social activities and to multi-track my thoughts. I do not resent this friend, though. It has enabled me to develop skills and make sense of the many informal learning opportunities my professional role offers daily (Cunningham, 2008) and, like EdD participants before me (Andrews and Edwards, 2008), through the reflection, exploration, reading, analysis and discussion it inspired, I have a profoundly deeper understanding of my professional self.

When I used observation as an exemplifying lens in FoP, it triggered an idea about how I might re-focus my original proposal, even while I was still in my previous post. As a teacher educator/ academic developer with more than fifteen years' experience, observation has been central to my practice. In my own career I have been involved in countless observations as *observee* and predominantly, because of my professional role as a teacher trainer, as an *observer*. The vast majority followed an orthodoxy that predominates across all education sectors in the UK and is the staple of teacher education programmes. All this is with the ostensible aim of improving the observed teacher's practice as a quality enhancement mechanism but often with the twin or even

preeminent role of quality assurance evaluation. The 'why' and 'how' have been a troubling constant in my thinking and practice with incongruity between my own ontological and epistemological positions a consequence of the demands of my former job role. The wedge that was driven between my values and practice (especially when I worked in Further Education and on secondary education programmes) was often due to the necessary (according to programme and/ or institutional policy) grading of observees. It was not a difficult decision to focus on teaching observations when I began the IFS. The change in job role was, in hindsight, serendipitous rather than inconvenient.

My IFS looked at the observations used on our lecturer training programme (PGCert) and found the tensions and uncertainty about purpose (amongst observers and observees) led to inconsistencies in experience and limits to the effectiveness. For my IFS I selected the PGCert observations as it was a real and present problem in a new professional role. Whereas I previously had less agency to effect change, I was in an environment where I could exert influence. The opportunity to examine a hypothesis through research was welcome.

One positive consequence of the IFS was that I was able use the research as a means to push (amongst senior colleagues) for the removal of a significant part of the assessment element of the observations from the OTL used within the PGCert. A scan of comparable programmes across the English HE sector showed that this twin purpose exists elsewhere. A significant conclusion I was able to draw was that, whatever hue the OTL process took within the broad orthodoxy, there was a persistence of the factors which acted as impediments to the widely-recognised potential of OTL. The same issues recurred: misunderstandings by both observers and observees about the purpose of the observations; anxiety impacting 'performance'; limitations to what was perceived as 'teaching'; hierarchy, status and observer biases impacting the approach to the process; inconsistent and problematic post-observation dialogue. Most significantly, where OTL practice is deemed successful and valuable, structural and cultural issues inhibit its extension and frequently undermine its sustainability beyond the setting within which it was instigated. Put another way, I realised that I (and teacher trainers/ academic developers) use tools and approaches

because they are conventional. I advocate questioning pedagogic practice but here is a pedagogic practice I used that was largely unquestioned. I also realised the persuasive opportunity afforded by questioning underpinned by research. No doubt I recognised this prior to the EdD but the process has solidified it; made it something tangible. It is the most significant contribution the EdD has made to my professional identity.

I was anxious about refocussing to beyond my institution after the IFS/ Thesis transfer but, in fact, have very much enjoyed the processes. It has widened my professional networks and has given me a sub-identity (below the generic Academic Developer one) as an 'expert' on observation alongside the cloud-based technology advocacy identity I have had for some time. The biggest frustrations (managing time for visits to other institutions, colleagues being unreliable and general busyness) have, in their own way, been an important part of the identity consolidation/ reformation. The experience of scrutinising the three systems (plus a pilot study and another abandoned case) as an outsider and armed with a common analytical tool, afforded a more objective perspective and pushed me to address my biases and strident perspectives head on. I made a choice to look at OTL that deviated from what I defined as the orthodoxy. I did this because, by definition, something that deviates from the norm implies deliberate thinking in terms of motive as well as embodying newness. My sense that much OTL happens (not just on PGCerts) because of convention drove this focus too. Further research on the more conventional OTL practices on PGCerts, variation in epistemological and ontological positions of those that observe and actual or, more likely, perceived impacts therein would make a fascinating further research project (though I have plenty of work to be getting on with for now).

I selected Activity Theory as a mechanism through which I could make the OTL schemes focal while allowing for multi-voicedness to come through and to provide consistency across cases. It certainly met my requirements in terms of enhancing my ability to position very different types of OTL within a common framework and gave me a clear structure that aided data collection, organisation of findings and analysis. Nevertheless, my relationship with AT was also a little fraught. What drew me to it in the first place was its flexibility and applicability to a system analysis where context, culture, processes and key players interconnect. What troubled me as I read more was

how, over time, the 'rules' of AT seem to have become increasingly entrenched. In the early stages of analysis I found myself impeded by this. It was not until I spoke with others who are using AT that I realised I had the agency to use the tool as I wanted and this liberated my thinking as well as the approach I took to the discussion chapter in particular.

In terms of the adopted methodology, my biggest disappointment (and perhaps therefore lesson about realities of research) was my inability to actually observe for two of the cases. I was excited by the prospect and convinced of the logic of it given my subject but the organisation in terms of access, permissions and logistics rendered it impossible. The amount of time I spent on these three cases (plus pilot and abandoned case) was at the upper limit of what was practical as someone who works full time. I compensated in both Cases 1 and 3 with more data from stakeholders and documentation but still feel an opportunity in both those cases to have a visceral exposure would have added layers to my understanding.

The research for my thesis has already had a direct impact on my professional role. My immersion in this subject has led to much contemplation about motive, milieu, mechanism and mediation of the observations on the PGCert I work on. It has led to discussions with colleagues and several changes to the observations we use. I also wrote (on request of our Deputy Vice Chancellor) a new observation scheme to replace the failing POT scheme at my institution. I drew considerably from one of the cases that are central to my thesis and ensured observer learning was weighted heavily in the proposal. It is being piloted in the three of the four faculties and I will be co-ordinating a review in the summer of 2019. In this way dissemination through dialogue and application is ongoing. My professional identity, therefore, has been articulated with more clarity in my own mind and, more importantly, my professional behaviours have been developed.

## Acronyms and initialisms

AD	Academic Developer
ADU	Academic Development Unit
AHE	Advance Higher Education
AT (also: CHAT)	Activity Theory (Cultural Historical Activity Theory)
BIS	Department of Business, Innovation and Skills
BSc	Bachelor of Science Undergraduate Degree
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EdD	Doctorate in Education
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEP	Higher Education Provider
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IFS	Institutional Focussed Study
MSc	Master's Degree in Science
NSS	National Student Survey
OTL	Observation of Teaching and Learning
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PGCert (HE)	Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education
PGR	Post-Graduate Researcher
PhD	Post Graduate Doctoral Degree
POT	Peer Observation of Teaching
PRT	Peer Review of Teaching
PSR	Peer Supported Review
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QE	Quality Enhancement
SEDA	Staff and Educational Development Association
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UK	United Kingdom
UKPSF	United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework
US	United States

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*'Everyone sees what you appear to be; few  
experience what you really are.'*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter XVIII, p.76*

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## Chapter 1: Context and rationale

For those of us with egos strong enough to stand it, colleagues' observations of our practice can be one of the most helpful sources of critical insight... [for others] this source remains strictly off limits...we fear the mask of command will fall away. (Brookfield, 1995, p.83).

At its best, peer review opens the classroom to review in a safe and supporting way with a focus on improvement and professional learning. At its worst, it becomes a management tool to monitor and control the practices of teachers. (Sachs and Parsell, 2014, p.2).

### ***Observation in Higher Education: multiform in design and purpose***

The observation of teachers and lecturers across all levels of education serves a broad array of purposes and is most commonly referred to as observation of teaching and learning (OTL) (Tilstone, 1998; O'Leary, 2014; Boocock, 2013; Lahiff, 2015). As an umbrella term, OTL embraces evaluative observations by senior colleagues, comparatively low-stakes observation of a peer for developmental purposes and mixed-purpose observations which are simultaneously evaluative and developmental by design, such as those on some lecturer education programmes. In Higher Education (HE) OTL is usually referred to as Peer Observation of Teaching (POT), Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) or a similar variant. Using PRT as their umbrella term, Scott *et al.* (2017) present a systematic review of the literature on PRT and draw conclusions from a review of 32 PRT policies. Building on the work of Gosling (2002), they argue that most PRT in Higher Education (HE) tends to follow a collaborative or developmental model rather than an evaluative one but, whatever the ethos, a PRT approach 'inherently possesses an evaluation element as it involves making value judgments about the quality of teaching.' (p.15). They acknowledge the problem of oversimplifying the range of PRT formats and note that 'there is an emerging plethora of approaches and methodologies reported in the literature' (p.15) citing examples of PRT use for non-teaching activities such as assessment design and module documentation scrutiny. But, even given this acknowledgement of diversity, most of the OTL schemes and policies they review have common elements found in OTL more broadly: Person A watches person B. Person A makes notes or fills in a form. Person A gives person B feedback. I have conceptualised this commonality as representing what can be seen as

an orthodox approach to OTL. The cases that are central to this research share some of the broad goals of orthodox OTL but diverge from that orthodoxy procedurally in some way, by significantly modifying mediation processes or through challenging notions of what is observed. This conceptualisation of an orthodoxy and how it was reached will be explored in depth in Chapter 2.

The epigraphs above reflect core tensions that beset both discussion and implementation of most, if not all, of the orthodox variants of OTL. The tensions in purpose in one incarnation of the latter type mentioned above were the focus of my Institutional Focussed Study (IFS), but it is OTL that breaks from the orthodoxy that is the focus of this thesis. The thesis presents three cases, each diverging from the OTL orthodoxy in a different way by modifying aspects of the observational milieu, the mechanisms of the processes, the means of mediation, feedback and reflection or by challenging conventional motives. The discussion, analysis and conclusions do of course relate to each variant but, more importantly in terms of my professional context and role as an Academic Developer<sup>1</sup> (AD), offer insights that can inform all OTL practice as well as AD roles and agency.

### ***Being observed***

To someone who is not a teacher or lecturer, it might seem surprising or even illogical that OTL may not be an accepted part of everyday life; that it can be resisted and provoke resentment or fear. Is it not, by definition, the job of teachers to be observed by their students on a daily basis? What difference does it make if the person observing is a colleague or even an outsider? The answer, of course, is related to the purpose (or perceived purpose) of the observation which is informed by institutional context and culture alongside intrinsic factors that shape the professional self.

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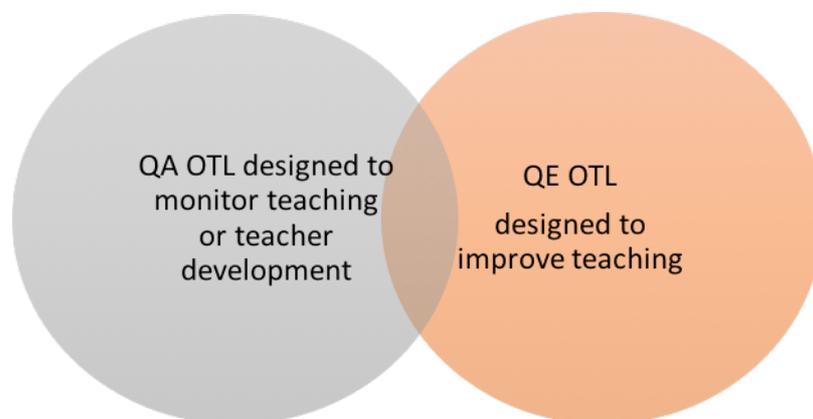
<sup>1</sup> I use the term 'Academic Developer' throughout as a catch all for those whose primary role is the development, support or teaching of academic teaching staff. It is probably the most widely recognised and accepted term but it is not without dispute as the many titles within comparable roles suggest. I myself work in an 'Educational Development Unit' but am employed on an academic contract as a Senior Lecturer. Some are employed on teaching contracts as Teaching Fellows, others on administrative contracts and others still have their roles pegged to management grades.

Encumbered by prior experience, institutional cultural and historical factors and, perhaps, self-doubt about their own efficacy as teachers, a typical response is one of anxiety (Cosh, 1998; Bell, 2001; O’Leary, 2014). Where the stakes are high this is understandable: if the observation of my teaching will secure me a job or determine whether I pass a teacher education programme it might be a desirable anxiety (Barrett and Martin, 2014), wherein fear can heighten performance and alertness. Of course, it can also be debilitating (Zaidi, 2017). Where it is ostensibly for formative, developmental purposes the perception that it is likely to be judgmental is still common, however (Thomson *et al.*, 2015).

In a HE setting, OTL has the potential to encourage reflection, foster collegiality and promote sharing of effective or innovative pedagogic approaches (Gosling, 2002; Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004; Bell and Mladenovic, 2015). The perceptions of purpose and other factors can nevertheless limit the desired outcomes and affect the sustainability of OTL initiatives (Sachs and Parsell, 2014).

### ***OTL in HE: context and debates***

At its most fundamental level, OTL can be primarily driven by a desire to *monitor* teaching quality (i.e. an aspect of Quality Assurance: QA) or to *improve* teaching quality (an aspect of Quality Enhancement: QE) (Wragg, 1999; Gosling, 2005). The extent to which the two overlap is debatable and explored in Chapter 2.



**Figure 1.1: Underpinning purpose of OTL**

In HE in the UK, where relatively low-risk POT is the predominant OTL model, the debates centre more on how valid OTL is as a developmental tool, particularly when positioned within the discussions around autonomy and professional identity of academics (Scott *et al.*, 2017). This has been particularly acute where OTL schemes are perceived to be associated with quality-driven judgement processes (Shortland, 2004). The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF<sup>2</sup>) makes that perception a more likely development (Compton, 2016; Heron and Head, 2018) and there is evidence to suggest HE institutions are increasingly using QA observation systems for performance management (O’Leary and Cui, 2018). Alert to the changing imperatives in HE, Gosling (2014) argues that PRT is an ‘obvious candidate’ (p.100) to provide evidence to external bodies of teaching effectiveness but warns that too strict an approach can remove necessary ownership (from those observed) and diminish its function. At the other extreme, a light touch approach can lead to limited compliance.

The plethora of studies on POT/PRT might suggest widespread use but small-scale studies predominate (see Chapter 2). OTL in HE is still emerging (O’Leary, 2014) and there is a clear lack of consistency either within or across institutions. Hardman (2007) drew on further education (FE) and HE case studies to illuminate some of the distinctions between purposes and types of orthodox OTL. She also pointed towards the increasing use of OTL in HE for a range of purposes and as part of many of the lecturer training programmes (such as the PGCert HE I work on- henceforth ‘PGCert’) that were then emerging. This tendency has continued. Against that backdrop, there are changes such as the impact of fees, the growing importance of the ‘student voice’ and relative ‘league table’ positions that have heightened the profile of observation as a tool for both QA and QE purposes.

In my professional role as an AD, my personal and professional values orient me towards valuing the developmental (i.e. QE) potential of OTL over what I consider to be its questionable QA value in terms of both reliability and validity. I have developed an

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<sup>2</sup> This has lately been re-branded Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (DfE, 2017) but is still most commonly referred to as ‘the TEF’

interest in innovations to OTL approaches that challenge these inherent issues. Re-engineered OTL might offer subtle but significant modifications to the OTL within a PGCert to address some of these issues or even radical re-imaginings that could provide transformative development amongst the teaching academics I work with.

To boundary the exploration for the purposes of this study, the focus is on OTL as part of lecturer development programmes or formal CPD projects within English universities. My focus is on initiatives that emphasise the developmental potential of the OTL scheme but, in their design, challenge or subvert the orthodoxy of OTL. The three cases in unorthodox OTL presented here were selected after some significant scanning and preliminary research of the sector and have been chosen in part because they exemplify ways in which it is possible to challenge the key issues identified. They illustrate ways of exploiting the broad notion of OTL but diverge from the sector norms as defined within the literature. In this study, each is used as part of a formal development initiative as opposed to a QA initiative.

In addition to the growth and consolidation of PGCert-type development programmes, the current increasing momentum towards improving the quality of teaching in HE within a widely-referenced though nebulous paradigm of 'excellence' (Land and Gordon, 2015) has elevated the potential of OTL as a tool for both QA and QE (Shoemaker, 2015). There are already some indications of increased use of OTL for QA purposes in some areas of HE (Kacmaz, 2016) with the TEF and subject-level TEF likely drivers of a continuation of this trend in the UK (Compton, 2016; O'Leary and Cui, 2018). This is further driven by global trends towards marketisation, competitiveness and concomitant emphases on QA and QE, wherein well-managed observation projects are one logical choice for improving the quality of teaching (Klopper and Drew, 2015). Scourfield (2019), for example, describes a new regulatory regime for social work education where, to combat perceived inadequacies in the teaching of social work, observations of teaching as part of an inspection regime have been mooted.

Any method that is rooted in the orthodox approach can manifest tensions that can impact the efficacy of the observations. These may be: issues of training, trust and credibility of the observer (Wragg, 1999; Ho and Kane, 2013) or the reliability and

validity of the observation process itself (Coe, 2014; Thomas *et al.*, 2014); suspicion about the QA aspect of OTL overriding QE potential (O’Leary, 2013a); competing ontologies with regard to what constitutes effective teaching (Sosibo, 2013; Coe, 2013); the quality of feedback (Cosh 1998; Yiend *et al.*, 2014); the willingness to be honest, especially with peers (Weller, 2009) or the sustainability of resourcing the use of ‘external’ expertise to conduct observations (Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). I have these tensions and issues as lenses through which to appraise the unorthodox approaches in this study. I wanted to determine whether there is a better ‘shape’ or mould from which effective and re-engineered OTL for HE can grow and in so doing ameliorate or remove these barriers. I was keen to determine whether it is possible to challenge the cynicism through re-shaping and re-branding and whether the resourcing was justified by the outcomes.

This study, therefore, focuses on unorthodox approaches to OTL for QE/ development purposes on PGCert-type programmes. It draws conclusions about the efficacy of such approaches within different cases and their wider application to the professional learning of teaching academics. By focussing on the underpinning ontologies and the rationale for challenging the orthodoxy, I also aim to illuminate wider thinking in the AD community about the role of OTL in HE. It is not so much that these alternative approaches to OTL are atypical that coheres them for this study but the supposition that there are pedagogic, cultural, political and historical bases that are driving the innovations or adoptions.

### ***Higher Education: Marketisation, managerialism and monitoring***

The UK has moved from 46 universities and around 350,000 students in 1990 to more than 140 universities and more than 2 million students (Collini, 2017). Much of this growth can be attributed to the upgrading of polytechnics to university status but also reflects massification of student numbers and increasingly higher proportions of students attending university. With this growth came cuts to funding, a shift from grants to loans and efforts to improve competition and efficiency (Cullen *et al.*, 2003) leading to increased scrutiny and managerialist cultures (Fanghanel, 2011; Wright and Shore, 2017).

Marketisation and the concomitant managerialist shift has transfigured the culture in HE to one which is increasingly akin to private sector businesses. This has repositioned the university narrative from an idea of a public good to one of competition and enterprise, with HE as the servant of the economy (Collini, 2012; Naidoo and Williams, 2015; Busch, 2017). It also results in higher prioritisation being placed on professionalising the teaching aspect of HE work (Shaw, 2018) which, in turn, has led to the creation of PGCert-type programmes and the growth of Academic (or Educational) Development work (Gibbs, 2013). Given my professional role it is unsurprising that this latter point is something that I find a positive outcome but that needs to be set against the inevitable neo-liberal outcomes of increased surveillance (from both within and outside each institution) (Collini, 2017), exploitative work practices (Gill, 2014) and obsession with league tables sourced from data which is often a poor proxy for what it purports to measure (O’Leary, 2017b). It is no surprise that in cultures that value increased scrutiny, observation as a tool for monitoring becomes more prominent.

### ***Complex professional identities***

Uncertainty, change, the complex needs of new demographics of students and neo-liberal drivers make sense-making difficult for teaching academics. It is an age of ‘supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2000; 2010). This makes professional identities more fluid and uncertain (Rhoades, 2007). Despite the drives to improve teaching quality, ‘Research is rewarded; teaching is not.’ (Nicholls, 2014, p.3). Autonomy, a supposedly unifying identifier amongst academics (Clarke *et al.*, 2013), is chipped away by surveillance and self-surveillance that results from increasingly managerialist cultures (Gill, 2014). One outcome is increased stress, leading to ‘pedagogic frailty’ (Kinchin and Winstone, 2017) which results in outdated and conservative teaching practices. Kinchin and Winstone (2017) argue that this frailty can be countered by opportunities for ‘regulative discourse’ (p.6) which are opportunities to discuss pedagogy and professional values. OTL is a logical tool to prompt such discourse.

### ***Professional learning in HE: Developing as teachers***

Ramsden (2003) argued that entrenched attitudes needed to be challenged if we were to move on from pedagogic conservatism but, sixteen years on, those entrenched attitudes are still manifest. It is a delicate balance that feels as though it was ever thus:

The exhortation to teach better ... will have little impact unless departmental cultures are conducive to better teaching. Likewise, attempts to improve teaching by coercion run the risk of producing compliance cultures, in which there is 'change without change', while simultaneously compounding negative feelings about academic work. (Knight and Trowler, 2000, p.70)

Learning about teaching in HE requires a challenge to existing beliefs, values and knowledge with opportunities for reflection, application and social engagement (Terenzini, 1999). Time is needed for individual reflection, opportunities for deep and surface learning as appropriate (Gibbs, 1994), exploration of what constitutes effective teaching (Ramsden, 2003) and acknowledgement of disciplinary specificity where possible.

Most UK institutions require academics who teach to complete some form of introductory programme designed to ensure at least minimal competence in teaching (Land and Gordon, 2015), though it has taken some time for this to become the norm. Brown and Atkins (1986) describe how it was a recurring theme from the 1930s onwards with calls for better academic training in British universities gaining official recognition in the 1960s and then repeated with some (slow) growth in provision through the 1970s and 1980s. Dearing (1997) went on to recommend much more extensive teacher training for academics. Although a consultation of HE academics found 70% were opposed to compulsory teaching qualifications for academics (Law, 2011), Dearing's call was echoed by Browne (2010), by the President of the National Union of Students (Boffey, 2012) and The Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2016) where 'better training for lecturers' (p.44) is cited as a reason for the introduction of the TEF.

The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) is, at the time of writing, collecting data on teaching qualifications held at English higher education providers (HEPs). The latest data available from HESA (2017) shows a moderate upward trajectory in teaching qualifications held from 47% in 2014-15 to 51% in 2015-16 where this information is known. Using the HESA (2017) list of 133 English HEPs, I reviewed 71 (53%) of these in terms of information available via a web search.

	Qual/ Fellowship	costs	open to...
Anglia Ruskin University	LTHE PGCert (12 months/ distance) + FHEA	£2,700	external applicants-ne
Aston University	PGCert LTHE	n/a	internal
Bath Spa University	Cert of Prof Learning in HE (CPLHE)	MA fees 695	MA available to outssic
The University of Bath	Bath Course for Enhancing Academic Practice (built in AFHEA_	FHEA + resear	ch element)
University of Bedfordshire	PGCertTHE (Teaching in HE)- inc FHEA	£2,267	internal
Birkbeck College	L6 AFHEA Grad Cert in Teaching and Supporting Learning in HE	£2,725	The Grad cery is intern
Birmingham City University	MeD run by BCU CELT includes PGCert	n/a	part of external progra
The University of Birmingham	PGCert HE - over 18 months	n/a	n/a
University College Birmingham	no info- runs UoB accredited PGCE	n/a	
Bishop Grosseteste University	M level credits towards cert in prof dev in education (no menti	n/a	n/a
The University of Bolton	Postgraduate Certificate for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher and Professional Educati		n quality handbook
The Arts University Bournemouth	no visible information- only one tangential mention of lesson observation		n quality handbook
Bournemouth University	PGCert education practice = FHEA	£2,720	external applicants

**Figure 1.2: Extract from a spreadsheet of data collected on qualification types offered at English HEPs (full list in Appendix 1)**

A review of the data shows that, despite the many false starts and unheard calls cited above, most universities now have a formal training offer and most of these approximate to the PGCert that I work on. Of the 71 I reviewed only 11 (15.49%) either have no publicly visible information or do not provide a PGCert or equivalent for their staff. Most of the latter are smaller, specialist institutions. Many of these PGCert-type programmes are associated with the United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). This means that they are approved and offer some sector-level standardisation. The UKPSF was established in part to address issues arising from massification, widening participation, diversification and globalisation (Lea and Purcell, 2015). Advance Higher Education (AHE)<sup>3</sup> has 307 UK subscribers and of those 130 have PGCert-type programmes accredited to Fellowship of the HEA status (source: e-mail correspondence with my own institution's AHE representative).

AHE champions the use of OTL (*of* the 'trainee' by a third party and of others *by* the trainee) as a means of development and gate-keeping. I received the following

<sup>3</sup> AHE was formerly the Higher Education Academy- HEA- but, somewhat confusingly, is still promoting fellowship under the HEA brand.

statement about whether observation was necessary on the PGCert-type programmes since this is a definite source of dispute amongst colleagues across the sector:

Our position is that to authenticate practice we either require a formal observation of the 'participant in action' (could be by video) by an experienced peer (e.g. discipline mentor/member of the programme team, etc. – not 'student-student') or 2 supporting references. (source: e-mail correspondence with AHE representative).

This authentication of practice is a requirement of both fellowship schemes and HEA fellowship approved PGCert-type programmes. From my own desk-based research I found that 32 of the 71 HEPs provided no publicly visible information on observations within the PGCerts. Of the 39 that did share information, 22 made it clear observations in some form were part of the programme and, of those that gave details (some were good enough to provide access to programme handbooks, for example), six had 1-2 observations, eight had 3-4 and a further three had 5 or more. I also received 39 responses to a SEDA (Staff and Educational Development Association) mailing list post to AD colleagues (Appendix 2). All reported use of observation on PGCerts though in very varied quantities and designs. All but four emphasised a non-judgmental ethos. Three were explicit that at least one observation was a pass/ fail assessment. From both data sources, it is clear that some included observations of others within the count whilst many excluded them from the tally. There is still no formal requirement, beyond those developed at institutional level, for HE teaching academics to have a teaching qualification but there is a clear sense that PGCerts are continuing to evolve in the discordant fashion described by D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) and there is a concomitant variation in OTL practices within them.

Irrespective of design, a PGCert will provide opportunities for pedagogy-focussed discourse, especially through OTL. This discourse allows for the essential identity-formation that shapes values, behaviours and beliefs about teaching (Bernstein, 1990). Anecdotal and experiential evidence (for example from the regional group I am a member of) suggests a number of institutions have sought to re-energise OTL or experiment with variant approaches to observation that challenge the orthodoxy of the typical structure and design.

### ***Summary of problem and rationale for the study***

'Observation' connotes positives and negatives, sometimes depending on context, sometimes on an individual's understanding of that context. At one extreme, I might see powerful potentials in observational tools available to me. At the other, I might perceive observations as symptomatic of increasingly monitored HE subjected to Orwellian surveillance. OTL as a QA and/or QE tool invites plaudits and scepticism but, as has been shown, it is not one definable entity. This core tension of judgment and development is central to the reputational problem that OTL has and feeds the other issues outlined above. Ongoing changes in the sector, not least the drives to improve teaching quality, have rekindled interest in OTL as a tool for evaluation and for enhancement and my own institution reflects this. The central issue is that OTL, as a tool for professional learning and development of HE academics, has enormous potential but, without a different approach, it is likely the predictable problems will recur. As will be shown in Chapter 2 it is unlikely that OTL, when seen at an institutional level, will be as successful as it could be, if it is misunderstood or seen as one entity performing two distinct functions (Davis, 2014). This is why I believe that it is opportune to look at OTL for development. In order to explore the tensions and potentials through a new lens, I have examined some of the ways in which my professional equivalents are experimenting with OTL.

Where published research on OTL in HE is available it tends to be of variations in OTL schemes but most fit comfortably within Gosling's (2002) much-cited classification (examined in Chapter 2). These studies also tend to be small-scale, insider studies and, as such, without making grand claims as to scalability or sustainability are often very positive in terms of the developmental outcomes. In addition to the preponderance of insider studies, there is a dearth of available research on:

- a. OTL that forms part of PGCert-type programmes and, as an extension of that,
- b. OTL that 'breaks the mould'; that goes beyond the orthodoxy or, at least, is presented thus.

Currently, such innovations can be seen as outliers when mapped against the Gosling (2002) classification. I believe that a new way of conceptualising unorthodox

approaches to OTL will aid understanding of the rationales that underpin OTL schemes. More broadly, this study offers new insights into the ongoing debates about where the value of HE OTL resides and raises questions about the motives, mechanisms, milieux and mediation of OTL.

I believe that existing and accepted OTL taxonomies do not adequately accommodate the diversity of types currently in use. An examination of examples that deviate from what can be seen as an orthodoxy will provide a new lens for those with interest in HE OTL to examine their own practice and needs. In terms of my professional role as an AD, it also offers an opportunity to examine AD values and agency in differing contexts in this still nascent discipline.

The aim of this study, then, is to examine cases of OTL use for lecturer development in HE that, in different ways, challenge the orthodoxy of observation and in so doing examine, from a position of externality, those cases *per se* and to offer insights into the wider debates, drivers and rationales that underpin all OTL.

### ***Structure of thesis***

The next chapter reviews literature pertinent to the professional learning of teachers, OTL broadly, OTL in terms of its application to HE and what I have characterised as unorthodox approaches to OTL explicitly designed to sit within a developmental paradigm. This is followed by Chapter 3 which defines the complex theoretical architecture that underpins the study, both conceptually and analytically. It offers a theoretical framework that is multi-faceted and that embraces key themes relevant to observation as both a broad concept and as a tool for developing teaching practices. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology; rationalises the qualitative approach; clarifies the data collection methods and rationalises the analytical approaches I took. Chapter 5 presents the data in a case by case format. Chapter 6 discusses key findings in the context of each case then widens this discussion to broader consideration. It ends with summative conclusions and includes reference to the contribution this thesis makes as well as implied or explicit recommendations.

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*'Men nearly always follow the tracks made by others and proceed in their affairs by imitation, even though they cannot entirely keep to the tracks or emulate the prowess of their models.'*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter VI, p.22*

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## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter, I showed how drivers for improving teaching in HE may be slowed by convention, conservatism or a sense of academic autonomy but are nonetheless inexorable. Formal programmes are still relatively nascent and the tension between academic autonomy and accountability is mirrored by the core tension of purpose when it comes to all types of OTL used in HE, including those used within PG Certs. In this climate, some ADs are experimenting with approaches to OTL that deviate from what I have styled as the orthodoxy.

The first part of this review looks at literature relating to professional learning of those with teaching roles in higher education. It considers how we learn to become university lecturers and how ongoing professional learning happens. It contrasts formal and informal approaches to professional learning and the pedagogic principles that underpin much of the formal offer. The review then turns to the role and function of Academic Developers (ADs) and their role in OTL. The final part of the review looks first at orthodox OTL broadly, including reported successes, issues and tensions. Finally, it narrows to the limited literature on unorthodox approaches (as per my own conceptualisation) and presents a categorising heuristic and general OTL success factors. Given the paucity of literature related to the innovative approaches specific to each of the cases that feature in this thesis, I have attempted to disaggregate the success factors and impediments from orthodox studies in a way that will inform the findings and discussion chapters.

The review is qualitative (Pan, 2016) and best termed an 'Integrative literature review' (Torraco, 2005) in that it addresses a subject that in its broadest sense is 'mature' but, in the context of the focus of this study, seeks to integrate that with a significant reconceptualisation of OTL through the lens of 'orthodoxy' and with the emphasis on HE lecturer development. The sections that focus on core concepts (e.g. professional learning) are often inherently 'theoretical' whilst the observation-focused sections draw largely on 'empirical' sources (Galvan and Galvan, 2017). Whilst a significant proportion of papers related to OTL in HE drew on departmental, faculty or pan-

institutional experiences, many are better conceptualised as theoretical *good practice guides* or *lessons learned* from trialling in a given context. Very few specific to HE are written from a position of externality.

### ***Lecturer professional learning***

Teaching is a complex activity and the professional learning that both precedes starting a teaching career (if any) and that which accompanies it cannot be seen as separate from the institutional, disciplinary and wider cultures in which it happens (Timperley *et al.*, 2008).

Against a backdrop of a pervasive quest for 'excellence' in HE's increasingly performative zeitgeist, academic development and the need for ongoing professional learning are often presented as accepted essential components of professional life for teaching academics. There is a 'slow but inevitable move towards rewarding scholarship of teaching and learning.' (Drew and Klopper, 2014, p.352).

Institutional culture, though, remains the biggest barrier to staff with teaching responsibilities engaging with professional learning in the teaching domain (Trowler and Bamber, 2005; Drew and Klopper, 2014). For Cresswell *et al.* (2015) it is in such cultures where the esteem of teaching is much lower than research that academics show greatest reluctance to get involved in OTL projects.

The key question is this: How do we learn how to become teachers in HE?

Historically it has also been part of the professional role that has relied on passive socialisation, on tacit knowledge and on benignly collegial assumptions of competence. (Watson, 2003).

The traditional dependence on informal approaches to learning how to be a lecturer inevitably makes the practical aspects of the role pre-eminent at the expense of the theoretical (Becher, 1999). Knight *et al.* (2006) are unequivocal in their statement of the dangers of over-reliance on informal approaches which can result in: 'staleness, professional obsolescence and institutional sclerosis' (p. 333). On the basis that, unlike all other professions and notably teachers in other areas of education, teachers in HE

tend *not* to need to undergo lengthy training (Parsons *et al.* 2012). Baume (2006) suggested that HE lecturers 'may be one of the last non-professions' (p.57) and the slow pace of change continues. For Ramsden (2003), informal approaches to gaining teaching expertise require engagement with theory and must go well beyond the tips and tricks that novice teachers crave. Whether that training is best located in-faculty or via a lecturer education programme is another contested area.

Knight *et al.* (2006), in a study of eight PGCert-type programmes in UK universities, found that participants felt that, on the whole, more learning about how to be a teacher came from everyday experiences, including those they had as students. By way of contrast, in a major study using experimental and control groups of novice lecturers in twenty-two universities across eight countries, Gibbs and Coffey (2004) found significant positive changes in the teaching of the trained university teachers in contrast, on some occasions, to negative changes amongst the untrained. The key distinction between this and Knight *et al.* (2006) is methodological. Whilst Gibbs and Coffey (2004) used metrics external to the perceptions of the lecturers, Knight *et al.* (2006) relied more on perceptions of participants.

Subsequent to both, Parsons *et al.*'s (2012) meta-analysis and Sword's (2011) longitudinal study, which focussed solely on a UK PGCert-type programme, also reported transformation in practice of the trainee lecturers. These programmes are typically institutionally driven, many are now linked to the HEA UKPSF and, whilst maintaining local distinctiveness, are noted to be increasingly alert to the importance of respecting disciplinary differences (Parsons *et al.* 2012). This acknowledgement of context and discipline specificity challenges efforts to standardise or define what constitutes good (or excellent) teaching in HE (Donnelly, 2007) and also means that the local experience and impact is likely to be varied. For similar reasons, use of OTL within these programmes has been diverse but usually manifests in some form whether it is micro-teaching; AD, peer or mentor-mediated observation and/or trainee observation of others. Such practices are usually aligned with reflective processes under the umbrella of scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). SoTL is the deliberate study of pedagogy in HE (Trigwell *et al.*, 2000; Brew, 2010) and many assessment practices or on-programme activities draw on core principles of discovery,

integration and application as defined by Boyer (1990) who sought to promote SoTL as a means of elevating the status of teaching in HEPs in comparison to research.

### ***Observational learning***

Observational learning owes much to Bandura (1974; 1977; 1986) who established the framework of learning that occurs through observing models, often mediated by a third party who aids sense-making of the learning event. In terms of teacher development, modelling effective and diverse teaching approaches is an obvious, though not ubiquitous, strategy (Tronson and Ross, 2004; Nerantzi *et al.*, 2014) and the connection with learning through observation of others is self-evident. Thus, vicarious learning, self-observation through reflection and mediation in the form of *social persuasion* of others make OTL a professional learning strategy that connects to many facets of Bandura's work (Pearson, 2017).

### ***Deficit, development and enhancement***

Whereas mandatory qualification, continuing professional development (CPD) and OTL tend to be accepted in principle across compulsory education in the UK, even core underpinning values in HE are subject to debate and scrutiny. McWilliam (2002) for example, suggests that development implies that the 'knowledge deficient' (p. 290) enter an unequal conversation with the knowledgeable developers, exacerbating existing tensions that go to the heart of professional identity and academic autonomy. Trowler and Bamber (2005) recommend ADs 'avoid any hint of a deficit model' (p. 12) and suggest replacing the word 'development' with 'enhancement'. Citing Norway as an example of a location where teacher education in HE is embraced, they argue that in the UK there tends to be positivity in terms of teacher training for HE academics from managers and newly appointed staff but this is not shared by established staff whose chief complaint is lack of time. If the broad offer is viewed as 'colonisation of their time' (McWilliam, 2002, p.297), it is unsurprising that many academics resist it in all its forms. The conflation of all types of OTL with concomitant fears of performance management and challenges to autonomy within development-driven peer observation of teaching (POT) systems is similarly a widely-reported issue. Whether they identify

with the title or not, much of the professional development activity in HEPs is carried out by those who can be described as 'Academic Developers'.

### ***Academic Developers***

In schools and FE, CPD acts as the umbrella term for all professional learning activity from the informal through to certificated programmes. A glance at literature relating to HE reveals it is framed more frequently as 'academic development', 'educational development' or 'professional learning' and is underpinned by the concept of SoTL. This arguably more 'academic' labelling masks the reality that the offer is in fact very similar. The first Academic Development Units (ADUs) can be traced to the late 1960s (Åkerlind, 2005) and have grown globally since (Debowski, 2011) but were still often marginal well into the early 2000s (Knight *et al.*, 2006).

There are several titles for those with AD-type functions in HE (e.g. Educational Developer, Teaching Fellow, Professional Development Advisor), varying loci in terms of academic position (e.g. academic, support staff, teaching only) and diverse affiliations in terms of where they are positioned within the internal structure of the HEP (e.g. HR/ Quality; discrete unit, school of education, within discipline areas). I share the view expressed and rationalised by Bath and Smith (2004) who argue that, after Becher and Trowler (2001), ADs can legitimately claim to be academics working within a distinct, if nascent, discipline. One common aspect unites them: by definition they all have responsibility for CPD and, where they occur, formal training programmes. Within that is often one or more OTL system that ADs have responsibility for and their agency in implementation and design will be constrained by the HEP culture they work in and the ways in which their roles and the units they work within have evolved. As Brew (2011) puts it:

Academic developers are balanced on a knife-edge of what practices are in line with their academic development values on the one hand and what is in the interests of others, for example university managers, on the other. The very survival of academic development centres depends on currying favour with those in power (p.x)

Land (2001) offers a taxonomy of AD orientations which are informed by a complex interplay of experience, personal values and organisational culture. Of the twelve

orientations, I see myself as a combination of 'Modeller-broker' (modelling innovative or alternative strategies) and 'reflective practitioner' (fostering a culture of self and peer critical reflection) with elements of the 'interpretive hermeneutic' (development through dialogue), the idealistic 'romantic' and the pragmatic 'opportunist' completing the picture (Land, 2001, p.6). The diversity of orientation leads to a 'fragmented tribe' (Land, 2001, p.10) and my own self-assessment against these orientations shows how nuanced such labelling needs to be. Whilst not central to this study, it is nevertheless a useful lens with which to consider attitudes and approaches of ADs, as their perspectives, as instigators of the unorthodox approaches to OTL, are a critical element. Key to success, Land argues, is a match between institutional culture and AD orientation and the extent to which this is apparent provides a further point of analysis.

### ***Observation of teaching and learning***

Observation of teachers across all sectors of education is used for a variety of purposes. These may be explicit and shared amongst key stakeholders or opaque, vague or ill-defined. Whilst this study is concerned with OTL used primarily for the development of the lecturer in HE, it is important to locate this within the wider realm of OTL. Wragg (1999) offers a potted history of the evolution of classroom observation in his seminal text that, though written about and devised for schools, has been influential across all areas of education. He describes how, in the early part of the twentieth century, quantitative models evolved and became the norm by the 1960s. Observers would count interaction types or record events at intervals. The original observations were very much part of the research paradigm and were not designed explicitly to address 'quality' issues at an individual or institutional level (Medley and Mitzel, 1963). Nevertheless, they proved useful for identifying individual teacher deficits but the outcomes were rarely generalisable aside from a few studies, some of which I find myself citing even today. Rowe (1974), for example, observed elementary science teachers and counted the interval between question asking by a teacher and the response. The average was less than one second. When a few more seconds were deliberately factored in, positive changes in engagement occurred.

The quantitative methods are still common across US education (O'Leary, 2014) with measures of such things as teacher utterances characterising much of the US OTL

framework (Tilstone, 1998). It is very much an accepted staple of teacher evaluation systems: 'classroom observation remains the method of choice (a de facto gold standard) for gaining systematic insight into these practices in their natural setting' (Martinez *et al.*, 2016, p.15).

An obsession with reliability in much of the US literature on observation (Ho and Kane, 2013; Martinez *et al.*, 2016) evidences tendencies towards defining criteria for effective teaching and the assumption of criterion-referenced and quantitative recording instruments. In fact, even though Martinez *et al.* (2016) look at (schools-based) OTL in six countries and acknowledge the tension between high-stakes evaluative and low-stakes formative observations *and* talk about variation in OTL methodology, there is a clear assumption that the observation instruments will be driven by standard effective teaching frameworks. In the UK (and in Australian HE) the assumption appears to be the reverse. Largely ethnographic recording instruments are the norm (Clark and Leat, 1998) and this is borne out by the samples that have been shared with me from UK HEPs. The ethnographic approach derives in part from the establishment and growth in credibility of qualitative research methods and social and cultural anthropology in particular (Wragg, 1999). Lahiff (2015) notes how the feedback instruments themselves are an under-researched area.

### ***Aims and orientations: Establishing the orthodoxy and classifying OTL***

Rather than a purely etymological understanding of 'orthodox' as a position signifying rightness of opinion, I use the term in its contemporary sense to mean what is seen as typical, usual, normal and (mostly) uncontroversial. In contrast, therefore, 'unorthodox' is the atypical, unusual, abnormal (in the 'uncommon' sense) and, possibly, controversial. It is important to note here that, in conceptualising an OTL orthodoxy, the sectoral, geographic and temporal contexts are important considerations. Approaches to OTL in Japanese schools, for example, have an orthodoxy built around the decades-old practice of lesson study (Ermeling and Graff-Ermeling, 2014) which, in its design as defined below, would be considered very unorthodox if used as part of a PGCert HE in a university in the UK. Also important to clarify is the idea that what may be seen as orthodox now may have been considered controversial and unorthodox in

the past, much as developmental OTL was in HE only two decades ago (Blackwell and McLean, 1996).

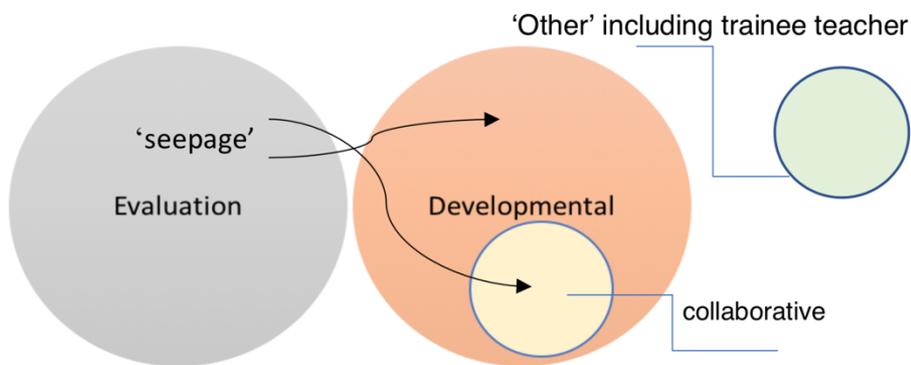
I have therefore conceptualised the orthodoxy of OTL (with an emphasis on UK HE, though it would resonate across compulsory education and FE too) as deriving from what is typical practice in a procedural sense in the first instance. This procedure is often found as part of the defining parameters of a paper on OTL or, as in the case below, as a way of contrasting a deviation from what is seen as routine practice:

[Peer observation is] a process involving an observer watching a colleague's teaching and providing feedback afterwards. The process of peer observation is often in part facilitated by completing a feedback form or checklist, and any feedback provided is intended to help observed colleagues enhance their teaching performance.  
(Hendry *et al.*, 2014)

This procedural conformity that unifies a range of processes within an orthodoxy has within it much variance and attempts have been made to offer typologies. Gosling (2005) offers one of the most frequently used categorisations of OTL in HE. He uses the umbrella term POT then sub-divides by type according to the principal purpose of the type of OTL. A recent attempt to layer nuance into this categorisation by the HEA (Scott *et al.*, 2017) also uses the purpose behind OTL events as the basis for the categorisation but uses Peer Review of Teaching (PRT) as the unifying term. In both cases it is the procedural similarity of types that suggests a common understanding across the OTL landscape which, in turn, has shaped my thinking towards conceptualising this as a valid orthodoxy. Perhaps the most significant additional aspect to both these studies is their use of 'other' (Gosling, 2005) and 'hybrid' (Scott *et al.*, 2017) as catch-all terms for OTL that sits outside their more structured framework. Where there is an awareness of 'otherness', there is an acknowledgement of what can readily be seen as unorthodox and, by definition, what is not unorthodox must be part of an orthodoxy. My contribution here is to problematise this otherness and suggest a semantic positioning that embraces a conceptual orthodoxy so that the unorthodox may be clustered first then, as will be attempted later, classified in much more coherent terms.

Turning to these typologies, as a baseline categorisation of OTL in HE, Gosling (2005) classifies the QA/ monitoring type as the *evaluation model* as the first of his three types of POT. These observations are conducted by senior faculty members or managers and may relate to promotions and performance management and, as such, have a 'perceived threatening nature' (Spencer, 2014, p. 188) and thus are not conducive to either individual or organisational change (Spencer, 2014). This creative interpretation of 'peer' could in itself exacerbate the 'alienation, resistance and suspicion' that Gosling (2005, p. 118) himself identifies as a likely consequence of utilisation of judgment-based OTL. Where such 'top down' models are implemented (or even enforced) they tend to foster a climate of reluctant or cynical compliance (Shortland, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004; Lomas and Nicholls, 2005) and 'offer little benefit to observed members of staff with regard to their own professional development' (Byrne *et al.* 2010, p. 215). Where OTL is mandatory, and 'a predominantly performative approach to the use of observation' exists (O'Leary, 2014, p. 26), reluctant compliance is a frequent manifestation, with development and reflection only a fortuitous by-product of a quantitative accountability measure.

Gosling's (2005) improvement models are split between two categories: the *developmental POT* and *collaborative peer review of teaching*. The first of these is broadly the expert practitioner as observer and the second is, in fact, the most closely aligned with a semantic understanding of POT. 'Actual' peers within a department, with no evident hierarchy in terms of rank or expertise in pedagogy, engage in conversations about teaching to open the traditionally closed and private doors to academics' teaching domains. Whilst observation by a peer-mentor as part of a PGCert is specifically mentioned by Gosling as a form of developmental POT, he also records a fourth category ('other' below) which includes detailed part-developmental and part-judgemental observations carried out by teacher trainers on student teachers.



**Figure 2.1: Diagrammatic interpretation of Gosling's (2005) conceptualisation of OTL types**

Within Gosling's (2005) discussion he acknowledges a likelihood that judgemental aspects of the evaluation model seep into both the developmental or collaborative observations resulting in dual-purpose elements whatever the primary orientation.

Since many OTL processes are explicitly designed to fulfil both these functions simultaneously, O'Leary (2014) argues that they may be better represented on a continuum from entirely developmental to entirely judgemental. Either way, such representations are useful only to frame an understanding and the preeminent classification by purpose does not adequately foreground the increasing diversity and innovation in OTL. My own view is best represented by the realistic positioning defined by Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker (2006) who say that it is impossible to separate all judgment from any observation process. In her study which included a survey of 43 UK HEPs, Davis (2014) concludes that whilst policy sets a tone and that perception of purpose is crucial in determining effectiveness, there needs to be a clear demarcation between observation for appraisal and observation for development.

A recent HEA paper (Scott *et al.*, 2017) sought to extend Gosling's categorisation, firstly by exploring the extent of OTL in HE and offering a typology. They reconceptualise OTL from POT to PRT so that it embraces systems that extend to consideration of all aspects of the teaching role and classify PRT according to locus of

control and purpose ('Progression linked', 'dual purpose', 'simultaneous centralised and decentralised', 'centralised' and 'hybrid'). They note the deficiencies in the sector in terms of OTL processes that embrace e-learning contexts and, whilst emphasising that pairs are typical, that there is some evidence of team approaches to PRT. So, whilst their reconceptualisation makes space for schemes that would sit outside what I have conceptualised as the orthodoxy these are presented as innovations and outliers. Their typology also exhibits the same core problem as Gosling's (2005) in that 'peer' needs to be interpreted in its broadest sense as some include OTL by senior managers. Additionally, the catch-all 'hybrid' is an inadequate category to express the diversity or subtleties of modified approaches.

### ***OTL in HE***

In HE, the literature reveals peaks and lulls in enthusiasm and resistance, with participation often dependent on the drive or interest of a few key individuals, many of whom are in AD roles. In a descriptive study using three HE cases, Hardman (2007) reports wide variation in the structure and design of OTL and also notes that, at that time, departmental use of observation (as opposed to the continuing use for new staff appraisal and on PGCEs and their equivalents) had all but disappeared. She attributes this to the replacement of Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) subject reviews with a new monitoring system under the QAA Quality Code. Under the previous system, lesson observation was part of the review process and negative experiences tainted perceptions and enthusiasm for OTL. Nevertheless, it made their use more likely as a centrally imposed system. Shortland (2004) describes a trios-based POT system that straddled a QAA subject review and how the academics were able to take more ownership and value from the scheme after the QAA subject review was complete and managerial pressure was less intensive.

### ***The rise of POT***

Many of the tensions discussed earlier and a negative impact on OTL perception due to the QAA subject reviews account for the lull in the period from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s. Since then there has been a steady growth in cross-institutional POT schemes, OTL on formal training programmes (in line with their growth) and diverse,

small-scale trials. The language used in the guides that accompany many of these schemes tends to be predominantly developmental, suggesting a tangible shift in drive and locus of control. A typical but well-established scheme is the one used at Leeds Beckett where guidance sets out a clear rationale (development potential) and presents the documentation in a way that addresses common fears such as anxiety and, in this case, the anonymity of findings when the data is fed up the management chain (Race *et al.*, 2008). Also significant here is the choice afforded to participants in terms of both who they partner with and what the focus of the observation is. Scott *et al.* (2017) reviewed 32 HEP policies and found most were nominally mandatory though there was a tendency amongst research-intensive HEPs to offer more freedom in both choice of 'buddy' and reporting requirements. Studies of OTL in the 2000s often report ongoing tensions and anxieties, though the findings tend to be positive. One such study is from King's College London (Lomas and Kinchin, 2006). Their scheme, whilst broadly successful for many, revealed the degree to which it remains a sensitive issue with a minority of staff 'openly hostile' (p. 212) and the paperwork was 'universally loathed' (p. 210).

As previously stated, the tendency in the United States is to exploit POT for evaluative purposes. One fairly large, single-institution study (80 observee and 143 observer responses) describes how tenured faculty observe the untenured and the reports are used for appointment or promotion. They conclude that such systems are necessary to counterbalance the otherwise pre-eminent student voice (Kohut *et al.*, 2007). Similarly, Ammons and Lane (2012) see peer observation as a triangulating means of judging teaching quality alongside student evaluations and a 'teaching portfolio' of resources, philosophy and results. 'Colleagues are in a better position than students to evaluate selection of content, appropriateness of objectives, instructional materials and delivery' (Ammons and Lane, 2012, pp.77-78). Given this contrast in core values, the following section draws mostly on studies from the UK, Ireland and Australia where development potential is pre-eminent.

### ***OTL for development: Impact and benefits***

Broadly speaking, most developmentally-oriented OTL schemes seek to provide an alternative lens on the teaching of the observee. They provide a counterpoint to the routine 'evaluation-through-experience' that students do which feeds into informal and formal QA processes. The peer or colleague observing has a layer of experience and often disciplinary expertise that can promote in-depth discussion about content, planning, delivery and student responses with a view to affirming current practices (self-efficacy as a teacher) and to aid development of practice (Farrell, 2011). Given the focus of this thesis, this section highlights potential impacts and benefits that could be broadly applicable across all developmental OTL schemes, whether orthodox or not.

By way of contrast to observation by subject expert peers, Donnelly (2007) conducted three in-depth interviews with PGCert participants and analysed 90 peer observations that were part of a PGCert. The OTL scheme here was disconnected in the main from subject specificity and focussed on pedagogy. The process aided participants in connecting theory and practice and highlighted 'the value of interdisciplinary learning' (p. 127) and generally benefitted the teaching practice of relative novice HE lecturers.

In a qualitative study of forty-eight (in-training) academics observed by ADs, Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker (2006) argue that the developmental value of observations is high. They suggest that there was no 'significant detrimental impact' (p. 429) when the ADs were not necessarily specialists in the disciplines observed. This study was initiated, in part, in direct response to Cosser (1998) who had argued that subject knowledge and context-specific pedagogy necessitate a narrow definition of the term 'peer' and that observations by those external to a faculty are meaningless. Outside of artificial OTL occasions such as 'microteaches', the content will be discipline-specific so the issue here appears to be whether non-experts can be equipped to make informed and useful observations. The centrality of discipline-specific pedagogy in these papers itself is not questioned (Becher and Trowler, 2001).

Despite counselling caution in respect of resourcing, underpinning values and the ways OTL is organised, Peel (2005) argues that OTL has transformative potential, particularly in raising self-awareness in respect of the teaching aspect of a lecturer's professionalism. Peel's study is often cited as it provides a clear conceptual framework for developmental OTL even though it was built around reflections of personal experiences rather than an empirical study. Key to her thinking is that it aids the 'search for professional identity as a new university lecturer' (p. 489).

Atkinson and Bolt (2010) likewise stress the opportunity OTL provides as a stimulus for self and peer reflection. They also point to benefits in terms of increasing dialogue and collegiality amongst peers and a clear sense of development which is a fundamental component of self-efficacy. Shortland (2004) echoes this, citing mutual trust and the fostering of strong professional relationships, which in the wider arena of professional life, and in any context, is to be valued. As with most aspects of OTL research, this comes with the counter possibility caveat.

Hendry and Oliver (2012) interviewed graduates from a teaching programme about their experiences of being observed and found that recurrent stated benefits were opportunities to learn via feedback, opportunities to see new (to them) strategies in action and thereby develop confidence to use them themselves and, something that was a theme in my IFS interviews, affirmation of the effectiveness of strategies being used by the observee.

MacKinnon (2001) asserts it is 'one of the most powerful approaches to academic development' (p.21) and Boud and Brew (2013) state that OTL is an effective way of moving away from traditional modes of CPD. Locating it within normal practice leads to an engaging and situated learning opportunity.

In an effort to clarify objectives and roles of observers in POT schemes in UK HE, Cosh (1998) urged POT to be seen as a reflective opportunity for the observer to counteract evolving discord in what was, at the time, an embryonic, uncertain and controversial phenomenon. Whilst it can no longer be said to be embryonic, a common confusion amongst all stakeholders in an OTL scheme is that it is the observee alone who is

being developed. This is exacerbated by the blurring of purposes and the often very real status and hierarchical differences between those observing and those observed. Changing perceptions and discussing the core values that underpin OTL are as important here as structural changes or deviations from orthodox organisation of OTL.

In a single faculty study of peer observation in an Australian university, Bell and Mladenovic (2008), for example, stress the value of classroom observation opportunities to the peer observer, weighting its value above that of the feedback given to the observee. Also in Australia but drawing on questionnaires and interviews from a single cohort of a lecturer training programme, Hendry *et al.* (2014) likewise concluded that change occurred in lecture and seminar practices of the observer as a consequence of involvement in a peer scheme, relating this to Bandura's (1977) notions of the importance of observing others. Mueller and Schroeder (2018) were particularly enthused by the learning potential of observing others, especially given the lack of need for significant investment. Indeed, this suggests that room for reflection on learning by the observer, irrespective of the basis of the observation, might go some way to ameliorating occasions of distrust or cynicism. It should be noted that in many of these studies (Hendry and Oliver, 2012; Hendry *et al.*, 2014), the conclusions are dependent on the perception of those who are subjects. In other words, no attempt is made to judge the claims of improved practice.

In a study involving 10 academics (all located within an engineering and computing science faculty) who were observed three times, Davis (2014) focussed on the post-observational 'learning conversations'. She concluded that, if the feedback process is dialogic, they can enable teaching academics to positively change through reaching their own conclusions but that this is dependent on how the process is mediated.

Kell and Annetts (2009) suggest dialogue with all stakeholders about purpose and value of OTL as a starting point. Their own voluntary institutional system had low compliance levels so they developed an activity to examine perceptions of purpose and value. In this single faculty, small-scale study they concluded that there was a clear lack of consensus. They also revealed a disparity between what stakeholders felt were 'existing' values and purposes and what a 'utopian' OTL system would offer. Anxiety

was a key theme in a study by Pattison *et al.* (2012) who concluded that whilst positive outcomes could be seen in technical and pedagogic aspects of trainee doctors' practice, the scheme had limited impact as only 21 of a possible 100 elected to take part. Though they describe a system which can be seen as orthodox POT, the key determiner in low voluntary uptake may be related to hierarchical observer / observee pairings though this is not adequately dealt with in the write-up. Both these studies reflect a common issue in OTL: Whilst value and potential are evident to some involved with the schemes, competing perceptions of purpose and limited uptake are two key issues amongst several recurrent problems within the OTL orthodoxy.

### ***Problems within the OTL orthodoxy***

One reason for my interest in unorthodox approaches is that despite the potential and the many reported benefits, there remain frequently reported barriers, resistances and problems which a break from orthodox practice may overcome.

Richardson's (2000) relatively early study (located at a private and church-owned American university) drew on colleagues' experiences of peer observation and suggested that resistance was in part due to worries about intrusion into personal space. He likened it to having a stranger watch you dress. Whilst the comparison in this objection is unique, the underlying resistance assumes that observation (even by peers) is scrutiny of the personal self. Additionally, he argued that the perception of observation and its value as a developmental tool was undermined (in his case) by upward reporting of outputs.

A central component of how OTL is perceived relates to the terminology used. 'Mislabelling' or negative connotation results in confusion and/or resistance, particularly in relation to the word 'peer' and the term 'observation'. Gosling (2002; 2005) has been highly influential in the sector in terms of categorising types of OTL but of his three broad categories of observation, the first 'the evaluation model' is likely to stretch any academic's sense of what a 'peer' is given that this type is conducted typically by senior staff for appraisal purposes (Weller, 2009). The biggest single identified issue in the realm of categorisation and its impact on understanding stakeholder ontological

positions appears to be in what actually qualifies as a 'peer' in POT or PRT (Weller, 2009). This is, in effect, a branding issue that is simultaneously understandable and incredibly frustrating. In one institution I worked in the acronym 'POT' was the most common phrasing for all types of observation, even those that were part of lecturer probationary reviews.

In addition to this conflation of types under the umbrella term for what typically is developmental application of OTL, the use of the acronym waters down the power of the 'peer'. Marshall (2004) notes that even the word 'observation' presupposes a classroom setting, leading to a biased connotation. Additionally, Weller (2009) goes further by stating that: 'Existing traditional models of peer-based teaching development are epistemologically and ontologically limiting' (p.33).

A notable feature in much of the positive literature about OTL in HE is that conclusions frequently offer no specific evidence of actual changes beyond the self-reported and this is a recurring theme in the literature (Shortland, 2004; Peel 2005; Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). Enjoyment, camaraderie and a desire to continue are themselves not indicators of positive change, let alone transformation.

The disconnect between the frequently stated enthusiasms for change in participant reflections and the propensity towards conventional, unchanged practices is further exacerbated when peer observations simply 'reinforce restrictive norms of practice' (Weller, 2009). In other words, peers congratulate one another for meeting expectations that are limited by their own conceptions and narrow vista. Whilst perceived efficacy of observations conducted by parties with varied experience and relevant training preoccupies much of the US literature, it is certainly under-researched in the context of UK HE. However, both Cosh (1998) and Yiend *et al.*, (2014) cite concerns about the nature of, and approach to, giving quality feedback to peers and connect this to experience and roles. Where the emphasis is on QA processes, a number of negative impacts are reported: a focus on the result at the expense of quality feedback; an undermining of developmental and peer observation projects (O'Leary, 2013b) and formulaic or orthodox lessons (Cockburn, 2005).

In part due to inevitable demands on time and coupled with existing tensions related to purpose, trust and credibility, the degree to which observers have been trained is questioned. The practicalities of providing it to observers is noted widely (Ingleby, 2014; Yiend *et al.*, 2014). Without training they risk existing in a position of obscurity (Cockburn, 2005) and, in line with both my own research for my IFS and Hudson's (2014) study which elicited eight mentor views of a single taught session, observers are likely to work from an 'individualised ontology' (Hudson, 2014, p.71) resulting in significant disparity in emphasis, tone and conclusions in feedback. Whether evaluation is an intended outcome or not, the fear of bias and subjective judgments from an observer are legitimate concerns that feed reluctance to participate (Raj *et al.*, 2017).

Thomas *et al.*'s (2014) meta-analysis of 27 studies of 'PRT' shows that reluctance to participate in voluntary OTL programmes was commonly due to a lack of confidence in peer reviewer judgements and objectivity as well as discordant views on what constituted effective teaching practice. Additionally, bad prior experience of overly judgemental observations had a significant impact on willingness to engage again (Kell and Annetts, 2009) and could threaten collegiality (Atwood *et al.*, 2000). A school-based study involving 57 trainee teachers in South Africa found that the trainees had a strong sense of varied philosophical standpoints in terms of what constituted good teaching (Sosibo, 2013). This is not to say that standardisation and fixed metrics for effective teaching is the answer either. Darling-Hammond's (2010) enthusiasm for such a system for school teachers in the US brings with it dangers of teachers learning behaviours that mask their inadequacies and reinforce officially-approved practices which then stifle innovation and experimentation (Ramsden, 2003).

Given the logistical and temporal issues related to training observers, it should be noted that use of pre-trained, external (to faculty) expertise is not without contention. Whilst Atkinson and Bolt (2010) describe the role of external expertise as an essential catalyst for change, they also acknowledge that it is an unsustainable model in HE.

Finally, despite there being 'no way to create a path for the improvement of teaching and learning without the expenditure of time' (Atwood *et al.*, 2000, p. 241), lack of time

is often cited as a reason for not engaging in OTL (Kell and Annetts, 2009; Byrne *et al.*, 2010). On the principle that we find time to do those things we value, it is likely that 'lack of time' is a mask or short-hand for some of the other causes of resistance, especially those that expose vulnerability.

### ***Unorthodox approaches in the literature***

In the same way that scholarship of academic development has been skewed by the preponderance of authorship from within academic development communities and units with a focus on teaching (Åkerlind, 2005), so the literature on OTL in HE also reveals a similar preponderance of OTL in an orthodox configuration, focused on the act of teaching. The role of academics, though, has become more complex and diversified (Barnett, 2000; Becher and Trowler, 2001; Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003). It was not so long ago that peer observation of teaching in HE itself was 'little used' and considered 'unusual' (Blackwell and McLean, 1996, p.156).

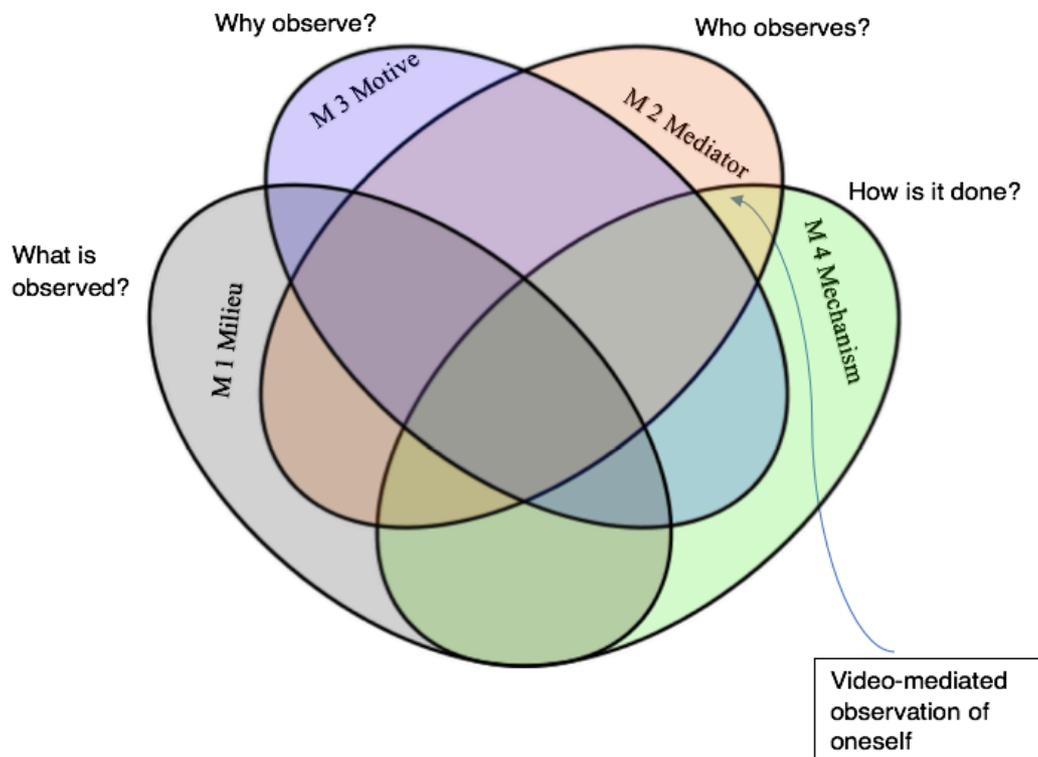
Given the absence of a meta-analysis or categorisation in the current literature of unorthodox OTL in HE, I have constructed a system for classification by type of deviation. Examples from the literature follow wherein divergence is determined according to one (or more) of these four aspects: Milieu, Motive, Mediator and Mechanism.

1. Milieu (i.e. where the observation is located and what is observed): This might include non class-based teaching such as observation of online delivery, resources, assessments or marking processes.
2. Motive (i.e. why observe?): Whilst orthodox models prioritise observee development/ transformation or evaluation/ confirmation of competence (or indeed a hybrid of these), unorthodox forms might emphasise observer learning, collegiality, discourse or a prompt for reflection within an action learning context. Peers might be encouraged to participate as if they were students (Kenny *et al.*, 2014) or focus on the methodology of teaching not the teacher as is the goal of 'Lesson Study'. Here teachers re-focus on the content

and delivery through collaborative planning and post-session evaluation (Davies and Dunnill, 2008; Dudley, 2014; Godfrey *et al.*, 2018; Wood and Cajkler, 2018).

3. Mediator (i.e. who observes): This assumes a shift from peer, superior or 'expert' to student, the teacher as observer of 'self' or other third party.
4. Mechanism (i.e. how the observation process is conducted): Where motive is different this often means the mechanism must change. This includes the use of video to accommodate geographic barriers or to minimise intrusiveness. An ethnographic approach that eschews the typical written feedback in favour of visual notation of position, interactions and non-verbal elements of a taught session would also be a change in the mechanism of the paperwork at least (Kell and Sweet, 2017).

Whilst this has proved a useful heuristic and a convenient interrogative starting point when seeking an understanding of the rationale of any OTL system, I should emphasise here that in terms of divergence there are often departures from the orthodoxy on two or more aspects. Thus, some unorthodox OTL systems that place the emphasis on self-observation (Mediator change), for example, also logically adopt a video-mediated approach (Mechanism). This I have represented diagrammatically below in Figure 2.3:



**Figure 2.2: Milieu, Motive, Mediator and Mechanism (4Ms): Paths to diverging from the OTL orthodoxy<sup>4</sup>**

### ***Milieu: not just classroom teaching***

In collections of case studies from HE (Gosling and O'Connor 2009; Gosling, 2014) peer supported review (PSR) is described a step beyond POT as it includes opportunities to look at a wide range of aspects of the broader teaching role such as marking, supervision and online courses. PSR is described as a powerful tool for professional learning that overcomes some of the hierarchical, anxiety and foci imbalances of orthodox OTL systems (McKie, 2019). Purvis *et al.*, (2009) used the strengths-focussed appreciative enquiry approach to identify effectiveness of the PSR system they implemented at Sheffield Hallam. Not only did they find that the PSR system was preferred by academics but that 90% of their survey respondents (n=113)

<sup>4</sup> Template of four-way Venn By RupertMillard [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>) or GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)], via Wikimedia Commons

felt that their practice in relation to teaching, learning and assessment had improved. In some ways, therefore, it is surprising that only two of the 32 OTL policies reviewed by Scott *et al.* (2017) acknowledged the wider teaching role beyond classroom time.

Bennett and Barp (2008) reported success in transferring observations to online contexts as a means of reducing anxiety. Bowskill *et al.* (2017) and Kacmaz (2016) likewise both argue for increased use of peer observation in online teaching contexts. The growth of remote learning and, as Bowskill *et al.* (2017) emphasise, remote *teaching* brings new challenges but has been neglected in terms of the support that peer observation can bring. Whilst the change in milieu may present technological barriers to potential observers, it can challenge the isolation inherent in teaching remotely and has the potential to allow for a wider vista on teaching as a consequence of recording.

### ***Mediator: beyond the peer observer***

Of the two principal ways to change mediation, using students or the 'self', it is the former that is the most controversial. As has been noted above, particularly in the US, OTL is seen as a way of rebalancing perspectives on teaching quality away from the student voice. Nevertheless, a project involving undergraduates at a US university developed an approach called 'Students as Learners and Teachers' (SALT) (Cook-Sather, 2008; Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). They report on an extensive, longitudinal study which sought to improve teaching though not in a remedial or evaluative way. The student consultants worked in a different faculty to their own discipline, were trained and the project was entirely voluntary. At its heart is the establishment of a relationship between student observer and staff member with a pre-meeting and post-session sharing. The claim is that it is a powerful and distinct lens on teaching, that it increases students' levels of respect and challenges the assumption that staff have an inherent vulnerability. Whilst Cook-Sather (2014) acknowledges vulnerability, uneasiness and a potential for disappointment at lack of valuable insight, she argues that these processes can act as catalysts to transformation of thinking and practice. In a much smaller study but in the UK and using PGCert participants, Peat (2011) reports on very positive responses from both lecturers and students but

acknowledges that she is: 'working with enthusiasts and that, if this is rolled out on a larger scale, there will be an element of resistance and uncertainty from some colleagues.' (p.19).

### ***Motive: changing the focus of OTL***

Whilst potential benefits to observers in reciprocal OTL systems have been noted previously, some studies go a step further and remove the lecturer/ teacher completely from the OTL learning dynamic. The motive, therefore, is entirely about observer learning. Hendry *et al.* (2014) work in a research-focussed university in Australia. Their small study (28 survey respondents and 7 interviews) found that by removing the judgement aspect (i.e. form filling and feedback) the teachers:

...were able to relax and vicariously experience their colleague's success in their teaching...staff learn new teaching strategies from peers and apply them creatively (p. 327).

Of 20 respondents who had subsequently taught, 19 were able to supply a concrete example of a change in their own practice. Additionally, they found that the system confronted feelings of isolation, aided self-confidence and developed self-efficacy.

'Microteaching' is now a relatively well-established feature of many teacher and lecturer education programmes where the deviation from the orthodoxy is that it provides opportunity for lecturers to focus on skills away from the many other distractions of 'real' teaching with 'real' students amongst a community of peers (as trainees rather than peers as lecturers). Established in the early 1960s at Stanford University, microteaching gives the lecturers a chance to teach their peers for 5-10 minutes and then receive feedback from the same (Allen, 1967). Practice varies between permitting the teaching of elements from one's own discipline to the requirement that the topic is necessarily distant from it or largely secondary. Studies claim impact on core skills such as planning, questioning and discussion management (Kilic, 2010) with the added benefit of peer observers learning from multiple opportunities to observe others, notwithstanding the need to establish a mutually supportive environment (Higgins and Nicholl, 2003). Despite its relative prevalence, it

has been criticised as being a feature of an 'atomised' rather than a holistic approach to lecturer education (Lee *et al.*, 2010) and I have found no studies on its use in lecturer education programmes in UK HE.

***Mechanism: augmenting or changing fundamental processes***

Using video as an alternative to 'live' observation is increasingly common (Gaudin and Chaliès, 2015). Wass and Moskal (2017) review a small-scale experimental strategy called Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) which is a counselling and clinical psychology technique designed to draw out reflections on an event to aid the identification of incoherencies between what was intended and what occurred. They chose this in part to counter what they see as a tendency towards impersonal and institution-wide CPD with something personal and constructive. The teacher talks with an AD about their conceptions of good teaching and recalls an experience (usually with reference to a video of the event), drawing conclusions about 'incoherence'. The process is necessarily precise to avert the potential for AD judgements.

Superficially similar is a study from South Africa (Nsibandane and Garraway, 2011) which looked at an underperforming Law department and used video to stimulate development through 'formative evaluation'. They were:

Struck by the shallowness and lack of academic rigour demonstrated...staff usually laying blame on students' under-preparedness or poor attitude to learning (p.100).

The video recordings of lectures were used to prompt discussion with lecturers who were encouraged to explain what was happening and why at stages. Although they also report successes and present it as a study in enhancement, the issues, tone and actual description of the process suggest that this was very much aligned to their own conceptions of good and bad practice.

Peake (2006) drew on survey data (134 trainee FE lecturer responses and interviews with 11 teacher trainers) and, in addition to further reinforcing conclusions about preference for QE over QA OTL amongst trainee teachers, found that alternatives to

traditional classroom observation, with special reference to use of video to record observations, are considered with a degree of scepticism.

As can be seen from the above examples, there are overlaps across the types of deviations from the orthodoxy but deliberate thinking about what is different (using a common frame of reference) can help to begin to cluster what are otherwise singular deviations. Whereas existing classifications focus solely on OTL purpose (Gosling, 2005; Scott *et al.*, 2017), the above could be adapted to support the conceptualisation of all OTL. Starting with setting ('Milieu') as the principal defining categorisation they could then be further clustered by purpose ('Motive') then Mediator and finally Mechanism.

### ***OTL success factors***

Across the literature, there are themes that emerge with regard to success factors. The following have been assembled either through explicit claims within the literature pertaining to orthodox OTL or by drawing an implicitly contrasting conclusion from reported impediments. Because of the preponderance of literature on orthodox OTL, these principles and conclusions are necessarily broad and, given that this study focuses on innovations and divergent approaches, should not be seen as essential requirements. Rather they may illuminate an aspect of a 'shared heritage' between each case and more orthodox OTL or, if notable by their absence, as a means by which the specificity of the unorthodoxy may be illuminated. Where there are references to orthodox OTL in the findings and discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6, respectively) it indicates a phenomenon (issues, impediments, positive outcome) that is similar in one or more of the cases or is a point of distinctiveness. The final chapter also explores this distinctiveness case by case then in a broad synthesis.

### ***Shared purpose, preparation and training***

All parties need to be aware of the purpose of the OTL and have an awareness of the potential for them to become mutual back-slapping activities (Weller, 2009) or, perhaps worse, 'pooled ignorance groups' (Byrne *et al.*, 2010, p.226). The design will more likely serve developmental interests over appraisal ones if, 'protocols and practices...

emerge at grassroots level and are reflective of localized needs, customized to a particular subject discipline.’ (Davis, 2014, p.138). In addition, ‘we need to provide the climate and opportunity to talk about teaching.’ (Donnelly, 2007, p.127). Despite its demand on time, the importance of training for observers is another recurrent criterion for success (Wragg, 1999; Ho and Kane, 2013; Hudson, 2014; Coe, 2014; Scott et al., 2017). Additionally, a pre-meeting to establish working protocols and parameters of what is to be observed is often cited as essential (Pattison *et al.* 2012; Davis, 2014) though my own experiences suggest time pressures often lead to this being performed perfunctorily or not at all.

### ***Importance of reflection***

Engagement with reflection and theory is necessary to connect pedagogy and practice (Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004; Peel, 2005). Opportunities for reflection need to be in place, either alone or with others mediated by the learning conversation approach to feedback (Wright, 2016; Schuck *et al.*, 2008). Since reflection does not come naturally to many people, there should also be support for the processes (Bell and Mladenovic, 2015) and an encouragement of staff to challenge the relentless pace (Berg and Seeber, 2016) and thereby allow time to properly think about their teaching (McKie, 2019). This can be achieved through multiple means and two recommended strategies beyond the orthodoxy are ‘research diaries’ (Engin, 2011) and group debrief sessions (Pattison *et al.*, 2012).

### ***Quality of feedback***

Feedback should be non-judgmental (Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2006; O’Leary, 2014), ‘collaborative, constructive, specific, honest, empathetic and ... insightful, challenging and justifiable’ (Cockburn, 2005, p.383). As with feedback to students, timing, specificity, sensitivity and achievability should all be factored in (Brinko, 1993; Boud and Molloy, 2013; Yiend *et al.*, 2014). Dialogic approaches to feedback are a recurrent theme in terms of criteria for success. Two-way, non-directive approaches can be the catalyst for change (Randall and Thornton, 2003; Hyland and Lo, 2006; Copland, 2010).

### ***Sustained and connected***

One-off peer reviews are less likely to lead to success (Byrne *et al.*, 2010) so sustained periods of OTL not only lead to better teaching but also improved professional interactions (Bell and Cooper, 2013) as do mechanisms that support the connection of the OTL events to one another (Peel, 2005).

Above all:

[before adopting an OTL system] academic institutions or units need to consider their systems, structures and procedures within the context of their organisational cultures and sub-cultures and ...examine the dominant behaviours, beliefs, values and basic assumptions of those cultures (Spencer, 2014, p.187).

### ***Conclusions***

In building this review I found that there are hundreds of papers related to OTL in HE, especially peer observation/ review and that there are recurrent themes and tendencies in approach. There are also similar limitations or gaps in methodology and conceptualisation. Small-scale, insider studies on what I have conceptualised as orthodox or slightly-modified OTL systems preponderate, as do studies that focus on POT in faculties or, as is now increasingly common in the literature, PRT rather than OTL used for performance management.

Academic development is a burgeoning 'tribe' and the work done by ADs is informed by institutional culture, individual orientation and the usual drivers and constraints. Professional learning and the ways in which ADs are involved in that will likewise vary but there are tendencies towards typical practices such as the implementation of a PGCert. This chapter has focussed primarily on developmental OTL and has shown that existing classifications are inadequate as they do not account for the many innovations occurring in OTL. This is exacerbated by the language used which is often misleading or contradictory. Peer Observation of Teaching, for example, can include non-peers, not necessarily *observing* something other than *teaching*. I have presented some cases of unorthodox approaches to OTL using a classification derived from the nature of the divergence from the orthodoxy. Whether orthodox or unorthodox, the

studies tend to be small, insider studies. Potential impact, common impediments and factors for success have also been identified. Generalising is of course hugely problematic in many of these studies, especially where there is only a small sample. The diversity of HEP contexts and cultures exacerbates this and variation in setting is a feature of the analysis. Nevertheless, broad conclusions about aspects of many of the OTL schemes reviewed above (both orthodox and unorthodox) can offer guidance or at least a point of comparison when each case is considered, especially when issues or success factors are disaggregated and can be shown to transcend the orthodox/unorthodox divide or be a marker of distinction. Some of these commonalities and distinctions are highlighted in Chapter 6.

### ***Research questions***

After reviewing the literature, I settled on the following research questions which allowed for flexible interpretation in line with the qualitative nature of this study:

1. How do Academic Developers conceptualise OTL for HE lecturer professional learning?
2. How are unorthodox approaches to OTL rationalised and structured and what facilitates or stifles OTL innovation and its sustainability?
3. In what ways and how effectively do unorthodox OTL approaches support HE lecturer professional learning?
4. In what ways and to what extent do unorthodox approaches to OTL overcome resistances and issues found in orthodox OTL systems?

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*'Memories of innovations and the reasons for them disappear; because one change always leaves a tothing-stone for the next'*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter II, p. 6*

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## Chapter 3: Theoretical lenses

### ***Introduction***

In the previous chapter I presented and discussed literature that deals either directly or tangentially with observation as a tool for teacher/ lecturer development. Below I pull together some of the theoretical threads that have provided illumination, reference points or analytical framing used in the scrutiny of each of the cases of unorthodox OTL. The chapter begins with consideration of theory that informs my investigation, in particular focussing on critical reflection, mediation, praxis, transformative learning and social learning. These theoretical lenses are found in the literature though there is no unifying or accepted framework as OTL is routinely scrutinised as a tool of wider professional learning activity or as an aspect of reflective practice. Additionally, and because I am shifting the primary focus to the OTL system (with the subject as a component of that), I needed a framework that would accommodate that. To that end, the final section deals with Activity Theory which has provided a theoretical model to aid consistency across cases in terms of data collection and analysis.

### ***Countering individualism: praxis and critical reflection***

In contrast to the neoliberal tendencies of marketisation, performativity and business practices in HE that inevitably support the individualistic notions of success in academia (Gill, 2017), I would argue that teaching should be a collectivist endeavour. That is not to say that I am necessarily out of step with policy at either the institutional or sectoral level. Rather, there is a contrariety of message; sometimes from competing sources, sometimes from within the same source (Harrison and Turok, 2017). For example, it is widely recognised that we live in a world of increasing academic specialisation which necessitates greater interdisciplinarity (Tarrant and Thiele, 2017). However, funding models, pressure to 'produce' and institutional cultures disincentivise thinking time and limit genuine opportunities to collaborate effectively (Berg and Seeber, 2016). Similarly, policies on teaching and learning abound with phrases such as 'student engagement' and 'active learning' but the persistence of emphasis on research and publication, reductions in contact time, intensification of workloads and casualisation (Gill, 2014) as well as content-heavy curricula inevitably push teaching

academics towards didactic, time-efficient 'delivery' approaches to teaching (Hénard & Roseveare, 2012; Kinchin and Winstone, 2017).

At an essential level, my professional role requires me to improve the quality of teaching and to do this I embrace a dialogic approach and seek to promote praxis as a core concept to support the development of my own 'students' which, in turn, I would hope is transferable to their contexts with their students. Without asserting that lecturers are necessarily oppressed in the sense defined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I follow the notion of praxis according to Freire (1993) wherein intellectual discovery is meaningless unless it results in action. Action, in turn, requires critical reflection (Brookfield, 1995). These twin concepts can inform an understanding of developmental OTL. Placing trust in a lecturer's ability to reason (facilitated by meditation in the form of discourse or prompts for reflection), praxis as a cyclical approach challenges the twin 'oppressions' of assumption (about what university teaching should look like) and lack of self-efficacy of those teaching but whose professional sense of self does not place that role pre-eminently.

Inevitably, too, given these oppressions in the context of managerialism and QA/QE tensions, this study draws on the work of Foucault (1977), particularly the inextricability of knowledge and power and the derivation of that knowledge through increasingly efficient mechanisms of surveillance. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) uses Jeremy Bentham's 'ideal' prison design, the *Panopticon*, as emblematic of the central tenet of his analysis: order, control and discipline are a societal need that is efficiently managed by increasingly intrusive observation. Whilst there is no scope here to explore the wider tensions around liberty and state control, it is impossible not to see the parallels between this wider societal analysis and the tensions around OTL within institutions. Agency (of the observed and the observer); structure (of the institution) and normalisation (of observation as a tool and of pedagogic practices) are all pertinent to this study. The perceptual tension suggested by the epigraphs at the start of the first chapter between intrusion and evaluation as well as development, self-efficacy or self-knowledge as power can also be seen through this lens<sup>5</sup>. Where grading is a feature of

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that, at the time of writing, my own institution is experiencing considerable discord over the introduction of automatic lecture capture (by default all timetabled lectures will be recorded). The discourse amongst

OTL the judgmental aspects resulting in the ranking of teachers the controlling power of observation is heightened (Page, 2017).

### ***Bandura: Self-efficacy and observational learning***

Self-efficacy is a crucial concept to this study and can be defined thus:

Perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance (Bandura, 1986, p. 391).

Bandura's (1977; 1986; 1997) work emphasises the importance of self-efficacy in effecting positive change as a sense of self-belief enhances motivation and effort. This builds on notions of personal agency and repeated experience to the point of 'enacted mastery' (Bandura, 1989). The importance of positive reinforcement- a sense of 'I'm actually doing ok'- came as a key finding in my IFS and Bandura's theory underpins a number of studies into the impact of orthodox observation schemes (Donnelly, 2007; Hendry and Oliver, 2012). Bandura's theories of personal change and self-efficacy are therefore central to this study as is the tangential and directly relevant notion also postulated by Bandura (1974) of learning vicariously. Observational learning through modelling is undervalued within orthodox OTL interactions and relationships (Bell, 2001; Bell and Mladenovic, 2008) but observation of 'models' is a vital aspect to reinforcing developing self-efficacy.

Explicitly, Bandura's oeuvre relates to study of OTL systems in two ways: Firstly, the observation, if by a third party (i.e. 'mediator') within the context of a formal training scheme or programme, is often an application of previously observed teaching and learning phenomena. It may have been framed that way by those delivering the teacher education programme to model effective practice. Concurrently, it can be seen as an opportunity for *self-observation* where the essential reflective 'mediation' (Bandura, 1977) is enhanced by the design of OTL process itself and the mechanisms through which reflection is fostered. The mediation is the bridge between what is observed and the resultant behaviour. In other words, it is a catalyst for praxis. In Bandura's (1977)

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academic staff subject to this new policy is all about removal of autonomy, permanent surveillance and Orwellian (or indeed Foucauldian) control. The name of the software used to capture lectures is *Panopto*.

terms the emphasis is on the importance of active information processing as a means of learning. Here, deliberate opportunities for thinking about the consequences are an essential component of that process and of course relate to critical reflection and praxis. Concepts of '*experience of mastery*' (becoming aware of success and what has led to it) and '*social persuasion*' (the role of third parties in encouraging effective practice) (Bandura, 1977) are fundamental components of this mediation (Pearson, 2017).

Whilst self-efficacy and observational learning are rooted in the psychological tradition which, by definition, emphasises the individual, Bandura's (1977; 1986; 1997) theories can be seen as socially embedded; they need interaction and are informed by the environment. Similarly, the power of mediation and the relative import of the 'model' in observational learning is influenced by a range of factors, not least the perceived similarity of the model (Hendry and Oliver, 2012).

Bandura's work is a theoretical lens with which I can anchor surveillance, oppression, reflection, praxis, social learning, communities of practice and transformation. Specific thinking about teaching and learning is a common goal of all the cases in this study, it is at the heart of effective reflection (Brookfield, 1995) and a prerequisite for praxis (Freire, 1993) which can lead to transformation (Mezirow, 2008) and, again, is characteristic of a developing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

### ***Transformative learning and communities of practice***

Useful in this context is Mezirow's (1997) concept of stages of transformation which draws on a number of the theoretical constructs defined above and provides a useful definition of what is meant in terms of development or change in behaviours (or practice) of lecturers. Firstly, psychological factors relate closely to the understanding of the self and echo the model of self-efficacy previously defined. Secondly, there is change to one's beliefs or convictions which can be central to behavioural change in teachers and help move lecturers from fledgling self-efficacy to confident experimenters and innovators. Finally, there is the behavioural change which is a

consequence of the changing mindset and practice. This change needs to be internalised to be seen as transformation.

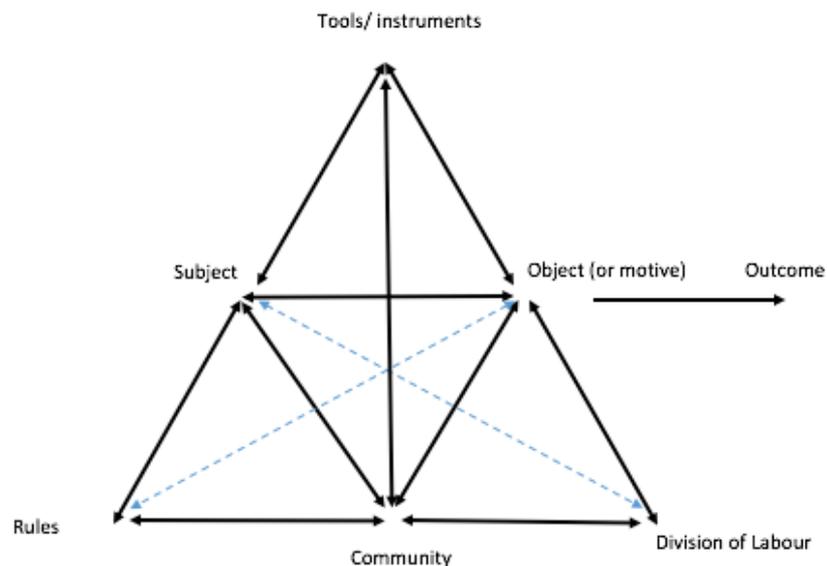
Communities of Practice (CoP) as a concept within which professional learning can occur evolved in the early 1990s (Lave and Wenger, 1991). What distinguishes a CoP from a team or group is a shared goal, issue or problem (in this case the collective effort to become better lecturers) and interacting with frequency (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Some PGCerts encourage a CoP ethos and this may extend to the OTL, depending on its design.

### ***Activity Theory (AT) as an analytical framework***

AT has its roots in the work of Vygotsky and Leontiev (Engeström *et al.* 1999) and connects to social constructionism as a methodological approach as well as connecting to aspects of Bandura's (1977; 1986) work, notably the role of mediation. Engeström (2001) describes how Vygotsky's notion of mediation formed the basis of what has become AT by emphasising the role of mediating artefacts in human behaviour. The upper-level triangle in Fig. 3.1 (below) is the residue of Vygotsky's work where the 'tools/ instruments' are the mediating artefacts essential for a subject to achieve his/her object. Leontiev's crucial contribution was to extend the unit of activity beyond the realm of the individual, to accommodate collective activity (Engeström, 2001) and to acknowledge the importance of social, cultural and historical factors. His work has been subsequently represented in the full activity system though he did not himself represent it in this way. Whilst Vygotsky, Leontiev and others from the Soviet tradition were concerned with the psychological understandings of activity (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007) and focused primarily on learning and play in children (Engeström, 2001), it was the adoption and adaptation of the framework in the West and Engeström's development of the now relatively familiar activity systems model (Fig. 3.1 below) that formed the basis of an analytical approach that offers:

A multi-dimensional, systemic approach that includes both psychological motives and all kinds of tools, as well as the always-present dynamics of power, money, culture, and history (Foot, 2014, p.2).

It assumes that human activity is a collective enterprise and tools (such as OTL systems) are employed to aid learning. The community is central to making sense of professional behaviours and practices. AT accommodates the network of agents (people, ideas, concepts, practices, communities) and connects them within an activity system (Engeström *et al.* 1999). Each activity system is constructed according to the following system structure:



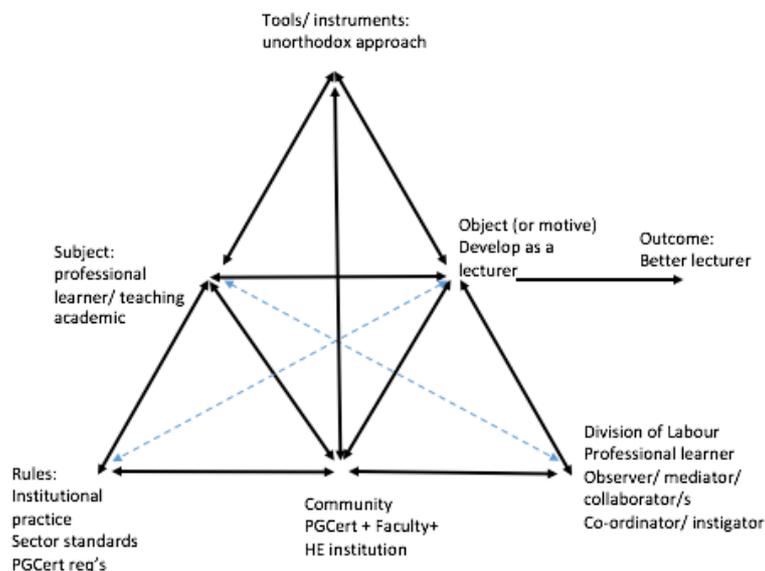
**Figure 3.1: An Activity System**

In the above Activity System framework each element is applied to a different aspect of the activity under investigation. Each arrow shows interdependence and also potential for incongruence and interference. By identifying the object as determined by the subject *and* other stakeholders in the community, an analysis of the other factors aids interpretation of the degree to which the outcome reflects the object and potentially uncovers why and how it is successful or not.

In this research each activity system will represent one of the unorthodox OTL approaches. The elements of the 'second generation' activity system can be summarised as follows:

- The object/ motive is the reason the activity is taking place-it necessarily comes before the activity.
- The subject is who is involved in relation to the object.
- The community is the wider body of participants in an activity.
- The tools are the means by which the activity is performed and may be physical or 'symbolic' e.g. communication.
- The rules are the professional, cultural and social norms and regulations relevant to the activity.
- The division of labour relates to organisation of the responsibilities associated with the activity and the community is the environmental setting in which the activity occurs (Engeström, 2000).

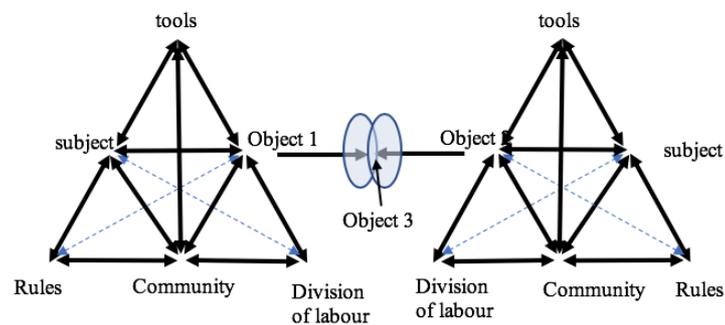
The arrows represent interdependence and can also act as interference markers representing contradictions (Engeström *et al.* 1999). A broad, non-specific activity system relevant to this study would therefore look like this (if the subject is deemed to be the lecturer or 'professional learner'):



**Figure 3.2: Assumed Activity System (lecturer as subject)**

However, each approach can be represented as a different system depending on the subject. The same activity can be represented as a second activity system if the AD becomes the subject. The tools, rules and community may be largely the same but the

object may be subtly or significantly different and, even where the broad goal is shared (better lecturers) the criteria for judging that may be discordant and create tensions and contradictions. A third system could centre on the mediators of the OTL approach. The third-generation element refers to the bringing together of two or more activity systems that have a shared 'boundary object' (object 3 in Fig. 3.3 below) (Engeström, 2001) where the goals may ostensibly tally overall but within which there may be tensions or contradictions.



**Figure 3.3: Minimal Third Generation Activity System (Engeström, 2001)**

Despite exploring ways of conceptualising the case studies in this way, I settled on a single activity system with the lecturers as common subject. This allowed me to include roles of all interested parties and the tensions manifested clearly to me. Either within a single activity system or across systems with shared boundary objects, it is the tensions and conflicts that can be most revealing. Rather than simply a fault-finding or trouble-shooting opportunity (though they may indeed serve this purpose), contradictions can drive innovation and change at individual and activity level (Engeström *et al.*, 1999). Engeström (2001, pp. 136-7) expresses five principles that shape activity theory:

1. The main analytical unit is the object-oriented activity system
2. Each system is shaped and informed by multiple perspectives i.e. 'multi-voicedness' (p. 136)
3. 'Historicity' (p. 136) recognises that activity systems develop and change over time and that investigation in respect of this can account for tensions

4. Contradictions are central driving forces for change
5. Changes in how the motive is conceptualised can lead to 'expansive transformation' (p.137).

Since it is not the purpose of this thesis to effect change within any of the cases, this fifth element is not immediately relevant to this study.

There may be overt and covert motives that further complicate the picture. AT not only helps analyse and explain the complexity of a system but also offers the opportunity to locate the key stakeholders within it and to compare divergent interpretations of the role of OTL both within and across cases (Yamagata-Lynch, 2007). AT has applications broadly and within educational contexts. Ellis *et al.* (2010), for example, dedicate a book to focusing on teacher education through the lens of AT. They argue that:

The cultural-historical line provides the intellectual resources to develop a coherent view of how teachers at different stages in their professional life-course conceptualize their praxis. (p. 4).

This occurs through recognition of wider social, historical and community contexts and the interface between key stakeholders and the mediating tools available to them to achieve change and transformation. Its application to OTL study also has some pedigree. Lahiff (2017), for example, found AT a useful way of modelling the complexity of lesson observations in a vocational training context and Wright (2017) uses an activity system diagram to represent her own feedback on lesson observations.

OTL as a mechanism for professional learning navigates aspects of lecturer autonomy, self-concept and identity; professional development approaches; institutional culture and lecturer evaluation. AT has been used as a means of exploring the ways in which teachers learn (Hoffman-Kipp *et al.*, 2003) and allows for analysis of units of activity such as OTL schemes which can aid identification of factors that support or impede praxis (Hancock and Miller, 2017). AT provides an analytical theoretical framework that has sufficient flexibility to encompass diversity in cases whilst preserving some commonality in each narrative and accompanying analysis.

Bandura's (1977; 1986) emphasis on social learning and the importance of mediation is reflected in the 'tools' pinnacle of the triangle (mediating between the subject (lecturer) and object (such as improved performance)). The notion of praxis connects the subject to the mediating tools in one direction and the 'rules' and object in other directions with critical reflection facilitating the shift of objects to outcomes. The structure of the institution, its rules and community can also reflect a Foucauldian analysis, especially when counterpointed with the agency of the subject and the 'whole' of the activity in each case which is, for this study, a framework of observation. The notion of community of practice is logically located within the defined 'community' section but also links to the division of labour and to ways in which people other than the lecturer as trainee act in a mediating (i.e. 'tool') role.

### ***Criticisms and limitations***

AT as defined by Engeström (2001) is portrayed as explicit and unproblematic but resistance to it in the West is rooted in arguments that there is no settled view on how some components of the AT model should be interpreted. This is exacerbated by disputed translations from Russian, for example, and questions as to whether theory of activity is too generalised to be meaningful (Bakhurst, 2009). It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the many interpretations and understandings but I share the view that AT does not need to be an absolute and fixed lens of analysis as it provides 'more a way of thinking than a coherent whole...it is a paradigm that invites us to think dialectically; that is, in terms of tensions that produce change and development' (Wardekker, 2010, p.241).

The second generation AT represented above (Fig. 3.1) has been criticised for failing to represent social division and alternative voices (Warmington, 2011) though this is not especially pertinent to this study.

Finally, and specific to the context of this study, because of the emphasis on change in Engeström's work and that of his hosting institution (University of Helsinki) much of the

theory stresses the longitudinal nature of the approach and this is necessarily limited here. Future study could embrace the modelling of revised iterations of each case.

### ***Conceptualising professional learning***

The unit of study will be the 'activity system' itself. To connect these more explicitly to both overt and tacit purposes of each case, three frameworks will inform analysis of each OTL approach.

In their synthesis of positively impacting professional learning activities, Timperley *et al.* (2008) identify ten principles of which the following are common goals of OTL when used as part of professional learning:

- Where professional learning is made context-specific it is likely to be more successful.
- Opportunities to integrate theory into practice is preferable to skills-only or theory-only approaches.
- On the assumption that learning is cyclical, professional learning experiences should be over an extended period of time and need to challenge existing assumptions about teaching and their own approach to it.
- 'Collegial interaction' (p. 19) is limited if it leads to simply reinforcing existing norms so needs to make central the impact of ideas, changes and activities on student outcomes and works better if facilitated by external (to institution or department) expertise.
- The organisational infrastructure needs to support the professional learning activities if it is to be sustainable.

The above represents my own synthesis of Timperley *et al.*'s (2008) work and complements the two specific models of CPD that follow.

With underpinning purpose in mind, Kennedy's (2005) nine models of CPD are located within three broader categories:

1. 'Transmissive' (passive participation typically mediated by an external expert supporting continuity of practice and compliance).
2. 'Transitional' (more focussed on individual or specific needs and is potentially transformative but equally can support a transmissive agenda).
3. 'Transformative' (characterised by autonomy, reflection, innovation and willingness to change).

This framework challenges the predominance of transmissive models of CPD and argues that one way to effect a shift from transmissive to transformative is to scrutinise the purpose and objectives of CPD activity through such an analytical lens. A key objective of PGCert-type OTL (whether orthodox or not) is development of the teacher part of the academic. This study sought to establish the purpose of an OTL system so it was crucial, therefore, to have a common framework to evaluate where each OTL activity can be located on a spectrum ranging from compliance to useful to transformative.

Narrowing this further to the component elements of a CPD activity, Bell and Gilbert's (1996) teacher development model posits that personal, social and occupational aspects interrelate and each is important in its own way. A successful model will embrace all three elements and, as such, the component elements provide a useful analytical tool with regard to the design of the CPD activity. The personal dimension includes teacher beliefs and attitudes and their motivations for engaging with the CPD. The social dimension stresses the importance of supportive group working and the establishment of safe environments conducive to innovation and experimentation.

### ***Conclusion***

AT provides a common lens with which to focus data collection which, as the next chapter will show, is necessarily mixed in means due to the context and OTL approach under scrutiny in each case. Whilst rooted in the Vygotskyian notions of learning, it is inadequate of itself as a means of framing some of the complexities of OTL. AT does, however, provide common anchor points for broader theoretical dimensions outlined above which are necessary to examine types of OTL.

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*'There is the greatest readiness, and where that is so there cannot be great difficulty.'*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter XXVI, p. 110*

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## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### ***Introduction***

As a qualitative study, this exploration of cases of unorthodox approaches to OTL seeks to understand how and why each is organised and the contextual drivers and impediments that shape AD thinking and the OTL design. Of equal importance and fundamental for contrast and depth, within each case and comparatively across cases, is the experience of each OTL system by those participating. The data has been used to narrate, interpret and critique each approach and then draw conclusions about actual and potential effectiveness. This, in turn, illuminates broader conclusions about academic development, professional learning in HE and the OTL landscape. The aims, study design, methods of data collection and analysis used to accomplish this are presented below. With each of the cases I was of course interested in what makes them unique as well as looking to define areas of commonality with each other (Stake, 1995). Case studies can be unpredictable and I needed to be pragmatic and flexible with my data collection. The reasons for this and the approaches I took are also detailed in this chapter.

### ***Aims***

This study is rooted in my own professional role and interests. The turbulent recent experiences of OTL in schools and FE provide an ominous foreshadowing of what already appears to be looming in HE (see Chapter 1). Given that it seems inevitable that OTL will be used increasingly for QA purposes, I am particularly interested in approaches that:

- a. Emphasise the QE/ developmental benefits of OTL.
- b. Seek to overcome some of the reported resistances to orthodox OTL by changing one or more of the defining elements of the orthodox system (Milieu, Motive, Mediator, Mechanism).

Where innovations do appear in the literature, they are even more rarely from an outsider perspective and nowhere have I found an examination of these new types of OTL together or in terms of how they compare to more orthodox approaches. In short, I have sought to establish what variations in OTL practice have been implemented in UK

HE and, in three cases that reflect the diversity within these innovations, motives behind each iteration and how well each appears to work. Above all, I sought to establish whether it was worth the effort and to what extent scrutiny of these innovations could lead to new understandings and conceptualisations of OTL. This, in turn, also provides a useful lens with which to examine or compare existing or proposed OTL schemes which adhere to the more orthodox orientation previously defined. Thus, the case study aspect of unorthodox approaches to OTL has relevance to both innovative and orthodox approaches and to AD work more widely.

### ***Ontological and epistemological position***

In interrogating my own positionality in terms of OTL (see Chapter 1), I found that one of the key frustrations I have is the persistence of the belief in others that OTL can be used as a reliable and fair means of judging the quality and effectiveness of lecturers' teaching. This frustration reflects my conviction that OTL is essentially subjective, irrespective of underpinning purpose. This, in turn, confirms what I knew but had not previously articulated as such: I am ontologically inclined towards Social Constructionism (Crotty, 1998; Robson, 2011). That is, I believe that there cannot be, and should not be, a rigid or ideal way to 'perform' as a teacher/lecturer. This means that performance criteria designed to be used in OTL are a blunt and potentially restrictive instrument. How I perceive my own behaviours as a teacher and those of others is necessarily filtered through the lenses of experience, values and professional role. Likewise, I see orthodox OTL as an opportunity to probe pedagogy; to start a discourse around the act of teaching, the behaviours of students, the interactions between parties and mechanisms of mediation. This position has, as a consequence of embarking on a professional doctorate, manifested in the way I seek to widen my own understanding and actively examine the ideas and understandings of others in terms of OTL. This also makes an interpretivist epistemological approach the logical succedent (Crotty, 1998).

The research questions (See Chapter 2) emphasise the 'how', 'why' and 'to what extent' in relation to unorthodox OTL. The OTL approaches are the phenomena under scrutiny and this research therefore needs to be fundamentally qualitative in nature and

to sit within the phenomenological paradigm. However, the use of a social constructionist tool, Activity Theory, as the heuristic for data collection, analysis and comparison, widens the phenomenological vista in that the lens becomes more holistic and limits, to an extent, the centrality of the ADs' perceptions.

The research design does place pre-eminence on the 'voice' of the key stakeholders and, as such, can be conceptualised as an *emic* approach (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). However, the literature is dominated by insider studies, most of which come with a non-generalisability caveat. In the same way, had I been solely dependent on these voices it was therefore possible (if not probable) that the subjective biases in regard to the OTL systems, especially where those ADs have introduced the system, would simply echo the generally positive reporting of the many insider studies because of the depth of involvement or investment the ADs had. I wanted to paint the 'warts and all' picture that I was seeking. There was only real value in my 'outsiderness', then, if went beyond interpreting AD perceptions and took an *etic* perspective in part. This led me towards the logistically challenging but logical conclusion that an ethnographic tool would enable the wider, more holistic perspective and support triangulation.

### ***Activity Theory***

Case studies have been used as a vehicle for structured, focused comparison (George *et al.*, 2005) and the rationale for this is explored below. In order to achieve the structure and focus it is of course logical to employ consistent methodological approaches across the cases, though there were practical impediments to this. Likewise, I needed a consistent framework for analysis that would allow for comparisons across the OTL approaches that both accommodated the research questions and allowed for expression of common threads in a way that enabled meaningful comparison amongst divergent approaches that, ostensibly at least, shared a common goal of lecturer development/ improvement. Each OTL approach is a system with multiple stakeholders with varying degrees of agency. The OTL approach is, inevitably, shaped by values, culture and history of some of the key stakeholders and the institution in which it operates. Whilst the discussion is informed by theories of professional and observational learning (as detailed in Chapter 3) I sought a framework

that would aid both data collection and analysis of OTL systems sitting in unknown contexts. AT offers that broader framework that also accommodates institutional culture and history.

In terms of its application to educational research, Roth and Lee (2007) argue that it is 'one of the best-kept secrets of academia' (p. 186) and that 'it is a theory for praxis, thereby offering the potential to overcome some of the most profound problems that have plagued both educational theorizing and practice' (Roth and Lee, 2007, p. 186). I selected AT as the pre-eminent driver for both data collection and analysis as it appeared to offer opportunities to achieve these objectives, capturing the essence of the primary units of analysis in each case but allowing for exploration of pertinent factors *within* each case and *across* cases (Bakhurst, 2009). Central to this study is Engeström's (2000; 2001) 'second generation' AT which is detailed in the previous chapter.

### ***Data collection***

#### ***Case studies as a methodological backbone***

Whilst often better seen as a data interpretation strategy, case studies here form the backbone of the research and provide a methodological framework for the two principal strategies (interviews and observation) as well as the contextualising data collection methods used (physical and social media based professional networks and desk research of university websites). Three case studies allow for both in-depth insights within each case but also broader and comparative elements.

Single case studies are appropriate when the case is special (in relation to established theory) for some reason. This might arise when the case provides a critical test to a well-established theory, or where the case is extreme, unique, or has something special to reveal (Rowley, 2002, p.21).

In this way, the case studies can be identified as *collective* but *instrumental* in each case (Stake, 2005). The approach I have taken can be conceptualised as following the logic of what George *et al.* (2005) describe as structured, focused comparison. I have used:

...general questions that reflect the research objective and ...these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases possible (George *et al.*, 2005, p.67).

The questions are also informed by the AT analytical framework and the consistency therein adds validity to comparison and offers scope for expanding the cases in future.

Case studies can be regarded as problematic in terms of objectivity and rigour (Rowley, 2002), so careful consideration of the rationale for their choice and for the way in which they are used is imperative. The tensions and variance in use and design of OTL certainly qualifies as 'complex social phenomena' (Yin, 2013, p.4) for which case studies can be an effective means of study. In educational research, case studies are used to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, where the researcher has no control over the studied phenomenon which operates in a range of real life (i.e. contemporary) contexts (Yin, 2013). The outsidersness therefore has centrality and is a crucial contribution to the study's validity.

### ***Case study sampling***

As a starting point, I undertook desk research, primarily from universities' own web sites, to unobtrusively harvest data (Hine, 2011). I collected contextual data to get an impression of how OTL is publicly presented within HE institutions and whether it is referenced in terms of PGCert-type programmes. I made frequent use on an *ad hoc* basis of opportunities to share my research ideas when meeting or communicating with colleagues, in AD groups and on mailing lists and at the networking opportunities afforded by conference attendance and presentations in the summer of 2017. The most successful aspect of this desk-based starting point was a post to the SEDA mailing list (Appendix 2) requesting information about use of observations on PGCert-type programmes and anything that could be regarded as 'atypical'. This generated 39 direct or list responses from ADs and their equivalents and provided the initial connection to two of the cases in this study. The pilot study resulted from a conversation with a colleague after a presentation on my IFS findings and the final

case resulted from a conversation with a professional contact who put me in touch with an AD leading on an OTL project.

I wanted to establish a range of possible case studies that would provide samples that were distinct from one another and crossed all aspects of the four aspects of deviation (Milieu, Mediator, Mechanism, Motive). The cases were selected purposively in part and in part due to convenience (Robson, 2011). Prior to establishing the final list, I had electronic or face to face communication with the thirteen possible case study institutions (Appendix 3). In addition, I identified from further desk research one university using a 'process recall' approach, another using lesson study and a third using students as observers. I sent speculative e-mails and then follow up e-mails to key contacts in each institution with research information but received no responses.

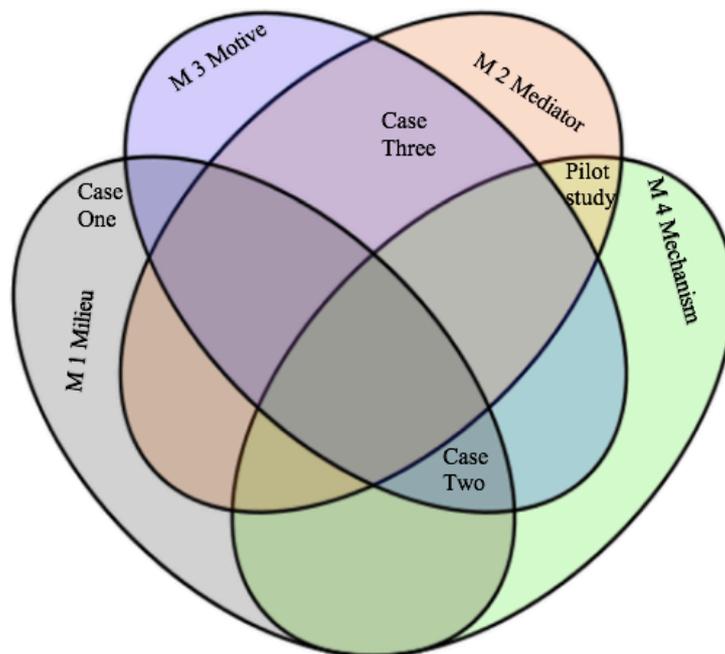
Cases were ultimately selected according to core criteria (Flick, 2014) and needed to have the following common elements:

1. Used as part of HE lecturer training/ development programmes.
2. Have a core element that diverges from the orthodox approach defined earlier.
3. Are designed to develop the teaching or teaching related skills of the participants.
4. Involve some form of observational relationship whether of the self, of/ by others or of a process/ output directly related to the teaching roles of academics.

Of the thirteen initial enquiries I made, and based on my understandings of the OTL approaches in use, I then sent further information and access requests to five of these institutions about the scope and needs to determine whether I would be granted access to what I needed (Robson, 2011). All but one (University E, see Appendix 3) maintained interest and contact and I was fortunate in that there was some variation in type of HEP. All four (i.e. including the pilot study) are English HEPs, two of which are Russell Group and two post-1992. Both the post-1992 institutions are specialist Arts/ Media institutions and I was a little disappointed that I was unable to find a suitable case from a multi-disciplinary, post-1992 institution such as my own. However, more important was the need to ensure each of the four elements of divergence was represented in some way:

- Pilot study: **University H:** Self-observation (video-mediated) = Mechanism + Mediator.
- **Case one: University M:** Peer Supported Review (of teaching, a resource, feedback, a tutorial or anything related to the wider remit of teaching) = Milieu.
- **Case two: University C:** Extended Microteaching (focus on 'performance' not content and also observer as learner) = Motive + Mechanism + Milieu.
- **Case three: University J:** Students as observers = Mediator + Motive.

My understanding of where these would be plotted on the four-way Venn of divergence based on my initial contact and preliminary discussions was as follows:



**Figure 4.1: Researcher's initial impressions of nature of divergence of each of four cases**

### ***Choice of research methods***

I initially settled on semi-structured interviews with instigators and/ or implementers of the OTL activity accompanied by 'observation' of the actual process and/or documents that showed outcomes of the process. I found in my IFS the dialogic and narrative aspects of the interviews gave scope for the detail, depth and honesty that I sought with regard to the OTL experience and how they were perceived by the PGCert

participants. Whilst I sought to maintain some of the contextual value a survey can provide, I rejected the notion of a formal survey in favour of the targeted e-mail to academic development colleagues on the widely used SEDA list mentioned above and committed to reviewing at least half the HEPs on the HESA list through web-mediated desk research. The rationale for choice of interviews and the flexibility afforded by a broad notion of what constitutes 'observation' as a research tool (reflecting of course the diversity that is central to this study) is outlined below.

### ***Piloting***

Confusions arising from poorly crafted questions or activities within a research instrument are minimised by piloting (Van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). I piloted my draft interview questions with a colleague (an AD) and another AD who is a friend working at a different institution. This not only aided clarification of the questions but also refreshed my interview technique (Seidman, 2013) and reminded me to curb my propensity to express my own ideas and enthusiasms. The 'observational' aspect of data collection was harder to pilot since the nature of the observation would be determined by the nature of the OTL type and access.

I piloted the redrafted interview questions at another institution where they were experimenting with self-observation by video as a complement to more orthodox observations on their PGCert and followed this with an observation of the whole process with one PGCert participant, informal discussions with her and scrutiny of the output resulting from it. I realised after completing the observation aspect and first informal discussion that there were gaps in my data. My idealism about the utility of observation in this context was challenged and I subsequently committed to more formal interviewing of key stakeholders where I could not observe the process myself. The pilot study also helped me to develop common prompt questions and topic headings in my field notes and interviews with observers/ observees to ensure consistency and comparability where possible (Robson, 2011).

The data from the pilot study also informed the ways in which I used AT to analyse and interpret the findings and to represent these in a way that would be coherent and provide some common frames of reference across very different cases and settings.

Because of the comparatively limited data and my wish to explore the other cases in depth, I have not included data from the pilot study in my findings. However, the structural diagram can be seen in Appendix 4, the summary of findings in Appendix 5 and the Activity Diagram in Appendix 6.

### ***Interviews***

My interest in the conceptualisations, rationalisation and agency of ADs inevitably led me towards a qualitative method that would give me depth over breadth. For data gathering purposes, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with one or more of the ADs provided the backbone to each case, with documentary evidence and analysis offering a critical triangulating data source. Interviews 'reach the parts which other methods cannot reach' (Wellington, 2015, p. 137) and thus offered an opportunity to explore beliefs, values and personal perspectives in relation to OTL. As part of the case study design they are an essential component (Robson, 2011, Hennink *et al.*, 2011; Bryman, 2004). The choice of a semi-structured approach was taken deliberately and with a clear sense of the aims and research questions. An unstructured approach would have likely led to gaps and made comparison much more problematic. Fully structured interviews can be seen as an inefficient extension of surveying (Carruthers, 1990) and limit the opportunities for participants to respond openly and conversationally to key issues (Longhurst, 2003). I found that semi-structured interviews gave me as the researcher the opportunities I needed to move the conversation accordingly (Macintyre and Thomson, 2013). The systematic approach enables both freedom to probe and data consistency across cases (Hoepfl, 1997). All the interviews (see Appendix 7 for sample transcript) show that I successfully avoided the pitfall of engaging in a 'balanced, two-way exchange' (Wellington, 2015, p. 139) but rather allowed the participants time and space to respond in depth.

The interviews for the three focal cases were all arranged and conducted in the spring of 2018. I followed Wellington's (2015) recommended approach in terms of formalities and logistics. I used a schedule (Appendix 8) that would ensure the same areas were covered in each case but also allowed for flexible probing and asides (Bryman, 2012;

Longhurst, 2003). The schedule also adopted Rabionet's (2011) recommendation to include prompts for introductions, thanks and ethical considerations.

At the end of the interviews each of the AD participants were also presented with success factors (Appendix 9) as identified in the literature review and asked to comment on how far they felt their OTL system met these factors with a rationalisation at each stage.

### ***Observations***

The counterpoint to the AD perspectives afforded by interviews is in the aspect that I am able to take from a position of externality. Where observations of 'live' OTL events were not possible, 'observations' of documentary data and/or interviews or other communication exchanges from subjects of OTL systems were utilised for pragmatic, confidentiality and access reasons. My original idea was to seek to witness each process in action. However, this was only possible in the pilot and one of the three main cases and not suitable or possible in the others. I acknowledge the limitations of direct comparability in terms of visceral experience of the process but had to accept in Case three the extended nature of the process made this logistically extremely difficult and in Case one I had missed the cycle of observations. Nevertheless, I did manage to extend the definition of 'observation' to include observation of documentation and outputs (forms, instructional material, course handbooks, examples) and for Case three to include recorded semi-structured interviews with three participants since outputs were limited (as a consequence of the OTL design).

Within each case the interviews sought to account for the unorthodox approach to OTL, perceptions of OTL more broadly and to identify stated purposes and aspects of each OTL system design. Given the subject of study and the need to get beneath the stated aims, non-participant and passive observation as a research method was a rational choice to develop etic perspectives (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). I wanted rich descriptions and narratives within each case, to help develop an understanding of the machinations of each activity system, explain key actors' actions in each context and provide points of contrast or confirmation with the interview data (Hennink *et al.*, 2011). For these

reasons and coupled with interviews, I felt it offered the best route to getting the full and complex understanding I was seeking. My goal was to use the observations in the broad sense outlined above to gather insights from those who had participated. To that end, I opted to take an ethnographic and relatively unstructured approach (Robson, 2011), using only my research questions as prompts for field notes, sketches and notes taken from conversations I had with participants. That I was unable to do this across all cases was a disappointment and, whilst I feel I have compensatory data sources, I do feel I missed an aspect in each of the two cases that could have given a more complete picture. Where I was able to witness the OTL systems in action I also sought opportunities for discussion with key participants by way of informal but authentic conversations (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018) on a convenience basis at some point after the observation.

In each case I am confident that I have sufficient data to build a case though I accept that there is an inevitable distinction between the data in the pilot case and Case two where I was able to witness the process in action against Case one and Case three where I was not. For a comparative list of data sources see Appendix 10.

### ***Saturation and triangulation***

Like most qualitative studies this one has a small sample compared to quantitative studies. The idea of saturation, or the point at which more data yields no additional information (Mason, 2010) troubled me in terms of the wider understanding of reasons for and approaches to divergence from the orthodoxy (i.e. broader conclusions) as well as within each case. Whilst I understand the arguments for data saturation in terms of overall quality, validity and replication (Fusch and Ness, 2015), I am not concerned here with frequency of occurrence of responses and I have realised that my study design does not lend itself to a simple equation for what saturation would look like.

I concur with the perspective of O'Reilly and Parker (2013) who argue that efforts to claim or fulfil a saturation criterion can be problematic. Here I am, in part, concerned with agency and rationalisation of OTL systems of those implementing them and, as such, the samples within each case represent sufficiency since all those interviewed

perform that function. In that sense, the interviewees and the other respondents meet the more important quality measure (in this case appropriateness) and, I believe, adequacy (Morse and Field, 1995). I am not seeking generalisability so the issue is not with the size of sample and a saturation point *per se* but with an adequate sample that would sufficiently answer my research questions (O'Reilly and Parker, 2013). That said, since this study is, by definition, about divergence from a determined orthodoxy, a key limitation is that it can only provide narratives and interpretation on those cases selected and these have been limited by factors such as time and capacity of the study. The cases are examples of a phenomenon and, taken to its limit, saturation of divergence is clearly impossible though it does open avenues for further research.

In using multiple data sources within each case, I have adopted a 'data triangulation' strategy to counter threats to the validity of the study (Robson, 2011). AT is of particular use here because where contradictory information from different data sources may be problematic (Robson, 2011), AT modelling allows for conflicts, tensions and discord to come to the forefront in the analysis.

### ***Ethics***

The research conforms to the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011) and ethical consent was sought ahead of field work from the UCL/ Institute of Education ethical committee. All participants were advised of the concept of 'voluntary informed consent' (BERA, 2011, p.5) and their right to withdrawal. All were also provided with a summary of the research proposal, a rationale for the study and information on dissemination (Appendix 11). Interviewees returned a consent form (Appendix 12) and observees/ OTL participant contributors another (Appendix 13).

The main issue with desk based/ internet research is related to likely inconsistencies in practice in terms of what is online, whether it is publicly available and whether the choices made at an institutional level will impact the sample to an extent that will suggest an inaccurate picture or one that does not represent the university fairly. To

that end, the data used from this stage (primarily in Chapter 1) is presented in a descriptive fashion.

Case studies must seek to challenge rather than confirm researcher preconceptions so the rationale for the choice of cases needed explicit expression (Yin, 2013). They are also unpredictable and any researcher needs to be alert to their own preconceptions with effort towards 'capturing the mood' (Yin, 2013, p.74) and the intended meaning of interviewees. Flyvbjerg (2006) offers rejoinders to 'five misunderstandings about case study research' and in doing so suggests strategies for combating potential ethical issues such as the need for the researcher to be open to the human propensity towards seeking validation and to make clear the goals of the study at all stages of the research cycle. All cases are outside my usual place of work thus precluding issues associated with insider research (Robson, 2011). Finally, and more pragmatically, it was fundamental that I needed to respect the case study contributors, so I instigated a two-stage member checking procedure (Rowley, 2002). The first of these was with all participants after transcribing interviews. The second, for ADs only, was that I sent a draft of the findings chapter to each of them for correction and comment.

In relation to the observations, the principal ethical concerns are related to honesty and openness about the purpose of the observation (Mulhall, 2003) and how the observer's presence can influence the situation. In Case two I spent an entire afternoon observing the summative OTL session. In this and the pilot case I was able to clarify purpose (in Case two via the proxy of the ADs at the host institution), blend unobtrusively and limit contributions or questions until after the completion of the activity (Hennink *et al.*, 2011).

The overall design included scheduled 'member checking' of AD interview transcripts, 'data triangulation' (multiple data sources) and included a clear 'audit trail' (Robson, 2011, pp. 157-159). All of these are mechanisms that counter threats to validity and bias in flexible, qualitative designs.

### ***Anonymity and data storage***

All participants and their host institutions have been anonymised (BERA, 2011). The member checking stages are designed in part to assure this. Likewise, any data has been stored securely (BERA, 2011). Audio recordings were stored securely online as were all other records. Signed consent forms and notes from interviews and informal conversations were kept in file or as part of my field work diary and these were kept secure in hard copy only. The only personal details held are participant names. Personal and institutional identifiers were removed from the transcripts. Personal information will not be shared with anyone. The audio recordings were shared through a secure online connection to a professional transcription service and are not stored on their servers; rather they accessed the audio through the provided link. The audio files have now been moved to another secure, online location and will be destroyed once I have completed the EdD.

### ***Researcher bias***

I have tried to make explicit (see Chapter 1) my own perspectives in relation to OTL. My professional interest is driven, in part, by a desire to champion OTL as a developmental tool in the face of increasing regulation and monitoring. In this way I have needed to be alert to my biases when collecting and analysing data and to use the range of data collection methods to help offset this (Robson, 2011).

### ***Data analysis***

#### ***Transcription***

All recorded interviews were transcribed in full by a professional transcription service, largely as a means of saving time (Richards, 2014), if not money. Full transcription is a means of increasing overall validity and ethical soundness (Bayliss, 2007). The transcripts were requested without fillers and markers (such as laughter) and then were further smoothed by me in a series of interpretive edits as a check for accuracy and to eradicate disfluency, identifiers and anything that may embarrass the participants (Bayliss, 2007). This was done within the transcription service's own software which

has playback and editing tools. Each complete transcription was then shared with its respective interviewee as part of the member checking protocol (Robson, 2011).

In line with the recommendation made by Basit (2003), I decided to experiment with electronic coding even though the number of interviews was relatively few. The choice was pragmatic and according to what I felt (at the time) was apposite (Basit, 2003). Several reviews of the audio recordings aided the processes of familiarisation and intimacy. I experimented with two types of coding software, *NVivo* and *MAXQDA*. The first took a considerable time investment only to frustrate due to technical impediments. The latter enabled me to work with not only the interview data but also the other data I had gathered. It provided yet another layer of intimacy and did inform some aspects of the way the findings are presented. A sample extract can be seen in Appendix 14 though, I should be clear, most of the organisation, mapping and structuring was derived from a non-digital approach.

### ***Coding***

In many ways, analysis began during the collection of the data. Iterative progression through the stages above and then through a systematic coding ensured repeated and deep exposure to the data (Lichtman, 2013). Miles and Huberman (1994) recommend a 'start list' (p.58) of codes prior to fieldwork-based on research questions, conceptual frameworks and hypotheses. This was as logical as it was intuitive for me and followed from my decision to use AT to frame collection and analysis. I also took their advice and kept the codes brief. My start list and complete code list can be seen in Appendices 15 and 16. The initial codes were determined deductively through the aims and research questions as well as the AT structure then these evolved inductively through the analytical stages (Mayring, 2014). My analytical approach is best described as a thematic analysis which uses the Braun and Clarke (2006) approach: a process of familiarisation (in interview and with repeated listening to recordings); deductive code application & inductive code generation; theme searching and identification; theme review; theme definition and, finally, report writing. The themes can be seen in the way I have structured Chapter 5. At this final stage I used a loose structure derived from the AT framework and wove a narrative about each from coded extracts from all data sources.

## ***Stages of analysis***

For each data set the following stages were broadly followed for each case:

1. Listen through after the interview and list jargon, acronyms and key terms whilst still fresh and familiar.
2. (professional) Transcription.
3. Post-transcription smoothing: for obvious errors (checked synchronously with recording) and to anonymise.
4. Member checking stage 1 (transcript with questions for clarification).
5. Printing, reading, highlighting transcripts and other documents.
6. Accessing websites and organising and typing up field notes (where relevant).
7. Electronic coding of all data sources.
8. Manual re-ordering from printed documents and coded extracts.
9. Drafting diagrams for findings and discussion chapters.
10. Writing followed by member checking stage 2- i.e. sharing drafts (Stake, 1995).
11. Production of final drafts and edited diagrams.

## ***Data weightings***

Since the methods of data collection were necessarily tailored in each case, the weighting of data used varied accordingly. This was in part due to limitations in access, timescales, opportunity and responses from potential participants. In Case 2 the process, impact and perspective of those who are subject to the OTL process was balanced between direct interpretation from observation and discussions whilst in the other two (Cases 1 and 3) it was drawn from more extensive interviews with the OTL activity participants. Irrespective of job title and how they self-conceptualise, those responsible for the unorthodox system central to each case are referred to as ADs for convenience. The following chapter presents findings case by case.

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*‘Men are generally incredulous, never really trusting new things unless they have tested them by experience’*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter VI, p.24*

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## Chapter 5: Presentation of data

### *Structure of chapter*

The chapter begins with a review of where the research questions are addressed in this chapter. This is followed by each case presented in turn. Institutions have been anonymised and all names of participants are pseudonyms. The core elements of a second-generation activity system (Engeström *et al.* 1999) have suggested broadly the section headings which are themselves broadly consistent across the cases for ease of comparison. Sub-headings are case-specific as particular themes have emerged. Thus, the historical and cultural context of the system can be found at the start of each case and in the section dealing with observation at the institution. The history of the activity (i.e. the unorthodox approach to OTL) begins within the same section and then extends into the rationale. Consideration of community and division of labour are made using interview and observation data. The rules, tools and objectives are presented graphically in each case. Outcomes in each case are presented here through the eyes of research participants and interpretations of the outcomes then extend into Chapter 6.

Each of the research questions is addressed at least tangentially within each of the three cases below. In the descriptive/ narrative section at the start of each case the first question is addressed explicitly (*How do ADs conceptualise OTL for HE lecturer professional learning?*). The second question (*How are unorthodox approaches to OTL rationalised and structured and what facilitates or stifles OTL innovation and its sustainability?*) leads to presentation of rationales with explicit and structural diagrams for each case. The second part of this question is presented in part and further explored in the following chapter. In each case, examples of how the subjects of the OTL scheme perceive ways in which it has supported them are shared with summative and comparative conclusions also in Chapter 6 (*In what ways and how effectively do unorthodox OTL approaches support HE lecturer professional learning?*). Since one key driver for this research was to establish whether unorthodox approaches offer solutions to barriers in conventional approaches, evidence from the data is presented in the findings and is also discussed in Chapter 6 (*In what ways and to what extent do*

*unorthodox approaches to OTL overcome resistances and issues found in orthodox OTL systems?).*

The findings are summarised according to each case in Chapter 6 in the form of a series of activity diagrams within which tensions and contradictions are highlighted. These are used there as the basis of discussion which begins with each case in turn then widens to a broader analysis.

### ***Case 1- Obsidian University: 'Peer Supported Review' (PSR)***

PSR is one of the more widely applied deviations from the conventional or orthodox approach to observation (Gosling, 2014). Whilst it includes observation of teaching, it widens the scope to include other aspects of educational practice and, as the name implies, tends to eschew judgement and evaluation in favour of support and development and also emphasises observer learning. This case examines its use in a PGCert HE at an institution which I have called 'Obsidian University'. My interest in PSR derives from its deviation from the orthodoxy in terms of milieu (i.e. of what is observed and where observations take place) and the mechanisms which directly challenge hierarchical elements within conventional approaches to OTL including a lot of POT schemes. PSR is used on a PGCert and is the preferred OTL approach across the HE provision at Obsidian.

#### **Institutional context**

Obsidian University is a specialist arts university with several campuses across southern England. HE and FE feature at all campuses. Subjects range from fashion to music technology to product design. The artistic and creative aspects shape the learning design and approach to teaching:

Most of our pedagogy is based around creative learning... collaboration and there's lots of group work... lots of learning through making. [Ali, Academic Developer]

In 2012 the Learning and Teaching Department was broken up resulting in a non-strategic approach to enhancement and development:

We've had this sort of underground approach to it ... One focus in the institution of learning, teaching, pedagogy was the PGCert. [Ali]

Across the cases, the TEF was cited as a driver for change. Ali felt this, more than anything, has put teaching and learning firmly back on the senior management agenda:

[The TEF] made us look at teaching in a very positive way... providing an ideal opportunity for learning and teaching to come out of this sort of underground, hidden cave. [Ali]

The principal sources of data for this case were as follows:

- In depth interview and e-mail exchanges with the PGCert programme leader ('Ali').
- 2 in-depth, face-to-face interviews with former programme participants ('Freya' who works in learning support and 'Gert' who manages technicians as well as having teaching responsibilities).
- 3 web-mediated interviews with former programme participants. One is a lecturer ('Callum'), another a librarian ('Deirdre') and the third a lecturer at an affiliated college ('Erica').
- Online documents freely available on the Obsidian website.
- Programme documentation, examples of completed PSRs and PSR-specific documents supplied by the programme leader.

### **The Academic Developer**

Ali runs the PGCert and top-up MA in Education as well as having other typical academic development duties. These include cross-institutional CPD, support for teaching and learning initiatives and HEA fellowship workshops. He came to academic development via a learning technologies route and is a former graduate of the PGCert that he now runs. Given the creative nature of the institution he felt that the concept of creativity was too implicit in the previous iterations of the PGCert so he sought to make creativity more central and explicit within the programme.

### **Personal perspectives on observation**

Ali began by saying that he felt observation had 'huge value'. He went on to say:

Personally, I'm not a fan of graded observation. I think our PSR process is really supportive because it's not graded.

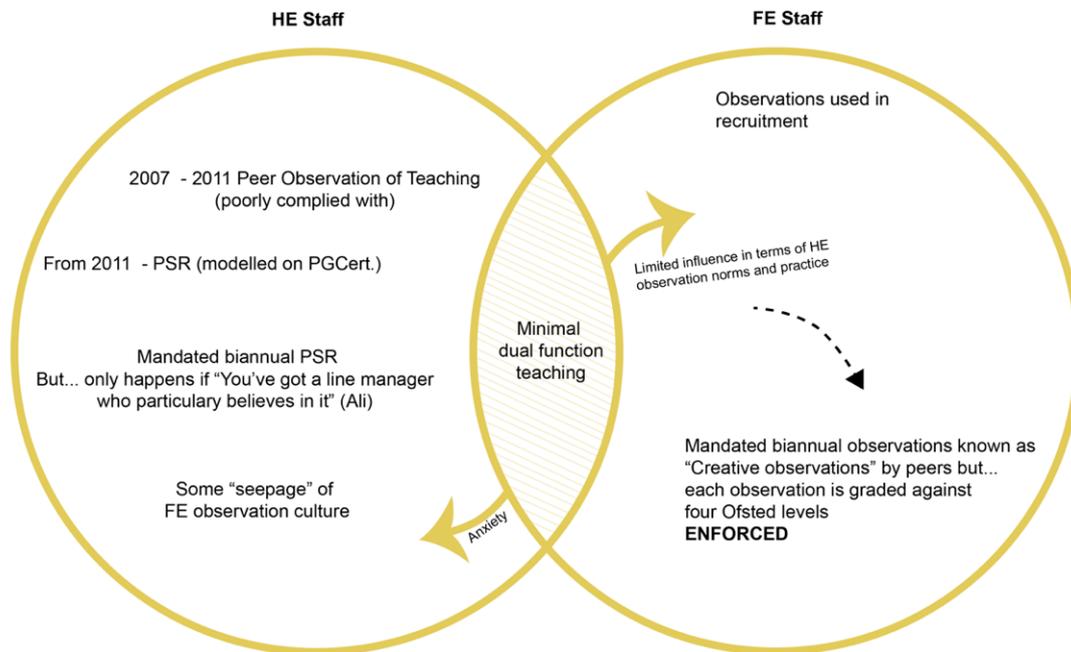
However, he also expressed the view that he could see benefits to grading in some contexts but again, later, how observation could be problematic in the context of observations that require either evaluative comments or grades. This dialectic, evident throughout Ali's broader consideration of observation was not likewise applicable to the PSR process within the PGCert. Here the dialogic and developmental aspect was pre-eminent:

When people on the PGCert produce their portfolios... you can see through those critical dialogues that they had with their peers and members of the course team they suddenly realise what they're doing and it is a real transformative moment... the process is designed in a way that reflection is a natural occurrence.

### ***Observation at Obsidian***

#### **Across the institution**

The current institutional scheme used across HE provision is labelled the same as the PGCert observations (Peer Supported Review). It has recently replaced a more conventional POT scheme. The scheme mirrors PSR schemes elsewhere (Gosling, 2014; Purvis *et al.*, 2009). Both are 'supposed to be mandatory' (Ali) with two observations mandated each year institutionally. Because of the FE provision, Obsidian is subject to scrutiny by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The observation scheme applicable to those teaching FE provides evidence of observation and achievement mapped against Ofsted criteria. For this reason, the observations include grading. They are nevertheless framed as developmental and operate under a reciprocal peer scheme. In other words, peers are required to grade one another. It is beyond the scope of this study to explore or discuss this further but the institutional proximity of such a system with evident built-in tensions and contradictions (O'Leary, 2014) is likely to have a bearing on the way in which any kind of observation is perceived by those working within the HE areas of Obsidian. See Fig. 5.1 (below) for a representation of the FE/ HE observation systems.



**Figure 5.1: Obsidian University: Observations**

When asked why there was an apparent question mark over the supposed mandatory nature of the observation scheme for HE lecturers, Ali suggested that it was likely that the resistance related to workload or a sense that is of limited value:

Everyone is all like: 'Oh, let's just leave it!' and 'It's a bit touchy-feely; we don't want to upset anybody.'

That said, Ali also cited the line managers who had themselves completed the PGCert and tended to be enthusiastic when it came to enforcing the PSR scheme. Ali himself felt there was a sense that fears and scepticism tended to be put aside when positive outcomes were realised. Ali feels there is a growing interest in PSR from departmental managers as the implications and impact of the TEF are realised. In the view of Ali, PSR at an institutional level has been revitalised with senior management keen to match or improve on its TEF Silver award from the 'trial' year of 2017.

## **On the PGCert**

The PGCert itself derived its approach to observation from the institutional PSR scheme and became a model for its implementation. Whilst across the institution compliance is patchy, engagement with PSRs is required if participants are to successfully complete the PGCert.

The PGCert is predominantly for Obsidian staff and emphasises arts and creative education. The programme documentation foregrounds these facets throughout. Ali perceives the most significant distinctions between Obsidian and generalist HEPs is the near absence of the long lecture and the frequent use of what he describes as ‘more experimental’ assessments. Ali estimates that at least 30% of staff at Obsidian are dyslexic so one consequence of this and the orientation of the programme is a modelling of innovative approaches to assessment within the programme:

We... push back against what we see as... too much emphasis on writing.

Ali qualified this, however, expressing the view that the shape of curricula, the approach to teaching and the methods of assessment tend to be evolving rather than built upon a foundation of pedagogic evidence:

I don't think we have been around long enough for these things to necessarily have been done in a particularly considered fashion.

One of the idiosyncrasies of the PGCert is that it is open to members of staff who do not necessarily have teaching roles. It is in fact possible to secure a PGCert at Obsidian without actually doing any teaching. This is unusual in terms of sector norms.

## **PSR rationale**

Ali, who has a leadership role in the PGCert, wrote the documentation for the recent revalidation and made the decision to keep all observations under the PSR umbrella. In that sense much of the current process was inherited and whilst we spoke I had clear sense that he was examining the rationale as he responded. From a pragmatic point of

view, PSR works especially well for those with non-teaching roles because the system allows for observations of things other than teaching.

Ali aligned his and his team's ethos in terms of the observation towards the developmental domain, explicitly noting the potential for observations to feel evaluative:

We wanted to open the door for them to understand the benefits of looking critically at their teaching... Without them feeling and being under pressure and sort of evaluated, if you like.

Critical reflection is central to the design. It is built into the 'rules' and the dialogic prompts and provides the foundation for the reasoning and intellectual emancipation that are pre-requisites to praxis (Freire, 1993; Brookfield, 1995). Ali had a copy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* on his desk as we spoke and he invoked these concepts explicitly in subsequent conversations. A complete praxis cycle requires action based on reflection and, whilst the process requires a verbal or written commitment to action, this is where each PSR process ends as a formal mechanism and where trust in the 'buy in' of the subject of the PSR necessarily begins. Ali acknowledged there was a mismatch between his own enthusiasm for PSR and belief in its potential and attitudes towards it amongst PGCert participants. He cited a frequent propensity to leave PSRs until the last minute (especially by academics) as evidence of his inability to communicate the transformative power of PSR. In his view there is an inherent and largely irreconcilable barrier because this potential must be experienced not heard.

Former PGCert participants cited collegiality as an assumed purpose: 'A unique opportunity to work together' [Deirdre] which also opens doors to see how other people teach: 'Without the PSR I don't see my colleagues teach' [Callum]. Although not overtly expressed by the AD or in the documentation, Gert suggested that developing relationships across campuses and meeting those within the institution lecturers would not otherwise meet is an apparent driver. Freya went further and, whilst acknowledging explicitly that she doubted this was an intention, PSR gave her (and others who work in professional services) a greater visibility, higher status and a sense of 'self-agency'.

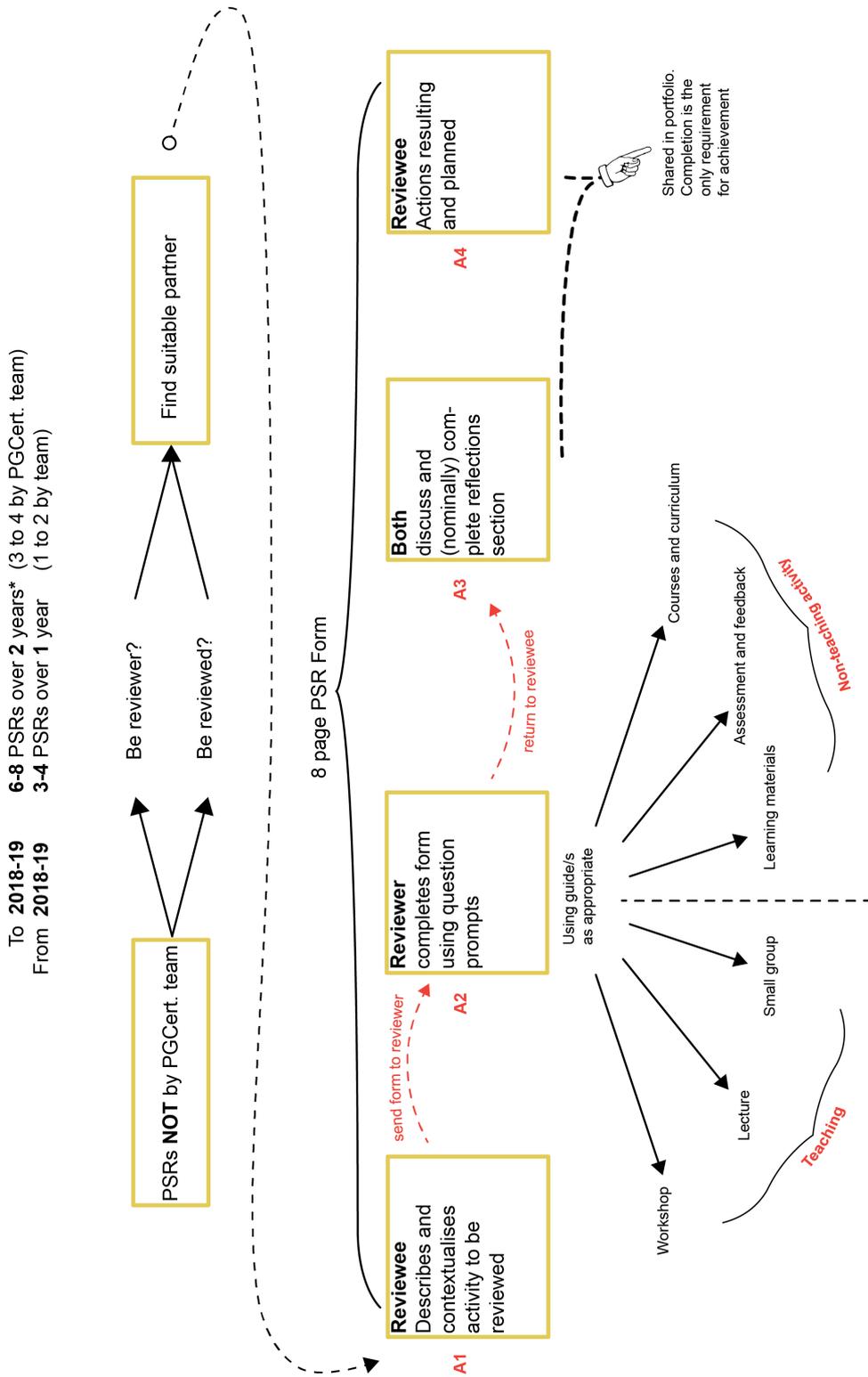
In terms of rationale in the documentation, the weighting is almost entirely towards benefits to the reviewee, though Ali stated in the interview that benefits of being a reviewer are just as significant. Unprompted, Deirdre said that PSR, 'benefits both the reviewer and the reviewee'. Whichever aspect the review takes there is a planning sheet with prompt questions (see Appendix 17 for edited example) which has three sections to complete. The process is detailed in Fig. 5.2 (below) which shows how there is variance in the expected number to be completed. The four-stage structure, A1 to A4, leads to reflections and actions resulting from the review being shared in an online portfolio. Ultimately, Ali is looking for 'deep and sustained' reflection that draws on the theories of learning. A desire for praxis competes against the need for evidence trails, written reflections and completion compliance which resonate not of liberty and emancipation but of the intrusive observation of a surveillance society (Foucault, 1977).

#### **Rules, tools and division of labour**

Fig.5.2 details the structure and organisation the PSR scheme within the PGCert. This diagram shows how up to and including the year of data collection (2017-18) a minimum of six PSRs were required with at least 3 of these as reviewee in partnership with a member of the PGCert team as peer reviewer. For the other PSRs, the PGCert participant can elect to be either reviewer or reviewee and select from one of six activities (three teaching related; three non-teaching) in each case. Choice is limited by availability and willingness of fellow participants on the PGCert programme. The reduction proposed for the academic year 2018-19 is in response to both PGCert team and participant workload and reduction of programme length from two to one year, broadly in line with the majority of comparable programmes in the sector. In each case the four-stage process is followed with a summary and action points shared in a portfolio.

Case 1: Fig 5.2

Obsidian University, PGCert. Peer Supported Review (PSR): Structures and processes



\* All participants completed PGCert. in 2 year iteration

Figure 5.2 Obsidian University: PSR Structure

To support the process there is quite extensive programme-specific documentation which also refers to the institutional PSR pages online. These contain a considerable amount of guidance material which includes prompt questions for each of the different types of PSR.

We have a range, we used to call them aide memoirs, and then we realised that was a bit poncey so lately they're just called guides... contain a series of prompts [for the reviewer]. [Ali]

Three of these guides are labelled 'Observing... (Small-group teaching, Lectures, Workshops)' and three are labelled as 'Reviewing... (Assessment and Feedback, Learning Materials, Courses and Curriculum)'. Additionally, on this page there is an introductory video, a blank PSR form, a session plan template, a guide to reflective thinking, a handbook for the whole process and further guidance on dialogic practices and reflection as well as a series of exemplars. Questions within these guides (see Appendix 18 for examples) are designed to limit judgements and to lead to: 'This is what I saw, what does it make you think?' (Ali). The forms themselves are apparently ethnographic though the examples I saw all tended to draw on the questions from the guides.

There were evident process barriers that daunted those preparing to do PSRs or whilst completing them, most saying it took a while to understand how they should approach PSRs, the minutiae of the logistics and the essential relatively minimal reporting versus the apparent extensive form completion. Despite this, and notwithstanding the explicit desire by the AD to model non-written assessment and respect the large proportion of PGCert participants with dyslexia, there is quite a lot of printed guidance and the forms do imply a considerable written expectation.

Conversely for some, the guides provide a necessary structure:

When you're learning as a teacher, facilitator or something it's actually really beneficial in a PSR process to watch somebody doing it, and to actually observe with a structured outline of what you're actually looking for. [Deirdre]

## ***Perspectives and responses***

### **'Forcing' change**

Part of the challenge apparent in the interviews with the AD and those who had participated in PSR, is breaking through negative expectations, misapprehension and ability to see or share a vision of PSR potential. Notwithstanding the use of the loaded term 'force', Ali consistently and repeatedly stated his strength of belief in the transformative powers of PSRs:

A powerful lever that forces...seems to force people to just think differently.

Enthusing PGCert participants, especially ahead of trying PSR, is the major obstacle. Freya goes so far as to say that:

If it wasn't for the PGCert and that the course demands that they have a minimum of PSRs, nobody would actually engage [in institutional scheme].

Once 'forced' to engage, Ali acknowledges how hard it is to judge how well PSR subject thinking (as expressed in discussions and reflections) manifests into actual change:

This is why the scheme falls short really, because unless it is joined and you do these things year on year...

Callum talked positively about his experience of PSR. However, he also used the word 'forced' as Ali had. The implication here is that the removal of voluntarism is a prerequisite for success:

In a certain sense, you are forced...then I realised that this was a great thing.

Acknowledging the tension within many institutional observation schemes, Callum also hinted at why a parallel scheme within the PGCert might provoke apprehension or scepticism:

PSR in the hands of PGCert people means it is developmental...they're educators...but if the PSR process was

handled by, say, management it would be a completely different emphasis. [Callum]

### **Fear of evaluation**

There was a sense from the lecturer respondents that PSR was an evaluative exercise and this caused anxiety:

...assumption I had at first [was] that I was being judged and reviewed...you feel like you're gonna be judged. They're gonna tell [you] that everything you're doing is wrong...practice torn apart. [Callum]

...I don't want to judge my friends...I was terrified of them...It felt like you were trying so hard to be good; to tick all the boxes. [Freya]

Most reported a gradual change in their understanding about the purpose and potential:

It takes you some time to realise that the benefit is to you. [Gert]

This shows that the anxiety for some of them at least, extends into or even beyond the first iteration. Anxiety, nerves and trepidation do not necessarily dissipate once the process is underway. All of the respondents described some degree of anxiety but all were ultimately positive about the process. That said, Erica felt the PSR design and processes (including observation of teaching) caused less anxiety from the outset:

I prefer these to standard observations...less stressful I think on people [and] much more productive.

It should be noted that Erica is the only one of the five participant respondents who teaches across both FE and HE and, as such, is subject to 1 or 2 graded observations a year which is 'a really stressful time'. When asked whether there were distinctions beyond grading that made PSR less stressful, Erica said that the ethos felt different because of the emphasis on support and dialogue.

### **Premature termination**

Ali commented on potential lack of closure for reviewing partners and for Erica the process felt incomplete. She reviewed a colleague's scheme of work and described very fruitful discussions:

...bouncing ideas off each other...she was giving me ideas...I was telling her bits that I'd learned... talk to someone who you don't necessarily work with at all.

However, she said that she had no way of knowing if the discussion actually led to any tangible change:

It would have been quite interesting to go back to her now...

### **Self-efficacy and agency**

After his first feedback from a peer, Callum got a real sense of how 'invaluable' it could be:

She was very complimentary and helped identify a lot of things that I was doing right...anything she said didn't feel like a judgement; it felt like advice.

He offered as an example of significant change the design and language of his assessment briefs all of which have been re-written as a consequence of a PSR.

Deirdre said: 'It energises your practice.' I asked her about the breadth of PSR and unlike Callum, Freya and Erica, Deirdre was unable to cite an example of change in practice or transferable learning from anything other than a PSR that was focussed on teaching or session facilitation. Freya talked very enthusiastically about both the PGCert as a whole and the catalytic nature of the PSR process within it. She described herself at the start of the PGCert as 'just a learning support assistant' (she is now Learning Support Coordinator) and credits the PGCert and, in particular, the dialogue and the conversations and necessary interactions of the PSRs with empowering her; giving her a voice and a sense that she had the power to change things in terms of learning support:

Oh gosh, it's transformational. It is. It has the potential to really get you to think about not the 'whats' and 'hows'...it's more about the why...why did you do that? Why? [Freya]

She has taken the PSR process into her new role and is positive about its impact, particularly in terms of bringing academic and professional services staff to a place of greater understanding.

What they [students] need is somebody that is willing to listen, and to me the PSR has the potential of having that excuse to get an academic to just do that ...[I] had to go through that transformation myself to be able to do what I do now. [Freya]

### **Flattening hierarchies**

The theme of academic and professional services work and collaboration was also a central feature of the interview with Gert. As a technical manager responsible for a number of technical support staff, he perceived 'a disparity of esteem' between the technical roles and those with academic roles. He saw this as:

...a cultural phenomenon associated with higher education...traditional role [of the technician] is a kind of brown-coated interchangeable drone. [Gert]

Like Freya and Deirdre, he took positive experiences from PSR and has introduced it into his team management where he deliberately pairs technicians with academics as a means of achieving a 'flattening of hierarchies'. He acknowledges initial scepticism evidenced by his own tendency to prioritise all other aspects of PGCert assessment over the PSRs.

Freya suggested that a developed sense of trust within a cultivated relationship are prerequisites because: 'conversations don't happen first time round'. Despite otherwise praising PSR for helping bridge a perceived 'us and them' divide between academics and professional services staff, she herself characterised academics as the resisters in the PSR relationship:

Some academics...are very closed. They don't want people from the outside, from another department, to come in and try to help them with their problem.

The assumption of a 'problem' here alongside this characterisation is a fascinating echo of deficit-focussed evaluative observational models from someone who

throughout expresses a view that PSR should not be seen as an evaluation tool for performance management:

Maybe 10 or 15 years back, people were associating PSR with something that was HR [Human Resources] related.

Of all the participant respondents, Gert was the only one to explicitly connect observing others with observer (i.e. his own) self-efficacy:

You can see some bad, and that's good for your own confidence. You think: 'goodness me!'

### **Transformation and change**

Each of the participants was able to share a tangible change in their thinking and practices as a consequence of the PSRs. Gert as a manager struggled to locate himself as the subject and reported several benefits to members of his team as a consequence of PSRs subsequent to the PGCert. Likewise, Freya was enthusiastic about her own transformation (as much in self-concept as in behaviours) but reserved highest praise for what PSR had to offer in terms of meeting perceived deficits of inclusive practice of academics. In both these examples, and despite explicitly expressing a view that PSR was NOT about performance management, both gave the sense that they valued PSR as a way of manipulating the behaviours of others.

Callum described how he now routinely engages a colleague from the inclusion team to PSR his assessment briefs as issues with them arose from one of his PGCert PSRs. His words, like all the other participants, are testimony to its potential effectiveness and it is examples such as this (i.e. the appropriation and adaptation beyond the PGCert) that provide compelling evidence of its potential to effect change and support development.

### **PSR scheme and success factors**

In the literature review (Chapter 2) I identified a number of commonly cited success factors and in this case and those that follow I asked the ADs to consider their schemes against them (see Appendix 9 for responses). An apparent barrier to success

identified in the data was the time it takes to break down barriers in order to have a meaningful dialogue. Additionally, there was a sense that there were limits to follow through from thinking and discussing to implementation as a feature of the system (as exemplified by Erica above) that reflects the deliberate disconnect between PSR events.

### **PSR: Conclusions**

PSR depends on epiphanies. The believers can wax lyrical about it but the sceptics cannot be told about the light; they have to see it for themselves. To reach it most need to be compelled. Yet compulsion suggests order, control and surveillance and not liberation, emancipation and freedom to grow or transform as a professional educator. Therein lies the fundamental internal contradiction of PSR. Despite this, there was a near universal sense of positivity from all those who had undertaken PSR. Its malleability beyond the rules of the PGCert PSRs means that there is room to break from the ideal of promoting deep reflection as well as to see teaching more holistically. It has potential to bridge barriers between academics and professional service staff as roles become more complex and intertwined.

## ***Case 2 - Sandstone University: 'Extended Microteaching'***

Microteaching is a common and long-established technique used on teacher education programmes (Kilic, 2010; Higgins and Nicholl, 2003) and is typically a short teaching session to peers (often of a topic outside the teacher's usual discipline) which focusses on performance, fundamentals of teaching 'skills' and communication including verbal and non-verbal delivery (Otsupius, 2014). The observation element can include feedback from peers and expert facilitators. This case examines a model of microteaching which is framed as 'peer teaching' at Sandstone University but I have conceptualised as 'Extended Microteaching' as it uses the microteaching template but layers on reiteration and restrictions in a unique fashion. I selected this as a case because it offered an example of deviation from the orthodoxy in terms of motive (focus on teaching skills), mechanism (multiple events in a single session in a training space) and mediator (unqualified and inexperienced peers rather than hierarchical interpretations of 'peer').

Sandstone University is a multi-campus, research-intensive institution in the north of England. Extended Microteaching defines the first week's teaching block on the PGCert. Unlike most similar programmes, the PGCert is *not* directly linked to the HEA fellowship. It is a relatively new iteration (in its second round at the time of the data collection) and succeeds: 'the one we murdered because it was too expensive' (Jane, Academic Developer). It is structured around intensive, one-week blocks for each of the two 15-credit modules and the 30-credit project. Stripped back, in part due to cost, the challenge for the ADs has been to include only:

Essential things you'd want them to have a go at and be able to understand. [Jane]

The principal data sources for this case are as follows:

- E-mail exchanges, Skype meeting and in-depth face to face interviews with two ADs. One designed and facilitates the Extended Microteaching events and is a programme tutor ('Jane'). The other facilitates and also leads parts of the PGCert programme ('Hannah').

- Observation of one day's event which was the third in a series of three microteaching events across an intense study week at the start of the academic year.
- *In situ* observation of self and peer evaluation outputs.
- Programme documentation and guidance to participants.
- Informal post-session discussions with three of the microteaching participants- all new lecturers at Sandstone with less than one year's experience ('Idris', 'Lilly' and 'Niamh').

### **The Academic Developers**

Hannah has been working at Sandstone for three years. She taught languages in HE and FE and then worked in teacher education programmes (again in HE and FE) before joining Sandstone.

Jane, who started her teaching career in primary schools overseas, joined Sandstone around two years earlier than Hannah. She 'fell into' academic development work approximately five years before that after teaching languages and a vocational subject in both the UK and abroad.

Both Hannah and Jane have the word 'manager' in their formal job titles which aligns with institutional culture and status rather than being indicative of a conventional management role.

### **Personal perspectives on observation**

When talking about her career, Jane cited several formative experiences (both positive and negative) that had a strong impact on her orientations towards observation and general teaching philosophy. Without citing the concept explicitly, Jane connected observation potential to self-efficacy (Bandura 1986):

...help people explore and discover things they didn't know they were doing that are really good.

Jane was strident in her expression of limitations of observation to make judgments, saying the value is as a vehicle for reflection (on the part of the observee):

All you do in an observation is see a snapshot...what matters is what they absorb out of it, what they made of it and ...what they're going to do about it.

The mediation role is already clear here, with a diminishment in the evaluative role of the observer and a concomitant weighting towards promoting reflection and trust in the subjects' ability to draw conclusions for themselves (Brookfield, 1995).

Hannah similarly saw the 'potential in that other pair of eyes' as being to direct or prompt reflection rather than eyes which are ready to pounce on bad practice: 'It doesn't count if it's a punitive pair of eyes.' Whilst acknowledging observation still makes participants nervous and can even be frightening, there was a real sense that both were keen to minimise the 'anxious awareness of being observed' (Foucault, 1977, p.202) by individualising the experience and handing power to change back to the observees.

Again, without explicitly citing praxis, Hannah acknowledges the power of convention and tradition in HE educational practices. She spoke of how the apprenticeship (unlike any other profession) begins before some even know that this will be their career. Practices and approaches are ingrained when we are students and these are not always good:

How you are taught; that's how you teach ... that fresh pair of eyes can come in and question.

There is a deliberate push for a dialogic approach and a structure to support it. Decision-making is seen as a consequence of what is discussed rather than predetermined by an autocratic 'leader'. These features parallel core elements of praxis (Freire, 1993).

Hannah questioned anyone's right to 'fail a teacher at teaching' and located dialogue at the heart of what defines her own sense of her role. So, rather than seeing her role as:

...teaching people how to teach; I encourage people to talk about teaching.

## ***Observations at Sandstone***

### **Across the institution**

At institution level, annual POT was compulsory though according to Jane this led to widespread cynical compliance:

An academic check-boxing exercise. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.

There were experiments with a dialogic model but Sandstone reverted to POT because:

The institution was way too immature for that approach. [Jane]

The POT scheme is implemented at departmental level with, according to the ADs, no consistency in paperwork or practice. OTL is used rarely for recruitment interviews and inconsistently for other evaluative processes such as probationary reviews and UKPSF applications. In the UKPSF application processes, applicants are better served by peers than senior managers according to Hannah:

The quality of feedback they get from the peers...is nearly always better than from a senior person...[because] they care more...they are learning themselves.

To their knowledge, it is not used at all for promotion applications. The inconsistency and general sense of OTL for either evaluation or development is rationalised in a phrase that is repeated several times in the interviews:

This is a Russell Group university after all. [Jane]

The implication is that teaching is not prioritised by those in leadership positions and this, they argue, shapes the culture of the institution.

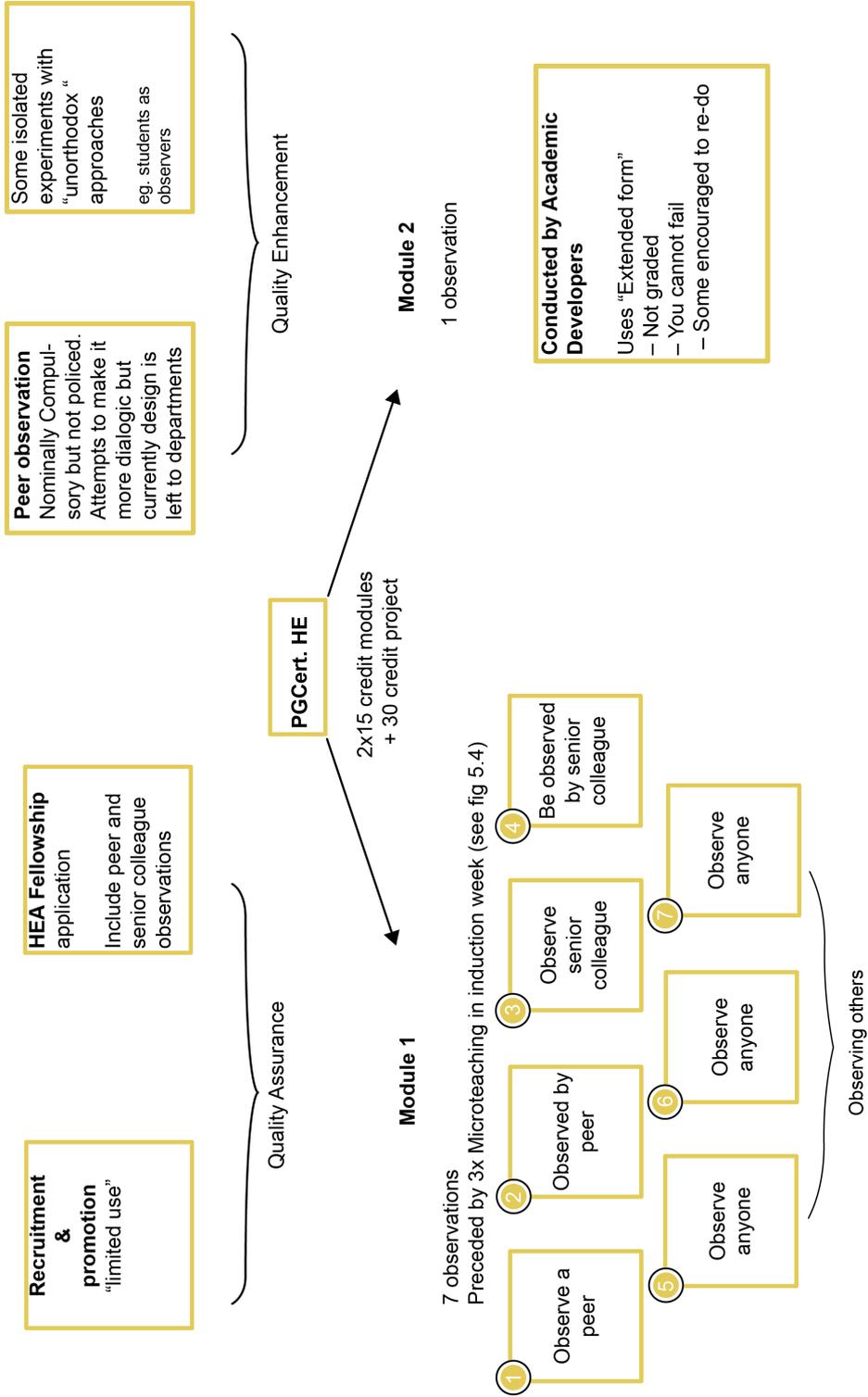
### **On programme**

The limited institutional use is represented in Fig. 5.3 (below) which also summarises the observations used on the PGCert and shows where the Extended Microteaching process is located.

**Case 2: Fig 5.3**

**Observations at Sandstone University**

"We have some people that are really keen out there but generally speaking people are just obsessed with trying to meet their research regulations" (Jane)



"Pick someone you think will be great to see" (Hamnah)

**Figure 5.3: Observations at Sandstone University**

Whilst not a pass/ fail event, the module 2 observation conducted by one of the ADs has the feel of a culmination; a summative experience. The incremental approach of microteaches (4 minutes, then 10, then 15) followed by reciprocal peer observations, then senior colleagues, then a series of observations of others all in the first module are akin to dipping toes in cool waters and gradually acclimatising rather than being thrown in head first at the deep end. It shows a sensitivity to potential anxiety and recognition that self-efficacy grows with nurturing rather than manifesting in a moment (Bandura, 1977; 1986). Both Hannah and Jane argue that it is about building trust, using the experience of seeing others as a critical lens on one's own practice and providing an opportunity for experimentation:

It's recognising what practice looks like in all its glory and in all its 'unglory' as well... people actually invite us to things...brave things that they are doing for the first time. I'm quite shocked how brave some people get. [Jane]

All these justifications apply to the design of the Extended Microteaching process and such things as willingness to innovate are rationalised with reference to the culture established during the first intensive study week where the Extended Microteaching sessions occur. The developmental ethos, with a focus on pedagogy is emphasised in the words of both ADs and in the related documentation:

We're interested in process. We don't give a shit about outcome really so we say to them: 'Don't bother inviting us to a model lesson; You'll get nothing and we'll be bored.' [Jane]

### ***Rationale for Extended Microteaching***

Jane made several references to deeply held beliefs about experiential learning and this was a central justification:

There's only one way to give these students an idea about what it's like to plan and do a session is to get them actually to plan and do a session...there and then.

There was no doubt that both ADs I interviewed were of similar mind about the value of the Extended Microteaching and two others I spoke with informally during the day's visit said corresponding things. The pragmatic choices determined by cost and

efficiency cited above supported a deliberate shift in emphasis from what was perceived to be an ineffective and didactic approach (actually 'poisonous' and 'disastrous' in Jane's words) in the previous design of the PGCert:

Poor academics, rocked up at the beginning, talked at all week,  
PowerPointed to death and that was somehow a teaching  
course...these people need to do stuff. [Jane]

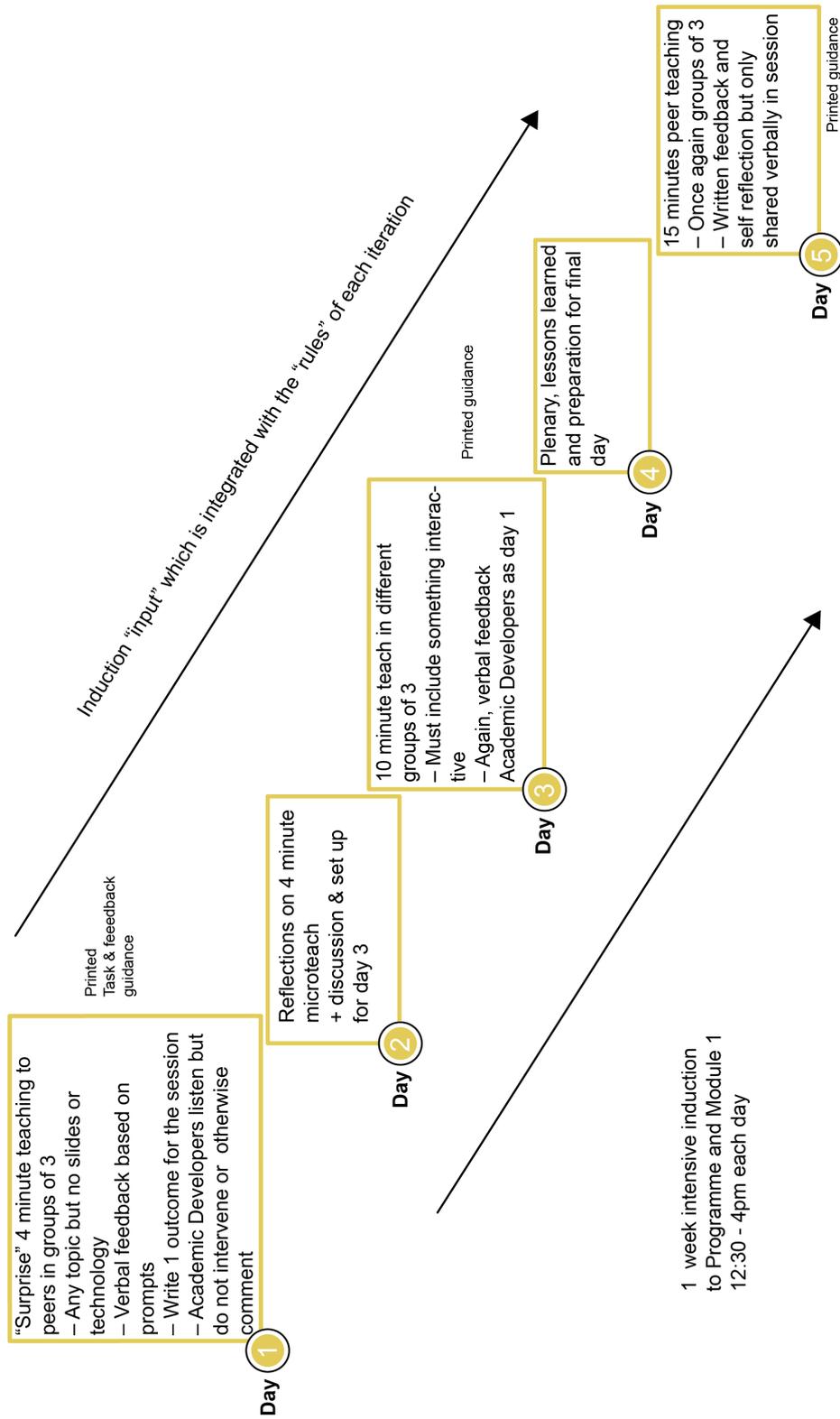
Jane also talked of 'scaffolding' on several occasions, alluding to the ways in which the participants are pushed further and further with each iteration in a structured manner. Whilst (famously) Vygotsky (1978) never used the term 'scaffolding', it is a common shorthand for the mediated processes of learning and movement towards the term Vygotsky did use: The Zone of Proximal Development. What distinguishes the Extended Microteaching process from the classically child-oriented theory is the two-stage mediation, where the teacher sets up and mediates holistically but the activities (the microteaches themselves) are mediated within by peers in groups of three. Thus, there is an internal scaffold that operates firstly within each increasingly longer microteach, a scaffold which connects between each iteration and a final scaffold that deliberately connects to the 'proper' observations that are to follow. The latter two mediated at a distance through the design of the process.

An opportunity to bond and to develop a sense of collegiality was also cited by Hannah so that: 'They have a responsibility to their peers'. Whilst there was no explicit mention of Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), many of the evaluative comments from the participants revealed that this process had forged bonds and a commitment to work together across departments and faculties after the teaching week. The iterative process establishes a frequency of interaction essential to forge an effective community (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). The goals therefore include: confidence building, skills development, developing feedback skills, putting theory into practice and opportunity to experiment. Framing all this is a chance to talk about teaching and learning.

### **Rules, tools and division of labour**

The process is detailed in Fig. 5.4 (below).

**Case 2: Fig 5.4 Sandstone University “Extended Microteaching” process and structure**



**Figure 5.4 Sandstone University Extended Microteaching processes**

Amid plenty of re-assurance, the first event is sprung on the participants with very little time to prepare. They are given a guidance sheet (edited version in Appendix 19) which offers only fifteen minutes preparation time, five minutes for rehearsal and stipulates a four-minute session that must include at least one learning outcome, a clear structure and acknowledgement of who the audience is. They are told:

It could all go horribly wrong. [Jane]

In that event much learning can still occur. Across the three iterations the groups are rotated so that the participants are never in the same group of three. The repetition is described as 'Aversion therapy' (Hannah). A guidance sheet (Appendix 20) is provided along with prompts for the feedback and prompts for self-reflection tailored for each session. For example, the second session needs to include something interactive and the third must include some kind of assessment activity. From the start, electronic presentation tools such as *PowerPoint* are outlawed:

We want people to realise what resources they actually have as human beings. [Jane]

During the course of the week, the taught elements layer on some theoretical fundamentals (Both *Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Domains* and *Constructive Alignment* were mentioned) and these are then woven into the expectations of the microteaches.

Jane describes the AD role as 'ringmaster' and Hannah offers a neat justification:

We do circulate because you feel like a spare part...They [the students] are going: 'Look at you teaching; you're not doing anything.'  
I said: 'Yup, watch and learn!'

### **Observing the observation approach**

The final afternoon of the week is dedicated almost entirely to final microteaches. Eighteen participants were allocated to groups of three and after establishing working practices and how time would be managed, Hannah took on the 'ringmaster' role and set them to work. I observed one trio through two complete cycles and another trio for

the final cycle. From my position I was able to see what was happening elsewhere in the large space used. The topics 'taught' to peers included: 'How to arrange flowers in a hanging basket', 'What is DNA?' and 'The Trolley Problem' (An ethical dilemma). The majority of participants were doing topics of personal interest but a few (Like the DNA microteach) used content from their own disciplinary areas. In my own experience, teaching from the discipline is discouraged in microteaching but the ADs allow freedom of choice and justify it by saying it is a testing ground and participants need freedom to choose what they feel will be most beneficial. Several were on their third (different) topic while others were recycling, honing or re-inventing approaches to the same topic.

### **Making and breaking rules**

Particularly interesting was seeing how differently the participants used the space. Seated at tables arranged in the 'café style' some stood at the table, others remained seated; some repositioned themselves at the tables; others moved their 'students' (i.e. the two peers). One group moved to a section of the room that had some wall space that was then used (for a diagrammatic representation of the taught concept). Since technological tools were not permitted there was no *PowerPoint* or similar used though I spotted at least two who had printed slides and were shuffling through them as a means of structuring their presentations.

### **Feedback efficacy**

I run microteaching sessions on the PGCert at my own institution. Students are given a 15-minute introduction 2-3 weeks beforehand and there is further guidance online. In those (10-minute presentations to groups of up to 8 peers and facilitated by an AD) participants tend to present from the front and the vast majority use *PowerPoint* or similar. In the sessions, participants frequently fail to allow for any interaction or assessment. Peer feedback, especially for the first few to do their microteaches, tends to be superficial. I mention this because it was notable how well integrated assessment was in all the sessions I observed and how layered and sophisticated much of the feedback was.

Whilst feedback tended to be preceded by much use of superlatives ('excellent', 'great', 'I really loved that'), many of the participants took extensive notes and offered quite

sophisticated observations. In one feedback session the focus (at the request of the microteacher) was on clarity of delivery. Her peers commented on clarity of expression (voice, pace) and on positive use of eye contact in the context of how it made them feel as participants. They went on to make some critical observations but through questions (e.g. 'I wonder why you ...?') which elicited the desired conclusion from the microteacher. These critical/ developmental moments were interspersed with further praise relating to successes or things the peers found inspirational. There was also use of pedagogic language (e.g. 'You scaffolded'). While time was made after each cycle for the microteacher to jot notes for a written reflection, there was also discussion between the peers about what they had seen and what the implications were for them (e.g. 'I hadn't thought about doing...').

The rules as set out in the guidance document provided ahead of each session, the feedback sheets and the self-evaluation sheets are very prescriptive. The contents are determined by the ADs and are agreed fundamentals such as use of voice; non-verbal communication; pace and timing; interaction. The content is largely deemed irrelevant; being a mere vehicle for the process development.

### ***Perspectives and responses***

Jane said that the participants always say the microteaching is the most useful aspect of the first week. This was evident in what I observed, from my discussions with some of the participants and from listening in to the end of week plenary session.

Lilly was positive about how she perceived the objectives of the week. Its goal to 'improve our ability as teachers' in terms of delivery, assessment and feedback was well achieved in her view. Idris said it was: 'great to stop focussing on content'. The focus on teaching skills enabled him to momentarily forget the discipline and as a consequence he felt: 'a clear correlation between prep time and how things turn out.' Following on from this Niamh took great value in learning something about herself that is not uncommon in novice lecturers: 'It made me realise I over-plan when I think I have under-planned.'

Idris appreciated that whilst all his colleagues were from different disciplines, they shared uncertainties and this overturned previous feelings of being 'alone or in a vacuum'. He was especially impressed with the 'new ways of applying things' he saw his colleagues try and said it had made him realise that there is a very wide range of ways to encourage participation which has already led to him being less rigid in his planning. He also said that the way he conducted demonstrations had changed quite dramatically as a consequence of the Extended Microteaching experience. Lilly was keen to do a lot more group work with her students and, like Idris, felt as if she had learnt a lot about different approaches from her peers. Most significant for Niamh was the technology ban:

Initially I couldn't get past that I need *PowerPoint*...it made me think about how tech is used.

The plenary gave the participants a chance to express their feelings about the week. Whilst there were minor suggestions about how the overall programme could be improved, there was nothing but praise and enthusiasm for the microteaching aspect. These anonymous comments are a flavour:

Seeing your own progression but also how other people teach.

I felt what it was like to be a student.

I tried to do too much.

I improved!

### **Extended Microteaching: Conclusion**

By design, the Extended Microteaching process removes the expertise from the process and feedback. Pre-meetings are not appropriate. Otherwise, the process positively reflects the success factors defined in Chapter 2 (See Appendix 9 for responses). Whether this approach to using observation for development is a break from the OTL orthodoxy *per se* or rather a break from the microteaching orthodoxy is moot. It is built on a platform of pragmatism and rebellion in the face of a research-oriented culture and in light of resourcing reduction but with affective goals that

centralise the needs of the novice lecturers. The participants were engaged, energised and positive in review.

### **Case 3 - Granite University: Student Reviewers**

In academic development circles the idea of students observing and feeding back to lecturers certainly generates interest and in wider academic communities tends to polarise opinion where mooted. Granite is a research-intensive institution in the South of England. Like both Obsidian and Sandstone, it was awarded TEF Silver in 2017 but, unlike either, has a very prominent goal of integrating research and education, invests heavily in teaching and learning initiatives and has sought to tap into the students as change agents zeitgeist (Kay *et al.*, 2010) as one strand of its drive to improve teaching.

Granite, unlike the majority of large UK universities, does not have a credit-based PGCert type programme. Instead it runs short courses under the banner of Granite's teaching and learning centre. None of these have observations as a core part of the courses. The Student Reviewers project is one of three options for teaching academics in the mandatory institution-wide observation scheme. When I selected this scheme as a case I identified it as deviating from the orthodoxy primarily in terms of mediator but also in terms of motive. The pivotal role of students as mediators is self-evident from the nature of the approach but the motive is far more nuanced and complex in both design and outcomes.

Data was gathered from the following sources:

- In-depth interview and e-mail exchanges with the instigator of the Student Reviewers scheme ('Peggy').
- Website content, printed documentation and slides from training sessions.
- 1 in-depth interview with lecturer participant ('Ross').
- 1 in-depth interview with former student reviewer who is now a lecturer ('Wilf').
- e-mail exchanges with one other lecturer ('Claire').
- 1 in-depth interview with PhD student reviewer ('Violet').
- e-mail exchanges with BSc student reviewer ('Alf').
- e-mail exchanges with MSc student reviewer ('Alice').

## **The Academic Developer**

Peggy has been involved in academic development work for around twelve years. The Student Reviewers initiative was designed and implemented by her and she leads the ongoing project amongst other academic development activities. She has also led on other student engagement initiatives in the past and the Student Reviewers scheme sits alongside a suite of 'students as change agents' projects. Peggy sees her role as connecting research to what is happening in the classrooms and helping to change thinking about the nature of education and how the lecturers see themselves:

There's a strong emphasis on enhancing education ... [that is] more research-led in terms of research informing the content that's being taught, so being more research-based with students learning through the process of undertaking research, and at the moment, being an academic developer here is very much about trying to help departments to make that shift in terms of the education that they offer, but also in terms of their own identity and thinking about, for them, how the two relate to each other, and how can they make the best of the synergies between the two.

This aligns very closely with the strategic approach at Granite. She also prefers 'education' rather than 'teaching' which also reflects an institutional shift in recent years:

...trying to get people to think beyond, I guess, the delivery...I think for a lot of people teaching is still very didactic and [we are] trying to shift their thinking towards something more inclusive, holistic.

## **Personal perspectives on observation**

Peggy was very clear in her stance that observation should be for developmental purposes.

It does have great potential...I've had some great experiences of being observed.

She said that this mirrors the institutional position though there is not a universally shared perspective:

We now have pockets of people who perhaps teach old fashioned... perhaps not up to the standards that the institution would like, and I

think departments would really like to use this as a mechanism to identify and perhaps use it in appraisals and so on.

Peggy cited trends towards more dialogic processes underpinned by recent literature on OTL. Throughout the interview, she re-emphasised the idea of OTL as a means to start conversations; a catalyst for dialogue. The idea of a different lens was also repeated:

A colleagues' perspective...just sees things in a different way... you have a certain view of yourself. I'm often kind of quite surprised when I have people observe me because I guess I think I teach in a certain way and then they feed back and maybe it's not quite as I thought.

When asked about why OTL is so often contested and controversial, Peggy's first response was that it was probably related to anxiety and a (positive) sense that we want to perform well:

I think it's the vulnerability because we're all professionals and we all want to do our best...you never quite get rid of that vulnerability.

In an ideal world, Peggy would like to see academics taking a multi-lensed approach to review/ observation with most benefit coming from cycling through reviews with academic developers, peers and students on a three-year rotation.

### **Personal agency**

Peggy said that the Student Reviewers scheme would not have happened if the institution was not pushing the student engagement agenda. It would also have been unlikely if her own reading, experiences and research had not led her to want to try it.

I said 'I want to do this.' [Head of Academic Services said:] 'That's very interesting; run us a pilot with five staff.' Ten weeks later I had forty staff signed up.

### **Observation at Granite**

Prior to 2015, there was a yearly, mandatory POT system where peers would observe each other teaching, feed back and write up. From 2015 a more dialogic model was introduced where senior management 'tried to make it a little more developmental' [Peggy].

The new model had two options and these are set out in documents available on the Granite website. One reflects a more orthodox approach to peer observation with pairs (or threes) encouraged to look at each other's teaching, digital resources or feedback and then offer feedback to each other as well as identifying possible applications to the reviewee's practice. In this way it reflects aspects of the PSR approach (Gosling and O'Connor 2009; Gosling, 2014) which emphasises mutuality of learning between reviewer and reviewee and acknowledges the wider aspects of teaching that exist beyond the classroom. The other draws on aspects of the 'lesson study' approach (Godfrey *et al.*, 2018) in that it encourages teaching staff to consider other aspects of the teaching role and to work in twos and threes to collaboratively enhance one area of practice by first using observation as an auditing tool then by planning alternative approaches, trialling them and finally reviewing them collaboratively. Both require only a 50-150 word summary though there are recommendations about how the process could be used for appraisal or disseminated.

As the PGCert was phased out (which did include embedded observations), these became the only observations of teaching opportunities outside those used for HEA fellowship applications. Interestingly neither of the probationary/ new starter courses they offer embed observation.

The dialogic approaches to peer review remain contentious. On the one hand managers are looking for evidence to support promotion; to triangulate informal evidence and data from student surveys. Peggy said:

I think there's a vacuum and I think people [managers] see peer observation that way, because there's not a lot else available to them.

On the other, there is a level of distrust from the academic staff about the 'real' motives behind these schemes. Irrespective of what the leaflet or website actually says, there are, in the minds of the academics, structures that mirror the coercive power of a 'hierarchical observation' system (Foucault, 1977, p.170). The peers somehow become proxies for the institution where professional practice is perceived to be under constant scrutiny. Both Peggy and Wilf mentioned these suspicions and both suggested that

whilst the current strategic approaches to student engagement and dialogic peer support were genuine, management at a local level exacerbated the fears of surveillance. As Ball (2003) states, it is a perception of material and symbolic rewards and sanctions 'within a field of judgement' (p.216). If the departmental managers are deemed to control that field of judgement, what the wider institution seeks to achieve is limited. This is exacerbated in a high-status, research-intensive institution by a commonly perceived erosion of autonomy (Amsler *et al.*, 2010) and trust. This is manifest in what Peggy described as resistance to any form of peer review of teaching often because it is seen as patronising and insulting to experience and qualification.

### ***Rationalising Student Reviewers***

The rationale offered by the AD who instigated the student reviewer scheme (Peggy) must be seen in the context of Granite's tendency towards innovative OTL approaches.

Whilst the objectives set out in student and lecturer-facing documents and presentations focus on improving teaching and learning and widening understanding amongst all stakeholders about how that happens, the scheme's designer offered a detailed and nuanced rationale. The five key aspects set out below are further elaborated with contributions from both student and lecturer interviewees:

1. There is an institutional agenda to promote the student voice and the levels at which they can be engaged in the development of the way their education happens:

[It's] very much about trying to encourage students to be partners in terms of their education. [Peggy]

[Granite] is very keen to kind of get students actively involved in their learning experience, not simply as kind of receivers of that knowledge, but actually generating that knowledge. [Ross]

Wilf saw it as:

a genuine commitment to involving students in teaching practice...a signal from [Granite] upper echelons saying: 'We want you to take students seriously.'

But:

These aren't students saying: 'I want my voice in.' This is the staff saying: 'Please give us your voice.' And it's often reactionary...the student reviewers programme...actually it embeds it from the word go. [Wilf]

Contradicting this, an MSc. Student reviewer said:

I originally volunteered to be a reviewer because I was unhappy with the system...I was student representative for the entire faculty...and was constantly getting similar complaints...I thought this would be a good chance to improve the quality of education at [Granite] and actually make a difference for students. [Alice]

2. It is an opportunity for 'students to contribute to educational enhancement' (Peggy) in a broad way rather than focussing on remedial action at the individual level. The scheme took much inspiration from 'Students as Learners and Teachers' project at Bryn Mawr College (Cook-Sather, 2008; Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). In contrast to this positive perspective of engagement, one of the student reviewer respondents saw it more as an endeavour to challenge deficits in the way students engage:

Because the university, I think it's facing a lot of challenges in the classroom...Students are not doing their readings...Many of the students don't reply emails [sic]. There is also ... this division between old generation lecturers who don't interact much with students. [Violet]

Recognition of sector trends was also mentioned:

I think there's nothing wrong with admitting that the Teaching Excellence Framework is coming so we're doing all we can to boost our teaching credentials. [Wilf]

In a conference the previous day to this interview a very senior member of Granite expressed his embarrassment at Granite 'only' achieving a silver award in the TEF. I asked Wilf what he thought about this:

The guy who sat next to me...said: 'What I've got from this series of talks at the opening is that everyone is shit-scared of the TEF and what was going to happen.'

3. The student reviewer scheme promotes conversations about teaching and learning between students and lecturers leading to a better understanding of what they both need.

I think sometimes people misunderstand me and where I'm coming from because I think sometimes they think I'm just worried about student experience, and I guess I do talk a lot about student experience, but actually I'm quite a strong believer that staff experience needs to improve... and I don't think you improve things for students until you improve things for staff. [Peggy]

I think that is very important because many students don't understand the effort implied in doing a course. [Violet]

4. Existing data from conventional sources such as student surveys 'doesn't help them [lecturers] make changes' (Peggy). Wilf, at the time completing his PhD, was still in a liminal space between student and academic and found his thinking challenged. He realised:

Your role is not to stand there. Your job title might be lecturer, but that's not what you're paid to do. The last thing we want, really, is staff members to be stood up in front for two hours preaching; proselytising.

Wilf's aspect here is of course as a lecturer but his experiences of the Student Reviewer scheme were as a student partner. In this way one of the goals is being achieved but only because of who Wilf is and what his goals are. It is the principle of learning by observing expert others (Bandura, 1977) and a resultant shifting of the objective of the process that led to moments of realisation and a willingness to challenge the pedagogic conventions of his own department and discipline. In alignment with the findings of Hendry *et al.* (2014) and Thompson *et al.* (2015), the principle benefit was to him as the observer. Like Wilf, Alf (a BSc. Student) is:

...personally interested in teaching, so I thought it would be a good chance for me to see how the 'backstage' preparation works.

5. Although offered as a third alternative under the peer dialogue umbrella it is not designed to locate the resulting conversations within a pedagogic colloquy:

We're really careful not to train them on pedagogy. One of the things we don't want to do is make them semi-academic developers. We want a student perspective so I'm quite careful to try not to tell them even what to look for. [Peggy]

Contrary to its ethos, Alice felt the scheme was an opportunity:

...to hold lecturers and academic staff accountable for the quality and on-going development of education... and recognise deficiencies in a course and if these are caused by miscommunication, an unclear syllabi [sic], lecturer negligence, high expectations from the student, boring material, and/or the use of online resources.

It is likely that such a strident declaration in publicity material might dissuade academic participation but it does nevertheless show that timidity and hierarchical barriers may be a concern.

One of the lecturer participants (Ross) was attracted to the scheme because of frustrations with peer observations:

...they wouldn't really say anything all that negative because it tends to be reciprocal and you're going to do the same to them two weeks later.

Built into this statement is the assumption that learning necessarily happens when being observed and fails to recognise the potential of learning through watching rather than being watched (Hendry *et al.*, 2014).

Ross expressed appreciation for the effort in changing the dynamics of peer observation at Granite by introducing the two peer dialogue options but still felt, after going through the process the previous year, that it was a 'box-ticking exercise'.

### ***Student reviewers: Structures and processes***

#### **Rules, tools & division of labour**

Fig. 5.5 below shows the process from recruitment to the (relatively minimal) required evidence. The estimated time commitment is 20 hours for student 'partners' and 3 hours for staff. There is a £150 incentive for each student who completes the scheme and it is sold in the promotion material as a boon to skills development such as critical

thinking and assertiveness in addition to the rationale presented above. The scheme necessitates considerable administrative support in the recruitment and pairing phases and operates on a rolling, needs-based basis.

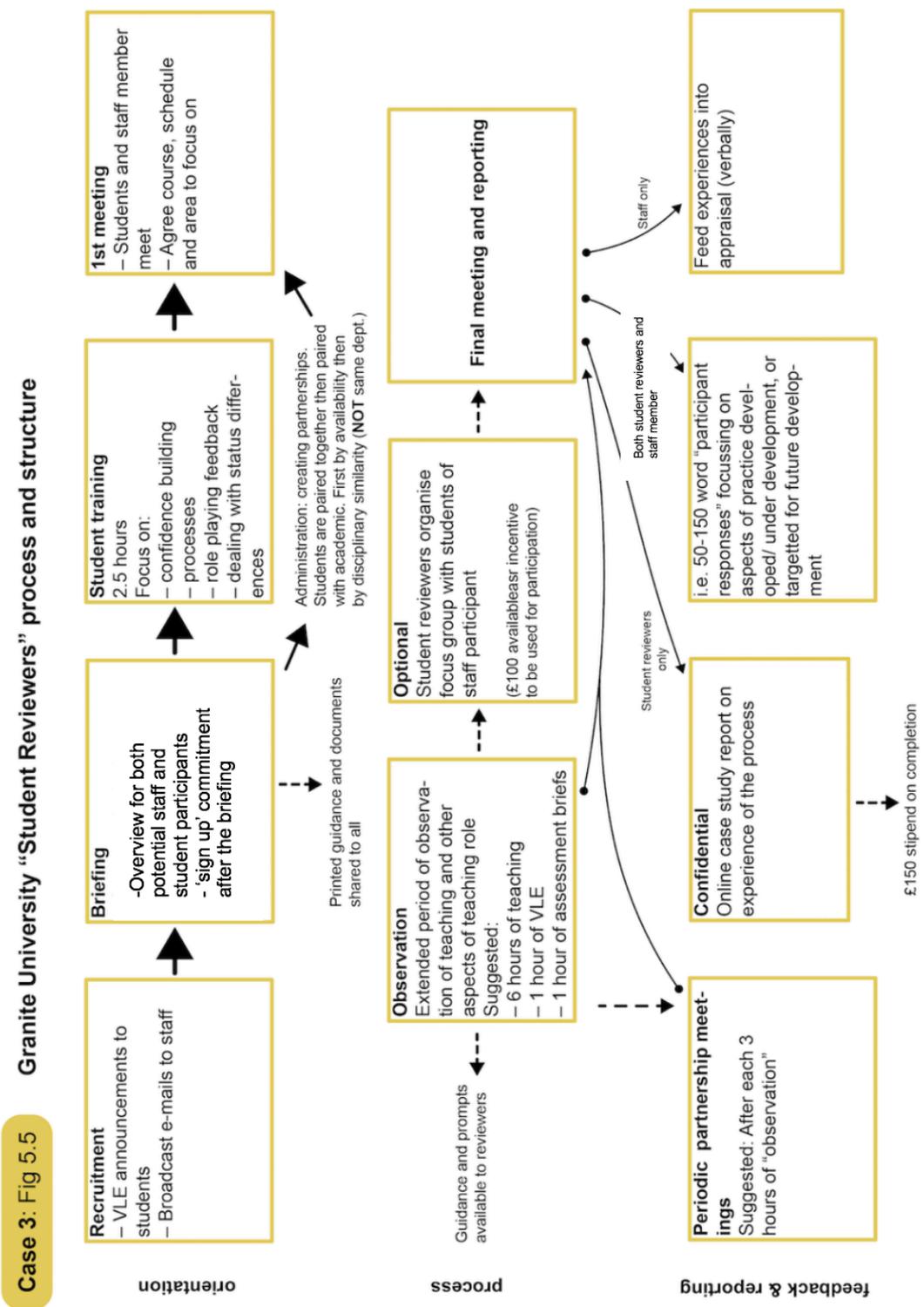


Figure 5.5: Granite University Student Reviewers Scheme

Despite the clarity of the structure and the process as expressed in the documentation there were examples of participants following their own path:

There was training I didn't attend...it wasn't the orchestrators of the initiative's fault. But I just wasn't able to do it. They said that was fine. They sent me lots of documentation, which I did read briefly. [Ross]

The result was that Ross was not entirely clear about the process and both he and his student partners shared some misunderstandings:

We'd assumed that we'd have to write some report for the kind of instigators of the project. Turned out not to be the case. We didn't actually need to do anything!

Violet attended all the training and felt very well prepared but (in retrospect) made the mistake (the first time she acted as a student reviewer) of agreeing to be partnered (singly) with someone from the same department in which she was studying for her PhD. She believes that the academic partner was looking for a new teaching assistant:

Instead of talking about this [project], he was teaching me how to teach...He never understood the thing from the beginning... I was worried about my image in my department and what if I then need to get a job here ... It was too close.

Undeterred by the disappointment and in spite of this sense of vulnerability, Violet reported very positive outcomes for herself. She had taught in her home country and was looking for teaching work in the UK. She says she learned a lot from her academic partner. However, and despite writing a detailed report (not required) and pushing to have a feedback meeting, he was very resistant to change.

Wilf has similar academic aspirations and, in fact, credits the scheme with helping him achieve that as, at the time of interview and having just completed his PhD, he had secured lecturing hours at Granite and had just had a successful interview at another institution:

I viewed that, quite selfishly, as an opportunity to get teacher training, because I want to be an academic. I could not think of a better way to demonstrate teaching credentials to future employers.

In contrast to Violet, his involvement in three rounds of the Student Reviewers scheme were all outside of his department and he saw this as a key element:

That's the thing I probably would stress right from the outset, that I felt most useful about that was seeing teaching outside of the [xx] department. Just the difference in people I watched. I watched somebody from [yy] and someone from the school of [zz]. Just the difference in the way they taught, it just amazed me that you didn't have to teach in the way that we do it. That was probably the most eye-opening thing. A sort of licence to experiment.

### ***Perspectives and responses***

#### **Participation**

Peggy was surprised by the initial response (approximately 40 staff and 200 students) though noted that recruitment has been tougher since and:

40 actually isn't that many, really [out of 4,000 potentially] ...this year we really had to push it...I think it's partly the scale of [Granite] and partly that we got the really keen people the first year.

#### **Motivating the already motivated**

This sense that the initiative appealed to 'wrong' lecturers was not uncommon:

Staff are saying: 'You know, I found this really useful but, actually, it's someone else in my department who really needed this.' [Peggy]

Any momentum is indirect and results from students seeing and reporting positive things they are seeing and then questioning why these things do not happen in their departments.

To what extent can we take the best practice that they're observing and get them to take it back to their departments, because that seems to be, at the moment, an easier thing to get to happen than getting the harder-to-reach staff... the staff who are involved in the project are already very good. [Peggy]

Willing academics, in effect, showcase good practice and (perhaps) poorly-articulated dissatisfaction from students who are not happy with the teaching they receive in other departments can become better articulated and evidence-based.

In a similar vein, any engagement project is perhaps more likely to attract students who are confident and engaged already:

I imagine people that kind of put themselves forward to this were already motivated. They both said to they wanted to become better educators. [Ross]

The student equivalent of the hard-to-reach academic would be an ideal addition as far as Ross is concerned: 'You want a couple of disgruntled students doing this type of thing.'

One respondent (Claire) became disgruntled with the project as her partners did not share the positivity and motivations expressed by others:

One observer never observed nor answered e-mails, and the other came to 2 classes but dropped the ball.

### **Self-efficacy: mediation and trust**

Ross described some anxiety before his first feedback meeting with the student partners. He was largely reassured through the partners' positivity but then begins to doubt how genuine this is:

They, presumably from the training, they were very positive. Really emphasised the positivity. I wonder whether that was genuine. Was that their feeling? Whether that was the training or whether that was something about the power dynamic because they are not my students, but they're still students. They know who I am. So, whether they felt they could basically kind of open fire on me, I'm not sure.

## **Dialogic feedback**

Wilf felt 'pretty well trained' and his (student) perspective of the goals and approach are illuminating:

The thing that stood out for me was this is not a chance for you to go: 'That was crap.' Or: 'I really hated that.' And it's not a chance for you to also become a bit of a sycophant and say everything was really good. It really is about this idea of dialogue.

Ross' partners watched far more than they were required to so it was fortunate that there were tangible observations that have changed, possibly even transformed, aspects of his practice. One example 'only happened because of what the student reviewer said.' This suggestion (about thinking time and opportunities to contribute) was built from a description of a session by one of the student partners:

I'm not sure a kind of peer would see that in quite the same way.

It was perhaps fortunate that Ross was not partnered with Alice, who gave the impression of taking a blunt and evaluative approach:

For the staff, having a direct input from a student allows them to know where their strengths and their weaknesses are. If anything, I believe there was more benefit for the staff than the student in this scheme.

Whilst it was clear that Wilf valued the scheme in terms of his own development, he also cited a number of examples of impact and change on those academics he was partnered with. One was glad to have friendly eyes to see their teaching from a student point of view. Another asked:

'What the hell is going on on the laptop screens? Sit at the back and don't tell me who, because I'm not interested in who, but are students basically on task?'

He mentioned several examples of communication and interaction observations he made to one academic partner such as how short the 'wait time' was between question and answer and how varying rhythm and speed might be better exploited:

I was trying to convey to her, because I found it so useful myself, the power of silence...and I think she really took that away. I think she

found that really useful. I would like to go back now and observe her teaching and see if she has.

### **Sustainability and expansion**

The impression Peggy gave was that the volunteer 'market' amongst academics was approaching saturation. Ross suggested: 'if it was rolled out, there probably would be disaster scenarios where people were just doing it because they were told they had to not because they wanted to.' Ross also argued that the payment to students, despite the willing investment in the project, would impact its sustainability. In spite of this, he was a strong advocate of the scheme and said he would certainly do it again.

Neither Ross nor Violet would commit themselves to saying whether the impact of the Student Reviewer scheme is likely to be felt beyond those in each partnership. Ross speculated that social media would make the outcomes and experience more readily shareable and Violet urged patience and persistence:

I think it could have an impact more widely, but it's not something easily measurable. It will depend of course, on word of mouth, changing the culture. But those things are very slow... sometimes good things come slowly.

### **Success factors**

Peggy felt that the student reviewers scheme met most of the success factors (see Appendix 9) with a clear deviation in terms of expertise and qualification. While Peggy argued that there was separation by design of the observation 'events' the participants often looked to make comparisons and connections across events.

### **Student Reviewers: Conclusion**

Wilf's unabashed admission that this was a teacher training opportunity, Violet's experience and the apparent tendency of the scheme to attract those interested in education or a career in teaching suggests the scheme could be honed, re-targetted or simply packaged differently according to different potential goals of student participants. Emphasising the teacher training potential and embedding this into some

teacher education programmes might be a mechanism through which the costs could be reduced while expanding the scheme. In spite of issues reported, there was a palpable sense from all but one of the participants (Claire) that this was a worthwhile endeavour. As a teacher training scheme it has much merit, provides an alternative to standard PGR development courses and could provide a template for observational teacher and lecturer education that is located entirely in the practice of others. Despite this, Ross was keen to go through another cycle as a lecturer; ranking the experience as much more beneficial than previous experiences of mutual peer observations and Wilf would 'give my right arm' for feedback on his teaching from some of the lecturers he saw as a student reviewer. Here he is showing a positive mindset towards all observation forged in part by positive experiences of being the observer though, it should be noted, he did not express such a strong wish to have his teaching appraised by students. It is clearly closely aligned with strategic policy at Granite and gives a sense of voice to student reviewers whether they have asked for it or not.

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In this chapter I have presented each case using common strands which were informed by my research questions and Activity Theory. In the next chapter, I analyse these findings, evaluate each unorthodox OTL approach and unpick some of the key lessons learned.

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*'The only way to safeguard yourself against flatterers is by letting people understand that you are not offended by truth'*

*Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, Chapter XXIII, p.101*

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## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter I presented the findings from each of three cases of unorthodox approaches to OTL. The first (PSR) is the most common deviation from the orthodoxy and includes within its design (wherever it occurs, not only this case) review of teaching related activities that are *not* teaching but also opportunities for observation *of* teaching by a peer. Whether it can be seen as integrating unorthodox elements within an otherwise orthodox approach or integrating orthodox observation within a more broadly unorthodox approach will depend on the hue and specifics of design but Obsidian is certainly more the latter.

The second case (Extended Microteaching) is, as far as I am aware, unique in design for a PGCert, even though one-off microteaching events are relatively commonplace. By separating the content and the 'real' students from the events, teaching skills and teacher 'presence' become the focal points. It is also driven by a desire to rid the participants of anxiety ahead of more orthodox observations as it provides three iterations of what can be seen as rudimentary exposure therapy.

The final case (Student Reviewers) is the most radical departure from the orthodoxy. In a well-funded, innovative environment there is room for re-imagining the way lecturer training happens and scope for widespread implementation of such a scheme needs the will of one or more enthusiasts to establish it and also the ethos and culture of the institution to widen it beyond a pilot and to ensure its sustainability.

This chapter starts with a narrow focus and then widens to include more general and applied analysis. Each case is discussed separately at first and begins with a summary of key findings with explicit connections made to theory and literature. Following this in each case is a representation of key findings in the form of an activity diagram which highlights contradictions (Engeström, 2001) (labelled C1, C2 etc.) as well as what I have termed 'Tensions' (labelled T1, T2 etc.). I see these as less vivid than contradictions in that a contradiction readily suggests a direct and apparent incongruity whereas a tension is more nuanced and multi-faceted. Where both feed the dialectic,

contradictions are diametric and tensions opaque, protean and/or multi-voiced. I have represented the tensions and contradictions as existing within one of the domains as well as between them. For example, it became clear that culture and values within a community that defines the rules may not align with values and culture beyond the immediate community. This impacts on the ways in which rules are framed and jockey for pre-eminence in the minds and behaviours of the subjects.

The tensions and contradictions are, in effect, interpretations of the findings and are how I have perceived the unorthodox from my position of externality and through the lens of multiple data sources. Each tension and contradiction is then dealt with separately with interconnected aspects highlighted, and recommendations suggested as appropriate. This is not a solely negative aspect, of course. Tensions and contradictions can highlight positive outcomes and these are also overtly expressed either in Chapter 5 or below.

After each of the three cases has been discussed individually, the second part of this chapter pulls together the many threads according to each research question then offers summative conclusions, a summary of this study's contribution and finishes with proposed dissemination channels. Where specific conclusions are reached that mirror phenomena found in the literature pertaining to orthodox OTL (Chapter 2) I have signalled this explicitly.

### ***Case 1: Obsidian University – Peer Supported Review***

Part of the problem of defining with any precision the PSR scheme is that it is multi-faceted. As clarified in Chapter 5, it has six broad focal areas and the subject can be the reviewer or the reviewee. The reviewer might be a genuine peer (a fellow participant on the PGCert for example) or an institutional ‘peer’ who also happens to be a tutor on the PGCert. As a CPD strategy, PSR at Obsidian can be defined as ‘transitional’ (Kennedy, 2005) in that it (and the PGCert that frames it) is not about enforcing compliance. PSR includes opportunities to transform practice but the ‘rules’ of the process can limit the transformative potential depending on how they are perceived. It is structured around questions which are pre-determined by the AD and his colleagues thereby managing to support the institutional agenda of promoting creative education (for example) whilst allowing room (for those that choose to follow that path) for genuine reflection and changes in behaviour. It is clear from the data that the personal, social and occupational elements, essential for effective professional learning (Bell and Gilbert, 1996), do combine in the PSR scheme. However, the central problem of personal motivation to engage is often not understood until the process is experienced. Where positive outcomes occur, especially from trialling new approaches, connections between theory and practice can be made. My impression from the interviews I conducted is that opportunities occur naturally though there is perhaps scope for more deliberate discursive events.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the data presented above was collected and analysed through the lens of Activity Theory. A visual representation of the system, key findings and points of contradiction and tension is presented below (Fig.6.1).

Case 1: Fig 6.1

Obsidian University "Peer Supported Review" (PSR)

T = Tension  
C = Contradiction  
Explanations follow

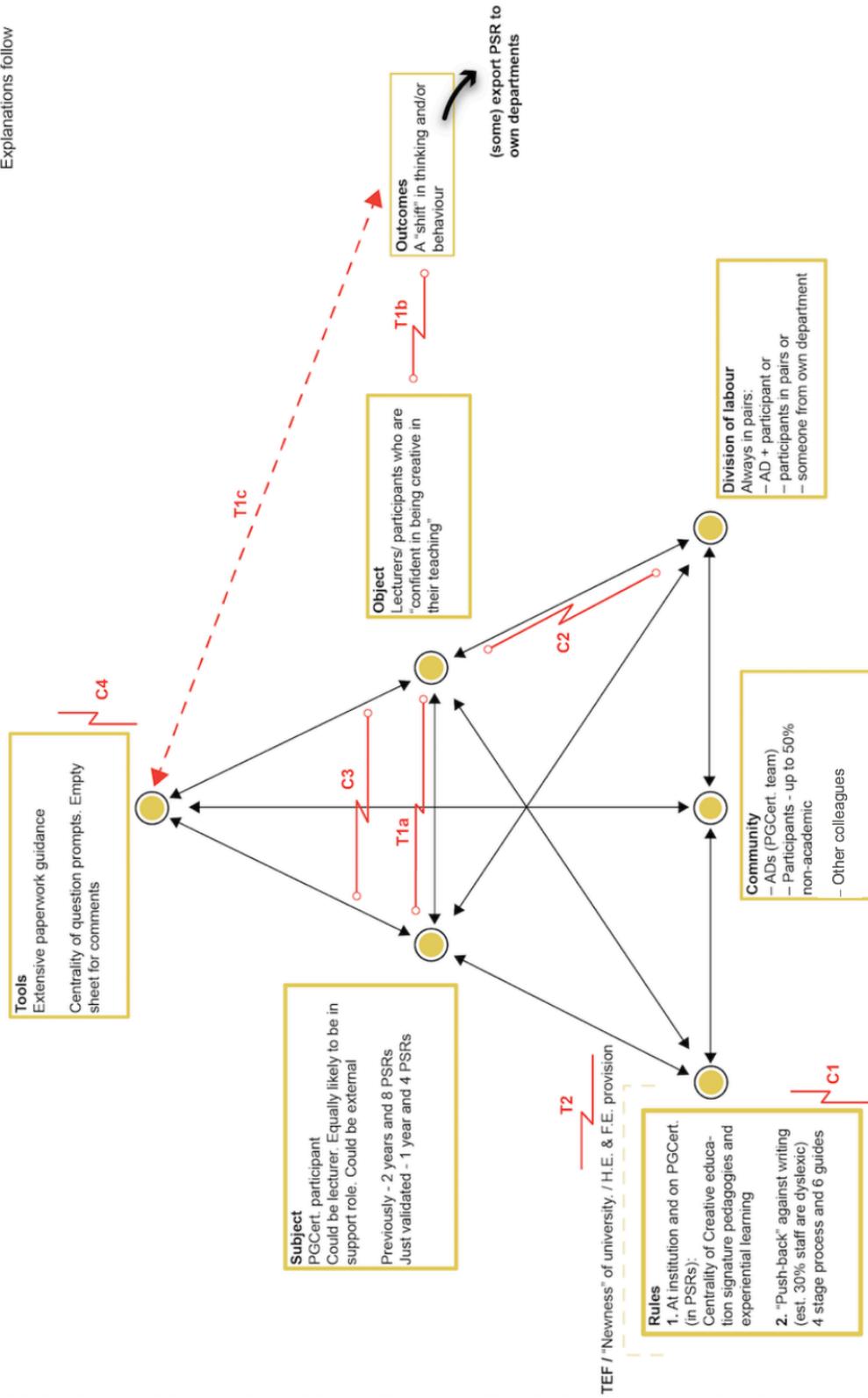


Figure 6.1 PSR Activity System

## ***PSR Tensions***

### **T1 a,b,c Visibility**

A number of aspects of the way the PSR scheme functions relate to notions of visibility. Firstly, there is a disconnect between the subject and the object (T1a). The subjects seem rarely to share the AD's vision (in terms of ethos and goals) and his ability to share it through documentation, video introductions or orientation sessions is limited. Assumptions about purpose, as I found in my IFS, abound and some of these are incorrect. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; 1986) is an overt goal with the ostensible outcome being a shift in practice. This action based on the process, dialogue and reflection is potentially the weakest link in a praxis-informed approach, however, largely due to its invisibility in the system. Freire's (1993) assertion that 'true reflection leads to action' (p.48) is the counterpoint to vacuous or meaningless reflection ('armchair revolution'). It is clear that action does occur and that change does happen but, because of its relative invisibility in the scheme, it renders it an issue of trust on the one hand, and dependence on often still nascent self-efficacy on the other. In this way, the ADs rarely see actual change, only expression of intent in writing or in discussion (T1b). Finally, the outcomes are also often invisible to the subjects when they are in the role of reviewer. The feedback loop remains open (T1c). A strategy for closing that loop and making outcomes more visible whilst maintaining the scaffold into action for those that need it seems required.

### **T2 Competing observational drivers (HE and FE)**

This case is unique in that the PGCert OTL scheme (PSR) is, in name at least, the same as the wider scheme for those concerned with delivering HE provision and for many of those supporting it (e.g. Library staff, technicians and learning support staff). It appears it is only enforced departmentally and according to the perceptions of its utility by heads of department. What is strange is that PSR began as institutional (HE) policy but was not widely followed through as it operated on a *de facto* optional basis. The agency of the individual who introduced it extended to implementation but not to ensuring compliance. It appears this was largely due to lack of commitment from the senior management level. Nevertheless, it was mirrored on the PGCert. Once key individuals experienced it they then took it back to their departments and, at that level,

effected change in the form of insisting on compliance. Mezirow (2008) identifies modified beliefs and convictions as crucial to transformation and this is evident here. The transformation of belief in PSR is a pre-requisite to adoption which then layers on local obligation to comply. In this way, it is transformation of attitude coupled with removal of voluntarism that was necessary for sustainability and, in turn, for any positive impacts as a consequence of the actual PSR process. Whilst there is some choice in the focus of the PSRs on the PGCert there is no choice whether to participate. Like other studies of more orthodox OTL, willingness to participate is impeded by clarity of understanding of the purpose of the process (Kell and Annetts, 2009) and voluntarism is apparently a major inhibitor (Pattison *et al.*, 2012).

There is a sizeable FE contingent at all campuses within which teaching observations are enforced and follow a graded model. This tension is manifest in competing rationales of surveillance and development and exacerbates its opacity (T1a above) and may increase anxiety and taint 'buy-in'. The familiar (to an FE context) disciplinary system of overt observation, although mediated by peers and branded as developmental, maintains the core elements for successful surveillance (Foucault, 1977) and fosters a compliant, if not entirely docile, community. Resistance or distrust informed by prior experience or assumption is a common feature reported in orthodox approaches (Page, 2017; Scott *et al.*, 2017). Further research on the impact of having both FE and HE with differing observational demands on wider perceptions of OTL would be worthwhile.

## ***PSR Contradictions***

### **C1 Inevitability of paperwork**

Despite the desire expressed by Ali to 'push back' against writing there is the four-stage process which suggests (though does not insist on) significant writing. Many of the participants upload the entire document even though it is not an explicit requirement. Coupled with this is the extensive documentation, notably the guides. Whilst use of the term PSR and the guides challenge the widely-held presupposition that anything labelled 'observation' necessarily happens during a teaching event (Marshall, 2004), it was clear from the interviews that these assumptions still

abounded. The guides are clearly written and follow the institutional guidance on inclusive design but are 4-6 pages in length each. The documents and forms are designed to aid the reflective process but with each empty box and with each question that states or implies 'approved' practice, it is possible to see them as potentially undermining the object of critical reflection: to challenge assumptions and reveal practices which work against the teacher's best interests (Brookfield, 1995). Nowhere does Brookfield (or Freire) state that reflection needs to be written though many institutions frame reflection as 'reflective writing' in support materials (including my own). The support documents and the forms are designed to aid reflective processes in much the same way as they do in more conventional approaches to OTL (Bell and Mladenovic, 2008; Copland, 2010; Lahiff, 2015;) and this is logical given the limited resource in terms of ADs. But, in many ways, writing is a barrier to dialogic relationships that foster genuine reflection. Whilst it may indeed aid cognitive processing in some to articulate thoughts in writing and offer a more tangible reference point, the ubiquity of reflective writing on PG Certs in general and as part of observational processes is as apparent at Obsidian as anywhere despite the attempted push back. The desire for paper trails no doubt reflects preference for tangible evidence across educational assessment practices which can be standardised, checked and externally examined; something Rogers (2018) describes as a pointless obsession. The evidential artefact is a logical component for HEA fellowship since 'authentication of practice' is required where fellowship is conferred. That written evidence is minimal in Cases 2 and 3 reflects, in part, that neither of those processes feed into HEA fellowship claims.

## **C2 The novice guiding the novice**

Related to C1 (above) is the problem of peers as reviewers. By definition they tend to be inexperienced and do not have the vocabulary or experience of teaching and its related activities to go as deeply as they might. The guides are there to tackle some superficiality but Ali readily acknowledges the problem and he relates it in part to anxiety:

That's probably the weakness of asking peers to do it...they're in a bit of a panic... [it] isn't as critical as it could be.

Whatever the focus of the PSR, the same problem reported in multiple studies of orthodox OTL about the limits to the value of peer feedback is an issue (Cosh, 1998; Yiend *et al.*, 2014) though a re-emphasis on value found by those who have experienced (and subsequently promote PSR) on reviewer learning could ameliorate such criticism to an extent.

### **C3 Skewed emphasis on reviewee learning**

The documentation in this scheme is oriented towards supporting reviewee learning. Given that OTL more widely is often presumed to be about reviewee/observee learning and reviewer/observer learning is undervalued (Bell and Mladenovic, 2008; Hendry *et al.*, 2014; Mueller and Schroeder, 2018), it is surprising that it is so lacking in prominence. It was identified by two participants without any prompting and was central to the AD's rationale, however. It may be that the 'review' part of PSR connotes a uni-directional process. Given that reviewer learning is a defining aspect that distinguishes PSR from typical orthodox OTL assumptions about the locus of learning (Hendry *et al.*, 2014), it is masked to an extent in the implementation in this case, if not in the underpinning purpose. Nevertheless, participants have learnt through observation (Bandura, 1974) irrespective of their own understanding prior to commencing a PSR and despite the weighting in documentation towards reviewee learning. More emphasis on reviewer learning would of course mitigate the problem identified in C2 above. When Gosling (2002) noted how it is impossible just to 'see' in an observation of another's practice he was identifying a flaw in the ideal of judgement-free observation. We inevitably interpret what we see but those interpretations can still form the basis of creative, critical and reflective thinking in the reviewer.

Also related to objectives and emphasis, it was surprising how passionately some of the respondents were for PSR in terms of its potential impact on how some staff perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others. The flattening of hierarchies, the opportunities for mutual understanding between support and academic staff and trust building are significant and transformative outcomes not reflected in the explicit goals of PSR though they are reflected as positive outcomes in much of the literature (Peel, 2005; Shortland, 2004; Atkinson and Bolt, 2010).

#### **C4 Ethnographic or competence based?**

The forms themselves appear to give a great deal of freedom but, given the issue of limited criticality (C2), guides with a series of questions frame each of the six possible PSR avenues. Inevitably, the questions will imply 'good' practice and, where used as a prompt, can lead to a narrowing of focus defined by the preconceptions and expectations of the guide's author. Nevertheless, each contains the sentence: 'Not all questions will be relevant in every circumstance'. The core question that arises here is: What expectations are there in terms of reviewee benefits when the peer is a fellow PGCert participant? There are competing forces at play here. On the one hand there is recognition of the dynamics of praxis and critical reflection and on the other a desire to shape the direction and content of the PSR-resultant conversations. The AD articulated objective of confidence and a desire for a shift in thinking and behaviours appears less likely for reviewees when the reviewers are peers.

As Engeström (2001) says, the contradictions when recognised can be effective drivers for change and, as is apparent from the interview with the AD and the way C1-C4 interconnect, this is ongoing and evolutionary. As an outsider I have little agency in this or any of the cases to effect change though the AD has welcomed this analysis and we have agreed to discuss the findings.

## ***Case 2: Sandstone – Extended Microteaching***

As described by the ADs, the Extended Microteaching process (mediated within the peer groups) can be seen as a self-efficacy staging post in the journey to ‘enacted mastery’ (Bandura, 1989). The on-programme observations after that (mediated by peers, senior colleagues or ADs) then provide further opportunities to move towards a goal of confidence or betterment though not to a fixed, criterion-referenced norm or standard. Critical reflection is at the heart of the rationale though this conflicts to an extent with the prescriptiveness of the Extended Microteaching processes. The AD ‘voice’ is ever-present in the rules but conspicuous by its absence in the actual microteaching. This allows for the voice (and feedback) of peers and time for self-reflection.

Extended Microteaching not only challenges the issue of isolated development *per se* (Bell and Gilbert, 1996) but also the isolated essence of orthodox observation. Orthodox OTL is by definition isolating unless it is explicitly oriented towards observer learning pre-eminently or alongside observee learning (Bell and Mladenovic, 2008; Hendry *et al.*, 2014; Mueller and Schroeder, 2018). For Bell and Gilbert (1996) such working together, both within the PGCert and then in sub-groups as part of the Extended Microteaching process, would constitute a valid challenge to isolation. It provides room for shared goal-setting and meaning-making (Lave and Wenger, 1991) from experiences of teaching events, each from a different perspective. The plenary activities reinforce and extend these naturally occurring exchanges. As a means of valuing personal beliefs, motivating participants, nurturing relationships, supporting experimentation and providing opportunity for linking theory to practice in a professional relevant setting, Extended Microteaching addresses all the conditions deemed by Bell and Gilbert (1996) as important. The apparent removal of the ‘experts’ from the core part of the process gives the impression of a potentially transformative professional learning process (Kennedy, 2005) but it is nevertheless constrained by overt regulation (timing, things they must include, tools that are banned) and slightly more covert conforming behaviours and practices defined by what is taught around the microteaching events and what is prominent on the feedback templates (e.g. writing explicit learning outcomes; importance of non-verbal communication).

The 'historicity' (Engeström, 2001) of the Extended Microteaching is tangible not only in the sense of the process as a response to perceived failings of the design of previous iterations of the PGCert but also as something palpable at each stage of the OTL process. Ostensibly, it is the same thing but for longer each time with a few additional rules but, in fact, the reality in each case is unique and defined in many ways by how the participants engage and interact and what their preoccupations are.

The Activity System diagram below (Fig. 6.2) is a visual representation of Extended Microteaching. Within the diagram I have plotted a number of tensions and contradictions that were apparent.

T = Tension  
 C = Contradiction  
 Explanations follow

### Sandstone University "Extended Microteaching"

Case 2: Fig 6.2

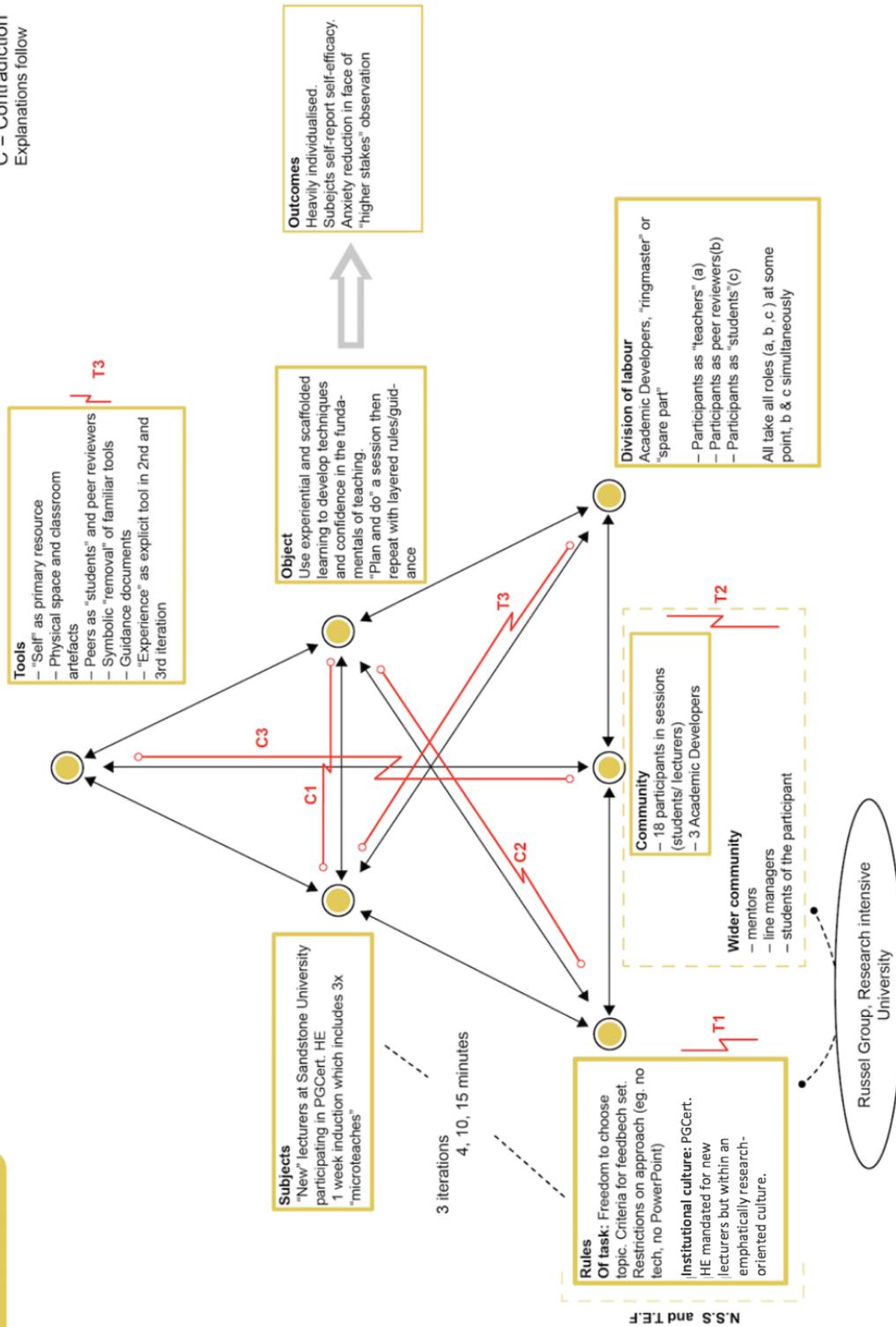


Figure 6.2 Extended Microteaching Activity System

## ***Extended Microteaching Tensions***

### **T1 Teaching in a research-intensive institution**

There was a clear tension in the words of the ADs about what their priorities are and the culture of the institution. This manifests not only in the way they characterised Sandstone but also in the university's own identity as portrayed on its website and how research and publication pressures are placed on academics, including the newly appointed ones. Land's (2001) view is that where values of ADs and the wider institution collide, so AD effectiveness is reduced. There is no doubt the ADs feel frustration and have had to make compromises. However, the Extended Microteaching design appears a serendipitous outcome. Reductions in resource have led to a necessary streamlining of the PGCert and, despite a mooted desire to improve on the TEF silver award in 2017 and pressures exerted by the National Student Survey (NSS), the sense is that Sandstone's priorities remain fixed on research. The ADs have developed a 'professional competence' and dialectic ('intelligent conversations') (Land, 2001) approach that, in the intensive first week of the PGCert is built around developing self-efficacy through practice, participant observation of each other and dialogic feedback. Whilst there was a clear sense of shared value in the process from all four ADs I spoke with, there was also a sense that its sustainability was fragile.

### **T2 'Present but not present'**

In many ways this can be seen across the process. The participants work in groups of three. In each cycle two of the group are peer reviewers but they identify during the delivery as 'students' so their presence as reviewers is masked to a degree. More overt is the presence but deliberate non-participation of the ADs. This is the most overt manifestation of Foucault's (1977) societal panopticon. The ADs roam the room- literally surveilling- and this of course disciplines the participants to follow the 'rules'. This suggests oppressiveness though in fact it was very benign. Nevertheless, the way the participants approach the teaching, coupled with the guidance and requirements layered at each stage, can be seen in the context of a 'normalizing judgement' (Foucault, 1977). That is, for the avoidance of appearing 'abnormal', the participants

will not only follow the rules but teach according to the defined competences; selecting approaches from the perceived 'approved' list rather than a radical one.

Looking deeper, the choices the participants make and the approaches they prefer (at the outset at least) make tangible their own disciplines, their *signature pedagogies* (Schulman, 2005) and the nature of their students. Their established and experienced colleagues' expectations as well as what the new lecturers perceive to be their students' expectations are what makes them alert to their own visibility. Not in that moment, but when the teaching is 'real'. Additionally, the spectre of future 'proper' observations also provides a sub-text to the rationale and design of the microteaching activities they prepare. Finally, and connected to T1 above, the research agenda and related pressures loom large in many conversations. Whilst separate to their teaching function, it clearly defines the nature of the institution and pushes the overall sense of surveillance.

### **T3 Multiple roles & performing for peers**

The participants are required to take on three distinct roles: teacher; student; peer reviewer. This requires the development of distinct skills and in separating these identities there is inevitably pressure and possible discomfort for some. The 'surprise' presentation is an acknowledgement of this though I imagine that now it is in its third cycle there must be some awareness of this that is shared with those about to start the PGCert. There's a chance that if the 4-minute teach in the first session were widely publicised it might be enough to dissuade some from coming which may impact on future sustainability. Like PSR in Case 1, the anxiety prior to the first iteration is counterbalanced by the reward and sense of achievement once it is complete. Whilst this identity switching may reinforce a sense of artifice, it does bring together opportunities for observational learning, multiple means of mediation (including the self) and social persuasion which are all aspects that can lead to change and build self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This is further enhanced by the proximity in identity of the 'models' in each case; they are all new lecturers so watching each other adds value to the potential for change in this regard too. These intricately interchanging roles give an entirely contrasting aspect to this type of OTL when compared to any of the orthodox variants.

## ***Extended Microteaching Contradictions***

### **C1 Determining objectives**

Whilst participants' thinking aligned with the ADs' verbally-stated rationale for the Extended Microteaching (there is not a rationale in any of the guidance documents), the object at each cycle tends to derive from self-identified deficits or issues raised by peers. Whilst the prompt materials offer guidance in terms of how to approach the microteaches and what to feedback on, the absence of a 'louder' voice (see C3 below) potentially undermines to an extent the preeminent goal. Core skills are evidently focal and, in line with some of the literature on microteaching, this process supports the development of those skills (Kilic, 2010; Otsupius, 2014).

### **C2 Artificiality**

The in-session rules, the shortness of time, the small number of 'students' and the limitations on technology are all rationalised. They are ultimately pragmatic decisions but also all contribute to the artificiality of the experience, especially when taken alongside the clearly expressed goal of enabling participants to 'plan and do a session'. Nevertheless, this approach to OTL embraces the notion of a community of practice by defining a shared concern (Wenger *et al.*, 2002), providing a vehicle for doubt-reduction and normalising observation (Wenger, 1998), albeit in a contrived setting (Lee *et al.*, 2010).

### **C3 Unused expertise**

All three Academic Developers in the room have extensive expertise. There is a palpable sense of wasted opportunity. Whilst this approach can be justified on pedagogic grounds in terms of participant willingness to engage, removal of pressure and even resourcing, my sense was that there might be ways to tap into that expertise (Atkinson and Bolt, 2010) without compromising the flow of the activity. This feature, uncommon even in other forms of microteaching, nevertheless echoes some of the criticisms of 'genuine' POT where doubts about the utility of peer feedback are often manifest (Weller, 2009; Yiend *et al.*, 2014).

### **Case 3: Granite – Student Reviewers**

I was happy with the number of student reviewers I was able to interview but, despite my request for interviewees being forwarded to all 2017-18 lecturer participants, I only received responses from four. Of these, two were unable to be interviewed for logistical reasons and one only completed part of the process, meaning that I only had one lecturer respondent who had completed the whole process. The discussion below needs to be seen with this limitation in mind.

The unorthodox approach to OTL at Granite needs also to be seen in the context of an even wider and diverse portfolio of innovation and breaks from the orthodoxy of lecturer development. As such it appears to manifest most of the essential principles for effective professional learning defined by Timperley *et al.* (2008) presented in Chapter 3. What struck me as initially surprising is that the Student Reviewers scheme does not seem to align with any of the models of CPD defined by Kennedy (2005). A closer consideration shows that it is nevertheless individually focussed, is not concerned directly with accountability and is designed to facilitate transformation rather than transmission (it is the antithesis of transmission in fact). I finally concluded that it fits most closely with the transformative model. The reason I lacked certainty was because of its unpredictability. I can locate it there but so much is dependent on the interplay within the partnerships. Nevertheless, the student reviewer scheme reflects the transformative model as it gives:

...a real sense of awareness of issues of power, i.e. whose agendas are being addressed through the process [and] explicit awareness of issues of power means that the transformative model is not without tensions, and indeed it might be argued that it actually relies on tensions: only through the realisation and consideration of conflicting agendas and philosophies, can real debate be engaged in among the various stakeholders in education, which might lead to transformative practice. (Kennedy, 2005, p.247)

One of the surprises for the academic developer lead (Peggy) has been how much the students have got from the process. My very limited sample of participants reflects that view too. As an activity system the Student Reviewers scheme, almost by definition, has these two subjects simultaneously. It is promoted as a CPD opportunity for both staff and students and parallel outcomes lead with 'teach more effectively' and 'learning

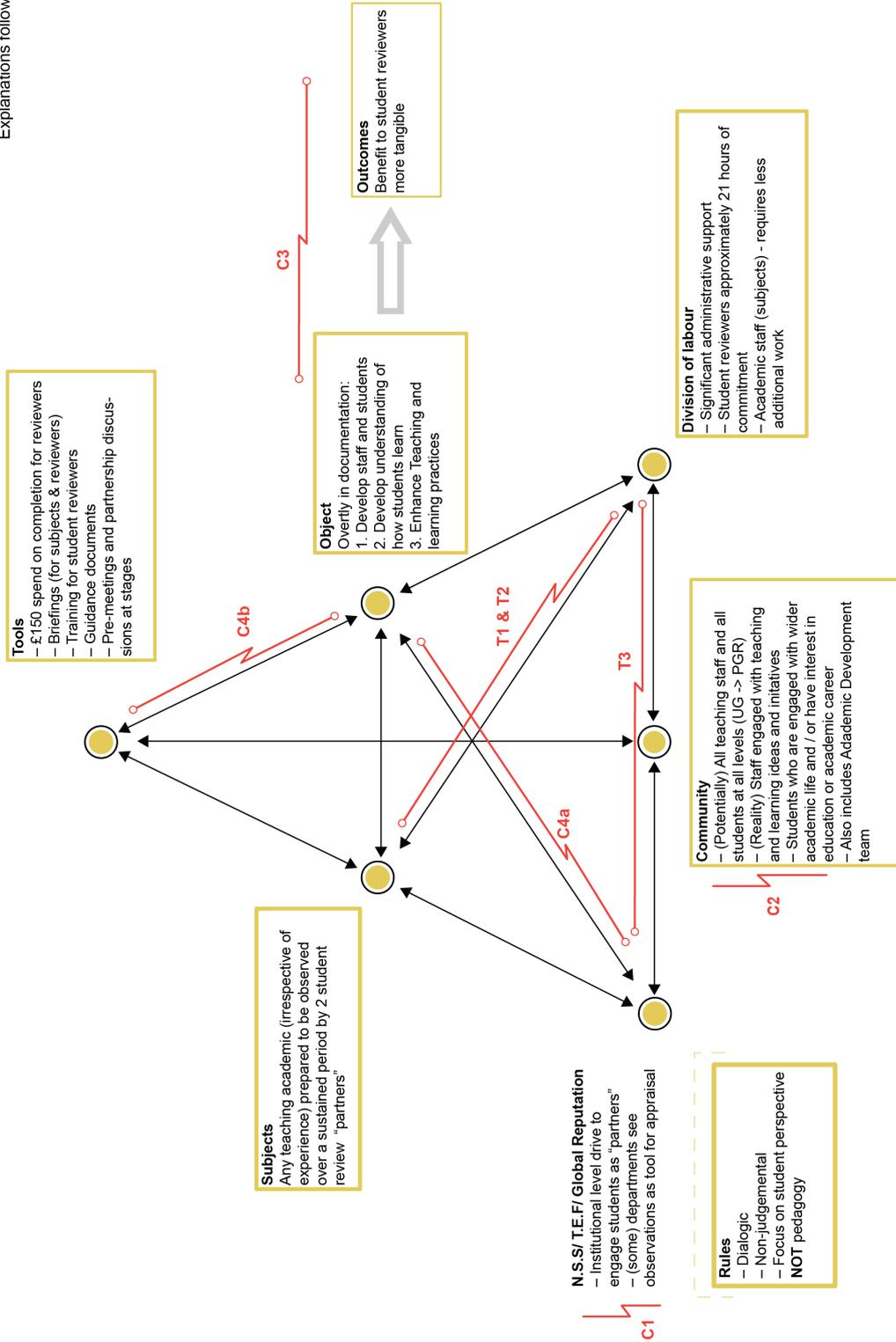
more effectively' (promotion leaflets) for lecturers and students respectively. I initially began mentally then graphically conceptualising the process according to Engeström's (2001) 'third generation' application of Activity Theory (see Chapter 3 for overview). However, it became apparent that this was pulling me away from my own focus (the development of lecturers) and proved more fruitful if I considered where the students were located within the lecturer-centred system and how they contributed to lecturer development or created tensions.

The diagram that follows (Fig. 6.3) shows the core components of the scheme in the form of an activity system with core tensions and contradictions highlighted and elucidated subsequently.

**Case 3: Fig 6.3**

**Granite University "Student Reviewers"**

T = Tension  
C = Contradiction  
Explanations follow



**Figure 6.3 Student Reviewers Activity System**

## ***Student Reviewer Tensions***

### **T1 Hierarchies and vulnerability**

It is very clear from the documentation and from the interview data that these tensions were central to the thinking behind the training and orientation. There is clear guidance and opportunity for training. The extended partnership is designed to allow relationships and mutuality of respect to grow. The problem of academic partners not attending briefings can be seen in two of the examples cited in the findings chapter (the complete misconception as to the purpose of the scheme and minor confusions about goals and processes). It means that however well students are prepared this can be undermined by the academic partner. That 'the scheme could become sort of sychophantic... the best students coming in who tell you how good your teaching is' (Wilf) is likely exacerbated in those instances where reviewers are from the same departments as the academics. The scheme is not preparing 'semi-academic developers' and does not focus on pedagogy. Through the carefully balanced feedback and without direction on what to focus on, it may be even easier for academics to dismiss this feedback than in peer-mediated dialogue or other conventional OTL types. This doubt about the message of the mediators would, according to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), limit the potential to develop or enhance self-efficacy. In this case we have a self-selecting group of academics, most of whom are those whose perceived self-efficacy is likely already high.

Whilst not an expressed objective of the scheme, it does locate the student reviewers as *de-facto* observers of those who have NOT chosen to be part of the scheme. The comparisons are inevitable and in a modern society that is imbued with normalised judgments (Foucault, 1977) it would be surprising if some 'hard-to-reach' academics did not have a tangible sense of surveillance as a consequence. An exploration of this would make a fascinating future study.

### **T2 Who is the real subject?**

Acknowledging again the small size of the sample, there is nevertheless a sense that, irrespective of financial incentive, many student reviewers are motivated to participate because of their own interests and career goals. The limited reporting (especially

limited in terms of what the academic partner needs to produce) makes measuring impact virtually impossible (Shortland, 2004; Peel, 2005) and the success of the scheme might depend on a wider 'sense' that student voices are better heard as a consequence. The teaching enhancement outcome is largely immeasurable on an individual level and, given the number of wider variables, similarly impossible to correlate to wider improvements should they manifest in, say, the NSS. The developmental outcomes for lecturers remain intangible but, perhaps surprisingly, the developmental outcomes for students motivated by career aspiration are potentially more appreciable. Reframing the teaching and learning enhancement by accentuating the employability for students could be a way to supporting the project's sustainability and would amplify the potential benefits and the scheme's distinctiveness in comparison to orthodox types of OTL. This dilemma would likely limit such a project in most HEPs I am familiar with since it is heavily trust-dependent but the specific context and culture of Granite makes its sustainability much more likely.

### **T3 Administration and workload**

The recruitment, pairings, training and monitoring of reporting are 'back-end' resourcing issues that appear comfortably met within such a big institution but would likely be a major impediment to other institutions wishing to use this model. The non-attendance of academic partners at briefings (citing workload), conflicts with the requirements put on student reviewers and potentially undermines the goal to represent each party as an equal partner in the endeavour. Whilst time pressure is a common concern in any form of OTL (Kell and Annetts, 2009; Byrne *et al.*, 2010), at least in these instances, it was a compromise rather than a complete refusal to participate.

### ***Student Reviewer Contradictions***

#### **C1 Owning observation: institutional and departmental drivers**

The institutional goals of student engagement and participation are clear and awareness of (if not belief in) the vision is widely articulated. The whole OTL system at Granite, and the Student Reviewers initiative in particular, is firmly within the developmental paradigm (Gosling, 2005) even though, unlike orthodox OTL, it challenges fundamental assumptions about student/ lecturer relationships (Cook-

Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). In ethos and the way OTL is presented and designed, the separation of evaluation (and punitive consequences) is as clear as it could be (Davis, 2014). However, the lack of a range of effective evaluative tools for judging teaching quality for purposes of such things as promotion is a deficiency in the eyes of some managers. The sense that observation could be used more for evaluation may gain traction if outcomes from all three of the peer dialogue options are perceived to be unmeasurable.

### **C2 Engaging the already engaged**

If the 'wrong' staff are doing this and the already engaged students are the most likely recruits then looking ahead it might be logical to consider whether that could change or if this tendency could actually be a central and acknowledged feature rather than a perceived deficit. The only logical recourse if trying to recruit the unwilling would be to remove voluntarism and/or increase the incentives. The former would change the dynamic dramatically and the latter would likely add costs to what is already (to my eyes at a not nearly so well-funded institution) a quite expensive scheme. Where there is voluntarism or optionality (as is the case here), the harder to reach academics will likely take the path of least resistance as is familiar in optional orthodox OTL (Pattison *et al.*, 2012). The student reviewer scheme requires considerable time investment and risk so those with self-efficacy that may need developing are very unlikely to opt in (Kell and Annetts, 2009; Peat, 2017).

### **C3 Objects and outcomes**

Linked to T2 above, there is a clear sense that the reviewer can gain tangibly whilst the reviewee may be open to the dialogue but may not. S/he may change as a consequence but may not. Trust in the perspectives of students may be there but may not. This uncertainty is exacerbated by T1 above and by the limited reporting and follow-up so enhancement of teaching and learning is always likely to remain, at best, impressionistic and slow burning. However, opportunities for mutual understanding and for students to develop themselves are more tangible. This weights the outcomes favourably towards the reviewer rather than the subject and reflects what is increasingly being seen as an untapped virtue of OTL processes (Hendry *et al.*, 2014).

#### **C4 a and b. Dissemination and wider impact**

The processes and limits to reporting are deemed necessary to engender trust (especially amongst the academic partners) but inevitably limit wider dissemination. The changes that an individual lecturer might effect could be profound. The transformation might be expressed in an appraisal or shared at a dissemination event but there is no obligation in this regard. In other words, the system can limit impact to individual level. Like it or not, measurability, reporting and auditing are components of the increasingly performative HE system and these imperatives may threaten the project at some point in the future. It would certainly prevent it from ever getting the go ahead in my own institution. The apparent (current) alignment of institutional culture and AD goals, values and initiatives aids its success (Land, 2001) but there is a fluidity in the sector that could ultimately threaten its longevity.

### ***What can we learn from the cases?***

Thus far, most of the analysis has been necessarily separated by case. Here I use the research questions that have shaped this study as launch points to pull together common threads and lessons from the cases from a more holistic perspective.

### ***Academic Developer perspectives***

My first question sought to provide context to each case:

*How do Academic Developers conceptualise OTL for HE lecturer professional learning?*

Unsurprisingly, given their roles and the reason I was interviewing them, all were positive about its potential. All cited personal experiences (both positive and negative) that have shaped their beliefs. Interestingly, experiences as observees were more prominent in these rationales than experiences as observers. I witnessed the same animation in all of them that I feel myself when advocating the potential for a developmental activity. I have been asked whether the ADs are themselves atypical or special in some way. Whilst personal values and style will have an impact, my impression is that they develop, support and/or promote these OTL schemes more because of contextual need and an ability to seize an opportunity. AD orientation, agency and innovation is only a tangential aspect of this study but is an area where further research (in OTL or other aspects of AD work) would be valuable.

The AD at Obsidian was a little ambivalent and I was initially surprised by his tentative defence of grading and evaluation through observation. This perhaps reflects the special context of that institution in that it has both HE and FE and in the FE part the narrative that is pushed is that they need to have graded observation 'for Ofsted', even though this is not an Ofsted requirement. At Sandstone and Granite, the anti-judgemental stance was comparably forthright.

The unorthodox schemes developed by the ADs (Cases 2 and 3) or championed (Case 1) are rooted in the ADs' identities and experiences. Whilst I only have limited data to

form these impressions, I was struck by which of the AD types (Land, 2001) were most prominent in their voices.

Ali at Obsidian unsurprisingly expressed ideals that located his thinking within what Land (2001) would call 'discipline-specific'. That is, heavily situated within a creative and artistic education framework and supported by the 'reflective practitioner' and 'Interpretive-hermeneutic' orientations wherein self-reflection and peer-evaluation is in turn supported by the encouragement of dialectic. Both ADs at Sandstone similarly reflected the latter two orientations but, possibly due to the sense of conflict with the institution and its 'Russell Group' culture, their thinking is informed by and explicitly reflects the 'professional competence' orientation. Institutionally, the pressure to research and publish trumps the less forceful impetus to develop as a lecturer. The reduced contact time and resource inform a design wherein the baseline skills are woven into the early part of the PGCert. Though their wings are clipped, the critically reflective, praxis-oriented signatures of the ADs can be seen in the ways in which this happens.

From what Peggy says about the way the Case 3 project aligns with Granite's strategic direction and how she has been pivotal in the establishment of the Student Reviewers scheme, I would say that the strongest orientations according to Land's (2001) model are 'political-strategic' and 'vigilant opportunist'. The former relates to the institutional push towards student engagement and the latter, not at all negative in this context, reflects how the innovation was pitched and pushed at the optimum moment; catching the zeitgeist of the institution at an ideal time. A broader investigation into AD perspectives on OTL and/ or PGCert-type provision using Land's (2001) orientations as a guiding framework would make for fascinating further research.

In common with orthodox OTL schemes, all the ADs saw dialogue as fundamental and each unorthodox approach has opportunity for dialogue built in. At Obsidian it is either facilitated by an AD or, when peer-mediated, supported by meticulously prepared documents that use question prompts (in lieu of pedagogic expertise). At Sandstone the dialogue is more temporally and contextually defined. Whilst I was sceptical before I saw the third iteration of the week's microteaching events about the type of feedback

peers would give in such situations (where ADs are deliberately separate), I was impressed with its sophistication. The 'exposure therapy' approach to preparing participants for being more formally observed has the twin effect of developing expertise in (limited and pre-defined) pedagogic theory and principles as well as verbal feedback protocols. Far less circumscribed are the reflective aspects of the Student Reviewer scheme. The relationship-forming and values-establishing protocols are precise and delimited (at least from the student aspect) and attempt to obviate pedagogy-focussed discussion. The extended nature of the process and the comparative lack of protocols around what is discussed and how that happens gives more scope for liberated reflection. If genuine critical reflection and praxis (Freire, 1993; Brookfield, 1995) is not possible without expert mediation or prompts specifically designed to question the norms and assumptions about lecturer behaviours, then in this instance it is dependent on student insight and awareness. The risk here is for superficiality or vacuity. The PSR scheme shares much in terms of core purpose and fundamentals of design with more orthodox OTL and, as such, shares many similar impediments. Cases 2 and 3, however, are more marked in their distinctions and inevitably present more context-specific conclusions.

Whilst the Student Reviewer scheme is a form of democratisation and values the student voice, it is the PSR scheme that is most consciously inclined towards praxis. The limits, as I have expressed above, can be due to other factors impacting a peer's approach such as anxiety or ongoing failure to share the insight of PSR potential. The scheme at Sandstone plays with power dynamics though this is something of an artifice; control still sits with the ADs through their time-keeping, physical presence and the documents. Praxis in this context is not the preeminent goal though. Here it is more pragmatic and technical with the affective aspect concerned with reducing anxiety and preparation for the future. None of the ADs mentioned praxis explicitly though Ali at Obsidian did talk of critical pedagogy. Nevertheless, all the OTL schemes anticipated or at least hoped for reflection and resultant action, with dialogue a much more visible and clearly-articulated component of it in all cases.

### ***Milieux, motives, mechanisms***

*How are unorthodox approaches to OTL rationalised and structured and what facilitates or stifles OTL innovation and its sustainability?*

Chapter 5 provides narrative detail and diagrammatic representations of each of the unorthodox approaches. In each case there is a sophisticated framework (the 'rules' and 'tools' in the language of AT). In Case 1 these rules and tools are explicitly designed to support novice peer reviewers and to nudge both reviewer and reviewee to a position where meaningful reflection can occur. In Case 2 the rules are there to manage the events as well as draw out the fundamentals considered imperative for new lecturers to grasp. The complex and deliberately restrictive guidance enables multiple 'lessons' to be layered within each microteaching event such as alternatives to the ubiquity of *PowerPoint* and the importance of considering the impact of gesture and other non-verbal communications. In Case 3 the rules are strongly buttressed by orientation sessions, guidance workshops and printable guides. What unifies them all is that these rules get broken, ignored or circumvented to an extent. The impact appears to be a reduction in the likely gain from the process. In the first case it may take the form of cynical compliance whereby participants simply get the PSRs done without meaningful engagement. In Case 2 the 'ringmaster' role of the ADs prevents severe deviation but subtle 'cheats' such as use of printed *PowerPoint* slides can only diminish the clearly stated desire to get these new lecturers to value themselves as a resource more. I also shared examples where the Student Reviewer scheme had problems related to rule breaking (or misunderstanding), notably by the academic partner. Another way of perceiving this is the degree of control each AD has over each iteration of the unorthodox process. In Case 2 they have the most control; in Case 1 it is dependent on whether the ADs mediate the PSRs. In Case 3 they have the least control. There is a core and common tension here. Where rules are broken there is a perceptible negative impact on the transformative potential but, at the same time, absence of visible control is a pre-requisite to trust, engagement and even sustainability of the scheme.

In terms of rationales for the processes, in Case 1 it was as much about legacy and convenience, so innovation was not central there. There was uncertainty about institution-wide leadership in terms of teaching and learning and several years of failure to embed any kind of OTL. Nevertheless, at the stage of revalidation of the PGCert, a conscious effort was made to maintain PSR on the PGCert and to continue with already-established positive moves towards using PGCert PSR experiences as a means of supporting its use across the HE provision at Obsidian. The nature of this creative arts institution and all that entails meant that PSR was a good fit to support a diverse cohort with many non-academics participating. Particularly interesting (and surprising) in this instance was the passionately-expressed enthusiasm for PSR from former PGCert participants in terms of shaping their identities in their own minds and the minds of their colleagues. The evidence of impact in terms of achieving what senior leadership had failed to achieve was tangible.

In Case 2 I found some resentment towards the institutional cultural drivers and a reluctant acceptance of constraints (both tangible and attitudinal) and these led to an innovative approach to the first stage of a wider, fairly extensive OTL system across the PGCert. In this case the leadership was strong and defined priorities with clarity but not in a direction that dovetailed with values and wishes of the ADs. Their agency was thus stifled to a degree but a creative approach combatted constraints to an extent. In the third case I found yet another distinct cultural milieu. Senior leadership favours student engagement strategies and the 'teaching' part of TEF is a strategic priority. In this climate, the idea of one individual was given room and resource to first pilot then grow a risky, unorthodox approach to OTL without, as yet, a call to correlate specific outcomes to this 'investment' other than it being part of the wider student engagement and development agendas. In Case 1 the use of unorthodox OTL is a key mechanism for its wider institutional sustainability, largely aside from senior leadership influence (though with tacit support of course). In Case 2 the OTL approach is both constrained and informed by the wider culture so happens in spite of the strategic emphasis. In Case 3 there is a (current) harmony between the institutional direction and this one aspect of a broad suite of unorthodox approaches to both OTL and wider lecturer development. Whilst the identities of the AD leaders and instigators can be seen in all the schemes, the most fragile appears to be the Sandstone one. It is easy to imagine a

change in personnel and a reversion to the 'talked at' model so passionately disparaged by Jane. Changes in personnel would be less likely to impact the Granite scheme as it appears to be an embedded part of the three-stranded approach to OTL and is a prominent aspect of the student engagement strategy. Most secure I suspect is the PSR scheme. The influence PGCert graduates are having is making a nominal policy a reality and personnel changes on the PGCert would be unlikely to effect any significant change on that programme without considerable upheaval. Despite these significant contexts and contrasts, each case represents success and all align to some extent with Brew's (2011) view that AD work will be unsuccessful if it antagonises the senior managers in the institution.

### ***Objectives and effectiveness***

My third question focussed on the aspects most difficult to measure:

*In what ways and how effectively do unorthodox OTL approaches support HE lecturer professional learning?*

Probably the most important lesson for me here is related to the ways in which I/ we (Academic Developers) and our students (typically novice lecturers) understand development. Whilst I was of course aware that development is more than simply developing teaching behaviours or the breadth of pedagogic knowledge and strategies employed by any lecturer, I can see that this dominated my thinking. It is logical and reasonable to connect OTL (in any guise) to such developments. However, throughout each of the cases, as expressed in the individual considerations in both Chapters 5 and 6, the perhaps more obvious behavioural changes are far less pronounced than the affective and cognitive ones. Of course, central to my thesis is the connection between OTL and self-efficacy but the examples that appeared were wider than this and some of the literature does raise these potentials. It was about opportunities to see things through the eyes of others (peers, students, colleagues from different disciplines, colleagues with different responsibilities) (Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). It could aid understanding of the self as a professional and help shape the lecturer identity (Peel, 2005). In Case 2 it helped new lecturers empathise with students and in Case 3 (where

it worked) to see students less hierarchically (Cook-Sather and Motz-Storey, 2016). The latter case is modelled closely on the 'Students as Learners and Teachers' scheme (Cook-Sather, 2008) and, possibly as a consequence (and unlike the other schemes), promotes these values-oriented outcomes in its documentation and training. There is certainly room on all these schemes for an appraisal of the affective and cognitive outcomes and locate them as potential or even central objectives.

That said, the more conventional and more readily understood goals were in evidence in both Cases 1 and 2. In Case 1 it was not measured beyond what was expressed in discussion and PSR outputs. In Case 2 it was more visible in the behaviours and interactions that I (and the host ADs) were able to witness. In the first case, change expressed may not align with changes implemented. In the second case it is dependent on AD judgment. Once judgement becomes part of the assessment of the effectiveness, the QA/QE tension becomes more apparent. It leads me to a much clearer sense that it is the process, not measurable outcomes, that is important. Despite my own ontological position with regard to OTL, I was still thinking in terms of judging effectiveness. In this way, I set myself a question that was almost impossible to answer in that it required me to be inherently contradictory. As this became clearer, I debated deleting or re-wording this question but felt that it was important to keep it here. The 'ways' are manifold. A response to the 'How effective?' question can only be impressionistic and should start with the perceptions of the subjects of the OTL scheme. Any OTL scheme perceived with a recognition of the elusiveness, perhaps even pointlessness, of measurable behavioural outcomes would likely lead to significant changes in the way it was rationalised and implemented.

In all three cases there was a very clear neglect of the benefits of observational learning (Bandura, 1977). Whilst becoming increasingly prominent, the voices in the literature advocating this low-investment OTL approach are relatively few (Hendry *et al.*, 2014; Mueller and Schroeder, 2018). In the first two cases it was either downplayed or not expressed overtly. In Case 3 this was a highly-valued outcome amongst the student reviewers though this was not an overt goal for either student or academic participants. On the PGCert I work on far more prominence and significance is placed on being observed than the observation of others, reflecting all the cases and norms

within such programmes. My thinking throughout this research cycle has compelled me to work towards redressing this imbalance as soon as I can and would counsel any AD colleague to question whether observer learning could be more pronounced in any given OTL scheme.

### ***Challenging issues with unorthodox approaches.***

My final research question sought to reveal any aspects of unorthodox approaches that might address some of the issues inherent in orthodox OTL:

*In what ways and to what extent do unorthodox approaches to OTL overcome resistances and issues found in orthodox OTL systems?*

The issues (that lead to resistance) are, as has been established in Chapters 1 and 2, copious. As I have argued, much is rooted in the core QA/QE tension. There are those that wish to use the tool for evaluative purposes (and tend to reject the many arguments about reliability and validity), those that focus on OTL as a developmental tool and others who believe it can serve these two masters simultaneously. Nothing I have read or uncovered in the process of compiling this thesis has dissuaded me from my position- already consolidated during my IFS- that OTL that is evaluative is very hard to do fairly and to try to couple QA and QE outcomes is to diminish developmental potential. Where evaluative OTL leads to suspicion and mistrust, it has much responsibility for reluctance when it comes to participating in any OTL scheme (Shortland, 2004; Byrne *et al.*, 2010; Spencer, 2014; O'Leary, 2013a). Even in orthodox, non-evaluative peer observation schemes, resistance arises. A challenge to perceived autonomy (Blackwell and McLean, 1996), the impossibility of being non-judgemental (Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2006), the inseparability of the personal and teacher selves (Richardson, 2000) and concerns about negative or ill-informed feedback (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Yiend *et al.*, 2014) are all possible.

In Case 1 there was a clear sense that many of the PGCert participants did not prioritise the PSRs. Given that some leave them to the end and/or sustain a 'bare minimum' approach (whilst others are feeling transformative benefits) supports the conclusion that experience is the more effective teacher. There is no voluntarism but

there is optionality in terms of timing and focus. I suspect that those former PGCert/PSR participants who responded to my request for interview (circulated by the AD to the two years' previous students) were more likely to be those that were enthused of course. The sense that PSR was a gift ignored came through and the assumption of evaluation (whether by AD or peer) was strong at the start. This indicates that what was said by the AD or what was read in the extensive guidance did not translate into a shared understanding at first. That both AD and peer reviews sit under the same PSR label does make the purpose less likely to be seen as transparent. If, however, the AD PSRs were differently labelled these would inevitably be seen as more evaluative.

In Case 2 the Extended Microteaching foreshadows the more conventional OTL. It is temporally constrained with some limited optionality built in in terms of what to teach and how to approach it. The 'ringmaster' role of the ADs could be seen as a surveillance masterstroke. The participants willingly surveil themselves, apparently given agency and choice but within the process are manipulated towards practical competences and self-confidence. Beyond the notion of 'no time like the present to practise' they are told very little. The exposure and repetition within a short space of time appears to very successfully achieve the goals. In short, it gives as little room for resistance as possible by combining the regulation with what is ultimately an enjoyable and largely risk-free set of experiences.

In Case 3 the minimal reporting required was a surprise to one lecturer. He understood the purpose. He recognised it was not about evaluating his teaching (at least from a management perspective). He was nevertheless perplexed by what he saw as a missing aspect. In this case, then, it is only less than full engagement in orientation activity and/or residual understanding of the wider OTL that taints understanding. In this case, and though I have no explicit evidence to support this (I would have to interview those that were aware of the scheme but made a deliberate choice not to participate), not opting into this unorthodox approach is more likely a consequence of scepticism about what students may have to offer, baulking at the time commitment or a manifestation of one of the resistances found in peer observation schemes. It defines developmental goals but the wider- and more nebulous- goal of better understanding between students and academics gave it its first breath of life and is likely to be the

driver that sustains it. It is a means to change attitudes and culture and has the potential to have an impact on academics who would resist any kind of observation, let alone a student one because it re-defines the relationship; taking the student voice to a much more intimate level.

Cases 2 and 3 remove hierarchical evaluation completely. In Case 2 non-participation was not an option and in Case 3 there was an expectation that one of the three options would be chosen. This combination of push and pull factors to reducing resistance appears to have an impact. By removing hierarchical evaluation in Case 3 and by providing reference rubrics in Cases 1 and 2, the issues of individualised mediator ontologies (Hudson, 2014) and distrust of untrained peer judgments (Thomas *et al.*, 2014; Raj *et al.*, 2017) are either a non-issue or significantly minimised. In Case 1 there is a residual anxiety which can be accounted for by the wider institutional culture and the AD-mediated PSRs which are part of the broader scheme. It is easy to see how they are perceived as evaluative. Despite the PSRs being required, resistance is manifest in the way many delay completion.

Another issue in the OTL orthodoxy is the lack of evidence of change or measurable outcomes beyond self-reporting (Peel, 2005; Atkinson and Bolt, 2010). This was specifically highlighted as an issue by the AD and one participant respondent in Case 1. In Case 3 it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure and such narrow measurables do not align with the ethos of the scheme. In Case 2 the subsequent, more orthodox OTL may illuminate teaching behaviours that are deemed positive by the ADs based on the rules of the Extended Microteach process. These cases illustrate a significant tension in any innovative approach to academic development, not just OTL. The HE zeitgeist tends to value, even demand, measurable outputs. Without them, sustainability of innovation might be threatened, but with mechanisms for measurability (in OTL at least) comes the association with evaluation and surveillance that diminishes developmental potential.

## ***Conclusions***

By using an Activity System to analyse and represent each of these OTL approaches to HE lecturer development, I have been able to discuss how they function (in context); define the structures, relationships and goals that underpin each and have drawn out issues, tensions and contradictions in each too. Elements of each case show how important (as an AD) it is to be clear about the purpose of OTL. It shows that disclosure of these purposes is not always understood however explicit it is. AT also provided a context-sensitive structure that enabled me to isolate and go beyond tensions in purpose. Most complex is what subjects or participants gain may be profound but beyond the anticipated or sought goals of the scheme. I have shown in the discussion above how some issues and positive outcomes in the unorthodox cases mirror those in more orthodox counterparts. I have also highlighted conclusions that emphasise the distinctiveness of the cases, reinforcing their unorthodox credentials. The following summative conclusions draw together many of the threads and provide a rationale for the claims I propound in the contribution section that follows.

## ***Evaluation versus development: The debate continues***

As I clarified at the start of this thesis, observation of teachers for development is a well-established phenomenon when compulsory schooling and FE are factored in. Widespread use in HE is much more recent. In all contexts, an impediment to the potential of OTL as a developmental strategy has been the use of observation as a managerial tool. Whilst still contested, there have been policy and practice shifts in schools and colleges that acknowledge a need to 'reclaim' observation (O'Leary, 2017a). Observations have been used in HE for a range of purposes and POT schemes dominated the developmental aspect prior to the surge in PGCert-type programmes in a context of ever-increasing pressures to improve teaching. These drivers have led to debates, not least in the context of the TEF, which include discussion about appropriate metrics to measure teaching quality. Unsurprisingly, observation is part of that discussion and there are signs that its use as a QA tool is increasing in HEPs. An exploration of perceptions of purpose was central to my IFS and I have made clear my view that there needs to be a separation of QA and QE OTL if its developmental potential is to be realised. The literature, unsurprisingly, is not

unanimous but the tendency is towards supporting this position. The observations that form part of most (if not all) PGCerts are varied in design and purpose though the developmental aspect is ubiquitous if not exclusive.

### ***OTL as Academic Development***

Whether formalised and accredited or not, professional learning opportunities for HE teaching academics are usually designed and delivered by members of the emergent, though fragmented, academic development 'tribe' (Land, 2001, p.10). Many see and present themselves in different guises of course (See Chapter 2). Their roles are informed by experiences, values, sectoral drivers and the priorities and cultures of their institutions (See Chapters 2, 5, 6). The wider design, ethos, impact and participant perceptions of these programmes is, like the OTL within them, an under-researched area.

As a thesis for a professional doctorate it made sense to make ADs a key data source as well as to locate their thinking and behaviours within the exploration. I could have (as I did with my IFS) make the subjects the pre-eminent focus within a broader system analysis. What surprised me most, and even though I had read some of the literature exploring core issues (Land, 2001; Bath & Smith, 2004; Brew, 2011; Gibbs, 2013), was how significant the institutional culture is and how clearly it manifests in the approaches taken.

### ***Degrees of unorthodoxy***

As I established in Chapter 2, in the mid-1990s peer observation was considered novel professional development in HE. While peer observation in many guises (Gosling, 2005) has shifted from an unorthodox to a more orthodox position, so PSR (again in different guises) is moving in that direction as more institutions recognise that teaching encompasses more than pure delivery. PSR necessarily embraces technology-enhanced and enabled teaching (Gosling, 2014; Kacmaz, 2016). Nevertheless, PGCerts typically favour a focus on classroom teaching and, even where PSR of non-teaching activity is an option, I found that its use could be nominal and it led me to abandoning a case after some initial field work. Microteaching has a long-established

legacy across many types of teacher and lecturer education programme and is orthodox in its own way. However, the Extended Microteaching model is, for the moment, an unorthodox manifestation on PG Certs at least but offers one model for rebalancing the practical and theoretical aspects of such programmes. The Student Reviewers scheme is the most unorthodox. Though resource-intensive, it offers a template for new levels of student collaboration and engagement and the potential for a truly innovative HE lecturer apprenticeship. Whilst I believe I have shown that a break from the orthodoxy can lead to positive outcomes, such a shift brings with it many of the familiar impediments related to anxiety, academic identity and trust (see Chapters 5 and 6). The success factors established in the literature review (Chapter 2) formed a small part of the analysis but most of the identified key elements were found in each of the cases (See Chapter 5).

One strong conclusion I have reached is that we can be shackled by assumption and convention when it comes to OTL. These cases do offer insights into three very different approaches and presented together show how by widening our horizons in terms of how they can be organised and what they can achieve, we open ourselves to opportunities and nuances that otherwise may only occur through good fortune. Questions that will be central to the various means of dissemination I will employ **are as relevant to orthodox schemes as they are to innovative ones and** will be: 'Have you questioned your motives? Does the mechanism match the motives? Do the subjects of your OTL scheme share and understand the motives? How much does the historicity of your professional learning (and OTL within that) reflect your true goals and how much is it either an unquestioned legacy or a consequence of institutional culture? Are self-efficacy and observer learning explicitly woven into OTL schemes?

Even within the cases that provide the backbone to this study I found that the benefits of observer learning take a subordinate role to observee learning. In all three cases it was either weighted less prominently (Cases 1 and 2) or is an unintended consequence for the mediators (Case 3). I would recommend to all colleagues a consideration of the role that observer learning plays in any OTL scheme and urge them to consider re-weighting the documentation / processes so that observing is seen to be as important as being observed. In fact, I have recently begun discussion with

colleagues about this in terms of the PGCert I work on and we will be implementing changes to address this. For example, we call occasions of being observed 'Third Party Observations' but also require several occasions of 'observing others' which are minimally logged by comparison. We will be bringing both types under a single umbrella term and will weight them equally.

### ***Contribution to knowledge***

On their own, each of the cases provides an external insight into three contrasting approaches to OTL. In this it is the externality that is of particular significance, given the preponderance of internally-generated cases in the literature. Assuming publication of each as a separate case, I believe that they will add to our understanding of very narrow and specific OTL phenomena *per se*. They offer a multi-lensed perspective that draws on institutional culture; AD values and agency; participant experiences and reactions; observations about impact and value.

I also believe that it adds useful examples to the growing body of studies that show the flexibility and utility of AT as a framework for data collection and for in-case and cross-case analysis in educational research. This chapter has shown how such scrutiny of tensions and contradictions within an OTL system can reveal opportunities, threats and outcomes perhaps otherwise concealed. Whilst these are of course interesting in each case, it is the broader questions they suggest that may inform future OTL design anywhere.

Within each case and comparatively across all three cases, I have shown how institutional context and culture can facilitate or stifle AD activity (using OTL as an exemplifying lens). These wider observations add to the body of knowledge concerned with the still relatively emergent discipline of academic development. In this domain, it is also useful to see examples of how innovation can be stimulated by personal values and experiences, made opportune or necessary by external factors or internal policy, depending on its aspect and that creativity and innovation can occur either because of or despite institutional culture. A theme that has certainly emerged can be best expressed in the form of a question when it comes to ADs and their relationship with the OTL they are involved with: Have we interrogated the processes and purposes of

the OTL we use and is there a shared understanding of these amongst key stakeholders?

Finally, and most significantly in my view, it has helped me to develop new ways of classifying and thinking about OTL, especially those types previously clustered as ‘other’ in the most oft-cited classification (Gosling, 2005) and ‘hybrid’ in a recent endeavour to extend Gosling’s work (Scott et al., 2017). By offering a conceptual orthodoxy, I would argue that I have foregrounded and celebrated ‘unorthodoxy’ and in so doing offered channels for innovation that unify by difference and in so doing, offer stronger rationalisation to those inclined to innovate. By re-framing the way OTL is classified we can look beyond the orthodoxy in our thinking and not to see these deviations as *one-offs/ outliers/ hybrids/ others* but as part of the wider set of collaborative, dialogic, practice-oriented developmental tools.

‘Observation’ as a term is still problematic but it is also a widely understood and a potentially unifying one. Rather than finding a new term (i.e. one thing I had hoped I might be able to do), we should look to re-connote observation in positive language away from surveillance and performance management. This would be of enormous benefit to ADs, teacher trainers, trainees and teachers in general, in and beyond HE.

### ***Contribution to professional practice***

I developed a heuristic (the 4 Ms model, see fig. 2.3) as a way challenging the labelling issues identified above and as a way of categorising different types of OTL that fell outside established classification schemes. It has proved useful in this study and has been something that has caught the eyes of AD colleagues. When I presented on my IFS I included the 4-way Venn image as a ‘future direction’ slide at the end and used that as an opportunity to begin establishing possible case contacts. It was during a post-presentation discussion about the 4 Ms heuristic that I realised that whilst it was useful as a way of categorising difference, it actually held more potential for myself and AD colleagues as an analytical lens for scrutiny of OTL or for the development of an OTL scheme. Since there is so much variance in perceptions of purpose (see Chapters 5 and 6), I would argue that a systematic consideration of motive for OTL, however

designed, would be a useful process for any AD or PGCert team to go through but that classification by purpose alone constrains our perspectives on potential. To that end I would propose that the '4 Ms' model can be reconfigured as a simple auditing tool which I have begun to develop below (Fig. 6.4). This is currently oriented towards analysing existing schemes but I anticipate re-working it to be a developmental tool which would not only structure thinking but would also use a version of the four-way Venn as an inspirational prompt. Where conclusions from cases alone are not generalisable, I believe the question prompts are and by following this structured process the model could help ADs isolate the kinds of challenges and tensions illustrated in both the literature review and case studies. Utilised as a development tool, it may aid the prediction (and therefore pre-emption) of such challenges.

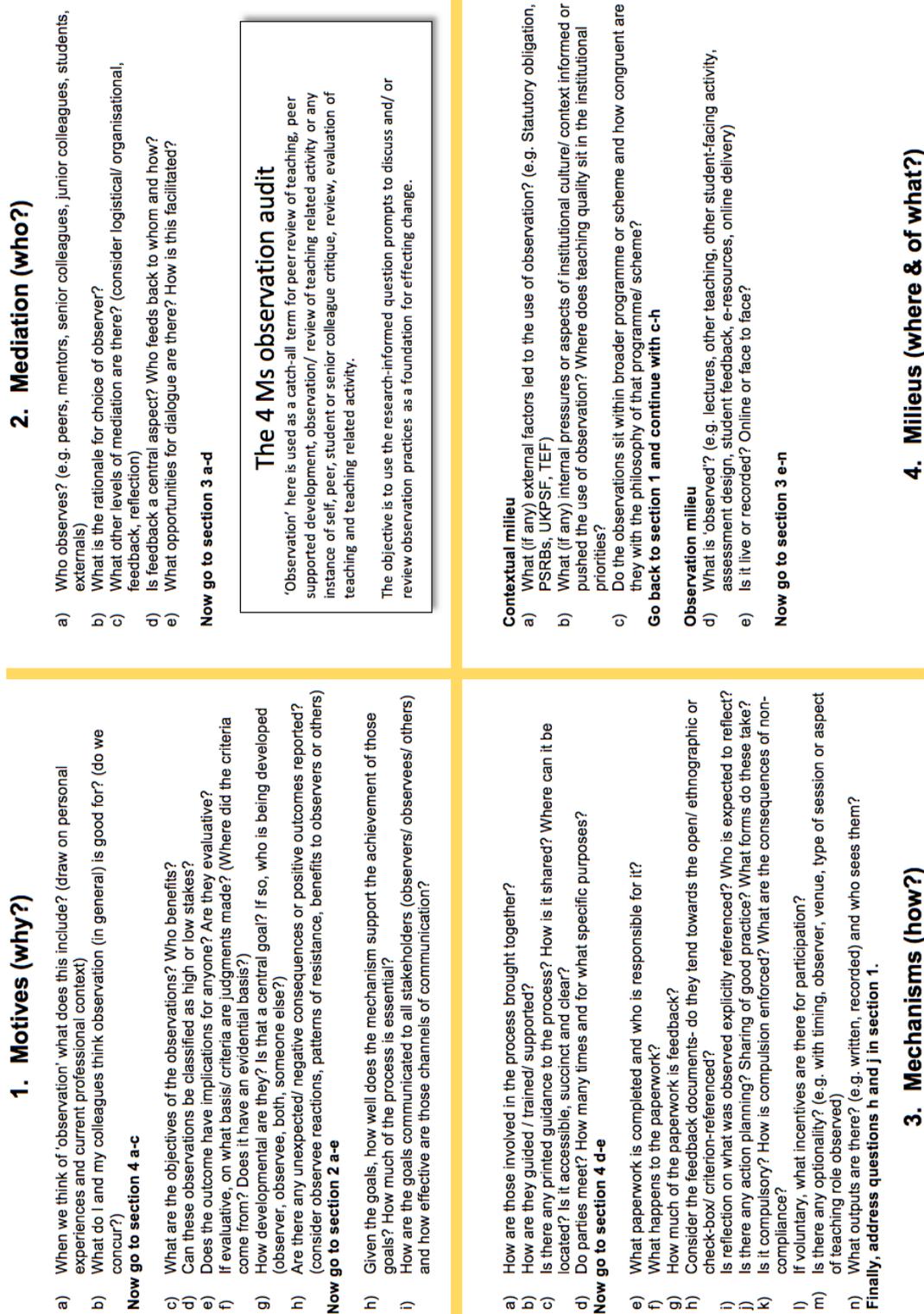


Figure 6.4 The 4Ms observation audit

## ***Dissemination***

In addition to the dialogic and applied dissemination in my own context outlined in my reflective statement, I have presented to two AD network events and presented at an Academic Developer conference (Compton, 2018) on some of the key findings from this research. The interest it generated led to the commissioning of an article for SEDA (Compton, 2019, forthcoming). ADs from all cases and the pilot case have contacted me about follow up work and developments of their schemes based on the findings, perhaps enabling me to take analysis of the OTL systems to the logical next level of iterative development based on in-system tensions (Engeström, 2001). I anticipate further dissemination through teaching and learning/ academic development conferences nationally and internationally in 2019-21 and also plan to disseminate through publication. Drawing on my research, I have already been central to the re-design of the peer observation scheme at my own institution (in pilot stage) which draws on aspects of the PSR approach. I am also re-writing the in-PGCert observation requirements to make equitable the value of observer learning with observee learning, to provide mechanisms for agreeing and understanding purposes amongst key stakeholders and to reduce the weighty form-filling obligations without removing the utilitarian scaffolding.

## ***Final thought***

OTL has at least the capacity to transform practice. Mezirow (1997) defines transformative learning as a process of critical reflection that challenges otherwise fixed frames of reference and 'habits of mind' (p.7). The role of educators or mediators is to support (without coercion) the establishment of a setting conducive to such critical reflection. Each of these cases offers such a setting. We should value dialogue and thinking over measuring contested markers of 'good' teaching or actual behavioural change. My belief in the developmental potential of dialogue prompted by witnessing another's practice has been reinforced strongly as has the idea that it is essential to separate evaluation from development wherever possible starting with a commitment to NOT utilise outcomes from any developmental observation process as evidence of teaching effectiveness. Innovation can refresh and it can bring unanticipated benefits. As with much in education, there is no 'one size fits all' OTL panacea but the common

threads of dialogue promotion, minimised evaluation and re-emphasising the potential of observer learning are reflected here as they are when the OTL literature is perceived holistically. Unorthodox approaches can address some of the issues prevalent in the more orthodox approaches but the motive behind the scheme and how the mechanism aligns with this motive must be interrogated. ADs, where they have the agency, need to make informed decisions about how much control they think is needed, how willing they are to relinquish control or to turn a blind eye to rule breaking. Fundamentally, they need to decide whether paper trails and impact assessments benefit the scheme participants or are there to feed institutional demands.

Still unresolved for me is the central problem of labels. I have shown how 'peer' is problematic and how 'observation' carries such strong negative connotation for many it can be a barrier of itself. 'Review' and 'development' are found as alternatives to observation but the former can connote evaluation and the latter deficits. Perhaps there is no ideal way of framing them though my current inclination is towards reclaiming and re-connoting 'observation'. I have been fortunate to delve into the thinking of AD colleagues from several very different HEPs and it has laden me with ideas and enthusiasms for future directions. There is no doubt in my mind that all types of observation will grow in prominence. We should exploit its potential, challenge managerialist myths and draw on evidence-informed responses when designing observation schemes and I hope that my framework will aid colleagues in that endeavour.

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**Appendix 2: e-mail to Jisc mailing list 'SEDA'**

8/11/17

Dear colleagues

As part of my (seemingly endless) doctoral research I am looking at variations in design of observations used as part of any formal lecturer CPD/ training/ support/ fellowship application (overt/ covert purposes, structure, perceived value, observer roles/ experience). At this stage I am not looking at in-faculty peer observation/ review schemes, however. I am currently scoping out the sector to get a better idea of the degree of variance before (later) settling on some cases.

I would be very grateful for any responses (even just a few words) to the following questions:

1. How do you use observation on PGCerts/ PGCAPs/ Fellowship programmes? (if not at all, I'm also interested in the 'why?')
2. Do you or colleagues use what might be termed atypical approaches to observation? (i.e. anything that deviates from the orthodoxy of expert, mentor, manager attends taught session/ observes/ gives feedback). If so, what form do they take?

Many thanks and best wishes to all

[Redacted signature block]

Tel:

Twitter:

### Appendix 3: List of potential cases

Green shading = case study included in this study

Yellow shading = initially deemed suitable but rejected after some data collection

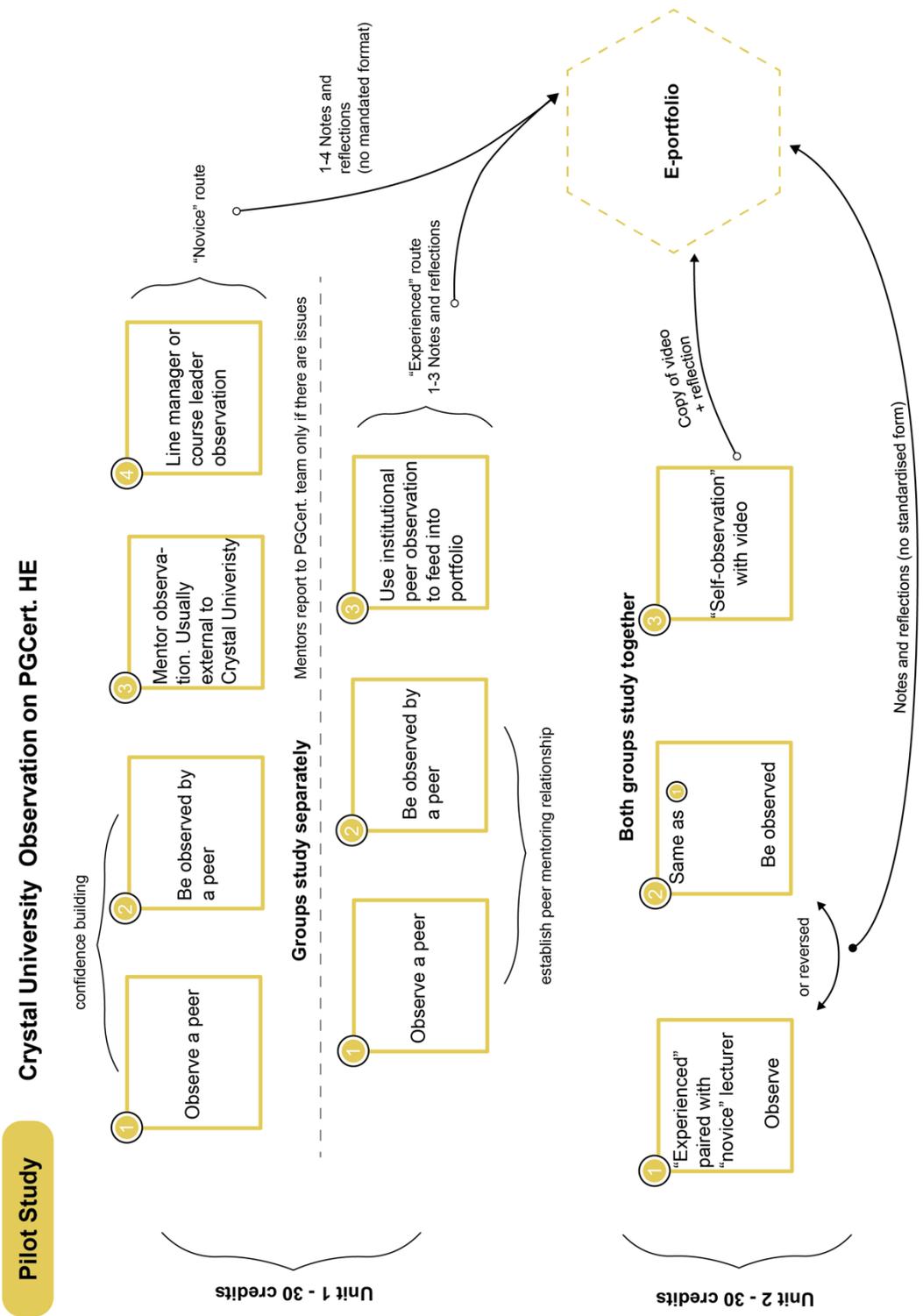
Blue shading = pilot study

No shading = rejected for reasons defined in outcome column

	Institution type	OTL type	Outcome
University A	Post 1992-Arts and Media focus London	Peer supported review-observation options include review of non teaching aspects of lecturing role	Anonymised samples shared by AD contact revealed OTL approach still had classic aspect at its core.
University B	Russell group Southern England	Lesson study	LS not used for HE teaching academic training; used exclusively on school-based PGCE programmes
University C	Russell Group Northern England	Peer-teaching/sustained Microteaching	Case study two
University D	Post 1992-teaching focused, multi-disciplinary Wales	Ethnographic recording of observation data focusing on sketches	The core approach is rooted very closely to the orthodoxy and, whilst the notation approach is an interesting aspect it would unlikely have been sufficiently divergent.
University E	Russell Group Southern England	Peer observation in groups of up to 5-discursive/ not report focussed	Arranged interview but then communication ceased.
University F	Post 1992 - Agriculture and farming focused central England	Peer support review of online teaching	Actually, only a very minor part of the PGCert and 'encouraged' so not central to philosophy or OTL design otherwise classically oriented
University G	Post 1992-Central England	Observation of 'other practice' eg. Assessment and VLE design	Initially selected as a case study but, after the initial interviews with ADs I found it was ultimately too close to the orthodoxy in all but the occasional opportunity (rarely taken) for divergence. OTL managed in a way that includes significant evaluation and <i>de facto</i> grading.
University H	Small Arts new University Southern England	Video-mediated self-observation and focused reflection	Pilot study

University I	Post 1992 - multi-disciplinary Southern England	Peer review 'beyond' teaching and students as observers pilot	Interesting documents supplied but I selected G (as similar OTL approach) as this one was an institutional-wide project, not necessarily related to PGCert equivalent.
University J	Russell Group Southern England	Students as observers	Case study three
University K	Research intensive Scotland	Microteaching and guided peer observation	Out of my geographic boundary but interesting enough to follow up. Ultimately too closely aligned to orthodoxy.
University L	Post 1992-multi-disciplinary Southern England	Academic practice reviews	Deliberate removal of notions of 'observation' from documentation. Similar to G and I and I was selected because of my interest in the variation in OTL approaches and their nascent interest in students as observers.
University M	Post 1992 Southern England multi campus arts institution with HE and FE	Peer supported review (PSR)	Case study one Nb. I initially selected University G as the PSR case as, even though it was less convenient it is a larger institution and suited my goal to include a range of institution types. However, it became clear that G did not fulfil my case criteria during the interview and so I contacted M as an alternative PSR case.

# Appendix 4: Pilot study observations on PGCert



## **Appendix 5: Findings summary from pilot ('Crystal' University)- Video Enhanced Reflection on Teaching (VERT)**

The pilot study helped me to improve the methodology and ensure fitness for purpose. It also helped me clarify the role of AT and, in producing the Activity Diagram (Appendix 6), I was able to establish the consistent format found in the discussion chapter. The text below captures some of the key findings. I anticipate publishing an expanded version of this case at some point.

Crystal is a relatively small and relatively new university specialising in media, design and fashion. The PGCert is also new and what drew me to this case was the enthusiasm of the Academic Developer tasked with designing a PGCert that would suit the specificity of the institution from a *tabula rasa*. VERT<sup>6</sup> does not define how OTL is used on the PGCert but this element of it is a significant departure from the orthodoxy and reflects in equal parts the values and nature of the institution alongside the desire of the AD to promote self-mediated reflection. The AD was inspired by a similar experience in her own training many years before which aligned with her wider goals of embracing technology, creativity and the use of multi-media artefacts as a core part of the PGCert.

### **Observation at Crystal**

All observations are called 'Peer Observations'. These include probationary observations and annual mandatory observations for everyone on a permanent contract. The observer could be a manager, the course leader or an actual peer and the process is overseen by HR. Such a system is typical in the compulsory sector and in FE and, though anecdotally I am hearing of increasing implementation of annual appraisal observation in HE, an HR coordinated system remains atypical in the sector. There is a clear bias towards the 'craft' of teaching in its practical aspect.

### **Observation on the PGCert**

The *tabula rasa* offered to 'Valerie' (the Academic Developer) has led to a PGCert designed for the teachers at this institution and is iterative and evolving. The PGCert comprises two 30 credit units (modules) which run over four terms (January to March the following year). It is mandatory for those on permanent contracts but only advisory for those on hourly paid contracts. Approximately 50% of the 17-18 cohort were 'substantial sessionals'.

The PGCert has two routes. The first is for new staff ('novice' route) and the second is for those with two or more years of teaching behind them ('experienced' route). The core content is the same as are the outcomes and assessment but the first unit is pitched and taught differently. The two groups join for the second unit. The obvious difference is that there is a more hierarchical approach to observation with the novices and the experienced participants are (perhaps subconsciously) offered status by experience in that they are paired with a 'novice' for the second unit.

The VERT scheme sits separately and deliberately after the other observations and, ostensibly, provides an opportunity for the participants to follow a direction that best suits them.

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<sup>6</sup> This is how I have conceptualised it. The AD did not actually have a name for this and at the time of the interviews had seen it as one approach to the PGCert OTL rather than as something separate.

## **Rationale for VERT**

There are three main reasons why Valerie felt it important to have the VERT as one aspect of the wider PGCert OTL requirements: a chance for lecturers to see themselves, as a means of developing self-efficacy and a chance to experiment.

The 'experience of mastery' (Bandura, 1977), that is perceiving successes and seeing why something was successful, is made real by being able to witness it first-hand rather than through the eyes of a third-party mediator.

The role of a third party in influencing what amounts to effective teaching or 'social persuasion' (Bandura, 1977) is one step removed in this process though it is still there as a consequence of the previous observations, the course content and voice of the tutor (Valerie in this case) in the prompts and words of the documents that describe how they should/ could approach VERT and what to reflect on subsequently.

In addition to the focus on the self the PGCert participants are encouraged to focus specifically on how they interact with students and how the students are behaving and responding to them.

Finally, VERT is sold as an opportunity to take risks or to focus on an area of perceived weakness or a gap in experience. The conclusion drawn here is that when observed by someone else, whether peer, mentor, AD or manager, the likelihood is that caution and safety would prevail.

The strong implication that in other observations the participants are not themselves is interesting. That Valerie values all types of observation but, presumably, is content with observations that provoke artificiality *if* complemented by situations that are more 'real'.

## **Perspectives and responses**

I observed Maya's session: a 'flash' brief setting the students up to organise a collective pop-up exhibition of 'zines' they had been producing as part of a Fashion Promotion undergraduate programme.

The video captured the presentation and interactions and it was clear that after a slightly shaky first 30 seconds, Maya was able to get into the flow and forgot the presence of the camera quickly. Indeed, she reported the same after the event. When we met after the actual event that students set up (but prior to watching the video) we discussed the previous session and Maya focussed on how the students had responded to being in a new space (excitable and noisy), how the acoustics were not good and her own sense that she might have managed the allocation of roles differently.

When we met after Maya had watched the video, Maya had used the observer prompt sheet to focus her reflection. This became a little more technical and competence-led (e.g. 'a variety of learning methods were used during the session') but the video enabled her to make judgements about herself that would otherwise have been very difficult to justify.

Maya noticed when watching the video that the students were struggling to engage with the visual stimulus material because of the way she had arranged it and instructed the students to engage with it.

The written reflection appeared, for the most part, a process to be completed and the animated discussion we had about the session was in no way captured in this document which was uploaded as part of Maya's programme portfolio.

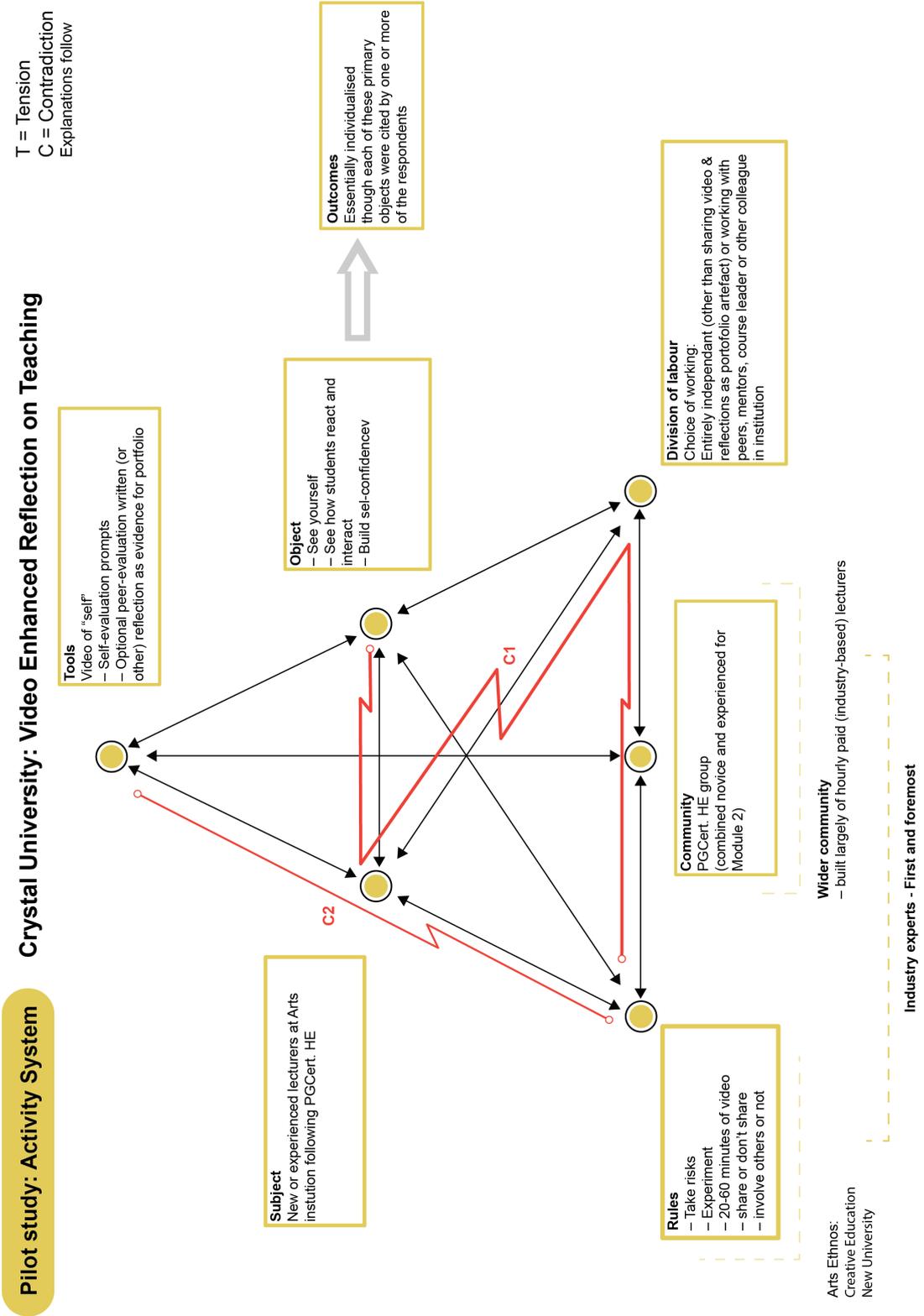
Maya 'felt awful' watching herself but found it nonetheless 'very useful' especially in terms of matching what she thought had happened with what actually happened.

Maya is interested in learning spaces and in particular the limits host institutional space and architecture places on the type of learning experiences the students can have. She expressed a profound satisfaction that not only did she chose this experiment to record but also that she had some evidence towards a hypothesis that risk-taking with learning spaces can be rewarding. Maya saw VERT as a culmination; the end of a continuum from wide-eyed, anxiety-filled observations from 'superiors' where her task was to demonstrate competence through to experimental, self-directed (and mediated) observation and a chance to see how she had developed as a teacher.

### **Conclusion**

VERT provides a clear contrast with the other observations. Whilst there is value placed in the observation of others there is a preponderance (for 'novices' at least) of hierarchical observations where the documentation and presentation suggest competence checking. The degree of choice in contrast is surprising and provides great opportunity for experimentation. However (notwithstanding how limited as I was to tracking only one participant), this may not be representative and the freedom to choose may result in a freedom to choose easy options. The use of the standard observation headings could be seen as a taint on this liberty, perhaps connecting too directly the competence-checking perception of some of the other observations (and the institutional culture) with the supposed expectations of VERT.

# Appendix 6: Pilot study Activity Diagram



## **Appendix 7: Sample transcript extract (Obsidian University)**

Interviewer: Okay. So just to kick things off then, in terms of your role as subject leader in creative education, can you tell me a little bit about what you do with the PgCert, the MA, and what creative education is in contrast to education.

T: I knew you were going to ask me a tricky question. Okay, so as subject leader, predominantly, I am responsible for running the PgCert which is largely an internal staff development activity. We do have a few externals every year but by and large it's the XXX staff. I'm also involved in working with course teams to do more general academic development so work related to assessment feedback, inclusivity, so supporting staff across the university with aspects of delivery, curriculum design, technology.

T: The MA ... I suppose it's a way to build on the PGC our PGC seen as the first sixty credits of the MA which is a two year top up and the idea is that it provides developmental room for our staff although increasingly we're looking to make the MA more of a revenue generating vehicle for externals. So mainly PgCert is my focus. I also get drawn into the HEA workshops that we run over the summer so we have a professional development room, we're HEA accredited or we're still waiting for our renewal so I'm hoping that by the time you transcribe this we'll still be HEA accredited. So we have the summer school four workshops fellowship, four workshops senior fellowship. And it's called the experiential route so it's not taught as such but it's about producing a portfolio of evidence. So I do some sessions on that. In terms of helping staff prepare their portfolios or case studies for senior fellowship. I've been helping them reflect on their practise really, much of what you do in the PGC but in a sort of compressed format.

T: I also do things like webinars, trying to generally raise awareness and good practise learning teaching across the university. While I was the learning technologist, I suppose the reason I ended up where I am is because I went through the cert at XXX in 2010-11 myself and through that it sort of, it was a bit of a light bulb moment as it is for quite a few people who go through it. Got me interested in research, and then stayed quite close to the course, provided tech support, but then sort of really understanding what it was trying to achieve and how it served the purposes in the institution but equally how it served the purposes of individuals going through it. And understanding that tension between the two. I tried to observe and learn as much as I can from a distance but now it's up to me to put it into practise really. So yeah it's exciting, it's a bit of a responsibility, but it feels like a logical next step.

Interviewer: In terms of the creative education aspect of it ...

T: Yes, so, as you're well aware, this was the question that came up in validation. I think we're still grappling with it a little bit. I suppose the easy answer which gets me out of jail is we've historically been an arts university, or creative arts I should say, and so product design, architecture, fashion etcetera. But we're broadening portfolios, so we've now got music technology and acting performance which aren't traditionally viewed as creative arts necessarily. At the very least, we've needed to address the creative arts education title to say that this is also for you people who aren't necessarily creative arts even though you're arts. It's all semantic.

- T: Going a bit deeper than that, I'm trying to take a lot of the good practise that I see in creative arts practises around how we deliver stuff, workshops, and there's the teaching scenario signature pedagogies that are characteristic of arts and creative arts. And just try to make them more accessible to a wider audience. I suppose as every year goes by I start to become a bit more confident in my own knowledge and passionate about the arts. I've never really been that passionate about the arts, it was always just a means to end for me, but having been exposed to people who are clearly doing great work, who often don't really know that they're doing great work, and also then combined with talking to colleagues from larger and [inaudible 00:04:38] institutions around some of their teaching practises that are into no way, no way ... can't really say no way, but in less creative from what I see in mine, I'm trying to export what we do a little bit more and consciously.
- T: What I'm trying to do is through the course hopefully enable people to come out confident in being creative with their teaching. You can interpret that in many ways. Just being confident in experimenting with a range of approaches to teaching, supporting learning, being confident in technology, being confident in iterating, so drawing on principles of creativity. Looking at what you can add, what you can take away, what you might change. So trying to close the gap a little bit between what I see as research into creativity, which is often over here on one side, waving his hand to the left, and research into learning which is sometimes over here. I'm trying to find a better crossover between the two. 'Cause I know at my institution, we're a university of creative arts, almost nowhere do I see creativity being taught. It's all intrinsic and embedded in what we do.
- T: I don't pretend to have the answers yet but I want to try and pull some of that out and make it more explicit so that people can see when they're being creative, help them to arrive at their own definition of creativity, and also be able to employ a bit more of a conscious approach to using accepted theories of creativity and approaches to creativity to help them iterate their teaching and change [inaudible 00:06:10]. So that's sort of where I'm going with creative education.
- Interviewer: You run a PgCert in creative education. I run a PgCert in higher education. Do you or any of your colleagues or people at your institution think that you are working with a very distinct pedagogic approach? Or is it more subtle than that?
- T: I think it is probably more subtle than that. I think we do a lot of work in the current version of PGC on signature pedagogies, so what other signature pedagogies of arts and there's a lot of workshop based stuff. There's a lot of experimental learning and producing, learning through making, I think it's possibly the learning through making aspect which is perhaps a bit more characteristic of us than perhaps what you get at other universities. But again that's a bit of a generalisation 'cause if you are a physicist, you're making something by bringing two things together so it is difficult to separate out exactly what makes us different. Perhaps you could say what makes us different is that we do less of perhaps what you see in large universities around the big lecture. We just don't do much of that. Most of our pedagogy is based around active learning, collaboration, and there is a lot of group work. A lot of making, learning through making. So it's not radically different, it's probably just the balance is more in that side of it than in the go to the lecture, learn something, learn through discussion and write something.

T: We try probably to push back against what we see as, we - general we - placing too much emphasis on writing. 'Cause we do have a higher percentage of students with disabilities than in the average sector. We work on about 20 to 25 percent with dyslexia I think so it's about double what the average is in the interdisciplinaries. And also our staff quality is body is 30% dyslexic at least. That is quite characteristic of what we do.

T: We have to just be conscious of that in learning design and in teacher ed. Trying not to say write 3,000 word critical reflection when actually you can make a video. It's those kind of nuances, those subtleties as you mentioned that perhaps we're just trying to foreground a bit more. It's not radically different than what you do here on your PGC but we're just trying to foreground more experimental, a broad range of approaches to evidence in learning possibly. Maybe that's-

Interviewer: That's great.

T: So yeah it is a bit nuanced.

Interviewer: Okay that's very good.

Interviewer: Before we talk about the specifics of the PgCerts, can you tell me broadly the role that observation of teaching and learning in any form takes at your institution. Is there a formal side to it? Does it work with probation, interviews? What about in terms of annual requirements, peer observation, that kind of thing.

T: Okay, just make a couple notes.

T: Since I've been there, we've always had some form of peer observation scheme. It was, when I arrived in 2009, it was called peer observation teaching. It was / is supposed to be mandatory. Everyone is supposed to do two peer observations per year and that's supposed to be logged by their line manager and recorded by HR. In reality, I don't think it ever happens. Certainly in HE it doesn't happen. In FE, because we have FE and HE, so we have FE at each of our four campuses, I would say they do more of it or have historically done more of it but there's still been no formal repository of it.

T: Fast forward to 2016 we had a new head of FE, had just arrived quite recently, probably last year actually and she's very convinced and very rightly so that we're about to be Ofsted. She's very concerned that we don't have any evidence of observation of teaching. There's a quite, you would say, a bit of a hive of activity around developing something which is actually in development at the moment. She's come in obviously from an FE background, from an FE college, has been tasked with getting us ready for Ofsted. A big part of that is evidencing peer observations so she's currently in the process of drafting a new form which will be creative observations. I think the idea is that they're gonna get staff to grade each other based on the four Ofsted characteristics. So that at least-

Interviewer: This is only for FE staff?

T: This is only for FE at the moment, yeah, so they get a sense of where they're at according to their FE scale and they can have a discussion around it. So that's FE; HE are supposed to have the same mandatory two peer observations as I

said it doesn't normally happen unless you got a line manager who particularly believes in it. Usually that's somebody who's gone through the Pg Cert and has taken it into their own practise.

T: In 2011, we had somebody, one of the academic developers was tasked with rebranding effectively. Based on research, I can't remember the name of the people who did the research, I'm sure you'll know looking at how to make it a more supportive process. So we consciously moved away from peer observation teaching to peer supported review. And she put together the policy around that, the forms, the procedure, and was tasked with basically piloting it. So piloting it with I think we've got seven schools so she was trying to work with heads of school to say what can we pilot this with your course, get your feedback. To try and show our staff body that we wanted it to be a supportive process.

T: It wasn't supposed to be a top-down evaluation of your teaching. It was very much meant to be a developmental process. That has persisted. So since that happened in 2011, we've had the PSR scheme ticking away in the background. Much like it's predecessor it's supposed to be mandatory. It's not. It's not enforced. Where it is enforced is on the PgCert so-

Interviewer: Before you get to that, can I just ask a few ... since you've been, your career at your institution has spanned both these experiences, do you get a sense of more positivity amongst colleagues for PSR than POT or is it roughly the same or the other way around?

T: It's hard for me to say 'cause I didn't really know what people's experience of POT was because it was being phased out as I was becoming aware of this. I would say that people who experience the PSR process, and I get to work with quite a few of those primarily through PGC, do find it very supportive. It's only a guess but the way in which our PSR scheme is portrayed and sold for want of a better word, it's difficult to not say it's supportive. I think you might go into it thinking oh I'm being observed and the two words are still used interchangeably: PSR, peer observation, but almost always people come out of it feeling that they got something positive from it. I think everyone's got preconceptions going into it but certainly, and what we do in HE, it's experienced as a positive process.

Interviewer: Another speculative question really: given that some of your staff will be working with both HE and FE simultaneously, and that you're working cheek by jowl, do you not think that there's a danger that the graded observations that are being introduced for FE are gonna somehow taint the preconceptions perhaps of PSR? Do you think it will have an impact? Or do you see them as being kept very separate?

T: I suppose two things. Firstly, interestingly, even though we've got FE and HE, they're quite separate. So we don't, if you're teaching in FE, you rarely get somebody who's teaching in FE and HE. The tutors tend to be FE or HE. It's the technicians who tend to span across both and we get quite a few technicians through our PGC so often they'll be working in FE and HE and they're the ones with the dual perspective. But a lot the tutors are, have their experience of either FE or HE. In terms of whether it will migrate or taint it, I can see if it worked in HE this sort of rebranded POT of actual teaching, firstly I can see it being imported into HE and only personal opinion but actually I don't think would be such a bad

thing because where we often struggle in my university is with things being mandatory.

T: Everyone's all like 'oh let's just leave it' and it's bit touchy feely, we don't want to upset anybody. Actually, because I know it to be a supportive process, I would have no problems with it being mandatory because I know that people would benefit from it and I don't feel that it would have a negative impact. I'm sure people would have negative impact thinking I've got to do a peer observation but actually having gone through it, I think those fears would probably be put to one side.

T: I think it arguably would benefit if it did sort of leak into HE a little bit. And if it were more clearly linked to HR policy, then certainly my boss at the moment, who's the head of learning teaching has been tasked with doing work around the nuances around where does it actually say that you have to do two peer observations a year and whose job is it to actually record that? Where does it go when we do these things? 'Cause it just doesn't get logged anywhere. I think it could happen and, in our context, I don't think that would be a bad thing because-

Interviewer: What about the Ofsted, now famously do not grade individual lessons, and they've been forced into that position by the weight of research evidence to suggest that grading lessons has a negative impact and yet your new person's coming in suggesting grading on old Ofsted criteria now 'cause they don't apply to individual lessons anymore. But presumably you still think that that would be an okay thing to do.

T: To be honest, I'm personally not a fan of graded observations. I think our PSR process is really supportive 'cause it's not graded. I can see why she is taking a graded route because I think she's new in post and she also feels I would imagine from conversations with her a need to get a general sense of where everyone's at. It'll be interesting to see how it goes. I can see how it would be useful for her. And also potentially for the staff to get a sense of where they are in terms of their performance and to have against, well against the Ofsted criteria I think they would probably benefit from being able to evaluate each other.

T: But again, going up against research, I think it's ... trying to think about whether it should be graded or not ... Again this is only personal opinion, I think our PSR scheme works because it's not graded, whether that would apply to FE or not, I don't know, remains to be seen I think. I don't have a problem with them grading each other, I think it's useful for people 'cause again when you're getting students to peer assess each other, they've got clear sense of criteria they're assessing against. I think that helps you understand what you're being evaluated on. But again-

Interviewer: This is just an aside [crosstalk 00:18:47]. I'm intrigued by this idea because you've got peers grading. What is the likelihood of anybody giving one of their peers anything other than a one or a two, the top two grades.

T: True. And I supposed that's probably what the research presumably goes back against is that you end up basically grading higher than you would ... no that's fair enough. So it would have to be an independent evaluation so not necessarily a peer observation.

Interviewer: Yes. And it becomes something completely different. It becomes an evaluation-

T: An evaluation of teaching. Yeah. No that's-

Interviewer: But that's kind of an aside and that's the FE backdrop but it's really interesting 'cause you have these two contexts together. That's why I'm interested. But I don't want to dwell on that too much.

T: Okay.

Interviewer: So we've got a very particular kind of institution. We've got that blend of HE and FE and we've got that seepage I suppose, a little bit, both ways potentially. Just to pull that all together then, how much do you think that the nature of the institution, according to those facets and others, informs the way that observation has evolved and is used? Or do you think it's just to do more with the individuals who are in the posts that have influence on it?

T: It's the culture isn't it. It's a bit of both I think. It's evolved organically, I don't think it's evolved with a particularly clear steer. When I came in to post 2009, we'd only just got university status and my boss then had been head of learning and teaching for about three years so she was trying to implement on all fronts really. I don't think we've been around long enough for these things to necessarily have been done in a particularly considered fashion. Possibly it's just other people do peer observations we should probably do some peer observations just so we've got a sense of quality in what we're doing.

T: But other than that I think it has evolved organically and it is down to the nature of individuals so if you get a head of school who is supportive of peer observation and gets it, generally they will push it down to their course leaders who will push it on to their staff and it starts to get some traction. If that person leaves, it tends to all dry up. So it is very based on what the individuals value. Probably more so than what the institution values 'cause the institution doesn't seem to be, it's not embedded in policy which I suppose it's in policy where the institution tends to learn these things if you believe in sort of organisational learning. So only when these things get formalised in writing policies that things actually change beyond the people who implement them. So yeah I think it is largely down to the beliefs of the individuals as to whether or not it gets traction.

## **Appendix 8: Interview schedules for ADs and subjects**

(post pilot revision)- AD questions are mapped to research questions

### Research Questions

1. How do Academic Developers conceptualise OTL for HE lecturer professional learning?
2. How are unorthodox approaches to OTL rationalised and structured and what facilitates or stifles OTL innovation and its sustainability?
3. In what ways and how effectively do unorthodox OTL approaches support HE lecturer professional learning?
4. In what ways and to what extent do unorthodox approaches to OTL overcome resistances and issues found in orthodox OTL systems?

### Prior to formal questions:

- Reiterate thanks
- Ask whether they have brought any OTL documentation with them
- State that the interview will last no longer than 1 hour
- Remind them of their right to withdraw
- Remind them of the recording process, transcription, data storage and destruction of recordings after the completion of the research cycle

- 
1. Background –professional and institutional- PRE-RECORDING
  2. Recording start: clarify specifics of role and thoughts about purpose of academic development aspects of role- responsibilities and nature of formal training delivered (context for RQ2)
  3. What role does observation (broadly) play at this institution? Where does it sit within the formal training? How has it changed over time? What are the pressures (drivers/ culture/ attitudes)? (RQ2)
  4. How much does the nature/ type of institution inform decisions about whether and how OTL is used? (RQ2)
  5. What are your personal views on the potential of all kinds of observation? (RQ1)
  6. Why have you (personally or as a team/ institution) adopted an atypical approach? (RQ1, RQ3)
  7. How much agency do you or other ADs have when it comes to deciding what approaches to take? (RQ1, RQ2)
  8. Please describe the process? (sub question: How are participants guided? How do you gauge whether intended approach is adhered to?) (RQ3)
  9. What are the intended objectives? (Sub question: How do you gauge whether these are being met? Do you have evidence of change/ transformation of practice?) (RQ3, RQ4)
  10. How does this system compare to your experience (or of concurrent) ‘conventional’ approaches? (RQ4)
  11. Success factors in your system? See handout (RQ4)
  12. What would/ will you change and why?
-

Close:

- Thank participants again
- Give them opportunity to ask questions
- Arrangements for Observation of OTL process
- Ask if follow up interview or emailed questions post observation would be possible
- Remind them of the draft report analysis section will be sent before submission
- Remind them that a final version will be available if they would like it
- Remind them once again that names and institutions will be anonymised.

Questions for OTL system participants and/ or mediators were developed from a consistent base:

1. Background –professional and institutional- PRE-RECORDING
2. Recording start: What motivated you to do the PGCert/ participate in this scheme? Were you aware of the [named scheme] element before starting?
3. What do you think was the rationale behind the [named scheme]? Overt and covert purposes? How is [scheme] different from POT/ other types of observation?
4. How well trained/ prepared were you/ the other people involved?
5. How many [observations/ aspects of the scheme] and breakdown- of what?
6. Talk me through one [scheme] ‘cycle’ that you went through (focussing on unorthodox elements) – compare with teaching obs if relevant
7. Benefits (actual + potential) for 1. You when observed 2. You when observing 3. People you observed ...institutionally? For students?
8. Issues and barriers? Should it continue/ change?
9. FOR LECTURERS only: How does it compare to other instances where you have been involved in observation (e.g. Peer observation)?

**Appendix 9: Success factors with responses from each case**

Success factors	PSR on PGCert HE at Obsidian University	'Extended Microteaching' at Sandstone University	Student Reviewers at Granite University
Are observers are trained?	When conducted by PGCert team members it's training via experience. For participants, there's an introduction to the process but no formal training.	Prepared rather than trained and this training through experience improves a the week progresses	Yes
Are observers either experienced/ qualified teachers; or do they have subject specific expertise/ pedagogic expertise?	This depends on who is reviewer or reviewee but there is no stipulation	No	No
Is the precise purpose of the observation system discussed with participants?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are pre-meetings part of the process?	Not necessarily	No	Yes
Does observee have degree of choice/ negotiable aspects (eg. About what is observed, when it happens)?	Yes	Yes on topic but no on time and other logistical considerations	Yes
Do they occur more than once for each OTL 'subject'?	Yes	Yes, integral to design	Yes
Are observation 'events' connected- i.e. content/ discussion related to each is not isolated?	No (deliberately so)	Yes, also integral to design	Yes
Does it have <b>no</b> grading or pass/ fail aspect?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is it designed to be non-judgmental?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is feedback encouraged that is dialogic rather than directive?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is reflection encouraged/ supported (rather than assuming it will happen)?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is reporting constrained to within the parties involved and the CPD/ programme organisers?	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there scope and support for connecting what is observed to pedagogic theory?	Yes	Yes	A little if self-directed

**Appendix 10: summary of data collection methods by case**

Case	AD Interview	Process docs	Live obs.	'Observation' of outputs and participant discussions	Other data
Pilot	Yes	Yes	Yes	3 x informal conversations with same observed lecturer	2 x e-mail responses by OTL participants
One	Yes	Yes	No	5 x recorded and transcribed interviews with OTL participants (3 online; 2 face to face)	e-mail exchanges with AD at member at two member checking stages
Two	Yes (x2)	Yes	Yes	3 x informal conversations with OTL participants plus two informal conversations with 2 x other ADs	As above
Three	Yes	Yes	No	2 x recorded, transcribed semi-structured interviews with student observers and 1x semi-structured interview with lecturer observee	2 x responses to email questions from student reviewers and 1 x e mail response to questions from lecturer (subject of student reviewer project)

I conducted a (simultaneous) interview with the lead AD on the PGCert and the ADU Head of Department at a fifth institution and was given access to course documentation and observation forms and guidance. As a case it interested me in particular because of their high rankings amongst non-Russell Group institutions. Their PGCert includes a PSR option but I found during the interview that it is very rarely taken, that more broadly the OTL on the PGCert was highly evaluative and that accessing samples or co-observing was problematic. For these reasons, I have not included any of the data in the findings as, despite my hopes and initial suppositions, the ethos did not fit the developmental paradigm that was a prerequisite for inclusion. It has, nevertheless, shaped my wider understanding and could form the basis of further research.

## **Appendix 11: Participant information sheet**

Rethinking teaching observation in HE: Case studies in divergent approaches to observation for professional learning

### **Information for participants**

Thank you for taking time to review this guidance sheet. In it you will find information on the purpose of the research, how it will be structured, what will be asked of you and what the outcomes are likely to be. It focusses on the professional learning of academics and, in particular, on the use of 'divergent' types of observation or peer review type activities as a tool for developing approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in higher education. Here 'divergent' refers to observation processes that deliberately eschew the conventional expert/mentor observation of teaching using an agreed feedback template followed by formal feedback.

### **Why is this research being undertaken?**

██████████ is a Senior Lecturer in Learning, Teaching and Professional Development at the ██████████ but is undertaking this research as part of his Doctorate in Education through UCL (Institute of Education).

The study has the following aims:

- To investigate alternative models of observation/ peer review as a tool for professional learning and the roles, agency and rationale of academic/ educational developers (and their equivalents) in instigating/ designing and/ or supporting these activities.
- To examine the processes in action and examine each in terms of perceived effectiveness and utility

### **Who will be taking part?**

I will be seeking academic / educational developer participants from any UK based Higher Education Institution who support or deliver formal training (in pedagogy) for those with teaching roles. In particular I am interested in instances where the more conventional approaches to observation either sit alongside a divergent approach or where the conventional approaches are not used. (conventional here means mentor, 'expert' or peer observe a lecturer-usually in a teaching situation, complete a form and then feed back). I will be interviewing those who manage and/ or instigate these divergent approaches and would also like to observe one or more occasions where the approach is used. Or, if more relevant to the approach, the outputs of one or more instances of that approach when applied and/ or interview those who have participated in the process.

### **What will happen during the research?**

Interviews:

If you agree to an interview, the interviewer will meet you online or at a location convenient to you and the initial process will take no more than 1 hour. The interview will be recorded and subsequently parts of it will be transcribed. The anonymised findings will be analysed and reported according to themes. A follow up interview or electronic exchange may also be requested for clarifications.

After the interview/s you will be sent a copy of all transcribed elements of your interview to ensure accuracy of both transcription and intended meaning. Alternatively, you may wish for this

to be done in person. As stated above, all participants can change their mind about involvement at any time and withdraw from the process at any stage prior to the completion to the report.

#### Observations:

If you have agreed (as either mediator/ observer or observee/ peer review 'subject') I will sit in on a session where the alternative observation approach is used, take some field notes and, if relevant and convenient, ask some questions about your experiences on an informal basis after the session.

#### **What happens to the research findings?**

The findings will be presented in a doctoral thesis which will be submitted as the capstone of [REDACTED] doctoral study. Elements may be used as the focal point for publication and wider dissemination. Full copies will be available to all participants.

#### **What are the benefits of this study?**

You may benefit from articulating your ideas about broader ideas around observation as used for the development of lecturers in HE and the rationale and your understanding of the approach in your 'case'. You may also find wider information shared as part of the process useful as a reflective lens through which to interrogate your own practice.

It is hoped that findings of this study when disseminated will inform design, role and management of observations in their many forms (including the conventional) across the HE sector. As you are no doubt aware, the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) will likely seek new qualitative measures to monitor or judge 'teaching excellence' and it is possible that observations will become a larger part of the HE lecturing and CPD experience. Your perceptions and experiences have additional value and pertinence in that context and may contribute to ongoing debate around quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms in HE.

#### **Who will know that you have been in the research?**

Only you and the researcher, [REDACTED] and, for observations, those in attendance will know. The research supervisors at UCL- Institute of Education only receive anonymised transcripts of the interviews. All notes and documents relating to the research process will be kept securely. No names of either institution or people involved will be used. Once transcribed, the audio recordings of interviews will be securely stored and destroyed at the end of the research cycle. No recordings will be made during the observations.

#### **Ethical approval**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the [REDACTED] and also approved by the Research Ethics Committee at UCL's *Institute of Education* and conforms to *British Educational Research Association* Guidelines. Copies of these guidelines are available at:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011>

For more information or to address any questions or concerns you may have, please contact the researcher, [contact and supervisor details removed]

**Thank you once again for your help**

**Appendix 12: Consent: Interviewees**

Title of research: Rethinking teaching observation in HE: Case studies in divergent approaches to observation for professional learning

I ..... have read the information leaflet about this research project and agree to the following:

- My interviews with [REDACTED] for this research will be recorded for the purposes of accuracy.
- That the data will be transcribed into anonymised extracts and the Institute of Education supervisors may have access to these for discussion and quality control purposes as they are required to read and assess the report
- Any report on this data will be presented totally anonymised.
- I have the right to withdraw at any time from the research and can also stop the audio recording of their interview at any time.
- I can withdraw my comments at any time before the research project has been presented.
- the audio recordings of the interviews will be destroyed on completion of the research cycle
- Copies of both transcribed extracts and relevant sections from the report/s will be made available to me

Signature:  
Date:

**Researcher details:**  
[REDACTED] is a part time doctoral candidate on the EdD. programme at UCL - Institute of Education and is a Senior Lecturer in Learning, Teaching and Professional Development at [REDACTED]  
*E-mail:* [REDACTED]  
*Tel:* [REDACTED]

I have discussed the research with the above named participant and answered any further questions.

Name: [REDACTED]

Signature:

Date:

**Appendix 13: Consent: Observations**

Title of research: Rethinking teaching observation in HE: Case studies in divergent approaches to observation for professional learning

I ..... have read the information leaflet about this research project and agree to the following:

- [redacted] will use fieldwork notes and sketches to record his observations of the process of observation/ peer review activity and notes of any informal discussions after the observation.
- That the data will be used as anonymised extracts and will inform the construction of 'activity diagrams'. Only [redacted] and the Institute of Education supervisors will have access to the field notes.
- Any report on this data will be presented totally anonymised.
- I have the right to withdraw at any time from the research and can also stop the observation at any time.
- I can withdraw my comments at any time before the research project has been presented.
- the field work notes will contain no personal identification details and will be destroyed on completion of the research cycle
- Copies of relevant sections from the report/s will be made available

Signature:  
Date:

**Researcher details:**  
[redacted] is a part time doctoral candidate on the EdD. programme at UCL - Institute of Education and is a Senior Lecturer in Learning, Teaching and Professional Development at [redacted]  
*E-mail:* [redacted]  
*Tel:* [redacted]

I have discussed the research with the above-named participant and answered any further questions.

Name: [redacted] Signature:  
Date:

	<p>used to have our own vivas which is really a developmental conversation on the portfolios. They would always talk about the value of what they've gotten, that kind of thing.</p> <p>367 PD Manager 2: And it's formative isn't it? And then it builds towards a summative debrief when they'll have that conversation with us after they've done the observation. So, that's when we I guess we really know what's worked and what hasn't. It won't be necessarily in a linear.... [inaudible].</p> <p>368 Interviewer: So, would it be fair to say then that in your own minds it doesn't sit separately as an entity it is the gateway to everything else?</p> <p>369 PD Manager 1: Yes, it's an integrated part of that week isn't it? It's to try to get them into the habit of being comfortable about being observed but also observing others and...</p> <p>370 PD Manager 2: It's a teaching and learning activity. It's a formative assessment, it's an opportunity for formative feedback and it leads into, in a very general sense, that the more formal assessments but we don't usually flag, "Oh and this is to get you ready for your sort of thing." We might mention it in passing.</p> <p>371 PD Manager 1: By the time they've gone and done that, however many they do for whichever module you want to call it because I'm confused, they've already had a positive peer to peer observation experience three times that week. So, when they come to do it, with each other, then I've done that</p>

## **Appendix 15: Start codes**

### **1. Professional learning & lecturer development**

- a) Motives/ outcomes
- b) Quality of teaching
- c) Qualifications and achievements
  - i. Fellowship
  - ii. PGCert
  - iii. Internal recognition

### **2. Institutional Culture**

- a) Teaching
- b) Research
- c) Academic developer role

### **3. Observation**

- a) Purposes/ motives
- b) Mediation
- c) Tensions
- d) Anxiety
- e) Resistance
- f) Sustainability
- g) Outcomes
- h) Impediments
- i) Success factors

### **4. Mediation/ mediators**

- a) Relationships
- b) Power dynamics

### **5. Processes**

- a) Structure
- b) Rules
- c) Tools
- d) Resourcing
- e) Training
- f) Support

### **6. Impact**

- a) Change
- b) Cascading

## **Appendix 16: Final codes**

<b>Code Category</b>	<b>Sub-codes</b>
<b>Institution</b>	<b>'Russell group', teaching and learning, hierarchies, mandating, cynicism, quality assurance, quality enhancement, student voice, research</b>
<b>Professional learning &amp; CPD</b>	<b>Accreditation, recognition, autonomy, inclusion and exclusion, costs, priorities, voluntarism, compulsion</b>
<b>Academic Developer Values &amp; Orientations</b>	<b>Passion, agency, profile of teaching, connecting teaching and research, 'professional muse'</b>
<b>Observation rationale</b>	<b>'another pair of eyes', reflection, praxis, dialogue, collegiality, baseline competencies, confidence &amp; self-efficacy, observer learning, scaffolding, 'bad' teaching, partnerships, enhancement, drivers, assessment</b>
<b>Observation rules and tools</b>	<b>Feedback, risk, choice &amp; options, guidance, roles, conversation &amp; dialogue, pedagogy, reflection</b>
<b>Mediators</b>	<b>Training, motivation, incentives, power dynamics</b>
<b>Observees</b>	<b>Vulnerability &amp; anxiety, judgement</b>
<b>OTL outcomes</b>	<b>Change, transformation, collegiality, trust, sustainability, transferability, wider impact, cascading, reporting</b>

## Appendix 17: PSR Planning and prompts

A1: Describe the activity to be reviewed:

- Explain to your reviewer: - what you want them to review and which PSR Guide you would like them to use for the review (you should use the same guide to plan your session/produce the material to be reviewed)
  - why you have selected this activity for review
  - provide relevant contextual information

A2: Reviewer's notes and questions

**The Reviewer has to do three main things:**

**First:** *watch* - workshop, studio session, lecture, seminar, tutorial, student presentations, crit;  
**or read** - handouts, learning materials, unit handbook, unit brief, session plan, feedback.

If it's a taught session, then you need to place yourself somewhere with a clear view, particularly of the students, avoid eye contact with anyone and **describe** the session focussing on what you have been asked to concentrate on.

If it's looking at documents, then you need to find a suitable place to read them. It is a good idea to make notes.

**Second:** provide accurate, non-judgmental feedback. Here are two examples:

*After a review of a teaching session:* **Do** report if you saw students spending a lot of session looking at their phones but **don't** turn this into a judgment that students weren't motivated to learn.

*After a review of documents:* **Do** report if you find it difficult to understand what the reviewee has written, but **don't** say that it is poorly written.

**Third:** ask questions which will enable the reviewee to think about this part of their practice in a different way. Focus on what it is they have asked you to concentrate on, although you can also go beyond this if you think it will be helpful (e.g. if you think there is an aspect they have overlooked). You can use the relevant Guide to help you pose your questions.

**Throughout:** you are trying to help the reviewee think deeply about their practice, but not judge them.

Reviewer's notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Review carried out by: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Review: \_\_\_\_\_

### A3: Post Review Reflections

This is the most important part of the review and is to be completed by both Reviewer and Reviewee . Write a reflective statement below that captures your engagement in the review.

Reflect on (examples below):

- the discussion you had either during or after the review
- the questions you asked/were asked
- what did you discover or learn?
- what thoughts/ideas did you have at the time of the review or later on?
- how do you plan to move your practice forward in light of the review?

*Reflective Commentary:*

A4: Capture the actions you are planning post review

1.

2.

3.

and so on

### ***Appendix 18: Sample questions from PSR Guide to reviewing materials***

- Would students be clear about how they are to use the learning materials?
- Would there be opportunities to make sure all students would understand the materials?
- Would students have opportunities to discuss the content?
- Does the content appear to have been kept up to date?
- Would the format used be inclusive (e.g. use of sans-serif typeface, minimum of 11 point for type and 24 point for PowerPoint slides, coloured background/paper etc.).
- Is the content inclusive? Does it offer a range of examples used to include all ages, ethnicities, genders and the LGBT community etc.?
- Is language development supported? For example will students be provided with a glossary of terms?

## **Appendix 19: Guidance on first Microteaching at Sandstone**

Read both pages of this document **before** you start work

### **By the end of this activity you will have:**

- Taught a four-minute session to one or two peers
- Received feedback on your teaching from your peers
- Given feedback to your peers about their teaching

### **Stage 1: Preparing your four-minute teaching session (15 minutes)**

1. Select a key concept or idea that you can teach to your peers in a four-minute teaching session without visual aids (ie: no PowerPoint, whiteboard, laptop).
2. Plan your teaching session taking account of:
  - Learner needs and characteristics
  - Learning outcomes - you need at least one (write it down and keep it for the week)
  - Session structure
  - Staging/scaffolding & sequencing the information/activities
  - Timing: remember you have no more than four minutes and will be stopped if you go over your time

You might find it useful to write some brief notes (key points) to support you while you teach. Do not be tempted to write out what you plan to say word for word and then try to memorise it – you will be teaching a session NOT giving a speech.

### **Practice teaching your session (5 minutes)**

Have a trial run through your session (information/ activities) by yourself in your mind or out loud. This will help you identify potential issues e.g. timing, the level of detail required etc.

### **Teaching your four-minute session (4 minutes teaching + 4 minutes feedback)**

- You will be divided into small groups (maximum 3 people)
- You will teach your group for four minutes and then receive oral feedback from your peers about your teaching (3-4 minutes)  
Remember to show them your learning outcome before you start (please keep it)
- This process will be repeated for each group member
- A timekeeper will start and stop each part of the activity to ensure that delivery and feedback times are strictly adhered to

### **Feedback criteria**

The criteria are designed to provide a framework for providing focussed **oral feedback**. Note that we are not using full assessment criteria because this is not related to a credit-bearing assessment.

### **How to give feedback**

There will be four minutes (maximum) for feedback after each teaching session. There are five aspects to provide feedback about. Audience members should allocate the first four aspects (below) among themselves for each teaching session to enable them to focus on particular aspects to feedback on (instead of trying to feedback on all aspects). These should be reallocated after each feedback session to ensure that each person has the

opportunity to practice giving feedback on all aspects. Feedback on the Learning Outcome/s should be provided by all members of the audience (learners).

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Voice</b>	Production - clear and audible and understandable Expression - modulation and rhythm
<b>Non-verbal communication</b>	Use of eye contact Body language (e.g. use of gestures, stance)
<b>Structure, sequencing &amp; scaffolding</b>	Clarity of session structure Sequencing - ease of following ideas and activities from beginning to end Staging/scaffolding - building on activities or ideas from the previous ones
<b>Pace and timing</b>	Speed of delivery of activities or ideas to suit learners Effective session delivery within the specified timeframe.
<b>Learning outcome/s</b>	Learning Outcome achieved for you as a learner? If not, why not (what would have helped you?).

#### **Tips for giving feedback**

- Be specific and use the criteria
- Concentrate on points not person
- Be positive about things to continue
- ....and be specific about how to improve/move forward

#### **What is good feedback\***

1. Clarifies good performance
2. Helps close the gap between current and desired performance
3. Gives high quality information
4. Helps students to assess themselves
5. Encourages students to talk about their work
6. Motivates students
7. Leads to useful information for teachers

\*Adapted from: Nicol, D. J. & Macfarlane-Dick, D. (2006). 'Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: a model and seven principles of good feedback practice.' *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(2), 199-218.

## **Appendix 20 Preparing a 15-minute teaching session guidance (Sandstone)**

- Select a key concept or idea that you can teach to your peers in a 15-minute teaching session without visual aids (ie: no PowerPoint, whiteboard, laptop). The choice of topic is up to you.
- Use the Session Plan Template (from the Day 2 Workshop, available on MOLE) to help you plan and record your intentions and consider potential challenges in advance of teaching.
- Plan a 15-minute teaching session which:
  - Has two learning outcomes (minimum)
  - Takes account of a range of learning styles and preferences
  - Is structured, sequenced & scaffolded
  - Includes interaction with the audience
  - Includes a learning activity
  - Includes a way of monitoring or evaluating student learning
  - Acts on any feedback received from the VoiceWorks and the first Peer Teaching and Feedback sessions

Timing: remember you have no more than 15 minutes and will be stopped if you go over your time. You might find it useful to write some brief notes (key points) to support you while you teach. Do not be tempted to write out what you plan to say word for word and then try to memorise it – you will be teaching a session NOT giving a speech.

Have a trial run through your session (information/activities) by yourself out loud. This will help you identify potential issues e.g. timing, the level of detail required etc.

### **The Workshop**

**By the end of the session you will have:**

- Taught a 15-minute session to at least two peers
- Received feedback on your teaching from your peers
- Drafted some written feedback to practice your written feedback skills (not to share)
- Given oral feedback to your peers about their teaching

### **Teaching your 15-minute session**

**(15 minutes teaching + 5 minutes drafting written feedback + 6 minutes oral feedback)**

- You will be divided into small groups (maximum 4 people)
- You will teach your group for 15 minutes; remember to show them your learning outcome/s before you start
- Your 'students' will then spend five minutes drafting feedback using the Feedback Form and you will complete a self-evaluation form during this time
- You will then receive oral feedback from your peers about your teaching which will be based on their written feedback (4-6 minutes)  
This process will be repeated for each group member
- A timekeeper will start and stop each part of the activity to ensure that delivery and feedback times are strictly adhered to