

**Thesis: Doctor in Education (EdD)**

**UCL Institute of Education**

**University College London**

**Exploring professional development for older  
workers in the higher education workplace.**

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**Thesis submitted for the award of Doctor in  
Education (EdD).**

I, Domini Maria Bingham 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**

This study of one UK university, concerned four related issues of flourishing, empowerment, potential alienation and inequality of professional older workers in a higher education setting, relative to their professional development. The study identified what is required to support sustained and extended working lives.

The lifting of the default retirement age in the UK, rising life expectancy and increasing numbers of older workers spotlight the phenomena of extended working lives, the place of older workers, their engagement and professional learning needs.

This thesis explored perceptions of older workers regarding their professional development and learning in professional roles in a UK higher education institution, together with what development was considered valuable by both staff and management.

An interpretative case study methodology, using a dual approach of survey and semi-structured interviews with staff and management, probed what was happening in a little-understood situation in a university environment.

This critical study built on a conceptual framework which regarded older workers as agentic and able to contribute as well as receive, while recognizing that older workers look to develop lifelong skills beyond the workplace. Workplace learning was seen from a broad, holistic life course perspective to include career progression. Forms of professional development, offering a 'best fit' to continue an effective working life of benefit to employer and employee, were explored.

The main contribution of the thesis was to generate new perspectives about what was valued by professional staff and management in terms of the learning and

professional development of older workers; the implications of what was valued and what it was to be engaged in professional development at a Higher Education Institution (HEI) as an older worker. It recommended strategic responses of interest to broader workplace settings into what supported older workforce retention. The research findings will be of benefit to academic research, policy-makers and practitioners.

## **Acknowledgements**

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## **Reflective statement**

### **Personal and professional interest as an education practitioner**

It has taken me a lifetime of work and study to have reached the point of submission of my EdD thesis. The areas researched over the course of the EdD programme reflect both my personal and professional interest and my experience in the focus of study, and as an education practitioner. I have held two identities for the duration of the EdD programme, firstly as a research student on a post-graduate research programme, where by necessity I have been a professional, and in my day to day work place working in higher education, firstly as a quasi-professional/academic practitioner, and more recently, shifting my identity to become a full member of the academic staff. As a part of this identity, the research experience undertaken throughout the course of the EdD has translated directly into my teaching and supervision of students on masters dissertations, and on a distance learning programme, hosted through the University of London.

Two threads have been a constant through my work: exploring barriers to learning through intercultural education for young people, and wellbeing for adults in educational settings. My 2010 research submission proposal for the EdD programme identified my enduring interest in these two areas.

I had started researching the former in a school prior to commencing the EdD, having been a London Education Research Unit (LERU) research fellow, and it formed the basis of my assignment for the specialist EdD programme. The area of intercultural education, was in turn, influenced by my employment at the Commonwealth Secretariat, and as a continuing member of the Commonwealth Association. I subsequently presented my research in this area at several international conferences including the Institute of Education (IOE)/Beijing Normal University conference in Beijing, China in 2012. I was a visiting teaching fellow at the University of Paris Quest Nanterre, with which I established an Erasmus institutional link, and at the Catholic University of Paris.

I first became interested in barriers to learning as an education practitioner when teaching in the field of adult education at the Westminster Adult Education Centre, London. Arriving at the Institute of Education in 2006, I took the opportunity to

complete a Masters in Lifelong Learning. I had previously commenced a MEd in Information Communications Technology (ICT) and Learning at the University of Aberdeen, through distance learning, several years earlier. However, family responsibilities as a single mother had to take precedence, so I had to defer. Such responsibilities and barriers to my own learning though were invaluable experiences in alerting me to the multiple barriers to learning experienced by adults. This concern also resulted in my putting myself forward as student representative for Year 1 and Year 2 EdD. As student faculty representative for the Faculty of Children and Learning at the IOE, I gained valuable insights into the way the doctoral programme was run. This role allowed me to network with academic and student committees. Researching and studying wellbeing through the EdD, opened further opportunities in the workplace in co-leading or leading modules in the masters programmes in my department, and publishing around teacher wellbeing, and leading for wellbeing in schools. I presented my work at several conferences. I gave a presentation to members of a national teaching union in 2016, followed by workshops on improving workplace wellbeing. I have been invited to become a committee member of Education Support Partnerships, which advocates nationally in the UK for teacher wellbeing, to solve the recruitment and retention crisis in teaching.

### **The EdD programme and my learning**

The first module of the EdD programme, Foundations of Professionalism, was an exploration of the meaning of professionalism and what it meant to be a professional, which was valuable learning, and I discovered the difficulties of discerning meanings of professionalism in my own work at times of shifting professional identities. The assignment focused on issues of professionalism for leading wellbeing for the school workforce in London. The area of professionalism in higher education, which was explored in this module, has been carried forward to the final thesis. The module feedback was positive but mentioned the discipline of sticking to the title to ensure coherency.

Teacher wellbeing and the impact on learning was the topic of exploration for the assignment for Methods of Enquiry 1 module (MOE1). The feedback for this module was positive but as a result of that feedback I realized that I had been rather over-

ambitious in scope and that I should consider how the theoretical perspectives I proposed worked together.

I switched tack for the Methods of Enquiry 2 module (MOE2), as it became clear that my curiosity into researching intercultural education was enduring, and I wished to build on my earlier research. Thus, I made the decision to move forward with the MOE2 focused on this topic area, which had also formed the basis of the fourth assignment – the initial Specialist course. This fourth assignment focused on intercultural education, and I conducted research in an urban London secondary school with a high level of English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. It resulted in several presentations at conferences. This module focused on research processes and skills, and allowed me to develop my research skills both theoretically in methodological understandings, and in the application of the research process. I have also been able to put the learning into practice as I was invited to co-lead on the Doing and Using Research Methods module our department runs, which I was involved with over the ensuing two years. I also was also part of a team researching into a funded project, focused on the cultural curriculum in several London primary and secondary schools.

My continuing interest in intercultural education was consolidated by the Institution Focused Study (IFS). Here, I needed to explore an institution other than my own, so I chose the London based Royal Commonwealth Society (of which I was a member), in which to locate a study around notions of intercultural citizenship for young people. The grade and feedback on this module were disappointing, and the feedback was somewhat critical of my theoretical understandings, of the small sample size, and of not being sufficiently transparent over the research process itself.

Nevertheless, this disappointment represented a further learning curve for me in that I should pay much more attention to being explicit and detailed about how I conducted my research study for this final thesis.

At each stage of the EdD, the formative feedback was supportive and I endeavoured to incorporate it into the final submission. The face to face sessions with my supervisors helped me to build on my work, introducing different facets into my work. At times in the thesis, I have struggled not to introduce more perspectives but to develop my argument around and across perspectives to support the research

questions posed. This is an area I will continue to work on in my writing and research.

I have returned to researching the workplace for the final thesis component of the EdD programme. I already held an interest in the higher education landscape. I had previously researched into higher education from an internationalization perspective, focused on the centre in which I work, as an assignment for a module in the MA Lifelong Learning, where I had received an A grade. The work resulted in published conference proceedings from presenting at an international conference at the University of J. J. Strossmayer, Osijek, Croatia. Having a focus on older workers for the thesis, allowed me to explore what I have come to see as an aspect of wellbeing, that of having the capability for wellbeing as an older worker through learning.

### **Conclusion and how the programme has contributed to my professional development and knowledge**

In reaching the culmination of doctoral research and study, a thread that I mentioned in my EdD proposal has endured, relating to a political interest in my research, for those who could be marginalized having the opportunity to play a role as active citizens. The IFS study considered the conditions necessary for a democratic education, giving young people a right to a stake in their society, and to have the structures in place to realize this stake. I see a link to my work, and in my world view, for spaces for voice emphasized through Habermas's theories of communicative action. This observation was reinforced when recognizing that wellbeing and realizing one's potential raises issues of social justice, which has been an enduring theme in my study and research, across the modules of the EdD programme and before.

There is no doubt that undertaking a programme of such duration and depth has changed me professionally and my career aspirations. Through my doctoral studies, I have developed my research capability and grown in confidence as a researcher. I have been involved in research projects for the centre in which I work, the London Centre for Leadership and Learning, Institute of Education, UCL, over the course of my time on the EdD programme and I am currently evaluating a research project on using research evidence in schools.



The contribution of the thesis to my professional and career development lies in its impact on my academic and professional journey, as I seek to develop excellence in my career as a higher education academic. The thesis, as the final piece of work in the EdD programme, has extended my research interests, and I am struck by the multi-disciplinary nature, and growing complexity of workplace learning. Through writing the thesis, I feel that I have begun to develop a niche area of research interest around older workers, and their professional development and learning, which is potentially exciting in terms of my professional and career development. Indirectly, writing the thesis, and immersing myself in the topic of older workers, has had a significant impact on my own career development, by giving me the renewed confidence, encouragement and sense of personal agency to continue advancing my career as an older worker.

I now have more confidence in my ability as a researcher, and am open to methodological paradigms that I have not yet explored. I am more comfortable in conducting data analysis than at the start of the thesis. However, I understand more fully the importance of being nuanced in claims regarding the importance of my research findings.

My writing skills have developed further and I have worked hard to introduce more clarity and coherence in the arguments I want to make, although I have more work to do. I have improved my editorial skills being more punctilious over my writing.

In terms of future steps, I am interested in further articulating what older workers' learning looks like in times of demographic change, and how to bring marginalized workers into the workplace. I have been commissioned to translate my thesis into a book to be published by Routledge in 2017, so that I can disseminate my work more widely. I also wish to continue my study and research into teacher wellbeing and leading for wellbeing.

The EdD has broadened my perspectives, more than I could have imagined, and I have developed a much more critical stance in questioning education and policy. This sense of criticality has come to the fore in my volunteer role as a primary school governor, faced with government reform of assessment, where new models replace National Curriculum levels, a reform resulting in excessive teacher workloads. The

role has opened my eyes to the government's thrust to codify governors' professionalism - a research area that interests me.

Completing the EdD programme, and learning the skills and processes of what it is to be an academic researcher, means that I am now better placed to understand and influence further developments in the areas I have outlined as being of future research interest.

## Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis explored the professional development of professional staff in higher education (HE) in the UK for those categorized as older workers. An older worker is defined as aged 50+ by the Office for National Statistics (ONS 2012).

This chapter introduced the UK context associated with government regulation and policies related to age. Next, consideration of the demographic challenge and employability of older workers was considered together with classification and definition of older workers. The significance, purpose and aims of the research were discussed. Finally, the rationale for study, leading to the research questions, was set out. The thesis structure completed this first chapter.

The research was set against a changing backdrop where until recently receipt of the state pension in the UK was considered the retirement norm. The lifting of the former default retirement age (DRA) of 65, rising life expectancy and demographic change has thrown a spotlight on extended working lives and professional learning needs. Evidence has pointed to significant numbers of employees wanting longer individual work lives, into and beyond their 50s and 60s, and there is some interest from employers, due to skills shortages, in encouraging older workers to continue in paid employment longer (DWP 2012). The sampled organization was a specialist university.

This thesis raised questions and produced tentative responses to development and training related to changing demography, a research issue identified by the European Commission in its report (EU 2012) on adult education trends and approaches, raising the role of older workers in today's workplaces. As it has been argued that 'suddenly older workers are being regarded as important prospective members of the labour force' (Mayo 2011:xiv), more innovative work practices and learning measures for older workers are required, which can be supported by bringing forward their voice and utilizing their initiative (EAEA 2012). This thesis used the term 'pragmatic' to indicate concern for the practicable, and provide a realistic and acceptable resolution for all parties (Chambers 1993). The term was employed to ask practical questions as to what types of professional development work best or are most effective for *both* employee and employer in the context I explored.

The study explored perceptions of older workers' learning and professional development and the value of professional development to older professional staff and management. It was set against the context of an ageing population where those of an older age make up an increasing share of the population. Also examined, were opportunity structures, how an older workers' society, which Laslett (1991:2) refers to as a 'fresh map of life' for older people, is organized or structured and affects an individual's life chances or ability to gain certain goods or meet certain goals. These structures were considered lacking in terms of support to enable the integration of older populations into societal institutions, such as the workplace and education. There was a limited blueprint of what an ageing future should look like, and where ageing was predominantly seen as a loss or decline rather than as an opportunity (Moody and Sasser 2012). Raising the statutory age at which workers can retire has become an important measure for increasing participation among older workers in the labour market (EU 2012).

### **The UK context**

The UK Equality Act (2010) provides specific protection regarding:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment/identity
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The UK population is growing, and becoming increasingly older. Ageing refers to population ageing, and increasing numbers of people reaching older age. By 2020, those aged 50+ will comprise 32% of the workforce (ONS 2012). By 2035, those

aged 65+ will account for 23% of total population, while the proportion aged between 16 and 64, is projected to fall from 65% to 59 %.

Not only are there rising numbers of older people, but the House of Lords ‘Ready for Ageing?’ report (2013:7) advised that the UK is ‘woefully underprepared for ageing’:

- there will be 51% more people aged 65 and over in England in 2030 compared to 2010;
- 10.7 million people in Great Britain can currently expect inadequate retirement incomes;
- there will be over 50% more people with three or more long-term conditions in England by 2018 compared to 2008;
- there will be over 80% more people aged 65 and over with dementia (moderate or severe cognitive impairment) in England and Wales by 2030 compared to 2010.

### **Changing attitudes for extended working lives**

The House of Lords report (2013) emphasized the necessity of changing attitudes to older workers in ageing populations:

Employers need to be much more positive about employing older workers... Employers should demonstrate more flexibility towards the employment of older workers, and help them to adapt, re-skill and gradually move to more suitable roles and hours when they want to do so. (Ready for Ageing 2013:7).

A Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) Managing Age report, written in the same year as the DRA was abolished, considered that:

Operating without a fixed retirement age is likely to require a substantial change in attitude to how older workers are viewed and how the issue of retirement is approached. (2011:5)

In tandem with ageing populations, the working population is working longer (ONS 2012). The ageing of the workforce and the issue of pensions is a key area for government policy. Average UK life expectancy at birth was 78.2 in 2010 (ONS 2013), and increasing, albeit with huge variations. Later retirement to reduce pension costs will result in many staying on at work well into their 60s and 70s.

## **Increasing employability, underemployment, and increasing employment and retention of older workers**

Policy responses are necessary to address three inter-related areas of concern: participation of older people in the workforce linked to withdrawal from the job market, underemployment of older workers, and policies to increase employment and retention.

Of concern, is the rise in inactive people to those working, projected to increase to 70% of the populations of OECD countries by 2050, which includes the UK, if there was no change in work and retirement patterns. This would reduce GDP per capita in OECD countries to 1.7% per annum over the next thirty years, a reduction of 30% from 1970-2000 (OECD 2006).

The 'Work Longer, Live Longer' report (OECD 2006) of 21 member countries, which includes data from the UK, argued for an overhaul of employment and social policies, practices and attitudes to encourage work at an older age. This is at a time when there has been a significant decline in the prime working age population, defined as between ages 25 and 54, evidenced from an analysis of 20 labour market indicators of over 200 countries (ILO 2003). In the UK, between April and June 2012, 29% of the working population, representing 8.4 million workers, were aged 50+ (Gov UK 2012).

A country's national policy context strongly affects the participation of older workers in the labour market, and their retirement decisions. Particularly relevant, are pensions, employment protection legislation, wage policies, and occupational and wider health care provision. Other factors are of significance.

Several factors accounted for reduction in and withdrawal from the labour market including skills obsolescence and choosing not to take up roles at variance with personal value systems, e.g. looking for a better work life balance to concentrate on health or family. However, research considered that discriminatory attitudes and beliefs are the main barriers to the labour force retention of older workers (EU 2012:17).

However, the implementation of any policy for continued participation in work by older workers is not straightforward. For example, Australian research which is relevant to the UK, being from a similarly developed country, pointed to a broad generalization and paradox for managers in that the Australian government wanted older workers to keep working, and urged employers to retain older workers. But, many employers either eschewed older workers or were not inclined to explore alternative conditions under which their employment might be of benefit. Similarly, many older workers in the same research indicated they would prefer to retire, and seemed equally unwilling to explore alternative conditions where they could continue to work, perhaps in a reduced capacity (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2005).

Underemployment is a further concern. In this study, the meaning of underemployment refers to workers who accept jobs that do not utilise their skills (McNair 2011). A growing proportion of workers aged 50-70 reported being very overqualified for their jobs; a significant waste of talent even though some workers choose to move to less stressful roles (ibid). This raises the issue of being able to flourish in the workplace.

One UK policy response to increasing employment, and to tackle employment barriers on the side of employers, has been to abolish the DRA. Pension reform policies to change the way people save through occupational pensions have been made to encourage them saving for retirement (OECD 2015). However, financial insecurities, coupled with a 'pension gap', means those wishing to retire cannot, so increasingly older workers are obliged to stay on in the workplace, regardless of a desire to retire, through an extended working life, or voluntarily staying on as life expectancy increases.

The Age Positive Initiative set up by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP 2006) in the UK to maximise the impact of removing the default retirement age (DRA), works in partnership with business organisations to push for sustained change in employer practices towards increasing the employment and retention of older workers. A decade on, there is a growing momentum to encourage employers to consider the value of older workers. In September 2016, the UK Government appointed a Business Champion for Older Workers and tasked the Business in the

Community, a UK business-led charity, to support businesses to retain, retrain and recruit older workers. Employers across the UK are being called upon to increase the number of people they employ aged 50-69, by 12% within the next 5 years, creating employment opportunities for a million more older workers by 2022 (Business in the Community 2016).

Participation and retention of older people in employment is also influenced by provision for education and training (EU 2012). Encouraging increased levels of participation, the ‘Agenda for New Skills and Jobs’ initiative (EU 2011:9), to prolong the working lives of older people, called for ‘a more targeted approach to lifelong learning and career guidance’ to ensure more vulnerable groups, including older workers benefit. Guidelines included approaches for improving participation in labour markets, encouraging active ageing to reduce ‘structural unemployment, and promoting job quality’. Two guidelines were particularly relevant (EU 2011):

Work-life balance policies with the provision of affordable care and innovation in the manner in which work is organised should be geared to raising employment rates, particularly among [...] older workers. (Guideline 7)

To develop a skilled workforce responding to labour market needs and promoting lifelong learning efforts should focus on [...] increasing the employability of older workers. (Guideline 8)

Since the ‘Work Longer, Live Longer’ report (OECD 2006), attempts have been made to address the demographic challenge. An EU (2012) report on 34 countries, indicated (where data available) a variety of impacts including an increase in employment of older workers, in exit ages from the labour market, and in numbers of workers choosing to work past retirement age. One way to offset the negative decline in growth is to improve job prospects (others are increasing immigration, improving productivity or achieving higher levels of fertility), by either helping older workers stay in work longer, thereby slowing the levels of inactive people, or encouraging them back into the workplace. The EU (2012) report highlighted several areas where the UK needed to improve its employment rate for older people.



In terms of how far the recommendations of the ‘Work Longer, Live Longer’ report (OECD 2006) have been implemented, a follow-up assessment made by the OECD (2015) of improvement made between 2004-2012, although indicating that some progress had been made, suggested that more needs to be done. On the positive side, labour market prospects for older workers in the UK between 2006-2012 have improved. In 2011, the employment rate for the population aged 50-64, in the United Kingdom, was 0.5 percentage points higher than in 2005, and 3.7 percentage points above the OECD average (ibid).

Action has been taken to improve employability through improved co-ordination in skill delivery, and strengthening of career guidance provision to older adults through the development of a joint strategic position between the Skills Funding Agency, Jobcentre Plus, the Department of Business Innovation and Skills, and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP 2011). Self-employment among older people, as viable alternative to carrying on working, is also being promoted. However, a recommendation to target an element of the Employer Training Pilots (ETP) work based learning programme to older workers, established by the Learning and Skills Council, was dropped when the ETP closed in 2006. Likewise, a call to improve delivery and take-up of the New Deal 50 plus programme was not taken up as the programme was replaced by the Work Programme in 2011 (DWP 2011).

The OECD (2015) review noted that policies to continue to promote age diversity in employment were moving ahead with implementing anti-age discrimination legislation, and that promotion of a more welcoming and more flexible working environment in the UK have continued. Also, some action has been taken to strengthen the financial incentives to carry on working. Notwithstanding, in view of the faster rise of the state pension age for women from 60 to 65, an OECD (2006) recommendation to develop programmes to support women remaining in employment through early intervention and prevention for the 50-60 age group, to ensure that intervention did not come too late, was not acted upon.

So, against a backdrop of mixed outcomes for policy implementation for older workers in the UK, it is pertinent to explore ways to meet the learning needs of older

workers to encourage extended working lives, such as this study focused on the higher education sector.

### **Classifying older workers**

For this study, I defined older workers as 50+ years, a distinct grouping in the researched organization's workforce data, and in the UK where older workers are classified as aged 50 + (ONS 2013). The age of 50 has strong resonance in the UK, marking the point when there is a decline in labour market participation, reported age discrimination, and growing awareness of approaching retirement (McNair 2011). Set against a steeply rising pension gap, and rising life expectancy, the classification could need an upwards reconfiguration. Furthermore, people of working age in the UK are defined by ONS (2013), as aged 16-64. This definition is rapidly becoming out-dated as for the first time over 10% of the UK workforce, representing over one million, is aged over 65 (ONS 2013).

The UK government states that the retirement age since abolishing DRA, is now *supposedly* (my emphasis) 'when an employee chooses to retire' (Gov UK 2012). Most businesses do not set a compulsory retirement age for their employees, and if an employee chooses to work longer they cannot be discriminated against (ibid.). Nevertheless, there were potentially issues around workers being managed out of their post which touched on issues of discrimination and equality. A relevant consideration was whether older workers should be differentiated in terms of learning and development, as a widely-held view was that late career workers do not invest heavily in their careers (Greller 2006). However, evidence from 450 US college-educated men aged 23-70 found age was not a factor in the hours spent on professional development and business networking. Findings of career motivation, measured as hours invested, showed the association was as strong for those in later careers as for younger workers, implying factors influencing investment in the former are similar (ibid.).

### **Significance, purpose and aims of the research**

As the average age at which people retire rises, there were significant implications for extended working lives, and potentially the motivation to continue at work. This thesis concerned professional development at micro-organizational level to inform policy at macro-organizational level. It explored the use of one organization's resources; specifically, human resources (HR). In developing my research, understanding context in educational settings was vital (White 1985). This study, located learning in a constantly changing external environment that impacts throughout life on individual experiences and beliefs (Withnall 2010:127), and where almost constant rounds of restructuring and increasingly mergers are commonplace, mirrored across the public sector. The UK public sector contraction has particularly concentrated on the 50+ workforce (McNair 2011:viii).

The overall purpose was to explore the value of professional development in the workplace to older workers in extended working lives, and the value of that professional development for management, in one higher education (HE) organization in the UK.

The research aimed to:

- generate new perspectives on what older professional staff and management understand and value about learning and professional development for older workers;
- capture forms of professional development identified as valuable; and explore similarities and differences between professional development needs as perceived by older workers and management;
- shed light on types of learning and professional development;
- recommend strategic responses for HE management at micro-organizational and macro-organizational level for affecting wider social policy change.

### **Rationale for study and research questions**

This study was important in shedding light on an increasingly contemporary concern of potentially widespread application to policy makers across the UK and OECD countries. How might older workers remain engaged for learning through professional development in the workplace when they make up an ever-larger

segment of the workforce, and where due to the pension gap, some workers have no choice but to continue? To what extent did managers of organizations value the professional development of older workers, and their contribution? Where did gaps in understanding this phenomenon lie?

The study, which aimed to produce an account of the workplace perceptions of professional staff in one HE institution, considered their ambitions, work engagement, career progression and possibilities for later professional development. The foci reflected an interest in professional learning and development, rather than underlying personal motivations. Nevertheless, it was important to ascertain the motivations of older workers to shed light on types of professional development seen as valuable, and valid to both older workers and management.

Dilemmas and possibilities were considered in how older workers approached professional practice. As a pragmatic study, management's responses in exploring the views and understandings of older workers, were emphasized. This included exploring what diversity and inclusion meant to the organization in terms of professional development for older workers, and how it was demonstrated, informally and formally, leading to a re-imagining of their learning possibilities.

Professional concern for staff wellbeing and marginalization or discrimination of older people, related to their professional development in the workplace (limiting possibilities and potentially hastening departure), alongside review of the literature, motivated an exploration of three key questions. The research questions were couched within a practical, pragmatic framework in the realization that organizations have to manage their workforce in the most cost effective and productive manner to address economic realities for continuity and sustainability.

### **Research question 1**

What professional development do older workers see as valuable in the HE case study?

### **Research question 2**

What professional development does management see as valuable for older workers in the HE case study?

Questions 1 and 2 can be connected by a discussion considering what and whose interests are served.

### **Research question 3**

How might any differing views on what professional development should be offered be reconciled?

This question concerns gaining understanding of how different interests in the process and outcomes might be addressed and by whom. It also explores any differences of gaps in expectations between the two groupings of professional staff and management.

### **Thesis structure**

Chapter 1 introduced older workers' professional learning and development in one HE organization, the purpose, significance and rationale for the study. Chapter 2 was a critical and analytical account of the major literature, expanding the concept of extended working lives, and professional learning, and introducing the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 considered the methodology and methods utilized in the empirical research. Chapter 4 considered the data findings. Chapter 5 presents the findings. Chapter 6 discussed the findings to arrive at a theoretical model and revised conceptual framework. Chapter 7 summarized the study and makes recommendations. Limitations of the study were considered. Plans for dissemination and future research ideas were proffered.

## **Chapter 2 Literature review**

### **Part 1 Theories of human flourishing, workplace learning and lifelong learning**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The critical literature review appraised relevant theories and empirical studies to reach understanding of the argument to be made (Hart 2009:1) enabling a strong research framework and conceptualization of the problem to be arrived at, which framed the research questions and guided the data analysis.

Theories of workplace learning, lifelong learning, and workplace agency were critically assessed. Habermas's theory of communicative action (TCA) and Sen's notions of flourishing were helpful to this study being sensitive to emancipation and agency which had inferences for how older workers' learning could be structured in organizations and provided a lens in which to view how older workers might achieve their potential in one university setting.

The central argument of this thesis was that the achievement of flourishing and potential was not the singular premise of younger workers. Older workers too had legitimate claim to learning as vessels of untapped potential. Also explored, were how older workers confronting extended working lives, might be drawn into the lifeworld of the university, and how restrictions associated with modernity, and alienation could be challenged. How older workers might achieve flourishing through engaging in dialogue, to realise flourishing through professional development was explored, alongside what enabling structures and processes needed to be present.

To understand more deeply theories related to learning, and the workplace for older workers, the literature review encompassed psychological, socio-cultural and postmodern theories as this intersection of factors were most relevant to contemporary workplace learning (Evans et al. 2002; Unwin 2009; Hager 2010). Systematic reading and keyword searches across this inter-disciplinary scholarship

identified four over-arching and interconnected theoretical fields that informed my understanding of the empirical field, and framed the literature review regarding:

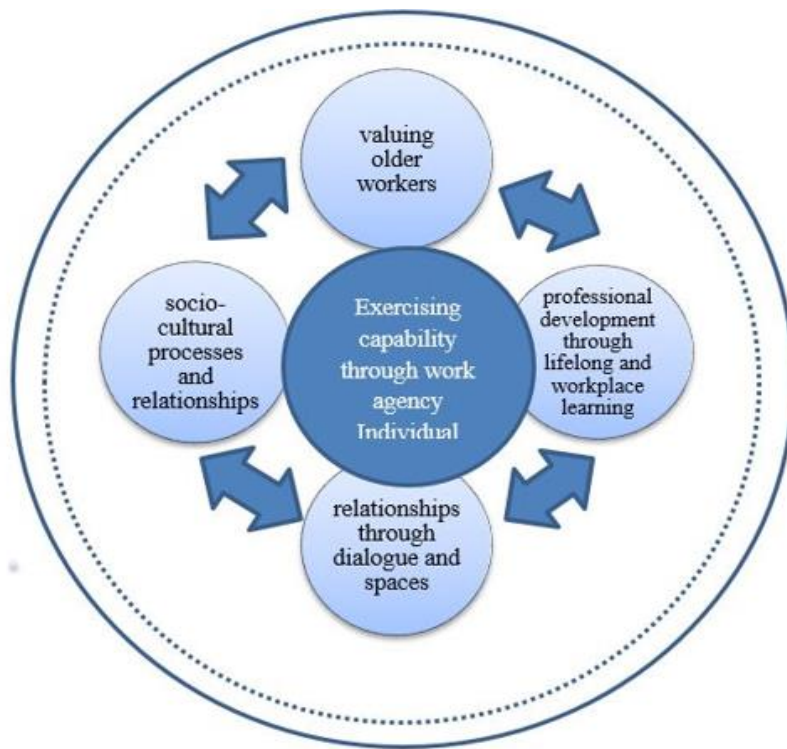
- empowerment of older workers in having their voice heard in the workplace;
- flourishing of older workers, professional development through workplace learning in extending individual working lives;
- socio-contextual relationships and processes;
- enabling organizational structures, processes and relationships.

These four concepts, each interconnected to notions of flourishing, were briefly introduced.

In my study, the most important theory for exploring older workers' empowerment was Habermas's (1987) theory of communicative action (TCA), and associated ideal speech situations (ISS) (1984, 1987), which support individual voice in sometimes hostile landscapes. Both TCA and ISS could be marshalled to negotiate spaces for older workers to understand how the organizational planning supported or suppressed democratic deliberation (Forester 1993; Burrell 1994). The second theory used, Sen's (1992) argument for flourishing through the capability approach, provided links to deprivation and exclusion of older workers' participation in professional development. Adult learning in relation to older workers, was considered through socio-contextual relationships and processes, which by encompassing a wide set of socio-economic and culture factors, were key to understanding how adult learning was affected. How the organizational structure of HR, its processes and relationships played a role in enabling adult learning environments to include older workers were also explored.

Fig 2.1 presented my initial conceptual framework of the thesis informed by the specific elements of the literature. The HR element of the university, as the outside rim of the circle, provided the background to the entire concept as a strategic framework, within which other elements were nested (Boxall and Purcell 2011). This outside rim represented the organization, while the components shown as inner circles, contributed to the flourishing of older professional workers as agentic individuals. The conceptual framework was informed by interest in older workers' ability to flourish and be empowered in the workplace through learning. It

represented the twin foundations of empowerment and flourishing for older workers' learning informed by the four elements of the literature review introduced earlier. The most important elements were Habermas's (1984, 1987) argument for voice in ideal speech situations, and Sen's capability approach (1992) for flourishing, both supportive of empowerment. Socio-cultural and relationship processes and organizational factors were central in understanding how adult learning was affected. Relational and context-related theories addressing learning relative to the structure and agency debate, in this study were refined to personal agency (Billett 2001) and work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014), which in conjunction with affordances of the workplace, drew attention to who participated in learning.



**Fig 2.1 Older workers: conceptions of value in professional development in the HE workplace for mutual benefit**

The organizational structure recognized that a critical HR development strategy and processes provided an overarching umbrella for learning possibilities for older workers. Within this strategy, initiatives for learning arose from older workers' participation, alongside formal structures. Through enabling structures and processes, empowerment and flourishing through professional development can occur. There



was an explicit two-way interaction, with the core facet being the notion of exercising capability and work agency, through professional development. How older workers interacted within the specific context was key. The approach was through dialogue and interaction to reach negotiated understanding and benefit, through creating dialogic spaces between staff and the overarching management structure in the HE environment. A dialogic process connected each element, each enacting on the other in a cyclical and continuous process. The conceptual framework themes emerging from the four concepts set out in the introduction to this literature review, leading to the initial conceptual framework shown in Fig 2.1., were explored.

## **2.2 Exploring workplace learning and its links to lifelong learning**

### **2.2.1 Theories of workplace learning**

Two workplace learning approaches were central to this study of older workers, and their professional development. First, was a workplace learning approach that included contextual, socio-cultural, organizational and other factors (Hager 2010). Second, relational and context-related theories, addressing learning relative to the structure and agency debate, were significant. Pivotal to this study were models of learning which included the role of personal agency (Billet 2001), work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014), and affordances of the workplace which drew attention to those who participated in learning (Billett 2001).

### **2.2.2 Contextual and socio-cultural approaches**

Theoretical understandings of learning have progressed from theories mainly derived from psychological framing where the learner was atomised, individual and human consciousness privileged (Maslow 1970; Rogers 1993) to more complex and multi-layered notions of learning to include adult learning, relations, communication, meaning making and identity formation. These developments represent a challenge in focus to arrive at a holistic and more nuanced understanding of later life learning than previously suggested (Hager 2010).

Theories of workplace learning embrace psychological, socio-cultural and postmodern thinking relating to learning and work, suggests Hager (2010). As

mentioned, most relevant to this study, was the role of contextual factors in workplace learning. Social, cultural, organizational and other factors, it is argued, had been hitherto underestimated (Baumgartner 2001; Hager 2010), and provide a platform for re-thinking the nature of continuing professional learning to better reflect how learning occurs. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that since workplace learning occurs and is embedded in workplace activity and technical and social relations of production (Billett 2001; Hoyrup and Elkjaer 2006; Felstead et al. 2009; Unwin 2009) it was affected by these factors.

The notion of a humanist orientation to learning which is independent of context and where learning is self-actualised and autonomous, as argued by Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1993), was rejected by socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky's theory suggested we are not separated from contexts in which we live (1978), development for learners 'accords with a metaphor of participation' (Hager 2010: 23).

Evans et al. (2002) also pointed to dominant literature concerning workplace learning theory, as being broadly in a Vygotsky vein, encompassing situated cognition (Lave and Wenger 1991), or activity theory (Engestrom 2001). Progressing notions centred on socio-cultural theories, Evans et al. (2002) argued workplace learning literature omits wider social, economic and political factors. I suggest including such a perspective has more resonance to modern public sector organizations including HE, affected by globalization, government policies, and increasing managerialism, forming part of the complexity of what it is to be part of, and to manage modern workplaces. Significant in the socio-cultural paradigm, was the relational aspect of learning, being related and inter-dependent, as well as individual (Billett 2001).

### **2.2.3 Relational and context-related theories**

Relevant to a study exploring whether older workers were marginalized when decisions were made with regard to who gets to participate in development, Billett proposed workplace learning theory which addressed personal agency, arguing for models strengthening 'relational inter-dependencies', between individual and social agency, between the engagement of the worker, and 'affordances' of the work environment (Billett 2001, 2004, 2008; Billett and Somerville 2006). Billett (2001:57) accentuated the subjugation of the individual in socio-cultural theories, where the

structuring of ‘learning experiences in workplaces is directed towards sustaining practice’. Complex negotiations about knowledge use, roles and processes occurring between imposed expectation and norms by organizations to further continuity and survival, were set against learners’ preferences and goals, ‘essentially as a question of the learner’s participation in situated work activities’ (Billett 2004:312).

This development perspective was culture-based influencing what skills people obtain, when they can participate, and who is allowed to do which activities (Miller 1993). Touching on inclusion of who is in, and who is out (Slee 2010), it drew attention to workplace conflict over who participates, relevant in exploring older workers’ marginalization. Furthermore, as workplaces exist to produce goods and services (Rainbird et al. 2004), they are restricted and affected by a broader productive system, and the politico/economic realities they operate within (Ashton 2004; Unwin et al. 2007; Felstead et al. 2009; Unwin 2009). Also, organizations are affected in how they conduct business, time scales, risks taken and opportunities such as who is afforded/chosen for development in a time of cost cutting (Unwin 2009), relevant to an HE sector affected by increasing competition and dwindling government subsidy. As workplaces are sites for learning as Unwin suggests, to improve learning means improving workplace conditions and what happens within workplaces, asking how ‘we might make greater use of their (employees) potential in order to benefit employers, individuals and society at large’ (Unwin 2009:4). This brings in the role of contextual factors and mutual benefit, pertinent in considering to what extent opportunities for professional development were available, and to whom offered, in a changing HE sector.

#### **2.2.4 Theoretical lenses for human flourishing, Habermas’s critical social theory and spaces for dialogue in the workplace**

Billett’s reflection on the capability of practitioners, in particular, social practices and their related knowledge domains (Hager 2010), I argue, aligns with Sen and Nussbaum’s work on human flourishing (1993). Sen’s work draws on Aristotelian views of what it means to have a good life, ‘*eudaimonia*’, or human flourishing, where the role of politics is to promote well-being or *eudaimonia* for the populace (Sen 1993). Sen’s work operates, or is *activated* in context. Billett and Sen view the capability of the practitioner, that is the function of the whole person operating in

context, an approach that is not humanistic but socio-cultural, embedded in context. It is not based on rational choice, but on preferences.

Humanistic theories of learning (Maslow 1943; Rogers 1969, 1983; Rogers and Freiberg 1993) (p34 refers), and Knowles' concept of andragogy (1978), view learning as a function of the whole person, being person-centred. Humanistic theories of learning encompass both cognitive and affective domains, where self-determination is central. Humanistic psychology is based on beliefs humans are truly able to decide what they do in their lives, although in reality, this may be difficult to achieve. Workplaces can thwart self-actualisation, curtailing expression and activation of capability, as environmental factors can impede (Sen 1993). Workers are not necessarily free to decide how their learning needs should be met.

Sen's work provides a link to deprivation and exclusion in the workplace, in this case to professional development. However, there are unintended consequences in that 'giving equality in one space frequently leads to inequality in other spaces' (Sen 1992:117), and measuring intangible capabilities for an individual or society are considered difficult (Nussbaum 2003).

Habermas's theoretical work (1987) on knowledge was relevant to the study as it aligned with Sen's capability approach, being linked to structure, and in particular, how spaces might be created to enable older workers' learning. Habermas's (1970, 1987, 1990) critical social theory offered potential in analysing modern workplaces from critical and pragmatic perspectives supporting the role of older workers, including access to equitable training and professional development. Habermas's writing around emancipation offered potential for this study, in considering how older workers could negotiate what was sometimes unyielding rationalized HE organizational structures and processes, through spaces where their voice can be heard. This was very pertinent, as an effect of an instrumentalist approach to management and organizations has resulted in rationalization being the mean ends norm of chasing profitability or targets (in contemporary HE in the UK). So, distribution of life chances of individuals within, or by organizations, can be safely ignored or minimally accommodated through minor or token adjustments in the push for the accepted goal (Adler et al. 2007).

Through a lens of human flourishing, opportunities for professional development and advancement were anticipated and imagined, staff and management joined in a relational and dialectic space to re-negotiate, respect, and advance older workers' contributions (not always valued). Presenting an argument for this linkage, an overlap between equality and age was seen. Moody's studies of critical gerontology drawing on Habermas's work (1971), challenged predominant views of ageing arguing a type of 'emancipatory knowledge' offering 'a positive vision of how things might be different or what a rationally defensible vision of a 'good old age' might be is absent' (Moody 1993:xvii). This view turned ageing on its head, with older people staking a rightful claim in the workplace, re-envisioning learning spaces for older workers and career progression.

For Habermas (1971:290), human interests circulated around three 'knowledge interests': technical control relating to labour activity, but humans should not be diminished by it; interest in mutual understanding linked to interaction in the lifeworld and communicative action; and emancipation from domination in 'the sense of being in control of the conditions under which one lives' (ibid). Where the first two interests were linked to labour and language, the interest in emancipation was linked to power. Habermas examined possibilities to survive in increasingly rationalized societies, proposing a reconceptualization of modernity not as a negative factor but:

The development of communicative rationality, practical reason (Kant), the freeing of morality from its religious base (Durkheim) and the emergence of the mature individual (Mead and Kohlberg). (Rasmussen in Rasmussen and Swindal 2002:232)

Teasing out notions of emancipation, a key element in my investigation was to explore whether Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (TCA) (1984), as a counterpoint to rationalization in society, could be applied to micro-levels of the workplace, specifically older workers' development opportunities. Habermas (1990) viewed dialogic spaces as a mechanism for workers' agency in rationalized organizations, and in this case, spaces for dialogue for older workers to be agentic. Discovering 'voice' in lived experiences of older age, we could begin to consider what an emancipatory perspective was for older workers in contemporary

workplaces. Habermas's work (1971, 1987) on rationalization and modernity, the replacement of traditions, values, and emotions which motivate society, to ones based on rational and calculated ideas, were influenced by Weber's 'iron cage' where humans lose their individualism, trapped in a rules-based rational world (Finlayson 2005:56,140).

For Habermas, rationalization was problematic, its remedy being rationalization of communicative action through social interaction, leading to communication free from domination; free and open communication (Habermas 1970:290-292). The TCA (1984) saw humans not colonized by the 'lifeworld' of the system, but free to be capable of critical thinking and political action. The TCA is defined as 'actors in society seeking to reach common understanding and to coordinate actions by reasoned argument, consensus and cooperation rather than strategic action strictly in pursuit of their own goals' (Habermas 1984:286), implying a groundswell of similar, communitarian thinking or norms. Based on pragmatism and communicative action, 'rather than critique of modernity, implying a critical view of the technical rationality, it creates and allows pre-conditions for a 'paradigm shift on rationality' (Englund 2006). Habermas saw its realization through 'ideal speech situations'; the importance of linguistic communication in coming together seeking agreement on important issues, through informed discourse in a sphere of public debate, such as education (Englund 2006). Rasmussen discussed Habermas's reconceptualization:

Language as a communicative discourse is emancipatory (p18) and his task is to rehabilitate the project of modernity by reconstructing it viz a viz the theory of communication, that is communicative action, communicative reason (p4). (Rasmussen and Swindal 2002:12)

Thus, the TCA can be viewed as a theory of integration (Englund 2006), having potential to make Habermas's work relevant to workplaces, providing a theoretical basis for a view of professional development and learning, transcending bureaucracy and market driven climates, in this case a university. Inherent was the notion of emancipation, or what could be termed 'empowerment.' Agency and empowerment are important notions for workplaces, leading to engaged workers. Flourishing through ISS, where older workers can *enact* their empowerment, is critical.

Therefore, it was important to have communication and spaces to form, and develop

positive institutional and departmental cultures, underpinning and allowing engagement. Such progression from absolute knowledge, by way of communication to political will formation, seemed to indicate the means by which critical theory could become praxis (Terry 1997). It appeared a tentative way forward for informed debate, transforming into praxis for older workers, establishing free speech situations without prejudice and fear of being labelled, and permitting a space to a shift of celebrating age similar to the existing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT), or Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groupings, in this context. This aligned with Sen's capability in being able to speak without fear of reprisals, i.e. in their 'ideal speech situations'.

Habermas's theories are critiqued as wide-ranging, difficult and over-complex (Osborne and van Loon 2005), and for an over-emphasis on the language, being unduly theoretical and systematic (Terry 1997). Furthermore, Ritzer (2012) suggested that forces in the modern world which distort the free speech process, preventing an emergence of consensus, must be overcome to realize Habermas's rationalized, ideal society. Nevertheless, it is argued such criticism is mis-conceived; the theories provided 'original, insightful and thoughtful responses to alienation and social fragmentation afflicting modern society' (Finlayson 2005:58). Habermas's work is functional not moral or ethical. Its purpose is functional, as colonization 'thwarts the good functioning of the lifeworld depriving society of the benefits of communication and discourse found in shared meanings and attitudes, feelings of belonging, social order and other areas' (ibid.:58). Whether Habermas's implementation and practice of ISS was tested is unclear. Despite criticisms, ISS related to organizations could shed light on an exploration of older workers in modern society, approached from a pragmatic perspective, to align the systems structure of HE and the everyday lifeworld of older workers to achieve an engaged, active and fulfilled workforce which this study attempted.

Barnett (2012:3), imagining future possibilities for twenty-first century universities, discusses Habermasian views of a university reflective of 'ideal speech situations'. Although critical of Habermas's lack of insight of modern universities' complexity, Barnett proposed a re-design of the university encompassing a 'multi-planar' approach, reaching into and opening up spaces for intellectual collaborative thinking,

and imagining of possibilities. Pre-conditions include an ethos of trust and communicative openness, where ‘something approaching a Habermasian ideal speech situation is logically entailed, and where hierarchy and boundaries need to be temporarily set aside’ (ibid.), supporting requirements for Sen’s flourishing vectors *in situ* for flourishing to occur in all staff, including older workers.

### **2.2.5 Defining and linking workplace learning to lifelong learning**

This section explored workplace learning connected to lifelong learning for older workers, and sustained employability. Definitions and participation rates in workplace learning were explored before establishing links between workplace learning and lifelong learning, and how it might be further cultivated for HE.

Exploring how much older workers’ learning takes place was valid as workplaces are important sites for learning in knowledge based economies, and there was evidence that age matters in opportunities given for professional development and training, with those under 30 most likely to benefit (SSDA 2007). As ever more learning is through work, finding out what types of workplace learning offered a ‘best fit’ for older workers and environments they best learn in was important for flourishing, and can be mutually beneficial to workers and employers.

Workplace learning [also called work-based learning] ‘derives its purpose from the context of employment’ (Sutherland 1998:5) differing from training restricted to business needs (Evans, Hodkinson and Unwin 2002). Workplace learning is dynamic covering an expanding variety of elements including business and management thinking, psychology, human resources and industrial relations (Evans et al. 2002). When thinking around learning from a life course perspective, inter-disciplinary connections embracing psychological, socio-cultural and post-modern theories (Unwin 2009; Unwin et al. 2015) can deepen our understanding of theories of learning and work (Hager 2004; Unwin 2009; Unwin et al. 2015).

It is argued that the increasing tendency for individuals to fuse the working and non-working parts and spaces of their lives (Felstead et al. 2009, Field 2006) raises questions as to the extent to which ‘learning at, through, and for work’ is embedded



in lifelong learning as opposed to being separated from it' (Unwin 2009:2). Similarly, others argue for expanded notions of work-based learning reflecting learning at work, for work and through work, arguing work-based learning expands and develops wider capabilities, self-esteem and professional identity (Evans, Guile and Harris 2010:159) encompassing career progression either within the same organization or externally.

Recognising the conjunct between individual and social structures and models of learning, Hodkinson et al. (2004) consider that links between workplace learning and lifelong learning were present when there is acknowledgement that people can be identified as being both separate from their workplace and incorporated into it. They propose people's view of learning might take on a lifelong learning perspective, drawing attention to how identities and individual biographies are significant in learning, as people have lives outside of work and lives which pre-date their working spaces. This shaped how people viewed themselves in their learning and how they approach it, suggesting a role for individual growth.

Models of workplace learning include learning with and through work (Billett 2010, 2001, Unwin 2009) and work-process knowledge (Boreham et al. 2002). Billett (2001, 2010) makes the case for understanding learning as participation, where learning is proposed as being interdependent between the individual and the social practice. Billett (2004) argues that considering learning as participation in work is important when lifelong learning policies and practices (OECD 1998) pass the responsibility for maintaining currency increasingly to workers. Participation in learning becomes ever more crucial suggests Billett (2001), when for the majority of workers, the workplace represents the only or most viable location to learn and/or develop vocational practice. In what is a complex theoretical field, this model argues that lifelong learning can occur through and at work, emphasizing the role of work practices and learning, including informal learning (Billett 2004).

Boreham et al. (2002) too consider that the social aspects of learning support the building /creation of work-process knowledge, defined as knowledge that an employer needs to work flexibly in modern workplaces. Knowledge comes from the collective memories of the individuals in a community of practice, and in the

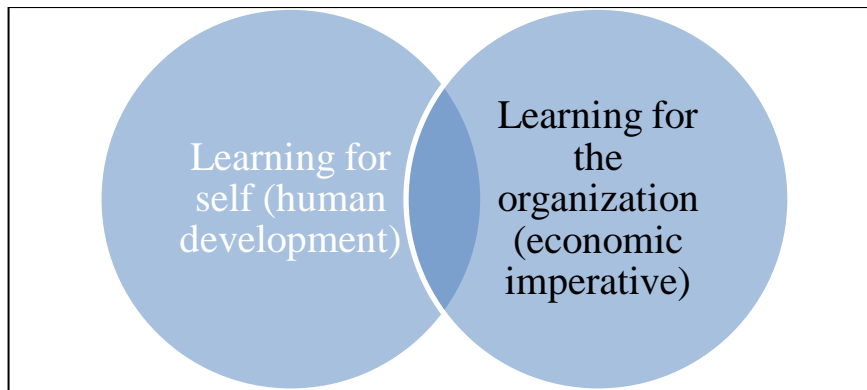
artefacts and technology within them. Part of what it means to have work process knowledge is to be able to work collaboratively, where members of a community share knowledge in the practice of their work to carry out tasks and working roles. Language enables workers to construct knowledge in the workplace, learning perspectives are carried forward in language that reflects organizational culture structure (Boreham 2004). What appears critical then is how the workplace is managed, accentuating the role of cultural and organizational structures in understanding processes of organisational learning.

Workplaces offering employees learning are important sites not just for learning, but in mediating flourishing in the immediate environment and society, extending learning to life course perspectives. Workplace learning is fundamental for individual learning, but more widely, where individuals are part of a learning society. According to UNESCO (Faure et al. 1972), that is the involvement of society as participant and actor in education and whose community can engage in critical dialogue and actions (Coffield 1997). The UNESCO report 'The Treasure Within' (Delors 1996) positioned education as central to a nation's economic development, considering that education should extend beyond formal learning into informal learning, expanding on the notion of lifelong learning. The OECD (2000), in developing the 1972 UNESCO framework (Faure et al. 1972), advocated for a learning society and the contribution that lifelong learning can make to human development.

Definitions of lifelong learning are myriad and contested, recognising learning may be conducted over a lifespan (Field 2006), and deliberate learning over a person's lifetime (Knapper and Cropley 2000). Given the relative shortness of compulsory schooling it can be argued much learning is in the workplace. Two competing paradigms of lifelong learning were driven by UNESCO and OECD over the last 40 years. One, a wider holistic view of human development, the other a functionalist view of human capital. The *Learning to Be Report* (UNESCO 1972) emphasized the right to fulfil individual potential, personal development through lifelong education. Social inclusivity amidst 'the variety of nations and cultures, of political options and degrees of development' (ibid.:v.), was recognised as a key principle in the report. However, lifelong learning has become part of economic and political discourse of

global capitalism for increasing competitive performance, positioning people as human resources, discarded and retrained if their job is redundant (Jarvis 2001). The emphasis is firmly on economic rationales where ‘lifelong learning from early childhood education to active learning in retirement will be an important factor in promoting employment and economic development’ (OECD 1997:13). Nevertheless, there was mutual benefit and value between learning for personal development and learning for organizational benefit realizing HE organizational imperatives (relevant to this study) seen in the shaded part of the overlapping circles in Fig 2.2, which could convey spaces for ISS. Spaces could be provided for learning through the concept of lifewide learning (Skolverket 2000; Clark 2005) which considers that learning occurs in different places simultaneously, and is helpful in widening out where learning can occur. The term lifewide learning (Jackson 2008), embraces the many sites for learning that occur in a learner’s life at any point in time with work being a very important context but not the only one (ibid.). Lifewide learning ‘acknowledges the shift from traditional stable structures of learning to more fluid, transient, and technology-enabled structures of the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (Jackson 2011:xii), which offers opportunities for holistic learning at work.

Barnett (2010) proposes that there is learning across an individual’s lifeworld at any moment in time in learning spaces that may be completely different from one another. Critically, these learning experiences will be marked by differences of power, ownership, visibility, sharedness, cost and recognition. Both lifelong and lifewide learning imply a shift in responsibility for education and learning from the public to the private and civil spheres (Skolverket 2000). Nevertheless, it is argued that it is still the responsibility of government and society to create good conditions for lifelong and lifewide learning, particularly by promoting educational equity (ibid.), which has inferences for older workers who are not always first in line for development. Similar to lifelong learning, lifewide learning is connected to both formal and informal learning and requires the capabilities to plan, manage and self-regulate own learning and development. These capacities will be key to being an effective and agentic learner where personalisation, collaboration and informalisation (informal learning) will be at the core of learning in the future (Redecker et al. 2011).



**Fig 2.2: Focus of learning in the workplace**

Connecting lifelong and workplace learning, the OECD (Kallen and Bengtsson 1973) proposed that the concept of ‘recurrent education’ entailed regular participation across the life course to nurture career and skills development. Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007:2) suggest this concept is related ‘to human capital theory which emphasizes the value of investing in education and training since this is assumed to bring returns in economic development and growth for individuals and for society’.

Lifelong learning plays a role in transforming lives. For Dewey, individual growth is intrinsic in how society should view its members, and growth has a moral dimension (1938:114). Allied to Dewey’s moral dimension, what differentiates ‘doing’ from ‘learning’ is that the latter changes what we are by changing our ability to participate, belong and negotiate meaning (Wenger 1998:226), highlighting the transformative and moral dimension to learning, its role for flourishing in society and in the workplace. NIACE’s enquiry into the future of lifelong learning recognised this transformative power, and recommended a society where learning played a full role, being a human right (Schuller and Watson 2009). The enquiry supported enhanced training and education for ages 50-75. While access to up to date skills for older people, establishing quality career services, and better working conditions was called for (OECD 2006; Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006).

However, concepts of lifelong learning and learning at work are problematic due to scepticism about how much occurs. Workplaces as learning environments were evident in research and policy but rarely discussed relative to lifelong learning (Unwin 2009). With workplaces crucially important sites for learning and access to

learning (Evans et al. 2002), inherent was the recognition of power differences and who gets to participate in this learning. These restrictions limit the political and philosophical moral ideals of UNESCO's Faure report (Faure et al. 1972); reframing the original ideal to lifelong learning, dominantly linked to training and new skills, for rapidly changing workplaces (Matheson and Matheson 1996; Bagnall 2000).

Power differentials and workplace climate can work for or against older workers, providing expansive or restrictive learning environments and motivation to engage in learning. Learning can be limited through workplace structure, power, gender relations and culture (Rainbird et al. 2004). More recently, age as a limiting factor, has been recognized. Bringing the two concepts of older workers and lifelong learning together (previously separate discourses), Tikkanen and Nyhan (2006) drew on empirical research across Europe, Australia, Japan and the U.S, stressing that the demographic challenge affected everybody in society as everyone eventually grows old, so age-management, lifelong learning and training measures that anticipate people's needs at different life phases, needs implementing in all workplaces. However, for lifelong learning to become a reality for older workers 'ordinary workplaces must become primary places of learning', which raises important issues about employers' roles in promoting lifelong learning (ibid.:3).

Nevertheless, Hager (2004) argues that pockets of *good* (my emphasis) lifelong learning are still found in reduced circumstances or 'alienation' (Dewey 1916). Dewey recognized workplace constraints, proposing that by viewing learning differently as process rather than product, it was possible to hone meanings about socio-political aspects of work extending beyond workplaces, sharpening an educational experience of working, connecting to workplace learning. Work and lifelong learning are 'occupation as becoming' as workers place high value on satisfaction obtained from work giving a strong sense of personal development. This provided intrinsic satisfaction, separate from work and workplaces that may reduce motivation (Dewey 1916), and potentially relevant to older workers. If work, as Dewey suggested, is 'creativity' rather than 'labour', it was possible to see lifelong learning *through* and *at work* possible. Such learning emphasized the role of work practices and learning, including informal learning, becoming ever more crucial when participation in workplace learning was sometimes the only location where

workers could develop their lifelong learning, and ability to flourish in work and beyond (Billett 2001).

### **2.2.6 Participation and motivation of older workers in workplace learning in later life**

Providing appropriate training and development opportunities over the life course will be crucial in maintaining healthy and productive lives; encouraging lifelong learning and importantly participation can lead to increased employability for the 50+ cohort. Conversely, it was this same cohort that was most unlikely to participate in work, possibly falling to 0% by 2025 for the 65+ age group (Hyde and Phillipson 2014). A policy brief commissioned by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, bringing together UK research on equity and employment for those disadvantaged in the labour market, indicated participation rates were lowest and fall steepest for ages 60-69 years (McNair 2011), with serious inferences for this older segment of the workforce. Additionally, poor employability was a key challenge in increasing employment rates of those 50+ (ibid.). Adopting age-friendly employment policies and practices to reverse the negative effects of older people on public finance can ‘convert the process of population ageing to one of being an opportunity for society and older workers’ (OECD 2006). Cedefop’s EU commissioned (2006) overview of contributions from scholars in Europe, Australia, Japan and the US into older workers and lifelong learning indicated that age-friendly workplace learning practices should include improved access to up-to-date skills, employment services and working conditions (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006).

Findsen and Formosa (2011:117) argued motivation always underpins participation, raising two questions. What motivates those for later life learning? How might age affect workplace motivation? The findings of the NIACE UK Adult Participation in Learning Survey (NIACE 2015), a survey series updated annually, provides an overview of the level of participation in learning by adults with a breakdown of who participates and who does not. The survey adopts a broad definition of learning, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. From a poll of 5,000 adults aged 17 and over across the four UK nations, it appears a fifth of adults (22%) are

currently learning, with around 41% having taken part in some form of learning in the previous 3 years, although a third of adults (33%) have not participated in learning since leaving full-time education. Although the 2015 survey indicated that overall participation in learning had increased slightly after remaining the same for the previous 3 years, ‘there has been little variation in the overall level of participation since the survey began in 1996’ (ibid.:1).

Engagement in learning is unevenly distributed and is determined by social class, employment status, age and prior learning. Older age groups are less likely to participate in learning, with a decline in participation for those aged 55+, with only 31% of those aged 55-64, 20% of those aged 65-74 and 12% of those aged 75+ considering themselves as learners (ibid.:4).

The most commonly cited reasons within the 2010 National Adult Learner Survey (NALS) (the last available data), for not learning are cost (58%), lack of time (42%), and inability to fit learning around job (29%), or family life (25%) (National Adult Learner Survey 2012). The survey which covered England only, conducted 4,647 interviews with 16-24 year olds not in continuous full-time education and those aged 25 and over. Uncovering motivations to learn, respondents were also asked to consider what would motivate them to take part in learning. Three in five (62%) were motivated by the prospect of learning something new and two in five were motivated by improved job prospects and income (mentioned by 42% each). Motivations for learning were closely related to life stages. Respondents aged 16-39 were particularly motivated by enhanced job prospects (promotion and higher income), while those in the latter stages of their working life wanted to be able to improve their performance at work for their own job satisfaction. People aged 20-49 wanted to learn to help their children, while those aged 50 and over placed greater value on learning new things, meeting new people, and confidence building (ibid.). Conversely, non-participation in learning had negative implications for this grouping’s employability, wellbeing, resilience and furthering of intellectual possibility (ibid.:2012).

The powerful relationship between learning and work is evident across the NIACE survey (2012). Adults in work are more likely than those outside of the workplace to

take part in learning. Nearly four-fifths of learners surveyed say that they took up learning for work-related reasons (ibid.).

The economic prosperity of the UK also depends on people becoming more skilled, innovative and capable through continuing to learn. Thus, it appears critical to understand what types of workplace learning participation might be mutually beneficial to increase employee engagement and organizational wellbeing. Costley and Critten (2012) surveying graduates, suggest that high level thinking skills are developed through applying learning and reflecting on real work issues. Practically, these skills can be developed through researching aspects of their workplace, developing key skills for understanding research statistics, improving presentation skills, and conveying learning to others. Developing such skills sets are also relevant to older workers.

Kanfer and Ackerman (2004) argued that ageing and adult development represented important but largely unexplored influences on work motivation. Their integrative framework for the use and effectiveness of different motivational strategies with mid-life and older workers in a variety of jobs located motivation in the broader context of life-span research which emphasized four intra-individual change trajectories over the life course (loss, gain, reorganization and exchange). This framework for learning suggested work circumstances affected work motivation aligning with socio-contextual learning theories. Practically, Kanfer and Ackerman argue work motivation may be improved by organizational strategies and managerial practices taking account normative patterns of adult development (ibid.). This argument was reinforced through a meta-analysis of 24 empirical and nine conceptual studies (those sampled were all from Western developed countries) showing most age-related factors can impact negatively on motivation for extended working lives, most significantly declining health and career plateaus, which should be addressed through human resource management policies and practices including ergonomic adjustments and continuous career development (Kooij et al. 2007).

Theories of work motivation (Herzberg 1959; McClelland 1961; Vroom 1964) may be limited in understanding older workers' motivations and organization practices,



tending to focus on intrinsic rewards related to learning and emphasize extrinsic rewards around pay, promotion and recognition. Conversely, learning and extrinsic rewards were often constrained for older workers leading to them being less valued (Kanfer and Ackerman 2004). Furthermore, knowledge utilization, helping, collaboration and enhancing positive affect seen as motivators were not addressed in either theory or practice (ibid.) partially borne out by some evidence of a lack of enthusiasm of the over 55s in learning new skills (ibid.). This lack of enthusiasm shown was consistent with a meta-analysis of 418 empirical studies relating to age stereotypes of older workers in the US indicating that older workers were less willing to participate in training and career development (in contrast to Greller's (2006) findings). However, the findings disproved other common stereotypical views of older workers (Ng and Feldman 2012:824). Moreover, a comparison of national Austrian labour force data with EU labour force survey data (ELS 2003, 2008) tracking participation in training indicated closeness to retirement led to a decrease in training participation but chronological age was not related to training across the age groups sampled, leading to difficulties in finding a straightforward relationship between training and ageing (Schmidt 2012).

It appears that what motivates older workforces is multi-layered requiring paying close attention to the 'complex interplay of educational level, occupational status, company environments (provision of time and cost incentives for the employee as well as sector-specific differences in training needs) and individual cost-benefit considerations' in terms of how decisions are made to participate in training (Schmidt 2012:211). Care needs to be taken in not falling back on negative stereotypical views of older workers to decipher what is really occurring as the influences of stereotypes and their role in workplace culture is significant to understanding how organizations treat different groups of workers (Unwin et al. 2015). Rather more, we should direct attention to the 'heterogeneity of older workers and the organizations in which they work' (Schmidt 2012:211) where a more holistic response to workforce development is required which may not be about counting days participating in training or the number of qualifications a person obtains (Unwin et al. 2015).

A UK-wide study of 1615 participants aged 18-55+, showed the perceived importance of learning new skills, which is different to a lack of enthusiasm, fell with age compared with 18-24 younger age groups (AAT 2015)<sup>1</sup>. However, even though the perceived importance fell corresponding with age, it does not necessarily follow it would be lower amongst those aged 55+. The research suggests this is probably because once a person reaches the top of their career they feel that additional skills will add little job security. An additional factor is that often those researched had been in their current occupation for several decades and may feel they have mastered the most important skills. This mind-set leads to a lower uptake of training. Contrastingly, aligned to the 2010 National Adult Learning Survey (2012) and the findings of Kooij et al. (2007), life transitions were a motivator for later life learning. Work-related reasons included sustaining employment, making existing work more enjoyable facilitating career change, providing greater financial security and gaining job specific skills or qualifications (Findsen and McCullough 2006). Empirical studies show the importance of training needs being relevant as older workers were more critical consumers of training products (Cedefop 2008), with 'buy in' difficult to achieve if no value or benefit was seen.

The empirical studies I have drawn on were helpful in moving towards some understanding of what motivated older workers' participation in learning as they relied on large scale nationally representative samples, which encompassed older workers experience of learning across a range of sectors.

### **2.2.7 Valuing later life learning and by whom?**

To whom is lifelong learning valuable? Is it for the government, employees, the employers or perhaps mutual benefit is possible? The first OECD (2013) Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), an international survey conducted in 24 countries to include the UK and Northern Ireland (UK), measured the key cognitive and workplace skills

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<sup>1</sup> A YouGov online survey conducted for AAT with a total sample size of 1615 adults, in February 2015. Covering all areas of Great Britain, across all vocational and professional sectors, the results were weighted to be representative of all adults in Great Britain (aged 18+).

needed for individuals to participate in society and for economies to prosper. In particular, it measured literacy, numeracy and problem solving in technology-rich environments. The survey suggested that in order (:) ‘for skills to retain their value, they must be continuously developed throughout life’ (ibid.:35).

From 24 member countries surveyed for the PIACC Survey of Adult Skills (OECD 2013) the UK was ranked 11th for numeracy skills. Numeracy skills peak in the UK for the middle age group, 35-44 year olds, but among 16-24 and 55-64 age groups it is approximately similar. However, the PIACC results of older adults in England and Northern Ireland were higher than comparator countries. Of note, the findings for literacy skills indicated that England and Northern Ireland (UK) were placed 7<sup>th</sup>, and was among the three highest-performing countries in literacy, when comparing 55-65-year-olds. Conversely, the UK was among the bottom three countries when comparing literacy proficiency among 16-24-year olds. Separating out within country findings, adults in England scored around the international average in numeracy, but above average in literacy. Adults in Northern Ireland (United Kingdom) performed around the international average in literacy, but below average in numeracy (OECD 2013:52). For IT problem-solving competencies, which assessed how well adults use ICT to assess, process, evaluate and analyse information, the UK scored 11<sup>th</sup> place for the cross-section of populations surveyed (OECD 2013).

The findings of the expanded 2016 PIACC survey (OECD 2016), covering 33 countries and economies over two rounds, found that for the cross-section of populations who participated, substantial variation across adults’ average proficiency, similar to the 2013 survey in the three domains assessed was seen. However, although the Survey of Adult Skills can offer a snapshot of the proficiency level of adults of different ages at a particular point in time, it does not allow for tracking how the proficiency of the same age cohorts evolves over time (OECD 2016), for instance if training is introduced. Nor does it gather data on those aged 65+.

The 2016 PIACC survey also highlighted that proficiency was also strongly related to age. General proficiency in literacy and numeracy peaks at around age 30, while

proficiency in problem solving in technology-rich environments peaks at around age 25. On average, older adults (55-65 year olds) score around 30 score points lower in literacy than 25-34 year olds. However, a substantial share of age-related differences in proficiency is associated with other individual characteristics, not just ageing, and particularly adults' level of educational attainment (OECD 2016).

Also, that skills use appears to peak between the ages of 25 and 54 can be interpreted in several ways. For instance, it is possible that older workers move into less demanding positions prior to retirement while young people follow the opposite path as they move out of entry-level jobs into more stable career positions. Alternatively, skills use may decline as skills proficiency does. One explanation may be that the fact that skills accumulate in the initial stages of one's career, reach a maximum in the early 30s, and then depreciate over time can be due to a lack of investment in training and lifelong learning activities (OECD 2016). Nevertheless, the survey concludes that there is clear evidence that biological ageing plays a role, and that putting policies into place could help develop proficiency over a person's lifetime (ibid).

The above-mentioned AAT (2015) report on the UK economic benefits of adult re-skilling across vocational and professional fields highlighted a skills deficit of 55-64 year olds, which indicated increased support for reskilling older adults would result in government savings of £105.2m over the next Parliament. This report suggested it is the older generations that faced the biggest barriers when re-skilling, reporting weaker skill sets when compared to younger cohorts. Specifically, it argued that there is a deficit in numeracy skills for adults aged 55-64, compared to younger cohorts, but acknowledge that this is a common trend seen in other countries.

The AAT (2015) report also suggested younger generations were more likely to have tertiary qualifications than older cohorts; qualifications often being utilized as an alternative measure of skills. However, a counter argument can be made in that the nature of these issues mentioned can change rapidly enabled through government policy and other initiatives, so there is scepticism over whether this situation would endure. Additionally, as the report suggested, the distribution of qualifications would not be expected to be the same between groups as experience is often considered a

trade-off for qualifications and is a valuable asset in the labour market relevant to older workers' longevity in workplaces (ibid). Importantly for employment in today's workplaces, although computer technological skills for older generations were ranked as good as younger generations in the AAT survey, more widely there was a relative lack of competency compared to younger cohorts with 8% of 55-64 grouping sampled having never used a computer and a further 10% only infrequently (AAT 2015).

For employees, lifelong learning then plays a preventative role; the more individuals use their skills and engage in complex and demanding tasks at work and elsewhere, the more likely it is skills decline due to ageing can be prevented. The PIACC survey findings suggested 'lifelong learning and targeted training, especially mid-career, can improve employability in later life and discourage early withdrawal from the labour market' (OECD 2013:36). For skills to retain their value, they must be continuously developed throughout life. Lifelong learning opportunities are relevant in both high-skilled and low-skilled occupations (OECD 2013). While in the workplace, re-design of tasks should be undertaken to maximise engagement with activities requiring the use of literacy, numeracy and ICT, in conjunction with training (ibid.). But paradoxically, older staff were not always the first choice in employer's preferences for development which would support the continuation of effective working lives (Billett 2005:159). This is important as restrictions or withdrawal in support given for learning disempower older workers, whereas ongoing learning can enable human flourishing while preventing skills decline due to ageing (OECD 2013).

More so, this is significant when learning is said to be the interaction between an 'agentic individual's mind and a socially constructed community of practice' (Cairns and Malloch 2010:9). An agentic individual has capacity to exercise control over the nature and quality of their life (Bandura 2001) where people are viewed as producers as well as products of systems contributing throughout their working lives.

The findings of the PIACC surveys (2013, 2016) make it clear that there should be a shift from a reliance on initial education to 'fostering lifelong, skills-oriented learning' over an individual's lifetime (2013:30). The wider benefits of which would include a better allocation of resources to maximise economic and social outcomes

(ibid.:30). Learning throughout life is vital to helping people adapt to change so they can stay in work and build a career. However, in the UK, the policy response remains disjointed and in the context of longer and more fluid working lives this leaves a skills gap ‘in what is offered for people in work who want and need new skills to change career or progress, or for people wanting to improve their wellbeing’ (Learning and Work Institute 2016:12).

The OECD (2006) reform agenda viewed employers as gatekeepers in improving job prospects for older workers. Implications for return on investment (ROI) can be financially attractive to employers as a rise in pensionable age lengthens the period employers could recover training costs, making investment in training more likely (OECD 2013). However, measuring ROI was problematic in how much new learning has been acquired and how much learning was transferred to the workplace thereafter (Unwin 2009). This was considered short sighted as learning for older workers may be determined by employers or less often negotiated by employees with managers (Findsen 2015).

The OECD (2016), which included data on the UK, confirms that an organisation’s human-resource practices are highly correlated with skills use at work and draws attention to this finding, being in line with a growing body of literature showing that participatory practices at work, such as those allowing workers more flexibility in determining the way and rhythm at which they carry out their tasks, encourage better use of skills in the workplace. Management practices which offer bonuses, training and working time flexibility all provide incentives for workers to use their skills at work more fully (ibid.).

Furthermore, a skilled workforce is crucial for the creation of future job and economic growth (OECD 2013). More broadly, the wider benefits of skills participation are seen across countries and economies through non-economic outcomes, where ‘there is a positive correlation between skills proficiency in literacy and trust, volunteering and political efficacy’ (OECD 2013:144), beneficial to individuals and societies in increasing social capital. These wider benefits align with the interest in developing wider measures of wellbeing proposed by Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi (2009) and the Learning and Work Institute (2016) which considers that

‘learning also has wider effects, beneficial throughout life and helping to boost health, wellbeing and social engagement’ (2016:12).

### **2.2.8 Seeing the value in older workers**

Reform to viewing value in older workers could be mutually reinforcing and beneficial ‘intended to convert the process of population and workforce ageing into an opportunity for society and older workers’ (OECD 2006:9) returning to Sen’s flourishing of individuals and recommendations of the large-scale Enquiry into Lifelong Learning (Schuller and Watson 2009). This research supported a shift from labelling those as ‘old’ or ‘retired’ to an interdependence of diverse age groups emphasizing an ‘inter-generational life course perspective’ and common purpose for all in how we live in an ageing society (Bernard and Phillips 2000). This included education at all levels, reinforced through critically reflective practice (ibid.). However, as learning for older workers is influenced by a myriad of factors from individual to organizational, to societal, learning opportunities will vary across workplaces (Findsen 2015).

Nonetheless, there are differing perceptions around how employable older individuals see themselves to be. For example, Patrickson and Ranzijn (2003:50) conducted 30 in-depth interviews with older people, aged between 45 and 70 years in South Australia across a broad cross-section of employment types and status collecting participant perceptions of how current their skills were, whether participants believed there were employable and how they explained their success or lack of success in obtaining work. Evidence indicated a mismatch between what older job seekers considered employers wanted and what employers were wanting. Overwhelmingly, interviewees believed their skills to be current and themselves employable. They did not perceive their skills were no longer as valuable as they may once have been. Interestingly, findings also indicated older workers’ identities were grounded in a different set of values that had become outdated in modern workplaces. Values such as ‘as loyalty, hard work and obedience are not as important in the structure of the new workplace as self-management, initiative and opportunism’ (ibid.:59). Virgona et al. (2003) reported similar findings. Although difficult to generalize from a small sample, the research pointed to a divergence in

perceptions over employability in Patrickson and Ranzijn's (2003) research and was aligned to McNair's (2011) findings.

However, there was some stigma attached to retraining. The AAT survey showed 55-64 year olds had low rates of participation in both employer provided and self-initiated training and were most likely to not undertake a qualification worsening with age, supporting other findings (McNair 2011). This inferred employers and individuals over 55 needed convincing of the value of participating in lifelong learning (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2005; AAT 2015).

How do older workers make the shift the OECD and others call for? Research from the UK Centre for Research into the Older Workforce which examined five major UK national datasets of those aged 50+ (2006) and the AAT (2015) report suggested key processes employers could undertake to make work more attractive to older workers to encourage retention and development. These included encouraging support and training targeted at 55-64 age groupings; creation of knowledge sharing opportunities, encouragement for progression, monitoring equal opportunities and implementing supportive workplace elements such as flexible work/learning patterns. However, the AAT report made no mention of training needs for the 65+ cohort.

Part 2 considered critical aspects of professional development and where learning takes place.



## **Part 2 Professional development through workplace learning in later life and in HE contexts**

### **2.3.1 Connecting later life working and professional development - critical perspectives of workplace learning**

This section critically explored professional development perspectives in workplace learning for older professional staff in HE. It was accompanied by considerations of how workplace learning takes place, forms and organizational structures best suited to older workers' needs. Concepts of later life working, workplace learning and professional development were set against the disappearing concept of a fixed time of retirement and a lifelong career in one occupation. Work takes many forms; full employment is an outdated notion and the term 'retirement' inapplicable to many today. A balance between paid work, education and training, unpaid work and leisure should be reflected (Bernard and Phillips 2000).

### **2.3.2 Professional development through workplace learning in later life**

There was no agreed definition of professional development interchangeably referred to as 'continuing professional development' (CPD) having multiple meanings and dimensions (Friedman et al. 2001). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD 2015), defined CPD as a combination of approaches, ideas and techniques to manage learning and growth. The focus was on the real-world benefits professional development can bring. It can be argued stressing performance aspects makes a demarcation between CPD and workplace learning. CPD describes learning activities undertaken throughout working life enhancing individual and organizational performance in professional and managerial spheres (Woodward 1996:1) bringing in employers and professional associations.

For adult teachers, Bolam (1993) distinguished between professional training, professional education and professional support providing an analytic framework codifying CPD. Recently, a broader term of 'professional learning' has been used (Timperley 2011) particularly related to education. Others referred to 'professional

development' and 'professional learning' as synonymous, the latter emphasizing the sort of experiences that are effective (Stoll, Harris and Handscomb 2012). Both are intentional, ongoing and systematic processes (Guskey 2000). Nevertheless, professional learning was hampered by connotations of delivery of information (Timperley 2011). My study used the term professional development.

It was unclear from definitions whether professional development concerned maintaining current role-related learning or preparation for progression or both. Furthermore, CIPD definitions did not envisage dialogue between organizations and employees which a broader holistic viewpoint encourages (Evans and Rainbird 2002). Also, professional development occurs beyond the workplace and sometimes at home. One way for professionals to approach learning was as 'learning professionals' seeking out opportunities whatever the constraints to extend professional understandings and skills sets, rather than reflecting on existing ones (Guile and Lucas 1999). This view represented an active, individual forward looking role in preparing for career progression or advancement while supporting a maintenance role helpful in a study of older workers' learning.

### **2.3.3 Designing for, and types of professional development for older workers in workplace learning**

Workplace learning (WLP) is embedded in everyday workplace activities extending to social relations and technical aspects of production (Billett 2001; Hoyrup and Elkjaer 2006; Felstead et al. 2009). Research showed the social nature of learning was most valued (Felstead et al. 2005). Ideas researched in the international EU Cedefop study (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006) provided a broad context for professional development practices for older workers focused at individual, organizational workplace and societal level.

If as argued, individuals, organizations and society could shift perception to see ageing as a lifelong developmental and learning process then all need to adopt a lifelong learning viewpoint (Hyde and Phillipson 2014). Development then becomes

a broad and holistic lifelong concept to include education and training certainly but collective community and workplace learning (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006:10).

#### **2.3.4 Forms of professional development for older workers**

To continue an effective working life of benefit to employer and employee what should professional development for older workers look like? In its infancy, no overall conceptual framework or model exists at organizational level in how to implement workplace practices (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006:22-23). Lifelong learning was key (Hyde and Phillipson 2014) to ensure ageing populations have skills to maintain healthy and productive lives, with appropriate training and development opportunities over the life course crucial. Three types of learning were identified, formal, non-formal and informal learning with evidence showing those 50+ were more likely to engage in the last two (ibid.). Informal learning is the process whereby all acquire knowledge and skills through everyday living; non-formal, systematic, organized educational activity undertaken outside the formal system providing selected types of learning, and lastly formal learning, the institutionalized, graded and hierarchical educational system (Jarvis 1985).

Recognizing and enhancing the value of informal and non-formal learning was vital for social inclusion while improving economic productivity. Research for the Learning and Skills Development Agency in England revealed binary views unhelpful as most learning has attributes of formality/informality (Colley et al. 2003); learning is a formal-to-informal continuum (Eraut 2004; Findsen 2015).

The landscape for adult development was multi-faceted. Illeris's three dimensions of learning and competence development for adults provided a starting point encompassing functionality, sensitivity and integration (2009). Tikkanen and Nyhan's (2006:10) EU research suggested four dimensions and categorized older workers' skills at individual level. These were the four C's of competence: capacities, conditions and compensation, and potentially an over-emphasis on ICT. However, these themes did not take a holistic viewpoint or envisage a dialogue between organization and employee. In building comprehensive, holistic approaches (Walker 1997) competence development (knowledge skills and attitude) is only *one*

(my emphasis) aspect in the total change process due to a variety of cultural and pragmatic reasons. Learning going beyond formal courses and programmes was an important part of workplace learning (Findsen 2015). Evans and Rainbird (2002) discussed the significance of workplace learning for a learning society making connections between types of programmes incorporating work-based learning and non-formal aspects of learning running through everyday workplace practices and between workplace and wider life/work relationships. Evans (2010:360) proposed establishing quality relationships, facilitated by dialogue, contributing to better understanding of the social nature of workplace learning and economic and political frameworks shaping, regulating and driving policy (Evans et al. 2006).

Narrow views of learning focused on skills and knowledge acquisition represented the contested debate between models of acquisition against models of participation and related concepts of cognition versus models recognizing socio-cultural activity (Malloch et al. 2010) such as Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning where learning was socially located in communities of practice. Adopting a wider slant picked up the value of social productions of learning absent from Tikkanen and Nyhan's (2006) four dimensions and the necessity for wider views of workplace learning encompassing individual biographies (Hodkinson et al. 2004). Holistic learning can be found in communities of practice and coaching and mentoring models (Evans 2010). This means going beyond mechanistic learning in organizations through situated learning (Lave and Wenger 1991) where knowledge is created through group participation; novices and experienced workers collectively engage in work as a community of learners and learning, building collective knowledge through modelling, coaching, mentoring and scaffolding, offering equal footing with younger workers (Findsen 2015).

Informal learning contrasted with formal learning has no one definition. Eraut (2004) defines it as offering greater flexibility for learners and recognizes the social significance of learning from others, emphasizing the role of individual agency. Learning includes tacit knowledge, important in workplace learning and exemplified in 'we know more than we can tell' (Polanyi 1962) making the distinction between 'tacit' and explicit or (articulated) knowledge. Tacit skills defined as 'implicit or hidden dimensions of knowledge' include key elements of mastery workers draw on

in everyday practice such as inter-personal abilities, reflective abilities, prioritizing and planning which could be beneficial in sustaining adult learning (Evans, Kersh and Kontiainen 2004), and I argue, older workers' learning.

A European study of over 100 case studies of adult learning in work environments found individuals bring personal lives into workplaces based on prior experiences, dispositions and cultural backgrounds which can modify, influence and improve on how workplace tasks are completed (Evans and Kersh 2004). Significantly, by recognizing tacit skills older workers would remain engaged in the workplace when otherwise the reverse might occur (ibid.). The ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP 2000-9) meta review of pedagogies of teaching and learning in educational spaces showed 'more prominence should be assigned to informal learning relationships being valued and appropriately utilized in formal processes' (TLRP)<sup>2</sup>. Giving formal recognition of informal learning such as tacit knowledge as part of what makes for effective professional development, had implications for my study where formal and informal learning was conducted.

Organizations which recognized and used employees growing wealth of tacit and explicit knowledge to solve goals realized a major competitive advantage. But how employees acquire and share tacit and explicit knowledge needs improving (Smith 2001), meaning workforce culture is critical. One view of organizational culture was defined as 'a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration' (Schein 1992:9). This functional paradigm viewed organizational culture as an external constraint or internal control mechanism which can be manipulated by management but provided for diagnosis and implementation of age friendly quantifiable organizational culture (Appanah and Biggs 2015). Supportive, interactive learning environments built on trust, openness and collective ownership encouraged knowledge acquisition and sharing (Smith 2001), mirroring a Habermasian perspective.

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<sup>2</sup> The ESRC-funded Teaching and Learning Research programme into the effectiveness of educational research was conducted between 2000-09 <http://www.tlrp.org/index.html>.

In hierarchical organizations such as HE, where it is argued that ‘the growing influence of managerialism points to the location of the majority of power at the centre of the organisation as it endeavours to reap gains in efficiency through tighter central control’ (Lomas 2005:8), ‘the glass ceiling’ tends to be low and hierarchical organizations can impede advancement (Olssen and Peters 2005). Moreover, this structural situation reinforces the lack of mobility for the cohort under study, older workers more generally tend to have reached the top of their career possibilities, confronting career plateaus (Kooij et al. 2007).

Learning which may be helpful in extending an older workers’ career possibilities would be in establishing more formal mechanisms for intergenerational development through mixing age groups, which could result in innovation and reciprocity (Zachery 2000). Finsden (2015) suggests realizing a holistic framing for workplace learning implies an intergenerational aspect to learning relevant for the development of teams of differing ages to limit stratification, and where misconceptions could be changed or ameliorated for more harmonious and productive workplaces. Nevertheless, while not new, intergenerational learning as a practice is little researched (ibid.).

However, learning at work is not unproblematic; critical voices challenge and place learning as being thrust on people for political objectives or social control. Coffield suggested ‘opportunities for lifelong learning were often viewed as a threat or obligation imposed by employers’ (Coffield 2000:13). Much professional development was conducted for contract compliance and statutory requirements (Field 1999) where motivation for learning can be low as workers needed to see real value in their learning (Cedefop 2008).

### **2.3.5 Features of the contemporary UK HE workplace context and professional staff**

Post-modernity (Giddens 1991), globalisation, technology and wider economic climates have rendered workplaces places of uncertainty with restructuring the norm as public sector reform gathers pace. In response, HE staff have had to adapt to

change to maintain a high-quality sector (HEFCE 2010) and management now have more in common with CEOs (Chief Operating Officers) of organizations than academics where administration is considered a tool for financial rather than collegiate benefit (Kernohan 2014).

In the UK, universities face significant challenges due to the UK Government's reforms and retrenchment of funding (HEFCE 2011). Paradoxically, the Government views HE central to the knowledge-based economy demanding an increasingly diverse and outward looking sector. Against this background, Gordon and Whitchurch (2007:2) suggested that workforce development has become a critical matter in enabling universities to deliver multiple agendas in complex environments. However, there has been less focus on implications for human resource management than on teaching and research activity. At the same time, the regulatory and policy backgrounds of HE systems has become more complex in relation to employer and employee rights, obligations and equity issues (ibid.:4).

Within this changing environment, there were clear linkages between institutional performance and the ability to attract, retain, reward and develop staff required of a contemporary university (ibid.:3) in a transition from a community of scholars to a community of professionals (AUT 2001), and where the composition of workforces is changing, with mixed roles emerging and a blurring of the traditional divisions between academic and professional staff.

Professional staff in HE is a knowledge based category of occupations usually following tertiary education and vocational training and experience (Evetts 2003), a buffer against the state (Freidson 2002) and have a responsibility to wider society (Perkin 1985). General characteristics include possession and use of expert or specialist knowledge, the exercise of autonomous thought and judgement and responsibility to clients and wider society through a voluntarist commitment to a set of principles (Hoyle and John 1995).

Professional staff provided services enhancing student experience and/or research, consultancy and knowledge transfer and contributed to the university's reputation and reach. More recently there has been an emphasis on the development of professional staff than hitherto. This has in part been led by professional associations, such as the Association of University Administrators (AUA), who offer

a CPD framework, and sector bodies who played key roles in skill and knowledge development through promotion and ownership of professional standards and development programmes (HEFCE 2010). Appendix 15 gives professional and support roles and age groupings for the HE sectors.

### **2.3.6 Structure, work agency and empowerment in workplaces**

Aspects of structure and agency enabling or hindering career progression and development were relevant to competitive contemporary HE workplaces. There is a paucity of material as far as I can decipher, specifically related to HE workplaces in this field, but literature focusing on structure and work agency in workplaces, more generally, is helpful and of relevance as there is some homogeneity across contemporary office workplaces.

Evans argued rethinking ‘structure and agency’ in relation to learning, work and social responsibility (Evans 2009). In discussing where the most productive workplace learning can take place, Billett (2006:11) drew attention to ‘relational’ aspects where relationships are negotiated in climates either highly supportive or developmental for career progression or which afforded fewer opportunities resulting in engagement, engaging despite barriers, or withdrawal. Being ‘agentic’, having agency, was important in workplaces in deciphering what was occurring in a socially constructed workplace and socially constructed individuals (ibid.:15). For this study of one HE workplace, such interdependence should emphasize agency giving people a voice to create a ‘culture of empowerment’ (Walker 1997). Nonetheless, it is considered that theories are not easily generated as an individual’s experiences of work are subjective (Billett 2006:14).

Having work agency in the workplace, of relevance to HE workplaces, aligns interdependences between lifelong learning and agency. Work agency is an ‘individual’s capacity to make intentional choices and act on those choices in ways making a difference to their professional lives’ (Harteis and Goller 2014). It consists of the capacity, belief and disposition to ‘make intentional choices, to initiate actions based on these choices and to exercise control over self and the environment’ (ibid.).



So, individuals are and have capacity to be self-determining, reinforcing self-efficacy which has inferences for participation in learning. As Goller and Billett (2014:13) comment ‘by taking initiatives, seizing opportunities and taking control over work situations employees are able to take an active approach towards their professional development’.

Crucially then, work agency was considered a necessary pre-condition for successful work-related and non-work related lifelong learning (Harteis and Goller 2014), so individuals need to develop qualities in supportive competencies separate from specific uncertain work landscapes, such as contemporary HE environments, as Dewey advocates. As a ‘self-manage’ concept it comprises strategies to advance and renew an individual’s skills and competencies. It is communitarian and participation is in communities lending weight to Habermas’s (1984, 1987) communitarian approach. It seeks to deliberately initiate change from the bottom up rather than top down organizationally, to be able to raise questions, identify opportunities and engage in learning activities (ibid.). Individuals need self-management tools more than ever to cope with today’s uncertain work environments requiring permanent lifelong learning through work-related knowledge, skills and competences to remain employable and current in increasingly protean careers (Hall 2002).

Cedefop’s (2012) research considered the interactions between learning, ageing and working to support lifelong and active ageing policies at EU and member state level. It aims to contribute to the further development of this field. In a publication, the outcome of a European Commission seminar of 70 researchers, policy makers and practitioners exploring the potential of investing in ageing workforces, the ability to ‘self-manage’ and ‘adapt’ to employers’ preferences (Cedefop 2012) was particularly pertinent to older workers who are often faced with additional discriminatory attitudes. Contrastingly, evidence suggested that such adaptability by older workers was not necessarily occurring (Patrickson and Ranzijn 2003:50; Virgona et al. 2003).

Equal opportunities for this study related to empowerment and confidence to push forward with support offered raising questions as to what extent an older workforce is expanding and progressing? Were they being held back through lack of skills or confidence? These were valid questions asking where HE is located in this space as a public sector body. Were other sectors demonstrating different models and notions of

older workers to model best practice? The UK DIY business B&Q, for example, specifically employs older workers and Barclays Bank, apprenticeships (DWP 2012). I found little material on promoting equality and diversity relative to age in HE. The Leadership Foundation which develops leadership skills of HE leaders offered guidance for enabling equity but not for age. A HEFCE guide supported HE best practice, including managing flexible retirement and extended working lives, workability, performance management and a framework for establishing ROI on staff learning (Mavin et al. 2012). The introduction to my thesis suggested older workers have much to contribute to the economy providing their labour skills are re-tooled' (EAEA 2006:58). A response to the challenge of equity for older workers would be through professional development, support and the absorption of the necessity by both staff and management to keep ahead.

### **2.3.7 Developing critical human resource organizational structures for professional development and learning**

Organizations function within the same norms of society they are embedded in so in Western societies where youth is privileged over age, an organization serious about combating workplace inequality, needs to eliminate inequalities or prejudices based on race, gender and age through enhancement of worker's freedoms, being an organizational form of development (Gagnon and Cornelius 2000:43). Effective management of knowledge, change, and innovation were central or core competencies to be mastered for organizational success (Rowley 1999). As knowledge based economies and lifelong learning were explicitly interlinked the latter must adapt to a global learning revolution taking place (Evans 2009).

This study argued for voice set against hostile landscapes marshalled to negotiate spaces for learning. The argument has been made for an agency/structure perspective (Habermas 1987, 1990; Archer 1995) through work agency. But it was insufficient to consider agency can do the job requiring a move beyond simplistic cultures (Glatter 2006). It was necessary to ask whether senior leadership in this study considered the organization, as an educational organization, had a moral purpose to develop all

staff's potential in pursuing a diversity agenda as agency and structure theorists supporting 'a very moral angle argue it should have' (Ritzer 2012:225).

Workplace learning forms part of management philosophies of development and change in organizations and how an organization develops new knowledge through its workers (Costley 2010). Bolman and Deal's (2008) four organizational frames: human resource, structural, political and symbolic are a helpful lens in analysing conflicting phenomena and relationships between them as a snapshot in time. This study mainly focused on human resourcing so the HR framework as part of organizational strategy pre-dominated, although the frames work in concert. Human resource management (HRM) is an essential element of business strategy for organizations playing a critical role in organizational viability and relative performance (Boxall and Purcell 2011). It plays a key role supporting higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop a sustainable fit for purpose, high-quality future workforce contributing to institutional success (HEFCE 2010:3). Adopting an HRM perspective (Green 2010) considered individual skills, needs, competency profiles, relationships, motivation levels, enthusiasm, harmony and cooperation asking:

- Is there a congruence between employee needs and employer needs?
- Is there a two-way communication between different hierarchical levels?
- Does the organization have people that believe in their people? Do they act on this belief?

An HR frame interrogates:

- To what degree is there participation in decision-making?
- Support for idea generation;
- Shared information;
- Does the organization used rigid controls to monitor attendance and performance?
- How does management perceive employees?

Bolman and Deal (2008) make a case for diversity, but it is mainly from a normative frame, in that as society is diverse an organization should reflect that but omitted seeing the benefits of diverse workforces (Green 2010). But the real world suggested

organizations presented in more complex ways indicating a permanent paradox of stability and instability, and lack of management control. Differing times, such as a change process, stimulated feelings of inclusion and exclusion, indicating shifting dynamics. Complexity theory restored the relationship between agency and structure (Close and Raynor 2010). Thus, it was suggested that alongside organization structures, informal structures of participation played an everyday role filling in gaps in understanding where the role of dialogue was emphasized (ibid.), and where I argued, Habermasian spaces for dialogue help re-balance the 'lifeworld'.

Formal structures support managers in decision-making for strategic planning, change management, problem-solving, creativity and culture. Leaders should be alert to designing emergent structures (Senge 1990), such as a re-design in this study of holistic learning frameworks where older workers can have best 'job fit' for sustained employability and flourishing in extended working lives. Stacey (2005:101) though presents Senge's (1990) and Schein's organizational culture model (2004) as 'reifying vision and culture, confusing values (choice) with norms (constraints)' offering a simplistic view that both are achievable through gap analysis.

### **2.3.8 Summary**

In considering older workers' professional development and learning, I discussed contextual and socio-cultural approaches and relational and context related theories addressing learning relative to the structure and agency debate; Sen's work on human flourishing through the capability approach and Habermas's critical social theory as central to understanding modern workforces, specifically addressing the role of older workers and their learning within those spaces. Sen and Habermas's theoretical frames were helpful to this study being sensitive to emancipation and agency, which had inferences for how older workers' learning could be structured in organizations. Sen's framing required enabling pre-conditions to be present, Habermas's framing required dialogic communication legitimized in the workplace. Flourishing can help stimulate communication to develop positive institutional and departmental cultures to include older staff. However, Sen and Habermas's philosophical writings were not fulsome around practices of 'affordances'. This study aimed to uncover what those

might be and how they could be implemented in recommendations for practice for older workers' development.

The contextual/sociocultural approach considered individuals were inextricable from the societies they inhabited. This linkage was appropriate as theories of learning have increased in complexity to reflect modern workplaces, so older workers' learning needs and development should consider an intersection of factors. Achieving human flourishing and potential is not the singular premise of younger workers; older workers too, have legitimate claim to learning as *vessels of untapped potential*. How older workers might be drawn into the lifeworld of the university, challenging restrictions of modernity and alienation, through engagement in dialogue via ideal speech situations to achieve flourishing was presented. Alongside, enabling structures and processes needed to be present. Billett discussed a strong connection to 'relational inter-dependencies', an individual's own agency (such as having the confidence) within the workplace interwoven with enabling or restricting cultures or 'affordances' of the work environment.

The connection between workplace learning and lifelong learning for older workers, and sustained employability was explored. Definitions and participation rates in workplace learning were explored before establishing links between workplace learning and lifelong learning, and how it might be further cultivated for HE.

There were a range of benefits to the government, employers and individuals from lifelong learning, including shorter periods of unemployment, a more flexible labour market and productive staff. A good set of skills and qualifications can positively affect an individual's labour market outcomes, improving their career, income, lifestyle, and offers wider benefits to individuals and society in improved wellbeing and inclusion (AAT 2015, OECD 2013).

Holistic framings of workplace learning, encompassing recognition of informal learning as effective professional development were beneficial, allowing older workers to remain engaged and advantageous in realizing business goals. Supportive and interactive workplace cultures built on trust and openness encourage knowledge acquisition and sharing. An intergenerational aspect to learning can result in

innovation where stereotyping can be challenged for more harmonious and productive workplaces. Workplace learning cultures have seldom supported older workers. Worker status and unequal access to learning resulted in uneven quality and learning opportunities. This implied a role for intervention by regulation and government policy readdressing the imbalance as these factors had significant direct and indirect impacts on workplace learning opportunities (Rainbird 2004).

If as argued, workplaces were significant for lifelong learning and as sites of learning, how might we make the most use of older workers' potential to benefit individuals and employers in wider society, thereby recognizing learning is a human right and education a form of democracy (Dewey 1916)? Obtaining an answer, means exploring what learning older workers value, what learning employers value and how any differing views on what should be offered be reconciled between these two groupings.

### **2.3.9 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework (Fig 2.1) was elaborated in Fig 2.3. The concept and study was pragmatic; older workers want to work and employers want to get the best from their staff suggesting the model is helpful for both older workers and management, allowing for reflection and action for older workers' professional development. It recognized instrumental and economic rationales were necessary as workplaces need to be performant. The framework suggested an initial organizational model exploring what was a 'best fit' for older workers' learning through spaces to continue an effective working life of benefit to staff and management.

The overarching organization human resource development component of Bolman and Deal's (2008) HR frame as the outer rim, indicated a critical HR development strategy and processes as the overarching umbrella for learning possibilities for older workers. Within this strategy, initiatives for learning arose from older workers' participation, alongside formal structures.

Through enabling structure and processes shown in the inner circles, empowerment and flourishing through professional development could occur. Ongoing learning

occurs in a dynamic external environment impacting throughout life on individual experiences and beliefs (Withnall 2010:127). Social processes can be lost sight of when navigating environmental contexts such as changing HE practice. A relational and dialectic process connects each element with each one enacting on the other as a cyclical process.

### **Exercising capability through dialogic spaces and work agency**

The framework recognized the possibility of achieving capability; flourishing for individuals and community in the university community of professional staff. Sen's capability approach (Sen 1992:48) explains how individual freedom and agency strengthened personal flourishing, adaptable to workplaces and professional development, where it can help stimulate communication to develop positive institutional and departmental cultures. However, this was contingent on Sen's vectors, seen through the socio-cultural processes and relationships, being in place and was therefore contextual.

The literature on structure, agency and empowerment in workplaces of relevance to HE explored the structure and agency debate (Habermas 1987, 1990; Archer 1995). The concept of work agency (shown in the central circle) was important in driving professional development keeping skills and competences current in uncertain workplace conditions separate from 'concrete work conditions' (Harteis and Goller 2014), supporting a shift to agentic individuals. Developing and sustaining work agency to deliberately initiate change is bottom up rather than top down, developing solidarity as a community and extending empowerment. Agency and empowerment were important notions for workplaces as organizations, leading to engaged workers.

### **Socio-cultural processes and relationships in learning**

Socio-cultural processes and relationships in learning to professional development suggested it is an intersection of factors that affect adult learning and development (Baumgartner 2001) underestimated in reflecting how learning occurs (Hager 2010). Relational and context related theories addressing learning relative to the structure and agency debate were refined to work agency (central circle). They lead to an

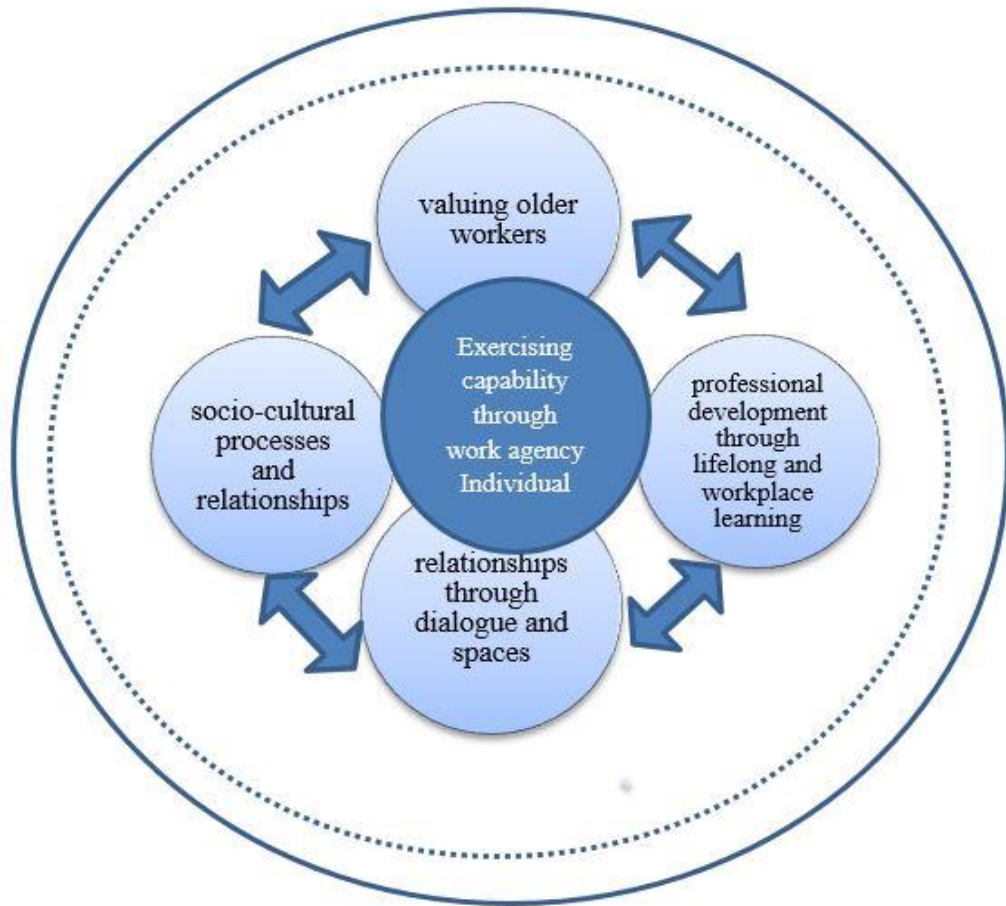
argument for rethinking structure and agency (Evans 2009), personal agency (Billett 2001) and developing work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014) for older workers.

### **Dialogue and spaces**

The literature review argued for voice set against sometimes hostile landscapes, seeing individual voice as important (Habermas 1987) and potentially marshalled to negotiate spaces. Spaces include workshops, communities of practice, different fora, informal learning, sharing opportunities and involvement by staff in strategic policy for organizational learning. With differing views as to whether management strategies could serve the organization and the individual, or whether it would always be conflictual, negotiations both occurring in and resulting in the creation of spaces might permit a contextualised capability to be achieved. High performance meant staff and management come together in a dialectic space, where respect for older workers' contribution is not always seen as valuable (Withnall 2010:127).



Critical human resources development – organizational structure and processes in one HE environment for older workers



Each element enacts on the other and overlaps with the central notion of exercising capability and community through professional development and spaces in which to develop.

**Fig 2.3 Older workers: conceptions of value in professional development in the HE workplace for mutual benefit**

### **2.3.10 Research questions**

The research questions stemming from the literature review and conceptual framework are now given.

The overarching research question commenced with a concern for older workers' ability to flourish in one HE site and potential marginalization for development opportunities as the focal point of enquiry, refined to a small number of specific questions. The questions were shaped by a desire to understand what older workers and employers value about professional development and what forms of learning appear most beneficial in relation to the literature around socio-cultural theories of learning, workplace learning, forms of professional development, agency and affordances of the workplace. A Habermasian perspective acts as a device for critical transformative social change (Habermas 1987) leading to the overarching aim of the study and research questions.

The word 'value' has several meanings relevant to the research (Chambers 1991) and as the word 'value' also pivots on 'value to whom?' I explored this aspect in the interviews. It concerned whose interests were served bringing a critical perspective into how the studied organization's human resource strategies enabled access to professional development and how on the other hand, older workers were able to influence access and what professional development and types were offered.

#### **Research question 1**

What professional development do older workers see as valuable in the HE case study?

#### **Research question 2**

What professional development does management see as valuable for older workers in the HE case study?

Questions 1 and 2 can be connected by a discussion considering what and whose interests are served.

#### **Research question 3**

How might any differing views on what professional development should be offered be reconciled?

This question concerned gaining understanding of how different interests in the process and outcomes might be addressed and by whom. It also explored any differences of gaps in expectations between the two groupings of professional staff and management.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter critically discussed the chosen research design and research methodology. Underpinning epistemological and ontological positions were explored. The methods for data collection and sample selection were critically reviewed. A full exploration of the data collection process ensued, together with the approach taken for data analysis. Challenges to validity, reliability and generalizability of the design were explored alongside the limitations of myself as the researcher. A reflection on triangulation of the data was made. The chapter concluded with a review of ethical considerations.

The research explored older workers' workplace learning through professional development in one UK university for professional staff aged 50+ employed in typical roles. The case study was chosen for accessibility in a context characterized by social, economic and technological change and restructuring.

### **3.2 Case study context**

The case study was a stand-alone, research intensive, specialist, largely postgraduate university offering specialist professional development training having national and international reach. Funding was mainly derived from government, non-government organisations (NGO's), other public bodies, and student fees. The university had six departments and a doctoral school. In 2013, there were 960 staff; 400 academic and 560 professional staff. Professional staff provided administrative and professional support in functions at differing grades, including registry, finance, building services, marketing, IT and library services, course administration and student welfare. They also engaged in teaching and consultancy roles.

The university's stated mission was promoting excellence in education and related areas of social research and professional practice through advancing knowledge and understanding; its work rooted in a commitment to truth, critical reason and social justice. It researched culture, reality, identity, class, difference, religions, equality, inequality and sub-cultures. Governance was overseen by Council (the executive body concerned with financial, legal and business matters and monitoring

performance) and Senate (supreme authority for academic matters) set out in statutes delegating overall oversight of key strategic areas. Committees reported to Council whose Committee meetings heard, approved and recommended on matters of strategy and guidance including the Human Resources Committee (HRC).

### **3.2.1 Human resource development, principles, structures and strategies**

The organization's HRC had oversight of human resources (HR) and industrial relations matters advising and making recommendations to Council regarding HR policies over HR strategy; safety, health and wellbeing policy; appointment, assignment, grading, appraisal, discipline, suspension and dismissal of staff procedures and approval of other policies including diversity to meet internal and legislative requirements. It agreed corporate HR targets and key performance indicators (KPI), reviewing university performance. The HRC oversight included staff development, whose strategies fed into HR strategies approved by the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) and Council. The Staff and Organisational Development (SOAD) policy followed HR strategy contributing to implementation of the university corporate strategy, the development of departments and staff individual professional and personal development. Development was a joint responsibility between individuals and their department.

### **Equality and diversity**

The staff profile for gender, ethnicity, disability and age (2013) was benchmarked against Section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act (2010). The PSED three aims require public bodies<sup>3</sup> to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination; and to advance equality of opportunity for protected characteristics *including age*. It involves considering minimizing disadvantages, meeting the needs of those with protected characteristics, encouraging participation in public life or other activities where their participation is low. Lastly,

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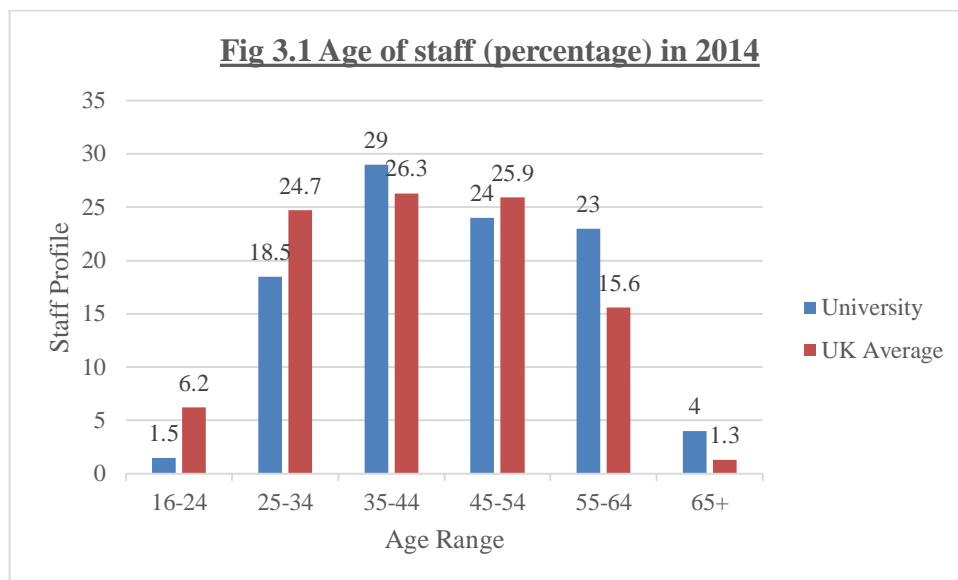
<sup>3</sup> Formally universities are not public bodies, although they are predominantly state funded.

they must foster good relations between those sharing protected characteristics and those who do not.

### Staff profile

This study focused on age as a protected characteristic. Appendix 15 provides other staff profile dimensions. The university had a slightly older workforce than the UK average (Fig 3.1), the largest majority was aged 35-44, representing a change from 2013 where the largest majority of staff was aged 41-55.

**Fig 3.1 Age of staff (percentage) in 2014**



### Employee voice and representation

HR consulted with staff representatives at consultative committees where staff development was on the agenda. Staff development canvassed suggestions for the central development programme through the staff review and development (SRD) form and emails. Employee HR and development concerns and access to opportunities were made through line managers and then departmental heads. For the former, it was possible to go directly to HR staff responsible for each department. There were cross-department committees where voices could be heard.

HR consulted with recognized trade union representatives (UNISON and UCU) at consultative committees. They represented the interests of all staff playing a role in formal consultative processes for employee concerns and grievances contributing perceptions into HR policies and strategy process. Unions advocated for member's interests for material concerns including pay, conditions and development. Unions meetings were held for all members from which follow up actions were taken related to member interests.

### **3.3 Research design**

Emanating from the conceptual framing, the research design took a philosophical world view (Creswell 2009) largely supporting advocacy but pragmatic in tenor. It asked exploratory questions more suited to a qualitative/interpretivist research design to uncover meanings for a social or human problem where qualitative analysis can provide richer and more detailed findings than quantitative research (Cohen et al. 2007:461). Qualitative research is a 'means for exploring the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem' (Creswell 2009:4).

The socio-cultural and context led concept also aligned with an interpretative research design underpinning the exploratory nature under study aligned to a social or human problem. The research sought perceptions of older workers' experience and aspirations around professional development, and in turn management expectations and views, suited to an ontology viewing knowledge as socially constructed and based on the real world we experience and live in (Robson 2011:28). An inductive approach was used in interpretation and overall theory deduced. Asking questions of an exploratory nature, qualitative analysis tends to provide richer and more detailed data than quantitative research (Cohen et al. 2007:461).

In the conceptual framework, the HR element of the university was framed through a strategic framework within which other elements are nested (Boxall and Purcell 2011). Sen's capability approach (Sen 1992:48) demonstrated how individual freedom and agency can strengthen personal flourishing being a broad concept adaptable to workplace situations and staff development. The role of agency came to the fore with an argument made for rethinking structure and agency (Evans 2009)

alongside personal agency (Billett 2001) and in developing work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014).

The primary role of research is generating empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss, 2008:viii). Here, new light was shed on development considered valuable by older workers and management and how any differences might be reconciled. This study focused on older workers' flourishing in the workplace through learning opportunities and was concerned with empowerment for learning and its pre-conditions. The research aim was to contribute to analytic generalizations and insight for a working hypothesis (Yin 2014:40, 68). This case study is only representative of itself and would need more studies to be generalizable. The methodology was interpretive and constructivist as the enquiry was exploratory (Robson, 2002:59) looking for new insights and understandings. An interpretive approach focused on perceptions, opinions, feelings, thoughts, impressions distinct to individuals researched and what was researched depends on methodology and design. The interpretive approach was viewed in terms of social philosophy, partly concerning subtle forms of social interaction, authority and conflict, overlapping with political philosophy with regards to authority (Scott 2012) relevant in exploring accounts of older workers' participation in learning.

Central to this conceptual framing Habermas's (1984) 'ideal speech situations' (ISS) was one way of actualising and enabling empowerment for older workers maintaining and realizing potential in modern society in a university setting. Habermas's concept of *Verständigung*<sup>4</sup> represents relationships of mutual recognition where opposing participants meeting on equal terms agree to behave in certain ways and successful interaction depends on cooperation of both parties with no relevant arguments excluded. In communicative action, parties share a common aim of reaching understanding, *guiding the conduct of the process of 'rational argumentation'* over disputed validity claims, giving meaning to ideas of truth and justice allowing for a 'context-transcendent power' giving rational potential and opportunity for everyday communication processes (Cooke 1999:4). For Habermas,

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<sup>4</sup> *Verständigung* – 'reaching understanding', 'mutual understanding', or 'communication'. Although embracing linguistic comprehension (*Verstehen*) goes beyond this to refer to the process of reaching understanding, in reaching understanding with another person or persons (Cooke 1999:19).



truth only occurs through this pragmatic concept of idealized practice of argument. So, the ISS is 'premised on a range of values and differentiated from systematically distorted communication (Day 1993). For my study rationalization of the workplace could be alleviated for older workers through communicative action and interaction of staff and management and employee representative bodies (trade union involvement).

### **3.4 Epistemological and ontological position**

Episteme is a 'theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology' (Crotty 1998:3). My episteme accorded with a philosophical assumption of an advocacy, participatory or emancipatory worldview held by theorists including Habermas (1987) and Freire (2005) who consider 'post-positivist assumptions imposed structural laws or theories not fitting marginalized individuals in society, or issues of social justice that needed to be addressed' and where specific issues addressing empowerment, inequality and suppression may need action to address such concerns (Creswell 2009:9). This worldview aligned with it being critical for older workers to have opportunities for development and Sen's capability vectors in place through enabling workplace structures to address concerns.

I have argued Habermas's theory on forms of knowledge may be helpful in pointing to gaps to where we needed to be in older workers' learning. Here, where there might be differences in perceptions of values of development between management and staff and how they could be addressed. Habermas rejects the 'illusion of positivism' (Habermas 1970, 1971). Participants [in this study](#) have already pre-interpreted social and cultural reality through a dynamic cultural symbolic meaning system. This study was informed by ontological assumptions that knowledge is socially constructed aligned with an interpretative exploratory enquiry. Therefore, the method for understanding socially constructed reality was 'dialogic' allowing individuals (staff and management) to communicate their experiences (and potential solutions to change or improvement) within a shared framework of cultural meanings (Blaikie 2010:135) around age-related perceptions. In line with my 'reflective partner' stance (ibid.:52) associated with critical theory, participant's voices were advanced through using survey data (Phase 1) to inform interview questions and identify interested

interview participants (Phase 2). Including professional staff's voices in the research design supported an agenda for change to improve lives (Creswell 2009:9) culminating in recommendations. By opening up a channel for older workers' voices for empowerment the possibility for change was realized.

### **3.5 Research methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Case study approach**

A case study explored a largely unexplored phenomenon: extended working lives for professional staff in an HE location. It contributed to knowledge of individual, group, organizational or other related phenomena (Yin 2009:4) with understanding framed by contextual conditions whose enquiry relied on multiple sources of evidence, using triangulation to converge data reaching understanding (ibid.:18). As an adult educator and EdD researcher case studies are important to develop learning skills needed to conduct good research and context-dependent, concrete experience central to development as a learning professional, as other skills (Flyvbjerg 2006).

My dominant epistemological stance was interpretivist and constructivist. However, case studies are sometimes viewed as positivistic having roots in experimentation. Yin's approach is fundamentally positivist recommending hypotheses and/or propositions (2003). But explaining such dichotomy, using a predominantly positivistic approach for a constructivist research study is not incompatible due to the applicability of different epistemological orientations (Yin 2014:17). Case study research can be positivist, interpretive or critical.

Using what Yin (ibid.) terms a relativist or constructivist perspective, the theory in designing a case study may concern the way in which participants' perspectives are captured and rooted in how and why I believed as a researcher their different meanings illuminate the topic under study. Accordingly, decisions over forms of research questions and methods used for data collection provided the rationale. Case studies are critiqued as not conducted using controlled analytical studies, such as randomised control empirical studies, so do not arrive at any causal relationships as controlled studies would; they are not as valid being subject to bias and are not

possible to generalize from. In repudiation, applying stringent research methodology practices such as triangulation would result in conditions being met (Flyvbjerg 2006:390-404). Knowledge can be seen as more than statistical significance, Flyvbjerg proposes there is no reason why case study knowledge cannot ‘enter the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in society’ (2006:227) concurring with Yin’s argument for case studies striving for analytic generalizations (2014:68). Flyvbjerg’s point of departure is of a researcher looking at common views of a target group applicable here (Flyvbjerg 2001).

### **3.5.2 Mixed methods**

This study used three mixed methods data instruments; survey (qualitative and quantitative), qualitative interviews and documentary analysis.

I took the decision to mix the research methods (quantitative and qualitative) and approaches; survey, interviews and document analysis as there were distinct advantages to mixing research assumptions in that it improves research quality dependent on how well the researcher mixes methods and approaches to answer the question (Briggs et al. 2012). To do this, I used a mixed method approach where the survey data informed the interview questions as it was important for participant’s voices to be carried through in a research design supporting an agenda for change to improve lives and appeared to be the most suitable way to answer the research questions.

Mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative methods but use more than one strategy (Robson 2011:162) adequately triangulating information (Denscombe 2010). In critique, such approaches could be related to the ‘incompatibility thesis’ but this is contested (ibid.:162). Those favouring mixed research argue for the concept of the ‘compatibility thesis’ where quantitative and qualitative methods can be used together ‘as long as the assumptions of both paradigms are respected’ with approaches carefully combined to complement each other’s specific research objectives, taking advantage of each paradigm’s strengths (Briggs et al. 2012:122-123).

I used Tashakkori and Teddlie’s (2003:11) definition of mixed methods designs as use of qualitative and quantitative data collection procedures or research methods.

The mixing occurred in methods used mirroring my approach using different methods for Phase 1 (survey) and Phase 2 (interviews). Mixed methods provide stronger inferences for findings and offer opportunity for a greater divergence of views (ibid.:14). This was of importance to ask the most salient questions derived from Phase 1 data driving the research in understanding a little-known phenomenon around older workers and management perceptions. In wanting to discover a wide range of views these different approaches (quantitative and qualitative) combined in a flexible design (Robson 2002:166) which allowed an evolving design for the study, multiple realities, myself as researcher as instrument of data collection and focus on participants' view (ibid.). However, the drawback was the need for extensive data collection (survey, interviews and documentary analysis) and time in analysing numeric and qualitative data (Creswell 2009:205).

### **3.5.3 Multi-phase sequential research design**

Mixed method research studies use qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques in parallel or sequential phases. A multi-phase sequential research design was used to elaborate on or expand on findings of one method with another (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). Convergent sets of data are complementary each informing, supporting or 'problematizing' the other (Creswell 2009).

Qualitative designs can incorporate quantitative methods of data collection.

Here, sequential research design occurred through a survey, then semi-structured interviews with professional staff and management. The multi-phase design took place over time, when concurrent design elements were combined but lead to one overall objective; an understanding of perspectives and values of professional development in one university. The concurrent design elements refer to data from different groupings (staff and management) helping explore the phenomenon at multiple levels (Creswell 2009). The survey was structured and discursive allowing for a small amount of data collection in a standardized form from a relatively large number of individuals; a relatively simple approach to studying values, attitudes, beliefs and motives giving anonymity where sensitive information is gathered (Robson 2011:238-241).

The main criticism around self-reported data collection methods is that information collected is difficult to verify but it is a key way of researching employee attitudes and perceptions (Yin 1990). Semi-structured or structured interviews were a ‘flexible strategy for discovering’; their purpose guiding the conversation to elicit rich and detailed content for qualitative analysis (Lofland 1971). The relatively formal interviews around beliefs and attitudes complemented other methods (Robson 2011:279). Attention is drawn to the priority or emphasis on the analytical strands in that mixed methods designs according equal weight to quantitative and qualitative data gathering are rare (Barbour 2008:159). I sought to avoid tokenism by ensuring the sample was sufficiently large devoting similar effort into survey and interview questions. The forms of data were not equal in terms of size and time allocation due to scope and resources as an EdD thesis. The interviews will result in thicker and richer descriptions supporting findings representing the dominant analytical strand (Morse 2003).

### **3.6 Sample population and selection criteria**

The sample was chosen to represent a cross-section of the population of professional staff aged 50+ across university departments. Participants had self-selected as professional staff and aged 50+, the two required variables. Ethnicity or gender were not variables. Management participants were selected for knowledge of strategic processes not canvassed on age.

Evidence was collected from a portion of the whole population in the expectation what was found would apply equally to the rest (Denscombe 2007:13). Though Yin regards cases not as ‘sampling units’ aiming for generalizability and should not be chosen for this reason, emphasizing that samples should be chosen with care and meaning (Yin 2003:32-3). Their purpose is to provide insight (Yin 2014:40). If concepts and issues are repeatedly raised the researcher can have confidence the category has been filled and sample representative (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Conversely, if the sample does not represent the wider population the extent of generalizability is very limited (Thomas 2013:44). So, both a case study and an experiment (interpretative and positivistic designs) were aligned in striving to offer generalizable findings or lessons learned to assume the form of a working hypothesis

(Cronbach 1975) suited to new insights, ideas and theories from staff and management for this study.

Different sampling criteria (Fig 3.2) were used for the data collection.

**Fig 3.2 Sampling criteria and approach to participants**

<b>Phase 1 Survey</b>	Homogenous sampling de-limited by the variable of age – 50+ no upper age limit, survey uploaded to university intranet through self-selection. Purposive sampling used networks as backup for 10% involvement.
<b>Phase 2 Interviews</b>	Non-probability, stratified sampling for 14 professional participants from the survey achieving the criteria older worker, aged 50+. Opportunistic and purposive sampling for management interviews. Criteria management roles and involvement in decision-making for PD, age not a variable.  Purposive sampling used networks as backup for 10% involvement, but was not necessary.

**Phase 1:** A homogenous sampling technique whereby particular variable/variables were chosen (Robson 2011:276) was used requiring a cross organization sample de-limited according to age by HR. HR did not finally undertake de-limiting so professional staff opted-in, self-selecting. The aim was to discover what development is valued. Variation experienced by gender, perceptions of part time staff as opposed to full time was considered. Ethnicity was not a variable.

**Phase 2:** If more than 10 participants matching the criteria had opted in participants would have been ‘purposively sampled’ (Thomas, 2013:137) but was unnecessary. Sampling was stratified and convenience sampling. Stratified in that participants were taken from two distinct groupings (professional staff and management) allowing comparisons and convenience in the totality of participants working within the university (Cohen et al. 2007:112). The representative sample of 10 professional

staff were recruited to opt in through self-selection through a yes/no box in the survey, a non-probability sampling technique, convenient and purposive (ibid.:113).

At Phase 1, I endeavoured to ensure a wide cross section across departments by checking names on the university website (where given). It was difficult to obtain participation from the finance and IT departments despite efforts and possibly due to an impending merger, increased workloads, anxiety around restructuring and lack of time.

The management sample was a heterogeneous mix based on those I considered best able to respond to research questions through their roles. Participants were personally invited for insights and views on policy around older workers and workplace learning and inclusiveness strategies, connected to the themes of the research questions.

### **3.7 Piloting of survey and interview questionnaire**

Yin (2014) regards pilot tests as a means whereby researchers can refine their data collection plans in relation to the content of the research tools and the procedures to be followed. The survey and interview questionnaires were piloted to refine or modify the research questions.

The survey was emailed to two people who fitted the demographic of the case study sample but were not involved in the research, before being disseminated. Their brief was to respond as authentically as possible and give feedback on timing, readability, clarity and fitness for purpose. Responses were positive but there was some valuable critique. Two questions which were evaluated as potentially leading the participants to 'experimenter-expectancy bias' (Thomas 2013:142) were altered to be more neutral. A small number of minor adjustments were made to some questions to arrive at further clarity of expression. Two questions were re-ordered for better logical flow. One question which was considered a duplication was deleted. The interview questionnaires for management and staff were similarly evaluated by a further person who fitted the demographic of the case study for constructive comment. Small changes were subsequently made to the interview research instrument in combining two questions into one for clarity and brevity, in making small changes to reduce

ambiguity (Robson 2011), and in deleting two questions in each questionnaire due to duplication or close similarity to others. However, there were no substantial changes made to the scale or the instruments of research.

### **3.8 Data collection**

Participants were approached in a variety of ways using my position as an insider researcher.

For Phase 1, an all staff email uploaded twice on the staff intranet invited participants self-selecting as professional staff aged 50+ to complete an online survey and opt in to participate further in the research (Appendix 3). Some staff were approached personally. Collection was made by an electronic survey to age 50 + staff, implemented to the sampled group for an initial understanding of biographic data. A further purpose was to identify participants and collect data for the interview research questions.

Phase 2 interview participants were invited in two ways for in-depth interviews, through invitation by survey opt in box for professional staff and for management participants a personal invitation through email or personally (Appendix 2) using my knowledge and contacts for one hour semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted with six management staff; one senior person from staff development, one head of department for HR, one senior member of administration, a staff member concerned with equality and diversity, a senior member of the leadership team (SLT), and a manager who had participated in the pilot interview. All were emailed a letter providing key information about the study (Appendix 2).

For Phase 2, in-depth follow up semi-structured interview questions were informed by major themes collected from Phase 1. The purpose was to gain a deeper understanding of issues and concerns emanating from the themes uncovered by the survey, providing a link between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Data collection was over several months. I did not enter the field with pre-established hypotheses and looked for an overall feel of the situation (Denscombe 2007:219). Fig 3.3 indicates the data



collection process. The survey and interview questionnaires and detailed collection process are given in Appendices 3-5.

**Fig 3.3 Data Collection**

<b>Data source</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Triangulation</b>
<p><b>(Phase 1)</b> Electronic Survey (10 minutes to complete) Piloted beforehand In 3 parts</p>	<p>Attitude survey from GoogleDocs.com Uploaded to entire staff via intranet x 2 occasions. Quasi-experimental, <i>Part 1</i>) closed questions for biographical data and <i>Part 2</i>) Attitude survey; questions were asked through a 6 point Likert scale, rank order and multiple choice questions <i>Part 3</i>) perception gathering and coded.</p>	<p>Research questions and literature Corroborated and questioned with data findings of Phase 2.</p>
<p><b>(Phase 2)</b> Semi-structured interviews (1-hour audio-recorded)</p>	<p>20 interviews (14 professional staff and 6 management: HR, staff development, equality, two senior leadership team and for the pilot, one staff member with line management responsibilities. Purpose to gather richer perspectives into older workers' perceptions of, and value seen, in PD and what forms they value in workplace learning. Data on management perspectives integral to obtaining holistic views of PD for older workers from an organizational and strategic perspective canvassing perceptions of value placed on PD for older workers and forms valued.</p>	<p>Research questions and literature Corroborated and questioned with data findings of Phase 1.</p>
<p><b>(Phase 3)</b> Documentary review</p>	<p>HR, equality and strategy policy documents, where access available. Workforce data analysis for analysing professional staff workforce in terms</p>	<p>Internal: selection based on triangulating findings: supporting staff and management findings, identifying gaps and making</p>

	of diversity for age. Committee minutes and union documentation.	recommendations for future practice. External: Government’s Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (2011), trade union documents. Contrasted with findings of Phase 1 and 2 where relevant.
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### 3.9 Data analysis

#### 3.9.1 Introduction

Data analysis involved ‘data transformation, exploring outliers, examining multiple levels or creating matrices combining quantitative results and qualitative findings’ (Creswell 2009:224). The literature review, conceptual framework and research questions formed the basis for data analysis and thematic coding. It was anticipated findings would permit a reconceptualization and further theoretical focusing of my studied topic. Less quantitative data was collected than qualitative data, restricted to Phase 1.

#### 3.9.2 The data analysis approach

Specific implications for data analysis in this study were in evaluating management and staff findings into what access to development was given, what was not, whether participants perceived access was afforded to them, whether the type and form was equitable in being appropriate for needs and the extent to which older workers felt valued relevant to workplace flourishing. The extent to which the researched organization provided ‘ideal speech situations’ (ISS) to understand how the organizational planning supported or suppressed democratic deliberation (Forester 1993; Burrell 1994) was analysed. Documentary evidence, where available, was used to support or refute findings.

A hybrid approach of qualitative methods of thematic analysis was used incorporating a data driven inductive approach and deductive *a priori* approach where codes were defined prior to in-depth data analysis. Codes were derived from

the research questions and theoretical framework (Fereday and Muir Cochrane 2006). The three data sources: survey, interviews and documentation were analysed through thematic analysis using the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss 1978). Thematic analysis offered an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data appropriate for understanding a little-known situation (Fereday and Muir Cochrane 2006). Findings were presented from interpretive and inferential analysis as a mixed-methods approach was used. Text analysis involved four tasks; discovering themes and sub-themes, reducing themes to a manageable number according to priority; building hierarchies of themes and linking themes into theoretical models (Ryan and Bernard 2003:85).

One challenge in combining qualitative and quantitative methods was the flexibility in integrating analyses from each data set relating to the paradigm incompatibility discussed earlier. However, taking a pragmatic stance advocated alternative inclusive philosophical frameworks de-emphasizing differences in philosophical traditions. Multiple assumptions and diverse methods can, it is argued, comfortably exist (Greene and Caracelli, 1997). Rigour in thematic analysis was demonstrated through three essential 'postulates' - a philosophical framework for social phenomenology. A high degree of clarity in the conceptual framework and research methods was established; an emphasis was made on subjective meanings the conceptual framework had on participants and care was taken for the model to be understood by 'actors' within everyday life (Schutz 1973).

### **3.9.3 Interpretation of electronic survey results – Phase 1**

Survey variables were analysed through an Excel spreadsheet exported and presented as tables. Data from qualitative sections were downloaded as open box free text, analysed thematically line by line or term by term using pre-coded themes. In using thematic analysis, through the constant comparative method a coding scheme emerged and major themes arising were recorded (Appendices 6-7 refer).

### **3.9.4 Interpretation of interview findings – Phase 2**

For qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews I partially used NVivo software to analyse data and arrive at increasing levels of abstraction (Miles and Huberman 1994; Miles, Huberman and Saldana 2014). But whether undertaking manual or computer analysis the conceptual journey was the same. The latter can help with data theorizing through alerting similarities but relied on the coding scheme (discussed later) I as researcher imposed on the data (Barbour 2008).

### **3.9.5 Interpretation of documentation – Phase 3**

The inclusion criteria applied to the selection of internal documentation was based on how older workers were viewed within planning for organizational learning (Chapter 5 refers). Workforce data analysis for analysing the professional staff workforce in terms of diversity for age was analysed (where available). Analysis of any formal consultation process indicating dialogue with union representation was made through internal committee minutes. Analysis of external documentation such as references to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) part of the Equality Act 2010 are shown in Chapter 5. There can be issues with documentary review as retrieval may be difficult, access blocked, selection of documentation biased and reporting reflecting author bias (Tellis 1997). I sought authorisation from the Director of HR for access to documentation around older workers' policies and staff organizational development policies but not all were forthcoming. There being a range of possible documentation to review, I excluded internal documents not relating to equity and inclusion or wider strategic documentation unrelated to staff development and learning. Neither did I review union documentation unrelated to staff development or issues of equity and inclusion.

Analysis was conducted through thematic analysis and codes determined inductively rather than *a priori* linked to the themes emanating from the interview findings. Validity was set against the criteria of authenticity; whether the documentation was representative, meanings clear and unambiguous, whether meanings were left unsaid and whether the document was credible, accurate and unbiased (Denscombe 2010). External documentation was explored using similar strategies. Internal documentation in the form of any official dialogue with management over older workers' development was analysed and cross referenced against Phase 1 and 2

findings. External documentation analysis considered gaps and omissions across the interview findings and internal documentation.

### **3.9.6 Synthesis of thematic findings**

A research synthesis brought together findings from different sources presented in Chapter 5. At its simplest, the aim of bringing together a body of research was to describe, analyse and draw conclusions on research evidence (Ring et al. 2011).

Phase 1 findings were examined manually and through NVivo to cross reference and corroborate findings of Phase 2 to ‘build a coherent justification for themes’ (Creswell 2009:191). Quantitative data from Phase 1 was compared with qualitative data in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. Both phases were cross-referenced with internal and external strategy/policy documentation at Phase 3 establishing validity. The approach was line-by-line coding for the translation of concepts from one study to another (Britten et al. 2002; Fisher et al. 2006) being aware new codes could have changed the coding frame (Noblit and Hare 1988).

More generally, synthesis of qualitative research de-contextualises research and concepts identified in one setting are not considered applicable to others. Reviewers are open to the charge by wrongly assuming these are commensurable (Britten et al. 2002). However, a strong case remains for qualitative research to be valued for its potential to inform policy and practice (Thomas and Harden 2007).

### **3.9.7 Exposition of coding**

The findings and exposition of potential themes were reached deductively from the literature review and inductively ‘*in vivo*’ from grounded theory. The themes were derived from the literature review, research questions and ‘*in vivo*’ themes representing a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding, the latter grounded in the data encapsulating key patterns through data analysis for theme development. Key themes are given in Appendix 8. Data deemed as duplication, irrelevant or not directly related to the research questions was omitted. The three data sources were analysed through thematic analysis, using the constant comparative method. All parts of the data were coded if identified as representing something of potential interest (Robson 2011:467). Codes were determined deductively from the literature and research questions and inductively.

The process was interactive, not linear and hierarchical (Creswell 2009:184). As a hybrid model, the inductive approach to data analysis was guided by research objectives and from that research questions were identified to guide the investigation (Fereday and Muir Cochrane 2006). This approach is common to grounded theory analyses. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step qualitative approach was used for thematic analysis with the constant comparative method to analyse the text making sense of data. Text analysis involved four major tasks; discovering themes and sub-themes, reducing themes to a manageable number according to priority; building hierarchies of themes and lastly linking themes into theoretical models (Ryan and Bernard 2003:85). Thematic analysis was an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data appropriate for this study in understanding a little-known situation (Robson 2011:467) around older workers' learning. Findings were presented from both interpretive and inferential analysis as a mixed-methods approach was used.

### **Constant comparison analysis**

The constant comparison method is core to all qualitative data analysis, based on constantly comparing and contrasting collected data. Three stages formed the constant comparison analysis for this study. In the first stage (open coding) data was chunked into small units; a descriptor or code/s attached to each unit. In the second stage (axial coding) codes were clustered into categories. In the third stage (selective coding) one or more themes were developed to express the content of each of the groups (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The method of constant comparison analysis was first used by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser 1978, 1992; Strauss 1987) in their grounded theory research, although utilized for other analysis (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2007, 2008). Coding is a key aspect of grounded research, content analysis and computer assisted analyses of interview texts (Gibbs 2007). In grounded research 'open coding' is 'the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data' (Strauss and Corbin 1990:61). The goal was the development of categories capturing the fullness of experiences and actions leading to code saturation (Charmaz 2006:112) when no new patterns of the property emerge (Glaser 2001). The purpose

of grounded theory is not to test existing theory but to develop theory from empirical materials (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:227) applicable to this study.

Not all the analysis in this study was grounded theory so a type of counting concerning systematic interrogation of who was saying what and in what context was used to provide patterns. It meant paying attention to whether particular areas were an issue for all participants or just some to provide a solid claim for a shared point of view, rather than one participant making many comments (Barbour 2008:217).

### **Coding strategy and analytic memo writing**

Coding is the process of organizing material into segments of text before bringing meaning to information (Rossman and Rallis 2012). Audio and text was used but not visuals. *In vivo* codes (Creswell 2009:186); codes from the actual terms used by participants were coded sparingly to avoid the possibility they might have originated from *a priori* categories and could not authentically be considered participants' concepts. Grounded theory means it is possible even desirable to derive theoretical propositions and frameworks from raw data generated in qualitative research (Barbour 2008:197). Despite usefulness, coding is critiqued as reductionist in 'reinforcing a representationalist epistemology reducing polyphonic meanings to what can be captured by a single category' (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015) and undermining an ethics of responsibility in that 'researchers code; others get coded' (MacLure 2013).

Two types of coding captured the essence of interview excerpts. Lumper coding was a broad-brush stroke representation, splitter coding split data into smaller codeable moments (Bernard 2011) resulting in more codes. Initial coding was undertaken from transcripts typed up *verbatim* in Word documents. I was only interested in the speech itself and didn't (excluding marked exceptions) consider non-verbal cues. Concurrent to coding, memos were created in NVivo reflecting on coding processes, code choices and possible relationships leading to theory. Coding and analytic were concurrent qualitative data analytic activities (Saldana 2013:40). Around 80 memos created represented 'question raising, puzzle piecing, connection making, strategy building, problem solving, answer generating, rising above the data heuristic (ibid.) (Appendix 9).





	re-reading and transcribing interview data as Word documents (Appendix 12 sample)
<b>Step 2</b> Generating initial codes  (travelling the coding journey)	Open coding used two types of approaches (splitter and lumper) both <i>a priori</i> and inductive coding.  Code mapping and landscaping (Saldana 2013)  270 codes generated from interviews (Appendix 11) (snapshot pdf from NVivo nodes or excel sheet)  Analytical memos made and coded alongside (NVivo (Appendix 9)
<b>Step 3</b> searching for themes – interrogating the data for patterns and meanings	Codes reviewed, patterns identified, clusters and absences  Combined similar codes/same codes from initial 270  Further abstraction of codes and code reduction
<b>Step 4</b> review of themes	Re-categorize, cluster and merged early codes, explored code content (Miles and Hubermann 1994:248-50; Richards 2009) reorganized/reduced current coding  Codes further abstracted as higher levels of abstraction occurred in refining provisional

	coding frame with negative/positive categories recorded.
<b>Step 5</b> defining and naming themes	Reduction and refining to 15 named themes
<b>Step 6</b> production of thesis findings	Chapter 4-6 refers
<b>Step 7</b> reflexivity in data findings and writing up and conclusion and recommendations	Returned to source notes, memos made  Memos (word) analysis for further refinement. Chapter 6 discussion and  Chapter 7 refers

Reading and re-reading and coding of transcripts allowed major themes on older workers' learning to emerge and a coding frame to develop, changed if new codes emerged. Some *a priori* codes originated from research questions and literature. The primary model of analysis was the development of categories from raw data into a framework containing key themes and processes identified and constructed by myself as evaluator on the importance of the data (Thomas 2006).

Coding was one way that data was analysed; field notes and memos highlighted connections and relationships. Appendix 10 presents a detailed description of Steps 1-4. The fourth level of coding invited me to start thinking about what was occurring and how to respond to the research questions.

### **Defining and naming themes – moving to developing theory**

I included Steps 5-7 as Braun and Clarke's 6 step model although benefiting from significant clarity fell short of including theorizing in its steps, an objective of this study. Steps 5-7 involved further reducing/refining the categorized data through the iterative approach, establishing sub-themes, connections and relationships to arrive at 20 named themes with 5-7 overarching categories. At the synthesizing and theorizing stages, pattern coding and axial coding were used.

**Fig 3.5 Example of process of data refining: moving from coding to theory development (Saldana 2013:12)**

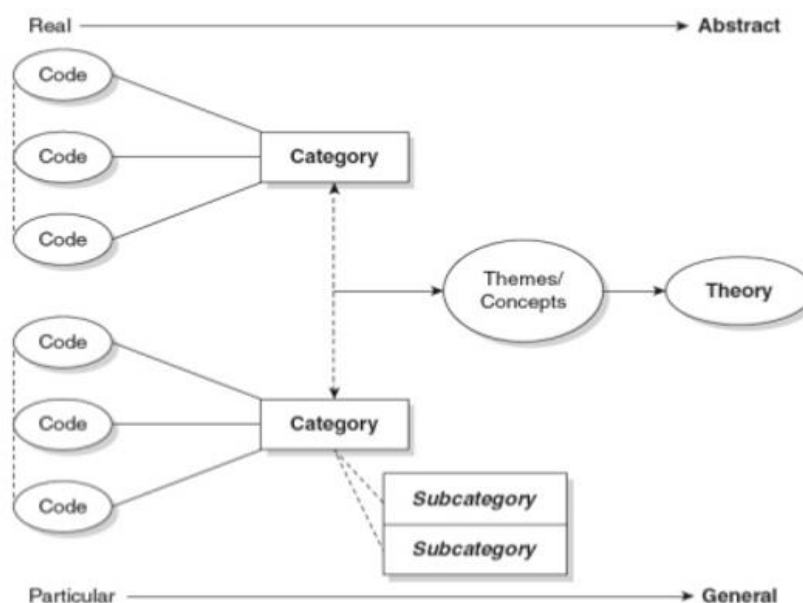


Fig 3.5 showed the process of scrutinizing and interrogation moved from left to right for this study in increasingly abstract levels of data interrogation (Miles and Hubermann 1994). Concurrently, it travelled from particular to general, able to be generalized relating to a *corpus of data*. This scrutiny resulted in a refined coding frame and suggestions for further analysis and ultimately explanation (Barbour 2008). The categories and data were interrogated through:

- highlighting exceptions, contradictions or disconfirming excerpts;
- maybe involving revisions and revising of coding frame or possibly individual categories;
- identifying patterns in the data in who was saying what and in which context, e.g. was it staff and management or just staff?

The constant comparative method allowed my systematic and deep engagement with the above points making sense of analysis through an ‘active search for confirming and disconfirming evidence in interviews’ (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). I could be

more confident in my understanding that the themes coming from the data and categories were most relevant to answering the research questions around older workers' professional development. Interrogation of documentary review analysis (Chapter 5) corroborated, contradicted or disconfirmed findings providing the case study contextualisation for discussion in Chapter 6.

Theory is 'a set of concepts used to define or explain some phenomenon (Silverman 2013) consisting of plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1994:78). It formed the basis of Chapter 6 discussion, considering the main strength of qualitative research is its ability to study phenomena simply not available elsewhere (Silverman 2006:43). Using a hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development this study attempted a grounded approach to theory development, exploring a little researched area.

There are challenges in developing grounded theory particularly when research not actually grounded theory relies on *a priori* codes and 'theoretical congestion' occurs (Morse 2000:715-16). Easterby-Smith refers to the 'Straussian' view of grounded theory assuming pre-conceptions are inevitable, i.e. the researcher will and should make him/herself aware of previous work conducted in the general field before starting to generate theory (2008:105). It is possible to sidestep the challenge of proposing no more than has gone before by being meticulous in patterning, looking for differences/exceptions to previous research and literature to interrogate and suggest new theoretical directions (Barbour 2008:235).

The reduction of categories, refining and naming moved the data to increasing levels of abstraction where data within those categories/clusters moved to being able to be generalized, relating to a corpus of data. Ultimately, it resulted in a theoretical framework that could be subjected to critical understanding of the phenomena of older workers learning in professional and administrative roles in one HE institution.

### **3.10 Challenges to validity, reliability and generalizability of design**

#### **3.10.1 Validity**

In interviews, I established rapport but retained objectivity distancing myself by being approachable but formal. Bias was minimized by maintaining a professional but friendly approach at all times; the recorded interviews evidencing professionalism.

Quality needed to be assured for reliable and valid responses (Briggs et al. 2012) and was effected for the survey adhering to best practice in design and piloting.

Questions were unambiguous, the order 'eased' participants. A 'don't know' category was included in rating scales for those having no answer or opinion. The instrument was culturally sensitive in wording. Interview quality was crucial for quality of analysis, verification and reporting of findings. I drew upon Kvale's six criteria for semi-structured interviews; the extent of rich, spontaneous and relevant answers; short questions and long answers; following up and clarifying meanings; to a large extent the interview being interpreted throughout; verifying interpretations over the course of the interview and interviews being 'self-reported' that is a story requiring few explanations (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:192).

Validity, trustworthiness, reliability and generalizability helped safeguard robustness and rigour. Validity and reliability, implying an objective reality independent of social reality, are often not used in interpretive or critical studies (Robson 2011:155) seen as a weakness, lacking trustworthiness. But validity is an inappropriate term outside of positivist paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln 1998) as qualitative research involves a less certain approach based on participant involvement, the alternative concept of 'trustworthiness' being appropriate in 'critical' qualitative research (Bassegy 1999). Hartas links validity to trustworthiness, 'validity is a criterion for the integrity of a study for accuracy of inferences and trustworthiness of results' (2010:82).

Briggs et al. (2012) discuss ensuring trustworthiness as equivalent to validity and reliability, essential in grounded theory studies. Triangulation of data collection, checking the validity of claims made and clear audit trail support robust trustworthiness which this study has done.

Trustworthiness for interpretivist designs included checking for representativeness, weighting the evidence, looking at areas not following the pattern and searching for

negative evidence. Also, it meant testing for explanations, replicating findings and checking rival explanations. Interview transcripts, field notes and data analysis details provided audit trails (Miles and Huberman 1994:263). Instances of the phenomena were added up (Silverman 2001).

The main threats to validity concerned description; interpretation of participant's meaning when not taking into account alternative explanations or understandings. Data was collected through audio for accuracy and complete data (Maxwell 1996). Documentary validity needed establishing in terms of authenticity, representativeness, meaning and credibility (Denscombe 2010:222). Internal validity was important as the reality of the descriptions made were mine as researcher. Accuracy of information was established by multi-method triangulation; in cross-referencing the three data sets validity was established (Bush 2007). Threats to external validity for experimental design and procedure were addressed by rich, thick detailed descriptions for a solid framework for comparison (Merriam 1998). Yin's main concern in deflecting criticism over case studies is in demonstrating they may contain the same degree of validity as more positivist studies. Here, potential threats to internal validity of interpretivist research were addressed with rigour and applying careful logic about comparisons (Yin 2003). But possibly most significant in generalizing results in social experiments is that I understood people may behave differently in experimental situations than in natural settings (Blaikie 2010:169).

### **3.10.2 Reliability and generalizability**

Three techniques can improve reliability. Firstly, the participant's position, basis for selection and the context data was gathered. Secondly, using triangulation or multiple methods of data collection and analysis strengthened internal validity and reliability. Thirdly, full data collection and analysis strategies were given to provide a clear and accurate picture of methods used (Creswell 2009). Small (2009) refers to a basic incompatibility of statistical generalization and flexible design research. Yin addresses this, arguing generalizations in science are usually based on multiple experiments, on the same phenomena under different conditions (Yin 2014). Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions but not to populations (*ibid.*) and can strive to generalization in the form of a lesson learned, working hypothesis or other principle 'believed to be applicable to other situations (not just other *'like'*

cases)' (ibid.:68). The aim of this research was to expand and generalize theories not make statistical generalizations, supported by Yin's argument for the use of 'analytic generalization' whether one or two cases (Yin 2003:32-33). Stake agrees, natural generalizability is something we all routinely do in recognizing similarities and repetitive patterns (Stake 1995).

### **3.11 Role and limitations as researcher**

Principally, my researcher's role was to remain objective, avoid bias and consider myself an instrument of data collection. Insider research is located in the actual environment one lives or works (Braun and Clarke 2013). Having insider status, I shared some group identity with participants in the sampled age profile and location. Insider research has practical advantages; knowledge of the context, organizational understanding and ease of access to potential participants (Robson 2011:404).

Researching up (interviewing those in hierarchical organizations of a higher status); obtaining confidential information; living with the consequences of findings made public can pose problems. I guarded against subjectivity and maintained objectivity which as an instrument of data collection involved identifying my assumptions and putting them aside (bracketing them off) (Braun and Clarke 2013). Interested in adults achieving their potential through lifelong learning and its barriers I guarded against over-involvement. I admitted a concern over older workers' workplace status and interest in transformational change. I did not deny my positionality but acknowledged it aware it was likely to affect my interpretation (Thomas 2009).

### **3.12 Triangulation**

Triangulation refers to findings going in a similar direction. However, it is unlikely the different methods used for this study would produce findings converging on an exact point of true reality (Denscombe 2007:139). Bryman concurs methods are mere tools for data collection and should not be considered 'rooted in epistemological and ontological commitments' (Bryman 2001:445) and should be consistent with each other but are not necessarily bound up in specific world views (Grix 2010). For this research, data was triangulated using different data sources to 'build a coherent justification for themes' (Creswell 2009:191). Obtaining a fuller picture using triangulation gave added confidence in findings (Denscombe 2007:138). However, triangulation does not always support findings, one set of data may not corroborate

another and contradictory findings are uncovered. When writing up the research I gave attention to contrasting and integrating the data where possible (ibid.:139) rather than stand-alone sections, interrogating and cross referencing findings of Phase 1 and 2 and cross-referenced with Phase 3.

### **3.13 Ethical issues**

An ethics form was approved by my supervisors and ethics committee. The BERA (2011:5) ethical code stating research should occur ‘within an ethic of respect for; the person; knowledge; democratic values; and quality of educational research’ was followed. The guidelines indicated responsibilities for anonymity and confidentiality, informed consent and disclosure, issues of power, privacy, right to withdraw, subjectivity and more widely, responsibilities to educational professionals, policy makers and the general public (ibid.:10).

Information obtained about or from participants was protected through anonymity and confidentiality according to the Data Protection Act (1998). Anonymity was kept at all times and no information was used to identify either institution or individual. The reporting of the study was confidential. Audio recordings and transcriptions were kept no longer than needed, stored anonymously on my home hard drive, not transferred to a USB or worked on in public spaces. There was potentially sensitivity for the older workforce and concern over participation particularly with concerns over restructuring through a potential merger.

The notion of informed consent was paramount. At the outset, I made it clear to participants I was conducting an enquiry and gained informed consent from interview participants through a consent form (Appendix 1) explaining the study and emailed in advance with contact details. It was signed electronically by participants and returned. Consent was obtained where participants participated in the survey and interview. I asked permission to record interviews. The letter of invitation made clear participants could withdraw from the research at any time. I made every effort to ensure participants were not coerced into participating by fully explaining the purpose of the study in the explanation letter at the time of the survey and interview. I obtained consent in the same letters for publishing this data at a later stage. Participants will be provided with a findings summary if requested through the consent form.



## **Power issues**

Issues of confidentiality were paramount as insider research. There were implications in the organization as a site of research and it was reflected in how the participants responded to taking part as their responses may have been affected by power relationships between them and myself. Individuals needed to know they were protected from any effects in participating, or choosing not to (Robson 2002:281). To counter this, I explained who I was sharing my background and research interest.

I ensured my behaviour allowed participants to talk openly making every effort to diminish the power between myself as researcher and interviewees. I was careful to emphasize there were no right or wrong answers; I was only interested in opinions and experiences. Leading probes or cues were avoided. Every effort was made to ensure interviews took place in a communal room used by staff or at a venue and time of their convenience. Where possible, for less formality I sat alongside participants. Management interviews were conducted in participant's offices at their convenience.

It is the responsibility of researchers to ascertain and communicate 'the extent to which their data collection and analysis techniques and inferences drawn from findings are reliable, valid and generalizable (BERA 2011:9). Researchers must take responsibility for knowledge gathered (Robson 2002). Thus, I stood up to the findings and take responsibility for communicating the research.

I encountered ethical issues of power. HR being supportive of the research agreed to email the survey. I agreed, believing the response would be greater but due to staff non-availability HR were unable to do this. Instead, they gave permission for the email with survey link to appear on the intranet (having seen the survey and accompanying email). A second sweep for participants was required to obtain a sufficient response, whereupon a member of the university ethics panel raised concern that the email cover note soliciting participants on the staff intranet could mislead staff as being a HR survey. My supervisors assured them the survey was not compromised by HR management involvement and was completely independent, they had merely facilitated the dissemination. This was important professional learning for me as a researcher. However, not to complicate the issue further I removed the survey having achieved an acceptable response.

### **3.14 Summary**

An interpretivist research design was used in conjunction with a case study. The theoretical lens took a critical perspective; an emancipatory view considering action may be needed to address any marginalization of older workers. This worldview aligned with the focus of the research in it being critical for older workers to have opportunities for development, capability and enabling workplace structures. The case study explored a real life, single instance contemporary phenomenon of older workers' professional development framed by contextual conditions, to produce in-depth understandings and contribute to knowledge of the individual, group or organization. This was effected through a flexible, sequential design, using multiple sources of evidence and triangulation to converge data and reach understanding.

Chapters 4 presented the data for Phases 1, 2 and 3. Chapter 5 presented the findings.

## **Chapter 4 Presentation of data – Phases 1, 2 and 3**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The themes presented were derived from the literature review, research questions and ‘*in vivo*’ themes representing a hybrid approach of deductive and inductive coding, the latter grounded in the data encapsulating key patterns through data analysis for theme development (Appendix 13 refers). Data deemed as duplication, irrelevant or not directly related to the research questions was omitted. Data findings for Phase 1 survey and Phase 2 interviews were presented. I analysed findings in a two-step process. Firstly, question by question and secondly grouping findings to form themes. The Phase 3 documentary analysis then follows.

### **4.2 Phase 1 survey data**

The findings reported participant demographic and biographical characteristics, identities, attitudes and experiences of professional development, organizational culture and attitudes to working conditions displayed in narrative form supported by tables.

#### **4.2.1 Participant demographic and biographical characteristics**

Table 4.1 indicated that although almost half of the participants self-referenced as having a professional and administrative role in the university (46%) a significant number who considered themselves as having a blended type of professional/academic role (18%) and a larger number (29%) self-identified as having other types of professional roles. A minority (7%) considered themselves as having an academic role. Across the roles, a significant majority (64%) of participants worked full time but almost a third (36%) held part time roles. The survey did not gather data on job titles.

#### **Table 4.1 Demographic and biographical characteristics**

<b>Participant categories</b> n = 28	<b>percentage</b>	<b>number</b>
<b>Job Role self-selecting</b>		
Professional/administrative	46%	13
Mainly Academic	7%	2
Academic/professional	18%	5
Mainly other professional	29%	8
<b>Age profile</b>		
46-55	36%	10
56-59	17%	5
60-64	25%	7
65-70	11%	3
Other	11%	3
<b>Type of Work contract</b>		
Full time	64%	18
Part- time	36%	10
<b>Ethnicity-self selecting</b>		
White	83%	23
Asian	7%	2
Black/Black British	7%	2
Prefer not to say	3%	1
<b>Self-selecting</b>		
Early adulthood	3%	1
Middle adulthood	68%	19
Late adulthood	26%	7
No opinion	3%	1
<b>Self-selecting as an older worker</b>		
Yes?	47%	13
No?	53%	15
1) Just generally in society?	74%	
2) Within the organisation?	26%	

#### 4.2.2 Work-based identities

When asked to self-identify perceptions of their biographical categories shown in the categories in Table 4.1, the largest grouping (36%) of the sample self-identified as being 46-55 years while a significant number (17%) gave their age as between 56-59. A quarter self-identified as being between 60-64 (25%) with three self-identifying as between 65-70 years (11%). In terms of ethnicity, a large majority self-identified as being white with only a small percentage classing themselves as BAME.

Responding to perceived life stage a very small sample of participants described themselves as being in early adulthood (3%). The majority placed themselves in middle adulthood (68%) with over a quarter suggesting they had reached late adulthood (26%). One person (3%) expressed no opinion. However, when participants were asked if they considered themselves as an older worker the picture was equally split between those who did (47%) and those who did not identify themselves in this category or at this stage of their working career (53%). But when invited to say whether they thought this was generally how they were perceived in society an overwhelming number (74%) sampled considered themselves an older worker. Contrastingly just a quarter (26%) felt it was the organizations' perception of them as being an older worker.

#### 4.2.3 Attitudes towards and experiences of professional development

This section concerned attitudes to professional development. Some questions were coded using the constant comparative method to form the basis of the interview themes. In spite of half of those sampled (53%) expressing no interest in age-related professional development as Table 4.2 refers, a significant number of participants did (39%) and one respondent (4%) expressed a desire for completely age-related development.

**Table 4.2 Age-related development**

Topic n=28	Not at all	Somewhat	Completely	No opinion
Want age related development	53%	39%	4%	4%

#### 4.2.4 Types of professional development seen as valuable

The next data set revolved around the value of different types of development offered, gathered through a Likert scale conveyed in Table 4.3. Over half of participants (56%) indicated that formal learning was somewhat valuable and a third saw it as very valuable (30%). Nevertheless, some (11%) considered it as having no value. When asked about informal development such as learning through colleagues

and networking, a strong number (68%) found it very valuable and a quarter (25%) somewhat valuable.

A third of participants (37%) considered having opportunities for external professional development through professional membership organizations was of value and almost the same number indicated that they would find it very valuable (33%). Some (19%) expressed no opinion.

**Table 4.3 Value of different types of development**

Topic n=28	Not at all valuable	Somewhat valuable	Very valuable	Other	No opinion
Formal learning	11%	56%	30%	3%	
Informal learning	4%	25%	68%	3%	
External professional development	7%	37%	33%	4%	19%

Turning to whether there might be gaps in professional development (Table 4.4) offered to older workers half (50%) offered no opinion. Almost a quarter (21%) indicated that more generally in society professional development did not serve the purposes of older workers while almost a third (29%) considered the organization itself did not offer professional development tailored to this age group.

**Table 4.4 Gaps in Professional Development**

Topic n=28	More generally	In the organisation	No opinion
Gaps in professional development	21%	29%	50%

Probing whether further development in specific areas would support professional older staff (Table 4.5) revealed that a significant number strongly agreed (32%) and slightly more (43%) agreed that coaching opportunities would be welcomed. A small minority either disagreed (7%), proffered no opinion (4%) or had other unspecified reasons (3%).

**Table 4.5 Types of professional development valued**

Topic n=28	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Other
Coaching	32%	43%	11%	7%	4%	3%
Mentoring	26%	59%	4%	4%	4%	3%
Establishing communities of practice	23%	42%	15%	4%	16%	0%
Internal Culture values older workers	7%	26%	26%	22%	15%	4%
Management value development for older workers	0%	21%	34%	24%	14%	7%

A high percentage (59%) agreed mentoring as a form of development would be welcomed with a further quarter (26%) strongly advocating for it. A small minority were either somewhat negatively disposed (4%), disagreed with it (4%) or held no opinion (4%).

Establishing communities of practice where older workers can become involved was considered very favourably by some participants (23%) with others (42%) considering it had some merit. However, some participants were unsure (15%) with the same amount (16%) offered no opinion.

#### **4.2.5 Valuing older professional staff**

Participants were asked for perceptions over the extent to which the internal organizational culture values older professional staff. The answers given were

somewhat inconclusive with a quarter (26%) agreeing the organization saw the value of older staff but the same number in slight disagreement (26%). A similar value considered the organization did not value older staff (22%), while a minority (15%) ventured no opinion.

Participants were asked for their perceptions over the extent to which they agreed management considered professional development for older workers as valuable. The highest value was given by participants who indicated they were in slight disagreement (34%) that management considered professional development for older workers valuable to them. Although some were rather more in agreement (21%), none had a strongly held view (0%). Also, almost a quarter disagreed (24%) considering management did not consider professional development for this grouping relevant.

#### 4.2.6 Who benefits from professional development?

A third of survey participants (33%) considered that professional development for older staff benefitted both staff and the organization. Some (19%) indicated that they believed development for older staff was solely for the benefit of staff while an equal number (19%) indicated that it was solely for the management’s purposes to achieve organizational goals. Some (22%) offered no opinion.

**Table 4.6 Beneficiaries of development**

Topic n=28	For staff	For staff and management/organisation	For management/organisation	No opinion	Other
In whose interest are staff developed	19%	33%	19%	22%	7%



#### 4.2.7 Attitudes to working conditions

This section considered perceptions from participants as to what improvements the organization could make to professional development for improved working conditions. A Likert scale (1-5, 1 meaning very much and 5 not at all) gathered data (see Table 4.7).

**Table 4.7 Attitudes to working conditions**

Topic n=28	1 Very much	2 Somewhat	3 Neutral	4 Somewhat not	5 Not at all
Recognition of worklife balance	36%	22%	22%	17%	3%
Flexible working	41%	22%	14%	19%	4%
Interpersonal abilities	45%	7%	26%	7%	15%
Organisational planning abilities	33%	11%	23%	26%	7%
Informal learning experiences	48%	15%	23%	7%	7%
Tailored development	30%	19%	29%	11%	11%
Mid-life career review	37%	26%	15%	15%	7%

Asked whether worklife balance was an important goal that should be prioritized and recognized by the organization over a third (36%) of participants indicated that improved worklife balance was valuable. Some (22%) suggested it was somewhat important that the organization recognized worklife balance as a priority while others (22%) viewed it as quite important it was seen as an important priority but conversely (17%) did not see its prioritization as a significant improvement.

Having flexible working to improve working conditions was given approval by over a third (41%) in strong agreement that it should be prioritized. Some (22%) were also in agreement but rather less sure, with a further number (14%) believing there was some merit as an improvement. However, some (19%) were less convinced of its benefit. Having the organization recognizing older staff's interpersonal abilities in working life was considered highly important by many (45%) of those sampled and a further quarter (26%) considered that they viewed recognition as being quite important to them. However, some (15%) placed no value on having this ability or skill recognized.

A further survey question related to the extent to which a staff member's contribution and expertise in organization and planning abilities was recognized as having value to others, which included management recognition. A third (33%) indicated that recognition of their contribution by both colleagues and management was very important to them. Some though were neutral (23%) while a quarter (26%) were not concerned about having their contribution recognized. Similarly, seeking perceptions of identity and self-value the survey questionnaire probed the importance to participants of recognition of their informal learning by line managers or colleagues. A high number (48%) considered it very important. Others (15%) whether having a line management role or not, recognized informal learning experiences had some value in the workplace. Almost a quarter (23%) indicated they felt neutral about recognition with a further 14% either considering it not very important at all or of no consequence.

When asked if opportunities should be offered for tailored training and development specifically for older staff the participants indicated appetite for a tailored offer with 30% considering it very important, while others (19%) considered it quite important, and a further 29% expressed neutrality. However, a further 11% were either somewhat negative towards this idea or expressed strong negativity as to its value (11%).

The survey questionnaire probed perceptions of the value of an opportunity for a mid-life career review. There was strong endorsement that this was either very important (37%) or somewhat important (26%). However, some (15%) were

unconvinced as to its importance with the same amount (15%) not in favour of taking up this opportunity if offered.

When participants were asked about the level of support received in learning new technology and office systems in their daily work (Table 4.8) over a third agreed there was some support (34%) with 7% strongly feeling supported. Constrastingly almost a quarter (24%) did not feel there was a sufficient level of support offered while the same (24%) indicated they did not feel they were at all supported.

**Table 4.8 Support for learning new technology**

Topic n=28	Strongly agree	Agree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	No opinion	Other
Support for technology/systems	7%	35%	24%	24%	0%	10%

### Summary of Phase 1 survey

The survey elicited 28 responses from those self-reporting as 50+ years. The significant themes that emanated were spaces for dialogue, valuing older workers, informal learning, experience being validated, lack of support for age blind professional development and learning. Of significance, was a desire for mobility or support for career progression and having older workers needs included and aligned to strategic planning as part of strategic organizational development (Appendix 6 refers).

These findings contributed to the themes of the semi-structured interview questions. The topics covered were carried forward in themes discussed in Chapter 6 contributing to more abstract and generalized statements (Denscombe 2010) representing a grounded theory approach to older workers' professional development. The survey data informed the interview findings through cross-checking for gaps, omissions or corroborations through the constant comparative method.

### **4.3 Phase 2 interview data**

#### **4.3.1 Introduction**

Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with professional staff including one pilot interview. I used the pilot sample in my final research sample count as there was no change in the scale and instrument of research. Also, the pilot interviewee was representative of the population considered for the final study. Had the instrument changed in the course of the pilot study, I would not have included the data in the final sample.

Staff participants were recruited by opting in through the survey as indicated in the methodology chapter. Six interviews were also conducted with management including the one pilot interview. Management participants were selected based on expertise and job role and age was not a factor.

#### **4.3.2 Demographic and biographical characteristics**

Demographic and biographical data for the staff and interview participants are shown in Tables 4.9 and 4.10 respectively.

**Table 4.9 Management participant demographic and biographic characteristics**

Management participants N=6	M/F	Job role
M1	Female	Course leader
M2	Male	Director of strategy
M3	Male	Chief executive
M4	Female	Deputy head of HR
M5	Female	Head of staff development
M6	Female	Equity and diversity officer

**Table 4.10 Staff participant demographic and biographic characteristics**

Staff Participant n=15	M/F	Age	Job role	
OW 1	Male	50 +	Library administrator	
OW 2	Female	50 +	Administrator	
OW 3	Female	50+	Programme leader (pilot)	
OW4	Female	50+	Administrator	
OW5	Female	50+	Programme services co-ordinator	
OW6	Female	50+	Marketing officer	
OW7	Female	50+	Student officer	
OW8	Female	50 +	Communications officer	
OW9	Female	50+	Publisher (unusual)	
OW10	Male	50+	Publishing officer	
OW11	Female	50+	International project manager	
OW12	Male	50+	Programme leader	
OW13	Female	50+	Administrator	
OW14	Female	50+	Programme leader	
OW 15	Female	50+	Administrator	

### 4.3.3 Interview data themes

This section presented the main themes from the interviews which were deemed most closely connected to the research questions. These themes emerged through ‘in vivo’ themes that were refined as well as themes that were *a priori*. A full set of themes appears in Appendix 13 and a diagram of interview themes is given in Appendix 16. The order of the themes presented flows naturally from themes generated. The key findings are reported under each main theme with verbatim staff and management participant quotes assigned to older workers as (OW) and for management as (M). The topic headings represented first stage headings in my methodology and were then translated into actual themes, that is, the concepts and key ideas that emerged and are discussed in Chapter 6.

### 4.3.4 Organization planning and policy

All management participants recognized the value of professional development and that it was incumbent upon the organization to fund it as the strategic staff development plan (SOAD) indicated. However, development was focused on role as

Phase 1 survey data affirmed and fixed on organizational benefits and not invested for those to move on (M3). There was some difference of opinion as to who funded professional staff development over and above fee remission for academic qualifications which was ‘patchy across departments with some self-funding and no policy’ (M2).

All management participants recognized that the default retirement age (DRA) posed challenges for succession planning. Flexible working policies for older workers, implementation of procedures and policies were needed in the future. The benefits of having older workers’ contributions reviewed drew on evidence from baby boomers still working and their influence on government (OW6). Two managers considered benefits should be reviewed due to changing demographics (M5, M4) and there was further comment on how the organization used older workers’ skills.

So that is one of the things I do welcome about the DRA, that we’re no longer seeing them as ready for the scrap heap just because... But it’s about how the organization utilizes their skills that is the key and how we get others to see the benefits. (M1)

Whether the hierarchical nature hindered development was contested as the organization was supposed ‘to be pushing equity and diversity’ (M1) but contrastingly it stifled moving on (OW11).

#### **4.3.5 Equality and diversity**

There was a majority view by senior management that the professional development of older workers was not taken seriously. One senior management commented ‘in that we probably don’t take professional development seriously for anybody. I don’t think we take the development of older workers less seriously than anybody else’ (M2). Being non-discriminatory was strongly emphasized:

As Chief Executive, if I came across someone who took the view that we shouldn’t develop X because he [sic] is too old I would go through the roof. (M3)

Retention was not considered a priority, it being informally accepted people will move on in academic and professional life with little done to keep them (M1), attested by both survey and interview data. Management considered there was a diverse workforce and positive image around age compared to other organizations. An older workforce was more accepted through workforce demographics data, indicating an ageing population. 'Some people are around the age of late 70s....which we felt was a real positive for the organization' (M4). However, the case of age is slightly different because by and large the distribution of authority in the organization is run by older people. 'So, it works very differently, much more insidious and difficult to deal with' (M3).

The word '*discrimination*' was not much evidenced related to age, but was raised in relation to general questions of equity such as men promoted over women for doing less work (OW1, OW8). If discrimination existed in different manifestations one said 'I'm not aware of it but it happens everywhere else, why would this organization be different? It does with men – older support staff and that's what society suggests'. Another commented 'it might be women generally. I think that it is an issue at all levels, not just support staff' (OW3). It was felt there was nothing you should be hauled up over 'but you're talking about low level discrimination' (OW2).

One long serving staff participant was concerned whether older workers' opportunities were being closed down due to focusing on 'young blood' or whether management was still supporting older workers' careers (OW11). Management made no reference to this form of workplace inclusivity apart from indicating a positive profile on older workers. With age a protected characteristic in the same way as gender, race and ethnicity the interviews probed;

*Interviewer*    *What I'm trying to uncover, is it perceived differently because it is age, has it had as much attention paid to it as other characteristics?*

Not from a strategic point of view but one of the things I'm aware of and have tried to encourage is the way in which we use colleagues, for example, Emeritus professors and others to help those coming up the ranks so to speak. I do think more communication needs to be had about how we are able to support ... we talk about age, the younger ones ... and still at the same time, support, enthuse, motivate the more

senior workers and have the communication..we might get both of them talking about how one could support the other. (M2)

One response was ‘we’re all going to get old but not necessarily changing our sexuality and probably don’t find it difficult to change our ethnicity identity, so it is different, and needs handling in a different way’ (M3) but formalized organizational structures were not initially considered helpful. ‘We don’t have an age equality group. Should we? And in the case of the race equality group and the LGBT group those are very much bottom up’ (M3).

Specific provision in professional development for older workers stimulated varied comments from both management and staff participants. Some saw it irrelevant, discriminatory or as labelling aligned with survey data. The university ‘didn’t offer development in terms of stages in life which might be helpful’ (OW4). But one manager commented, ‘to a certain extent age doesn’t come into it. So, I’m struggling with the concept other than pre-retirement and getting ready for not being in work’ (M2). The organization offered equitable opportunities looking ‘at skill sets, particularly through appraisal where people’s gaps are and where the organizational needs are, but we’re also talking about people’s ambition’ (M2).

But by not discriminating there may have been inadvertent discrimination shown:

So, we do not discriminate on the basis of age. It is entirely possible as a direct consequence of that is an inadvertent...an *inadvertent discrimination* against older workers, who might themselves think there are some things that are not appropriate for them because they haven’t got many years left. I don’t think the organization does have that point of view but by virtue of not having made specific provision it might be a consequence of where we are. And so, I think there is work to be done. (M3)

#### **4.3.6 Mobility and career pathways**

Management saw diversity and equality in career progression for different ways of working across the professional workforce. Whether working full or part time performance and development still mattered (M3). However, even if it is an organizational principle there was still inadvertent discrimination:



I don't think I see explicit discrimination. But I think there is probably historic inbuilt discrimination. I guess it is more mechanical...returning to work after maternity schemes. (M2)

Career related training, workshops, and an external career service were offered but access to a career or development service was considered helpful by management but no specific mobility or career development for older workers existed, aligned to survey findings. 'There is something for BME's but I don't think they've even thought what shall we do about older workers and is there something for them?' (M5).

Mid-career reviews were widely welcomed chiming with the survey data and long term planning (OW5, OW7). Most staff felt a joint responsibility to develop careers. Individual motivation was a driver ...`my own personal drive and seeing there were opportunities I could take up. But equally you can sit back and not do anything' (OW3). Senior staff tended to stay, with career mobility considered risky (M1). It was more about the day job but skilling up if someone wanted to take flexible retirement or work as a consultant, such as for self-employment (M6).

Management participants (4) remarked on the paucity of opportunities for mobility internally, career mobility, or career development for older workers, but there was not necessarily a correlation between extensive development and moving up the hierarchy as people tended to leave having done the development, taking skills with them (OW12). An older worker with management responsibility commented that there was little vision for professional development learning in the organization (OW3).

The extent to which the organization valued staff was important for encouraging someone with their career acknowledging not everyone wanted to move. Suggestions included work shadowing opportunities and some level of coaching opportunity (OW12). But doubt was expressed about the organization's intent to develop staff for another organization's benefit, aligned to a management response (M3).

#### **4.3.7 Transitions**

Managing transitions was considered done ‘reasonably well’ (M3) with time off and support given for age transitioning (M2). Organization consistency needed improvement as line management currently relied on individual managers using good judgement or experience (M3). Considerable efforts were made by management in offering a flexible range of development opportunities recognizing where people’s careers and needs might be, but there was more to do at transition points (M3, M4). Several staff considered there was an absence of valuing in a *sense of closing down* suggesting *a kind of limbo* for older workers with the organization not seeing the benefits and ‘how you move forward than seeing it as the end of your career’ and ‘neither supported to retire and no conversations about benefits of having older workers (OW2, OW6, OW12). Whereas, it should be around valuing and respecting and saying, ‘yes, we need you... what can I do to help you?’ (M5). There was a blurring of spaces between individual personal life and workplace life. Three staff mentioned elderly caring responsibilities as a growing phenomenon but a sense of burdening in asking for time off (OW1, OW10, OW11).

*Interviewer: Because it’s going to impact more in the workplace?*

Discussion fora or groups where people could openly discuss those issues would be really helpful and because you would know other people were in the same situation. And, you don’t feel ‘God, I’ve got to phone up and say I need another day off ... elderly relatives have had another fall or whatever’. (OW1)

#### **4.3.8 Intergenerational dialogue and knowledge sharing**

Facilitating communication between different age groups and different stages to discuss age hadn’t really been considered although it was accepted age might be slightly different to other protected characteristics (M2, M6). Whether inter-generational spaces should be created where people could share tacit knowledge was mixed. Interaction with younger age groups would be helpful ‘touching on that experience thing’ (OW1, OW4). Neither management (M5) nor staff (OW10, OW14) thought formalized approaches existed but it was thought by some to happen naturally through ordinary team and staff meetings and good heads of department

would facilitate it (OW6). A small number of participants questioned its institutionalization.

Healthy working relationships, having validation around experience based on respect where people needed to feel *equally valued* regardless of generation was important (OW12). It could improve business effectiveness using those with vast experience in their working careers which they can share, the good and the bad, ‘whereas somebody just starting out – what you really want to avoid is re-inventing the wheel, y’know’ (OW14). But compositions of future workplaces should avoid ‘*the curse of the gerontocracy*’ having too many older workers, as well as too few’ (OW6).

There was almost unanimous enthusiasm that informal knowledge sharing was positive and should be further encouraged. Older workers had much they can help young workers with in terms of experience and wealth of knowledge to bring to knowledge sharing (OW4). Knowledge exchange was valued as a mechanism keeping that person engaged in a different way as they move towards the last 5-10 years or whatever of working careers (OW3). There didn’t appear to be any kind of formal/informal mechanisms for cascading knowledge, it was left to individual initiative. How knowledge was shared and proliferated set around professional advancement was poor (M4). But doubt as to whether to institutionalize it (OW6) was raised aligned to findings on intergenerational sharing and the value it brings.

But knowledge sharing provoked sensitivity about to whom sharing was of value to:

There’s an informal exchange process of knowledge sharing but unless there is something specific for you as an individual, it might be very useful for the organization or the department but it’s not going to happen. (OW6)

Sharing knowledge was affected by wider industry climate and power issues where ‘people fight hard to protect what they know and the area they know’ (M1). Some departments appeared more advanced than others with people supporting each other, learning from other members of staff ‘feeding back knowledge from central programmes at team meetings and individuals being motivated to ask questions and help each other in team work’ (OW14). But formalized sessions could be run – very explicit for different perspectives’ (OW1), and more done to get dialogue going to hear about experiences but carefully couched’ (OW14).

### 4.3.9 Perceptions and labelling

A change of perception was needed ‘rather than us being a burden I think we should be more of an experience’ (OW4). But older workers had a role to play in closing the gap (OW7). Several recognized traditional hierarchies, where older people were respected by younger people, have disappeared in workplaces and society meaning ‘younger people think older people have nothing to teach them – they’re *re-treads*’ (OW6). One interviewee questioned the value between the generations ‘it’s very important for them to understand where you’re coming from and you’re not just *old fodder or the dinosaur left behind*’ (OW6). A solution was to ‘formalize spaces for dialogue to shake up pre-conceptions people have about each other, where young and old are both present’ (OW7).

Perception is linked to labelling. Some saw ‘experience related’ as positive and acceptable (6), a euphemism and of labelling (4), did not like either term (3) had no strong feelings (2), not needed (2), and those viewing ‘age-related’ as ageist (2). For some, the difficulty was not so much the kind of language used but expectations of what you do when older. Labelling can arrest development as ‘people get assigned as being X and it’s very difficult for them to break out of whatever they’ve been assigned or perceived or not’ (OW14). Words like ‘retirement’ and ‘older workers’ carried baggage and ‘experience related’ implied experience is valued, when often with older workers, it is the experience which actually gets in the way of the learning said one team leader (OW5); it’s the quality of the experience regardless of their age’ (OW3).

### 4.3.10 Vulnerability

Management recognized older workers could experience vulnerability in ageing:

I suspect they do, ageing is terrible really. It’s horrible. Again, if there is evidence the organization through its processes, practices or policies is doing things that is making people feel vulnerable, I would like to know what they are. (M3)

Female older workers were particularly affected:

In the administration, the majority of staff are female, a good proportion female older workers... I think they feel vulnerable and lack confidence. They don't have parity of esteem and are at the lower grades (M2).

One manager thought many would be afraid of being denied development if the organization knew they might exit in five years and the approach should be 'help me to transition. I've been a good servant to the organization to transition, help me' (M1). Many staff reported vulnerability around age, losing their jobs, status, potency, health and in professional life. 'Probably the most important single factor is not to destroy their confidence' (OW9). How older workers are perceived goes very much into society when hearing about people in their fifties being made redundant finding it very hard to get jobs (OW13).

Health aspects 'which absolutely would have implications for organizations' (OW11, OW13) were raised. With older workers staying on a further decade, staff will experience significant illnesses (OW12). Health vulnerability refers to both older men and women, while female health issues such as the menopause and its implications were rarely considered (OW6). Female older workers were particularly susceptible in other areas due to taking on caring roles. More generally, it was considered harder for women to be taken as seriously as men.

#### **4.3.11 Professional development – dialogue, forms and review**

Dialogue between management and staff to identify age-related professional development had *not* been considered (M1, M6) apart from pre-retirement courses, but should happen through 'SRD (staff review and development), one to ones, focus groups on issues and staff training development analysis in the annual staff questionnaire' (M5). Suggestions made were in establishing fora to ascertain age-related needs (OW4), focus groups, using the SRD and strategic lead from senior leadership (OW11). Dialogue was needed between line managers of older workers and staff development (OW14), but the role of individuals in staff development was critical, which needed sensitive handling. Development occurred in departments and

teams involving staff development and supported team priorities (OW14).

### ***Maintaining currency as an older worker***

Management and staff *both* valued maintaining currency ‘particularly for an organization having a strong professional development and education focus’ (M3) with opportunities given in skilling or moving sideways, or because things are developing generally, e.g. technology (OW7). Older workers must have the confidence through training and discussion ‘to speak up when things blocking them could be related to other people’s perceptions of them as old’ (OW9). Perceptions needed to shift to acknowledge development, ‘we’re all encouraged to work so we need *to continue to be motivated and supported*’. You don’t want to *apologise because you’re 60* because you want to continue your career’ (OW3). There may be gaps in perception, with assumptions made about appropriate development needs concentrated on ‘*maintenance*’ rather than ‘*progression*’ when an older worker may actually want to be creating new pathways and new engagement’ (OW12).

### ***Forms of professional development***

One manager considered, ‘it is how you keep them current by investing more in *refresh and reengagement* with older workers than with younger workers, ‘refreshment in what is happening in the world out there. We’re all the same’ (M2). All management interviewed thought a mid-life career review was positive ‘there is nothing for professional staff’ and if the organization was a learning organization which it was not thought to be that would be different (M5), although there have been attempts to create opportunities in professional services for pathways of progression (M2). But broader development in transitions was not really recognized ‘inevitably impacting more on older women than on younger women or men’ (M2).

Soft skills and experience; team working, empathy skills, negotiation skills of use in intergenerational and knowledge sharing were considered valuable but often went unnoticed. Soft skills were needed but ‘soft skills people aren’t necessarily the ones

who are getting promoted' (M4). Other scenarios for encouraging learning included; management prompts, scenarios to pull everybody in and sharing of different life journeys 'to get the message across loud and clear that c'mon we're talking to everybody. So that it's important and valuable to the individual group and organization and we can all benefit' (OW2). There needs to be a massive range of CPD for all ages 'which is not a one size fits all, it comes back to personalizing learning' (OW11, OW12). There was a suggestion to formalize networking learning through 'professional learning communities, but we are several stages behind that' (OW12).

Management acknowledged types of development currently offered were not the best fit:

The sorts that work were by and large not what was provided. It is about mentoring, coaching, workplace relationships, team working, partnerships; it's about the unfunded, uncosted bits of development'. (M3)

A broader conception of what professional development was would help participation and make it more relevant, an everyday occurrence applicable to staff and management (M2). This could include 'coaching and mentoring' in the formal box but more self-directed knowledge such as meeting with peer colleagues, reading around the subject, writing, participating in national working groups, 'to me, that's all development ... at my stage of career they're the more valuable' (M2). Utilizing staff development personal development plans, encouraging honesty and trust so information can inform and the organization support was considered helpful, and coaching around retirement (M4).

Most were aware of retiring workshops but didn't consider there was development given apart from 'the retirement thing which is about retiring' (OW2, M6), but there was no provision for different life stages. Management too acknowledged more could be done around pre-retirement (M1, M2). 'It's not 'retirement' anymore ... not sure what the word is' (M1) and something could be done in the last 10-12 years of work (OW5). A staged withdrawal would help due to increasing workload pressure... I'm sure I'm not alone in this' (OW10). Apart from retirement workshops how to manage later career years was difficult (OW8). Possibilities for development exist with re-training, training for alternatives, work opportunities (OW3, OW7),

establishing coaching (OW12), shadowing, pro-actively encouraging movement (OW13) and mentoring (OW14). Other suggestions included; refreshers, confidence boosters and reflecting on achievements (OW1). There was a *lack of homogeneity* and for people nearing retirement age finding out the issues (OW6); so, for some it is an exit strategy for others coping with changing everyday demands (OW2).

### ***Self-worth through participation in development***

Making time for development was important ‘because it comes back to your question about self-promotion and self-worth. If they don’t do it and you’ve got a line manager who’s not doing it, what happens is they’re stuck forever unless they leave’ (M4). Staff and management seemed agreed older people became humbler in age (OW8), ‘you feel less confident about lots of things but more confident about others – there’s quite a lot of research on this (M3). Management have responded with work experience, peer placement, targeted programmes for women, men and BAME staff and encouragement to take up Erasmus programmes (M4).

The responsibility to push forward/own professional development was thought overall jointly shared but ‘individuals needed to know they’re empowered’ (OW6, OW13). Further support was requested as ‘you seem to get stuck at a level and it’s very hard to see a way out, progress elsewhere or be given the opportunity, e.g. job shadow which is not really encouraged, neither is career progression. Whereas, in other organizations it’s encouraged and expected’ (OW2). Line managers needed to adopt specific approaches to understand how age impacts perception, feelings and confidence’ (OW7). Staff development ran workshops for line managers focused on equality and diversity, the importance of SRD and the development of those they line managed, and for employee engagement. With changing demographics awareness raising for age was needed in future development planning (M4).

### ***Review and development process and effectiveness***

The annual staff review and development (SRD) was completed regardless of position or role, academic or professional staff and similarly structured, ‘you review last year and look ahead to the next, setting objectives’ (OW1). References to a lack of transparency were commonly heard and where the SRD went once submitted. For



one manager, the SRD linked to the overall strategic plan ‘in thinking and making provision in the overall strategic plan for whether we’ve got the skills and dispositions needed....so it plays a part in our strategic planning and we direct staff development that they’re going to have to do some work’ (M2).

But how evidence that professional learning had an impact on the organization was gathered, and clarity around how an individual’s SRD fed into organizational practice was somewhat surprising:

Not well, that goes right back to what we were discussing, an individualized, dis-articulated culture. (M3)

Conversations had been held with staff development about the need to have line of sight between strategic priorities and an individual’s objectives. A gap was acknowledged but it was not considered specific to the organization:

I think in any institution, the focus tends to be on developing and growing your academic stars and professional development for professional staff is really discipline based, accountants are going to be trained accountants, and I think that is changing...I think you only get the best out of your professional staff... there is a business imperative to developing them. (M2)

Generally, staff development was not considered part of integrated strategic planning. ‘I’m not sure about strategic planning. It will be talked about in the Strategic Plan, Priority 6, around building an inclusive workforce, and something around leadership skills and developing potential (M4). But for staff, there was a missing organizational link in how the vision translated into the SRD (OW14). For one participant, organizational practice is what you do on a day to day basis, ‘so I think it does [feed in] but not formally. It’s just about getting the job done really and how we do that’ (OW3). Another saw the SRD as a useful tool for goal setting (OW1).

The SRD offered no place for an age-related discussion where dialogue could take place, not exclusively for the older worker, but more around what stage of career that discussion would be helpful to open up the dialogue. It was thought there was still a place for learning new skills, e.g. IT, to keep currency or where functions became

obsolete (M6).

The SRD form was set up for short term objectives, not allowing for staff to consider different roles whereas a long-term plan was required (OW7). Staff recognized future career progression was just as important as other development (OW13). A broader conception of staff development meant that it would be easier to see how older workers' development could be structured around a busy working life. The SRD could be less structured, 'linked into informal learning, learning days, that sort of thing' (OW1), recognizing tacit knowledge. It was helpful having 'a personal professional development plan giving people a sense of where they're going and where they want to go. You're being considerably more pro-active – it's an individual thing then' (OW7). This would be 're-angling the whole nature of the development portfolio to be able to include this. It's what self-reflected learning is' (M2), giving opportunities for open, frank and trusting conversations with a reviewer to where they are or with a career service or coach, so colleagues can feel they can have a conversation with someone about 'this is where I am, but OK, what next? What else?'(M1).

#### **4.4 Phase 3 – Documentary analysis**

##### **4.4.1 Introduction**

Documentary analysis was concerned with organization process. The selection criteria of the internal documentation was based on how older workers were viewed within planning for organizational learning. The documentary evidence, from internal and external policy and strategy documents, was analysed according to themes deemed most salient to the research questions of the study to support or refute the findings. Appendix 14 gives a full list of themes. The analysis focused on ascertaining the presence or absence of specific policies pertaining to older workers. Any provision was explored to ascertain implicit references to age and inclusion, particularly in relation to professional development. Internal documentation scrutinized included the university Strategic Plan (2015-17), HR, equality and strategy policy documents and committee minutes (where access possible).

Documents from the staff intranet for professional staff workforce data for diversity, including age, were analysed. Analysis of any formal consultation process indicating dialogue with union representation was made. External documentation from the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (2011) element of the Equality Act 2010 was analysed, as were union representation documents (Appendix 14). Table 5.1 maps the themes identified in the interviews related to documentary analysis.

**Table 4.11 Documentary analysis themes**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Internal documentation</b>	<b>External documentation</b>
Inclusion of older workers in strategic planning for organizational learning	HR, equality policies, Strategic Plan (2015-17) All staff survey (2014)	HEFCE (2011) Trade union policy
Equity and inclusion	Staff development strategic policies HR policy documents Committee notes (staff intranet) Staff workforce diversity data	Equality Act 2010, including Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (2011)
Professional development	Staff development plan All staff survey (2014) Committee notes (staff intranet)	
Union representation and dialogue through formal consultation	UCU and Unison trade union formal committee representation/involvement documentation	Union web site documentation

#### **4.4.2 Documentary analysis themes**

##### **Organizational planning and policy for learning and development**

The Staff and Organisational Strategy (SOAD 2013-14, 2014-15) emanating from the HR Strategy aimed to fulfil the Strategic Plan objectives. In its principles,

framework and operation SOAD implemented the organization's strategic policies. Thus, its mission for staff development was focused on the aims of its corporate strategy mainly through the Central Organisational Development programme running throughout the year. For 2013-14 (the latest available data), a key development strategy included programmes to understand equality of opportunity, legislative responsibilities and best practice. Programmes included Equality and Diversity Training, Equality Training for line managers, Equalities Analysis Training, a work recognition enhancement programme for BME Staff and Dignity and Respect in the workplace. HR confirmed there were no specific policies for staff development organized around age except for a Preparation for Retirement policy, which although I was authorised to see, could not be located by HR.

A coaching programme was available staffed by volunteers. Of interest, was the encouragement given to both academic and professional staff to engage in Erasmus Staff Mobility programmes, the encouragement to extend professional engagement through workshops to communicate with peers in other universities, such as peer shadowing schemes, and staff development support for local or cross department events.

Analysis was important in corroborating evidence of organizational processes which took into consideration older workers' requirements. Significantly, no documentation that specifically referred to older workers' needs was seen.

### **Equality and diversity**

The Strategic Plan (2015-17) stated a commitment to equality and diversity based on its values and dedication to enabling individuals to lead fulfilling lives and in building fair, cohesive and prosperous societies for staff and students. Priority 6, Inclusive workplace- 'Building a culture that provides opportunities for all to excel and advance' stated:

The university aspires to be an exemplary employer, where staff feel valued and can see how they contribute to the whole. We will promote a unified community, where all colleagues are respected for the role they fulfil and for their ideas, experiences and perspectives.

It added:

We will provide opportunities for colleagues to develop their professional capabilities and enhance their career prospects, responding to individual needs but also to the needs of teams and services in realising strategic priorities.

The Strategic Plan embedded a strong client-centred service and strong performance culture. Internal communications and collegial engagement for staff and students were given high priority. Aligned to the Strategic Plan (2015-17), the HR Strategy had as the first two of its six objectives, a commitment to recruit and retain the best available staff, sustaining motivation and performance and rewarding individuals for the quality of performance delivered. However, it was not possible to discern the remaining four objectives due to lack of access to documentation.

The university was 'proud of its diversity and aims to provide an environment where everyone can learn, work, develop and progress without barriers where equal life chances are given to all' (Equality and Diversity Policy 2013). A document on the intranet (readily available) which outlined a rationale for merger, acknowledged diversity for gender and ethnicity but *made no mention of age*. This is in spite of the Equality and Diversity policy (2013) benchmarking itself against Section 149 Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act (2010). The same policy document mentioned issues concerning proportions of female staff at senior grades and the BME staff profile, and that the organization was undertaking a number of initiatives in response. However, *no* mention of any initiatives to address age-related discrimination were found. Evidence showed senior level meetings were held where issues such as staff development accounts for development opportunities and equality analysis were discussed.

### **Staff and management dialogue**

Staff voice was gathered through the 2014 first all staff survey where 87% of participants considered the university acted fairly regardless of ethnic background, sex, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, disability or age with regard to recruitment and 78% stated it was committed to equal opportunity for all staff.

The proportion of staff who felt discriminated against at work was better than the benchmark, although the proportion of staff who felt harassed or bullied at work was higher than the benchmark. On the whole, different parts of the university did not communicate effectively with each other, many staff indicated low cooperation between departments. Many staff felt the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) did not make best use of existing skills and expertise and many that the SLT neither listened nor responded to staff views. A substantial number saw communication between the SLT and staff ineffective, although more positively the extent to which staff felt apprised of information by immediate line managers/team leaders was above the benchmark. Employee engagement (those feeling part of the organization) was below the benchmark. The proportion of staff satisfied with current learning development was rated below the sector benchmark. These issues were addressed in a detailed action plan approved by SLT. Under the Inclusive Workplace strategic objective, staff development actions were to extensively publicise workshops ‘to ensure the widest audience for staff development activities’ while continuing to explore how best to promote a wide range of development activities across the university. However, there were no workshops *related to age type development*.

### **Union representation and dialogue through formal consultation**

Analysis of any formal consultation process indicating dialogue with union representation was made. Scrutinizing formal dialogue between management and unions was appropriate to view whether the term ‘older workers’ was raised, whether this grouping was seen or acknowledged as a distinct segment of the workforce as part of diversity and equality policy, and whether professional development was discussed for this segment, considering its implications. Two unions UNISON and UCU (Appendix 14) represented staff both having equality units. Fundamentally, unions represented practical processes campaigning on inequality, pay, and workplace discrimination, and advocated for the quality of public services. UCU documentation referred to age discrimination covered in legislation for direct and indirect discrimination (Equality Act 2010) and stated that in terms of equality for development it is illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of age in employment and training. Although an HE employer is not obliged to have an

equality policy (whether age or general), the UCU considered it was a way of demonstrating discrimination was taken seriously. UCU affirmed advancing equality was one of three core requirements of the Equality Act 2010 which applied to all protected characteristics including age. It gave guidance that branch representatives should encourage employers to take steps to create an organizational culture positive about age diversity and ensure age discrimination was prevented, which might include raising awareness of the benefits of an age diverse workplace (UCU FAQs).

Unions had representation in the university through formalized dialogue at committee consultative meetings where staff development was discussed. Scrutiny of the staff intranet committee meeting minutes showed union involvement played a formal role in feeding employee concerns and perceptions into the process of decision making, for formulating HR policy and strategy at formal consultative committees. Frequently held recognized union meetings on site were open to members, and concerns could be raised at these meetings or at additional times with branch representatives.

#### **4.5 Summary**

This chapter presented the findings for Phase 1 survey data, Phase 2 interview data, and Phase 3 data analysis explored the extent to which selected documentary evidence supported or refuted the research questions. The selection criteria for documentary analysis was concerned with organization processes and how older workers were viewed within planning for organizational staff development. I saw no documentation that specifically referred to older workers' needs either for strategic policy, equality and diversity policy, or in staff and management dialogue *related to age type development*.

The findings were then discussed in relation to existing literature in Chapter 5 discussion of findings, to identifying gaps in the older worker provision of professional development.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion of findings**

### **5.1 Introduction and presentation of themes**

The discussion themes were based on those presented in Chapter 4 (Phases 1, 2 and 3) aligned to their salience and predominance with regards to the research questions, connected to organizational context and processes. Themes emerging for the data analysis were consolidated with relevant literature leading to a model and a revised conceptual framework. Appendix 13 gives a full set of themes.

The survey data themes were spaces for dialogue, valuing older workers, informal learning, that experience was validated, lack of support for age blind professional development, lack of mobility/career progression despite an eagerness to continue in careers and that older workers' development required alignment to strategic planning. Key interview data themes were equality and diversity, organizational policy, value and perceptions, vulnerability, transitions and mobility, knowledge sharing, intergenerational dialogue and professional development approaches. External documentation was contrasted with Phase 1 and 2 findings. Internal documentation representing official dialogue with management, was analysed and cross referenced against findings, including references to the Equality Act PSED (2011) in eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between persons who share relevant protected characteristics and persons who do not.

### **5.2 Research question 1**

*What professional development do older workers see as valuable in the HE case study?*

#### **5.2.1 Survey findings**

There was a strong white profile of professional staff in line with the case university profile. Roles were wide-ranging across the academic/professional binary similar to Whitchurch's (2013) research. A striking finding was that while half the participants



considered they were older workers, half did not perceive themselves as such. However, nearly everyone aged 50+ thought they would be perceived as an older worker in society but this fell to a quarter who considered that the organization perceived them that way.

Spaces for dialogue were very important in ensuring inclusion and equal opportunities, aligned to Habermas' notions of dialogic spaces (1987). The value of older workers within the organization and wider society was questioned and a sense of discrimination existed, particularly for female older workers.

Staff considered that age blind PD should be needs related regardless of career path, wide-ranging and open to all ages. Differentiation was largely considered inappropriate. Over half the participants were uninterested in age-related development. Most striking and concerning in today's fast changing world was that only half of the participants held an opinion on gaps in professional development, indicating staleness in reflecting on goals and where refreshment was required as recommended by McNair (2006) and Altmann (2014). Career development and progression were not seen as an organizational priority by staff and lack of mobility lead to staleness and stagnation in roles mirrored in McNair's (2006) research. Lack of profession specific training opportunities hindered movement into other roles and an in-house career offer was viewed as supportive.

The value of, and recognition of older workers' informal learning experiences, was overwhelmingly validated aligned to Evans, Kersh and Kontiainen's (2004) research. Mentoring, proposed by Evans (2010), was highly valued by staff in this research as were establishing communities of practice aligned to Cairns and Malloch's (2010) work. But the value of external professional development was less confirmed. Potentially participants were not associated with professional organizations or accessed development externally, or if they did, their value was mixed. An overwhelming majority wanted a better worklife balance and third desired to work flexibly. Possessing interpersonal skills was highly valued which related to self-identity (ibid.) aligned to the literature (Evans, Guile and Harris 2010:160) and staff wanting recognition of their value was a significant finding, but soft skills were not valued by the organization and did not lead to promotion and career progression.

## 5.2.2 Interview findings

### Value and perceptions

Feeling valued in the workplace was central to the research questions and an aspect of diversity, being in line with the CIPD's (2004) argument that being 'valued' is critical to the psychological contract employees have with employers. A literature scan around valuing professional managerial and administrative staff in HE revealed a complete paucity of literature as far as I could decipher. However, Duncan (2014) considered that universities were considered largely effective in demonstrating they valued staff through surveys, follow up action plans, reports, fora and working groups where staff could participate.

Staff perceived a default rhetoric around older people with widespread negative views of being a societal burden which was suggested by Tikkanen and Nyhan (2006). Significantly, and representing a disjunct with the organization and society more widely, the older workers in this study realized they were not passive recipients; they had a role to play and furthermore should make efforts to close the gap. This action orientated view was supported by critical educational gerontology (Findsen and Formosa 2011:54), being a positive approach to 'helping people better understand and assist themselves'. It is concerned with political structures and powers underpinning learning and the role of older people themselves to shape the social system in which it is established (Potter 2014).

Those viewing the term 'experience' as positive and acceptable, and those viewing it as negative, raised a point about workplace terminology; whether it acted as a progression or a barrier in people's minds which was in line with NATFHE's (undated) proposition. Retirement was viewed as pejorative. Being in that phase was not the issue but connotations and expectations of what you did when you were older were. Labelling stopped the ability to break out of what participants had been assigned to or perceived to be, resulting in discrimination of older workers. Such language created an atmosphere where it was possible to bully people into unwanted premature retirement. A language of equality such as speaking of 'long-serving' colleagues rather than the 'middle aged' or 'old guard' may help avoid some unwanted intimidation (ibid.). No documentation on acceptable language in this research was seen although I accepted the possibility it was discussed in equality workshops.

Relating ‘experience’ to professional development, language could be used positively thereby encouraging participation to attract those reluctant to engage. Individually, older workers should take responsibility by ‘avoiding self-labelling and engaging in self-prophecy related to perceived limitations’ and create and participate in learning opportunities as advanced by Finsden (2015:587).

Empowerment and improving confidence was a very significant finding. The IES/NIACE study (Hillage et al. 2000) indicated improved confidence and willingness to shoulder responsibility through learning experiences. For some, the value between generations was problematic for diversity. Presumptions that younger people would have respect for experience and age in this study had largely disappeared. Low level ageism in disdain shown to older workers (some revolved around comments concerning technology) related to inclusive organizational cultures aligned to evidence, suggesting a development orientation and a supportive development climate promoted retention, as emphasized by Maurer (2002) and Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser (2007). Nevertheless, experience does not necessarily equate to value, the very experience could inhibit the learning. What was important was the quality of the experience regardless of age.

### **Professional development approaches**

Notably staff in this research widely recognized there was insufficient dialogue around professional development. Spaces for voices to be heard included management circulating around departments, good role models and facilitation of situations where people felt comfortable opening up. Mechanisms included discussion groups, fora, role models, tools for reflection on future options and cross fertilisation of ideas. A key finding was that development needed to be more ‘alive’ and dynamic which would also minimize isolation in the workplace aligned to Kanfer and Ackerman’s research (2004) indicating that knowledge utilization, helping, collaboration and enhancing positive affect, seen as motivators, were not addressed in either theory or practice which could improve participation in development.

Communication and understanding can provide a mechanism for valuing what older workers offered. However, the findings suggested different groups at different stages in the university did not come together as a norm, so formalized spaces for dialogue through creating 'Habermasian spaces' called for by Barnett (2013), could break up preconceptions and empower. Significantly, consultation by staff with management on formal committees which had staff development on their agenda to permit voices to be heard was not raised. Neither was consultation with staff development mentioned apart from acknowledging emails were circulated and the staff review form canvassed further suggestions. This again was significant given consultative committees had staff development on the agenda.

Nurturing positive collaborative relations with trade unions was important which was underscored by Duncan (2014). Documentary findings showed trade union perceptions were included in decision-making for HR development but importantly and most curious is that neither management nor staff participants mentioned the role of the recognized unions discussing age-related concerns, despite unions holding frequent meetings for members on site where concerns for increased dialogue could be raised. Oosterwijk's (2015) research considered that trade unions have been coy around advocating for older workers' retention, so unions could and should play an increased role.

It was seen in this research that having work agency, proposed by Harteis and Goller (2014), was a powerful mechanism to get what was needed in staff development. Fostering a good relationship with the staff development unit was pivotal. Having an approachable head of staff development signalled the importance of an enabling leadership style and culture in encouraging participation aligned to Bass and Avolio's work (1994). One staff participant, a team leader, worked closely with staff development to support team priorities and two other participants had been pro-active in contributing suggestions for development courses through emails circulated by staff development, suggesting self-efficacy as advanced by Maurer et al. 2003).

Segregated professional development for older workers was either viewed irrelevant, discriminatory, labelling, or development that was segregated in terms of life stages and transitions was seen as helpful. Nevertheless, career development applied to everyone but became more urgent as you age in an ageist job market with those aged

50+ struggling to be employed as McNair (2009, 2011) suggested. This finding emphasized an *urgency* to reflect on development approaches in the second half of life to protect against *both* unemployment *and* remain employable particularly when the survey findings indicated a lack of impetus in thinking about developmental goals in line with McNair (2006) and Altmann's (2014) research.

Striking, was the disjunct seen between an appreciation of the value of soft skills by staff and the recognition by management that these skills did not result in promotion. Team working, empathy and negotiation skills often go un-noticed in the studied context and it was considered difficult to structure around an entire organization. Less structured staff reviews linked to informal learning, learning days to develop a personal/professional development plan, giving people objectivity and structure and building motivation to learn were welcomed. Putting staff in control supported them to be pro-active. In turn, building work agency, as proposed by Harteis and Goller (2014) and giving capacity to interact within a community of practice emphasized by Cairns and Malloch (2010) was supportive.

Making work more 'attractive to older workers' encouraged retention and professional development mirroring key processes which broadened understanding of workplace learning for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges and how we learn in a variety of places. These processes emphasized tacit learning, that is, elements of mastery drawing on everyday practice which were seen as beneficial in sustaining adult learning as Evans, Kersh and Kontiainen's findings indicated (2004). This was crucial when the organization's adoption of adult learning pedagogies was not always present and importantly such processes encouraged older workers' engagement aligned to the literature (Evans and Kersh 2004).

### **5.3 Research question 2**

*What professional development does management see as valuable for older workers in the HE case study?*

#### **5.3.1 Interview findings**

##### **Organizational policy**

This theme centred on whether the organization reflected a social justice perspective or business imperatives. Focussing professional development on organizational benefit as a private entity and not wider society was potentially at a variance with a public body such as a university, where structure and agency was seen more widely related to learning, work and social responsibility suggested by Evans (2010). The organization had benchmarked itself against the PSED of the Equality Act (2010) for staff diversity to remedy discrimination in gender and ethnicity but significantly *not for age*.

HR strategy principles focused on organization business objectives which did not include acting as a champion for equality or social justice. Through the stated principles, framework and operation human resource development (HRD) implemented the organization's strategic policies. The HRD strategy implemented through the Staff and Organisational Strategy (SOAD) was clearly also part of the process for implementing the organization's strategic policies. The HR remit delegated through Senate maintained oversight of diversity through its equality policies and authority to implement new change initiatives, to meet internal and legislative requirements. Initiatives had been conducted for protected characteristics but significantly *no* evidence of the advancement of age-related policies was found and of note the Equality Officer advised no-one has requested it. This indicated an omission and lack of awareness around age as a protected characteristic.

A demographic tipping point was being reached where ad hoc processes needed formalizing into policies and procedures. Staff responses for this study pointed to growing societal awareness about changing demographics. Organizational implications for the health of older workers, for example, dementia and the menopause, required recognition suggesting a holistic response to professional development where 'age friendly policies where health and wellbeing policies take account of older workers' needs and where employers enable staff to combine work with caring responsibilities' was recommended by Altmann (2014:6).

Investment in professional development was recognized as valuable through the Strategic Plan 2015-17. However, professional development was anchored to existing focus not career development outside borne out by the Staff Development strategy plan (2013-15). Website documentation advised that organization

development aimed to assist *every* member of staff to develop to their full potential within the university and supported personal career development. The policy supported opportunities for staff to advance professional capabilities and career prospects but was couched relative to realizing strategic priorities. Thus, there were limitations on external career development corroborated by management responses. While there was strong organizational support for Erasmus mobility programmes for professional staff and fee remission for university courses there was no policy or financial support around professional membership external courses which were acknowledged by some professional staff to be of value and relevance. This form of development was also recognized as key to maintaining currency and growth in professional roles by some senior management findings but was related to securing a return measurable over a reasonable time.

Overall, there was insufficient robust strategy planning and process for strategic HRM with no clarity between SRD plans and strategic planning. Senior leadership were candid in that professional development was not taken seriously for *anybody* but the development of older workers was *not taken any less seriously*. Management concurred there were clear pathways for academics but not for professional staff which if the organization was a learning organization as Senge suggests (2006) there would be. This was an unsettling finding for an HE organization although steps had been made by senior leaders to change this. Further changes to advance career progression for professional staff, including senior staff, through a potential merger with another HE institution were envisioned.

Management were vehement that any discrimination in viewing someone too old to be developed would be very seriously dealt with but research showed managers agree older workers were discriminated against, just they didn't believe it occurred in their own organizations as research has shown (Maurer et al. 2008). But priority not given to development by the organization raised a contradictory tension as the Strategic Plan (2015-17) recognized investment in professional development was valuable.

Even if staff were developed retention was not a priority and promotion rarely occurred. Human capital theory, an economic approach to education and training, promotes the benefits of investing in human resourcing addressing ROI. Education

and training are *the* most important investments in human capital to both employers and employees to improve productivity and earning power highlighted by Becker (1993). However, seeing the development of older workers as either a business case or a social justice one is not binary and co-existence is possible, advocated by Kandola and Fullerton (2003) and CIPD (2004). Regardless, Karpinska (2013) suggested that employers are not very positive about extending older workers' careers

### **Vulnerability and support**

The Chief Executive was adamant he would want to know if there was evidence that practices, processes and policies were making people feel vulnerable. Nevertheless, making an exit date known five years or 10 years hence would be avoided if it resulted in being denied development. This had implications for how the organization was run, and for HR practice if the organization followed principles which deliver an organizational model and workplace climate for empowerment in learning. An offset approach would be in transparency where those planning retirement some way off could request transitional support. In turn, an organization recognizing often long, good service could respond appropriately. What was unclear was what loss of self-esteem and increased vulnerability meant for professional development. How did it affect it? Were staff more likely to undertake development or less likely? There is some evidence linking a development orientation and a supportive development climate to promote retention aligned to other research (Maurer 2002; Armstrong-Stassen and Schlosser 2007) related to research into self-efficacy (Maurer et al. 2003). Staff saw the solution in building inclusive workplace environments which supported transitions. As Karpinska noted 'investment in employability of older workers appears to be crucial and investments in lifelong learning or policies that promote a healthy life style are among the tools that can prepare future older workers to the challenges of an extended working life' (2013:131).

### **Professional development approaches**



A surprising finding was that management stated staff had not specifically asked for any age-related professional development or referred to it in an age-related way, so it had never been looked at in that sense. Hitherto, the organizational development programme had concentrated on equitable development opportunities for all, preferring to view people as individuals addressing their individual, professional and personal needs, skills sets and aspirations. The only exception was pre-retirement planning. Although management saw it *as not discriminating* on the basis of age, a key finding was that it was acknowledged by senior management that as a direct consequence of not making specific provision for older workers (who might think they did not have many years of work left) an *inadvertent discriminating* may be taking place. Nonetheless, management acknowledged staff required development at different age and career stages. But the organization needed more investment in development to keep the workforce current and renewed as longevity in the workforce can result in loss of skills seen in other research (McNair 2006; Altmann 2014). So, more re-engagement with older workers than younger workers was required in terms of *refreshment* such as advancement of technology as the AAT (2015) report indicated.

Management findings aligned with staff findings on the value of development through coaching, mentoring, relationships and team work reinforced through holistic learning found in communities of practice and coaching and mentoring models as Evans (2010) advocated. Nonetheless, it was the forms of professional development viewed as most valuable that were uncoded in this university study.

### **5.4 Research question 3**

*How might any differing views on what professional development should be offered be reconciled?*

#### **5.4.1 Survey findings**

Older workers perceived themselves to be *viewed by others* as career irrelevant but contrastingly they had a keenness and eagerness to continue their careers. A more holistic view of career trajectories in staff development would be helpful. Significantly, strategic organizational development strategy and planning for

professional development to include older workers required constant review to adapt to external and internal change as part of strategic planning. The staff review and development process as a tool for achieving organizational goals needed adapting and reviewing to be more holistic.

Overwhelmingly, management were considered not fully supportive of professional development for older workers. Only a minority of staff believed that older staff were valued by the organization. Overall, this perception suggests management may at best be lukewarm and at worst not actively supportive of older workers. But there was inconclusive agreement over the extent that organizational culture was seen to value older workers raised by Armstrong-Stassen (2008), suggesting an ambivalent attitude in the internal culture was reinforcing a sense of older workers *viewing themselves* as career irrelevant. This sense of confinement and limitation was further heightened in that an individual's career was potentially viewed as more narrowly focused on development for the utility of the organization. Even though a third considered there was mutual benefit to the organization and workers from professional development, a significant quarter held no opinion.

Issues around identity were provocative as half of the staff wanted their informal learning experiences recognized by other staff and management as a way of representing value in the workplace. This suggested older workers' knowledge and experience could be underutilized as McNair's (2011) research suggested. Views over whether development provision should be age-related or tailored were polarized with as many for as against it. This was interesting as the literature indicated tailored provision kept older workers employable (McNair 2006; Altmann 2014). Mid-working life reviews suggested by NIACE (2015) were very valued. Also, although the organization appeared to be doing a reasonable job of supporting staff to keep up with technology older workers can find learning new systems and technology challenging, aligned to the AAT (2015) research, indicating further support was required.

## **5.4.2 Interview findings**

### **Professional development approaches**

A fundamental finding was that perceptions of older workers needed shifting to acknowledge development not dismissing those aged late 50s or 60s as career irrelevant or not having career goals. There was a gap in perceptions that some older workers may have a strong development perspective and not a maintenance one which appeared a default model. But older workers are not homogenous and some look for an exit strategy, as Kooij et al. (2008) findings indicated.

The OECD (2006) agenda for reform to improve job prospects for older workers views employers as gatekeepers. It calls for a three-pronged approach: firstly, increased investment in lifelong learning at a mid-career point, secondly following the requirements for adult learning, adapting teaching methods and contents to older workers' needs, recognizing prior learning and experience to increase attractiveness of training and potential returns. Thirdly, promoting later retirement itself encourages greater investment in training older workers as there is a better ROI through longer pay off times. Extended working lives means all need to continue to be motivated and supported (ibid.). Drawing on Habermasian spaces it is vital, grounded in the findings and through the literature, that older workers have the confidence (built into training) to discuss when certain things are blocking them which could be related to other people's perceptions of them as old. Kanfer and Ackerman's (2004) research on age-related changes to motivation indicated focussing on intrinsic rewards around pay, promotion and recognition may not be as valued for this age group as these are often areas where older workers are constrained. Motivation for this cohort could be improved by adopting critical HRM age-related organizational strategies and managerial practices, advanced by Kooij et al. (2008).

The seductiveness of age in remaining in the same groove and not extending new learning found in this study was suggestive of plateauing. McNair (2010) reported that employees and supervisors may conspire to underperform. Some plateauing appeared related to organizational expectations in how staff might progress or in being given opportunities which negatively affected morale and performance. Line managers may find it more convenient to tolerate sub-optimal performance than to train because costs and inconvenience of moving from 'good enough' to maximum performance do not seem justified by potential gains or just allowing those to retire with dignity (ibid.). Factors associated with job content plateauing suggested employers needed to ensure older workers with high work centrality and learning

self-efficacy are provided with challenging jobs fostering learning new skills. As important, was signalling to older workers they were valued and respected through HR practices targeted at older employees and respectful treatment from their supervisor and work group members supported by Armstrong-Stassen (2008).

With no set retirement, there needed to be a way to ensure people were doing the job well. The suggestion of ‘mainstreaming’ meant expectations of progression were the ‘*norm*’ as you would in a school, college or university environment. Why should workplaces be any different?

McNair (2010) suggested that creating a *sense of a positive future* had a major influence on the work and training decisions of employers and employees. This placed the responsibility to develop firmly *on both the staff and organizations* expectations when a finding was that staff *wanted* the opportunity to re-think skills, how they used them and how they might improve them emphasizing agency. There was acknowledgement of a requirement and keenness to keep pace with professional development aligned to older workers continued motivation to participate in development in line with Greller (2006). Findings in this study showed older workers also wanted to be given the opportunity to advance, suggested by the OECD (2013) survey of adult skills, which called for continuous development of skills to retain older workers’ value in the workplace.

The AAT report (2015) indicated low levels of technological skills a barrier to re-skilling and employability and there should be opportunities to keep up.

Interestingly, the 2014 staff survey for the studied organization revealed satisfaction with current learning and development was below the sector benchmark.

Paradoxically, wanting age-blind professional development did not represent older workers’ best interests. More suited to their interests would be tailored personal/professional development plans negotiated with line managers and reviewed at three to six monthly periods to re-visit aims and objectives proposed by McNair (2006) and Altmann (2014). Mentoring, coaching and other development could also be offered.

### **Staff review and development as a performance tool**

A crucial finding was that adapting to a performance management and appraisal process and using the SRD as a performance management tool was considered helpful *by both managers and staff*. A key management objective was to revise the review and reward frameworks to strengthen a performance culture (Strategic Plan Priority 6 – Inclusive Workplace) but having to negotiate with professional associations and the unions in fighting charges against ‘rampant managerialism’ meant this has not been advanced. There was a lack of transparency over staff reviews once submitted emphasizing a deficiency of robust processes for strategic HRM and development goals for some older workers were not really engaged with.

As earlier referenced, there was a gaping omission in the organizational structure showing how the impact of professional learning feeds into organizational practice in the strategy planning and little clarity in how a SRD fitted into strategic planning. This was despite the fact that on paper the SRD fitted into the overall strategic planning through Strategic Plan 2012-17, Priority 6, ‘Inclusive Workplace - Building a culture that provides opportunities for all to excel and advance. And on paper, the HRD strategy evidenced in analysis of HR policy closely mirrored the strategic plan in the type and range of courses offered to support the organizational objectives.

The staff review was set against an individualized, disarticulated culture in tension with an organizational priority to promote and facilitate collegial relations and joined up working outlined in Priority 6 of the strategic plan. In terms of processes, the SRD discussion and form itself was restrictive and limited to the expertise of the line manager. Importantly, there was no formal requirement for line managers to take the career development component seriously, so best practice for staff review in learning organizations could be followed which Boxall and Purcell (2008:200, 219) advanced.

### **Equality and diversity in organizational policy**

Equality and diversity enshrined in government regulations (UK and other countries) represents a social justice perspective through equal opportunities. Through the Equality Act (2010), the State requires organizations to implement measures for fair treatment. UK legislation covers sexual orientation, religion and age. The aspect of age was not considered by management in this study (diversity implications and possible discrimination being omitted). Interestingly, ‘*inclusivity*’ as part of the

lexicon was also absent indicating age had not registered in management eyes as a diversity aspect and a protected characteristic apart from recruitment and redundancy. This was despite Priority 6 of the strategic plan – Inclusive workplace focused on building a culture to provide opportunities for all to excel and advance (Strategic Plan 2015-17). The organization's values state that it aspires to be an exemplary employer where staff are valued and can see how they contribute to the whole (ibid.). Succession planning and a business imperative to inject new blood into an ageing organization had resulted in a sense that opportunities were narrowing for older workers which raised a tension around the Strategic Priority 6 in building and promoting an inclusive workplace.

In this study, unions had recognized age as a protected characteristic but had not lobbied for its inclusion in the same way they had for gender and racism issues in HE. Furthermore, from available documentation the issue of older workers had not been raised in any formal meetings by them, which accords with Oosterwijk's (2015) findings over the reticence of unions in relation to age.

Nevertheless, the findings recognized older workforces were more accepted in HE (than other sectors) with the annual staff survey tracking progress in developing the organization as a workplace to include diversity aspects. Discrimination through ageism of professional staff was not overt but existed as in other organizations and society relative to both genders but was more pronounced for women as society suggests, aligned to research by McGann et al. (2016). Although line management development covered responsibilities under the Equality Act (2010), strikingly, there were no staff development policies focused on older workers apart from retirement preparation. The annual Equality Data Report was underwhelming in relation to age with *no specific and explicit mention as to affordances being given to age*.

### **Managing diversity**

Managing diversity required framing the debate as to whether professional development was for social justice or for business objectives in this study with evidence indicating these aspects can be inter-dependent and mutually reinforcing as Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013) suggested. Diversity policies strengthen organisational and human capital, which alongside knowledge capital, are principal

intangible assets used by companies in a wide range of sectors to establish competitive advantage and create value (EU 2003).

Kirton and Greene (2005) presented a case for diversity management centred around an equal opportunities discourse referring to practices accommodating workforces for diversity, whether based on geographical location, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, disability, age and other aspects of identity challenging discrimination that disadvantages people because of these aspects of difference. This 'valuing differences' approach (as opposed to an assimilationist melting pot approach or accepting of difference approach) reaches further than merely seeing an organization as non-discriminatory proposed by Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013), and beyond what was legislated for, to one of being positively valued. It encompasses Sen and Nussbaum's notion of flourishing (1993) 'where harnessing these differences creates productive environments where all feel valued, where their talents are being fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met' (Kandola and Fullerton 2003:167). It is a proactive, strategically relevant and results-focused approach complementing equal opportunity initiatives recognizing ethical and 'fair practice' arguments can be combined with the recognition and valuing of difference as an opportunity to improve business performance (CIPD 2004).

Organizations establish modes of operating that can reflect unconscious assumptions (Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins 2013). Diversity management includes ensuring talents are well used and staff retained. Part of this is creating a culture supportive to difference when discriminatory attitudes and beliefs are a factor in older workers' job market withdrawal (EU 2012). Stereotypes and ageist assumptions including older people's learning capabilities in the vast majority have little credibility suggested Findsen (2015). However, some businesses have been reluctant to adopt a diversity approach through a critical human resource development strategy, as the empirical evidence is still evolving, but practically it is argued there is a strong business case for adopting it and it adds values (CIPD 2004).

Crucially, diversity and its acceptance is not just the responsibility of the organization to create culture. Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013) posited that it operates at an individual level, emphasizing an active agentic role for older workers where the findings showed there is a lack of empowerment. Understanding what

organizations can do to promote diversity can be viewed at macro level – the attitudes and characteristics of wider society in which the organization is located, meso level – the organization itself and at micro level – attitudes and commitment of individual workers. Syed and Ozbilgin (2009) advanced that different strategies are required at each level. This study largely focused on meso and micro organizational levels.

Edwards (1987:45) suggested that reinforcing differences is not unproblematic when asking when is it more equitable to treat people differently because of their differences and when does different treatment become unfair discrimination corresponding with the unintended consequences of placing one group before another (Sen 1992). Regardless, good organizational practice means robust policies do not discriminate directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously for any protected characteristics. In practice, Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013:30) considered good practice anyway is often diminished by being narrowly focused on recruitment, training and promotion thwarting Sen and Nussbaum's notion of flourishing and Kandola and Fullerton's (2003) characterization of managing diversity where professional development could play a positive role.

However, Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013) proposed a pragmatic business case for diversity management for the studied organization would be in the argument diversity is good for business and profitability, based on recruitment and retention of good staff, better services and products, better decision making and better reputation.

### **Vulnerability and support**

A surprise finding was the scale of widespread feelings of vulnerability around losing jobs (and not being able to replace), loss of status, losing potency in relation to men and women, health and loss of confidence. How older people were seen in society impacted significantly on confidence levels in this study, augmented by widespread restructuring and redundancies of the HE sector, and when research indicated that the unemployed 50+ age grouping were unable to find another job (McNair 2011).

Perhaps the vulnerability factor was unsurprising as there was a strong association between the importance of work for people's personal needs in terms of meaning,



role, status and social engagement as well as finance, seen in McNair's findings (2010). Signals that employment is secure (and investment in training can be such a signal) bolstered confidence (ibid.). Staff and management reflected on older people's increasing humbleness as they aged. Older people felt less confident about some aspects of their lives but more in others indicating increased mastery. A question arises as to whether 'humbleness' reflected badly on older workers leading them to be seen as 'invisible' or 'weak'? Although there was a strong sense of joint responsibility to develop, some individuals wanted to be 'sanctioned' by the organization to give a sense of empowerment and encouragement. This finding threw up a potential tension between the desire for 'self-promotion' and 'self-worth' together with workplace vulnerability. The evidence from findings on confidence change in this study means there was a role for management in supporting and nurturing an older workforce as (Altmann 2014) recommended.

### **Vulnerability in transitions**

There was a link between vulnerability and transitions affecting esteem and confidence. Not only society labels older workers, this research showed pejorative language was *used by older people to talk about themselves*. Management recognition of vulnerability in transitions was aligned to an equity and diversity approach to people management and the necessity to build inclusive workplaces environments recommended in policy (EU 2012). Parity of esteem was considered lower for administrative staff on lower grades (a good proportion female) highlighting managing diversity. However, there was a real danger in seeing differences as benign overlooking the role of power, conflict, dominance and history of how organizations are fundamentally structured by race, gender and class (Johnson and Schwabenland 2013) and this study argued, age. This finding aligns to critical educational gerontology as a concept of praxis and action. Its purpose is 'to prevent premature decline, to facilitate meaningful roles, encourage psychological growth and improve social attitudes towards ageing' (Findsen and Formosa 2011:54).

### **Transitions and mobility**

Managing transitions was effected reasonably well but did not relate to careers. Older worker perspectives were often one of being in limbo leading to an absence of

valuing and closing down rather than progressing. A demographic tipping point was being reached where ad hoc processes were insufficient. The ending of the DRA had resulted in uncertainties over succession planning. Management recognized that professional development around transitions should be advanced for all workers and translated into formalized policies and procedures. Solutions were to use staff development personal development plans, encourage trust and transparency, coaching and using the staff review to link to the career service. Line management was key to helping staff manage transitions which aligned to other findings (Boxall and Purcell 2008).

### **Equity in transitions for development**

Development still mattered to the organization regardless of being employed full or part time as the Strategic Plan (2015-17) bore out in its Priority 6 – Inclusive Workplace, although not specifically mentioning part time working or those on casual contracts (present in HE as in other sectors). However, management pointed to *inadvertent discrimination* around broader development in transitions and different life stages seen as inevitably affecting older women more than younger women or men. Staff concern about equal opportunities was reflected in a call for the benefits of having older workers reviewed. Some management saw no clear pathways for professional staff as opposed to that of academic staff and there was recognition of the lack of inclusivity in professional development by some management, which raised questions of equity over differences and demarcation between the two job categories.

Mobility concerned stagnation, transparency around equity and how it could be improved for organizational strategic development and innovation to benefit older workers and more widely. A management view considered effective professional development should be geared around the organization but also acknowledged it was valuable for an individuals' progression either within the organization, outside or in a person's personal life, aligned to learning theory which extends beyond the workplace as supported by Evans and Hodkinson (2009).

There were three issues. Firstly, under-employment; the organization under-utilizes skills and experience even if development is undertaken so staff leave. Secondly, lack of internal mobility gave little opportunity of moving to different roles and

thirdly the organization did not provide career mobility or career development for professional and support staff which is considered an issue across higher education (Duncan 2014).

However, more generally older workers did not move on. Professional development for older workers should be seen as a tool for providing mobility out of the organization for self-employment beneficial to being a dynamic organization as Boxall and Purcell (2008) proposed. The organization did not seek to develop staff for the benefit of another and so did not welcome career changes but skilling those who want to move aids succession planning. Line management play a crucial role in enabling or disabling opportunities for progression (ibid.).

A lack of transparency over vision for professional development and strategic fit for the organization indicated it was fragmented and led at departmental not organizational level. Organizational transparency in how roles and why roles were parcelled would allow route maps to development across academic/professional binaries. Transparency and equity allowed room for aspirations and route maps to development resulting in enhanced work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014).

Older workers did not necessarily want career development in the same area. What alternative skills and knowledge would they require to change direction? Joyce and Showers (1980) suggested that starting with personalizing learning, understanding older workers have more experience (but not necessarily the right kind) and potentially more learning, would open up the conversation. A needs assessment tool could result in new work opportunities with re-training. Professional development suggestions included coaching, refreshers, confidence boosters, and revival skills tailored to older workers and shadowing which pro-actively encouraged movement within the organization as McNair suggests (2011). Significantly as referred to, types of professional development offered were *not best fit* and it was mentoring, coaching, workplace relationships, team working, partnerships being the uncosted, unfunded professional development that made the difference (coaching was unfunded, reliant on volunteers).

Having a broader conception of what professional development was would help participation making it more relevant and an everyday occurrence and a more expansive view of development posited by Evans, Hodkinson and Unwin (2002).

This meant formalizing coaching and mentoring, including self-directed learning and networking through professional associations which are all personal development. Interestingly, this type of professional development was thought by management to be more valuable in later career stages. Formalizing the informal learning; making explicit how networking learning operated without excessively formalizing it such as professional learning communities (Stoll et al. 2006), fitted into this holistic view. It actively promotes internal mobility together with line management effectiveness to move beyond a box ticking formality and facilitate personal learning (Joyce and Showers 1980). Significantly, the findings showed the concept of workplace needed to be overhauled in a time of changing demographics aligned to recommendations that universities needed to reach out rather than being ‘locked in’ (HEFCE 2010).

### **Knowledge sharing and intergenerational dialogue**

Knowledge sharing was overwhelmingly considered positive. Although existing informally it could be extended and explicitly formalized. The individualistic nature of the organizational culture hindered knowledge which was in contrast to a view that HE workplaces were considered largely effective in nurturing positive, collaborative relations (Duncan 2014:39). Nonetheless, the desirability of collaborative working was supported by Findsen (2015) where through group participation, both experienced and non-experienced workers build collective knowledge as a community of learners and learning, building collective knowledge through modelling, coaching, mentoring and scaffolding offering equal footing with younger workers (ibid.).

However, there were concerns around knowledge sharing relevant in times of organizational change and concerns over job security which raised the question of ‘*value to whom*’? Jarvis (2004) is critical pointing out that power relations are absent in discussions around workplace learning where ‘learning organisations are not neutral places’ and the reality is that who gets favourable treatment in workplace learning is directly related to the exercise of power relations in often complex circumstances, according to Findsen and Formosa (2011:40). Nevertheless, there was evidence of *gaining value from* and *giving value to* others in knowledge sharing through capitalizing on older colleagues’ knowledge, and the value placed on

mentoring as forms of knowledge recycling. While there is ambiguity in employers' attitudes to older workers in that skills and knowledge can be regarded as obsolete, Tikkanen and Nyhan (2007:11) considered that they are also viewed as 'loyal and reliable particularly by younger workers'. Utilizing skills and knowledge in different ways can bestow continued value on workers moving to the last five or ten years of a working career (ibid.), aligned with the findings here on intergenerational sharing and value it brings.

As with knowledge sharing, there were no organizational structures for developing intergenerational team working and it was debateable whether formalized approaches to facilitate communication between different groups should happen. Nevertheless, with four generations sharing today's workplaces the value of mixed age workplace communities with *intergenerational* and *intra-generational* dialogue was seen. Barnett (2013) proposed that creating intergenerational spaces encouraged a potential beneficial two-way flow of knowledge and experience. Little researched as a practice with no guiding rationale or framework (Findsen and Formosa 2011), mixing age groups can be beneficial for innovation and reciprocity and Zachery (2000) stated that it challenges pre-conceptions Intergenerational learning could extend lifelong learning through 'shared meaningful activities' (Brown and Ohsako 2003:173). A business blueprint for building values in multi-generational workplaces suggested learning gaps can be overcome through addressing knowledge (K), skills (S), abilities and attitudes (A), (Rhoades and Shepherdson 2011).

## **5. 5 Theoretical model and framework for recommendations**

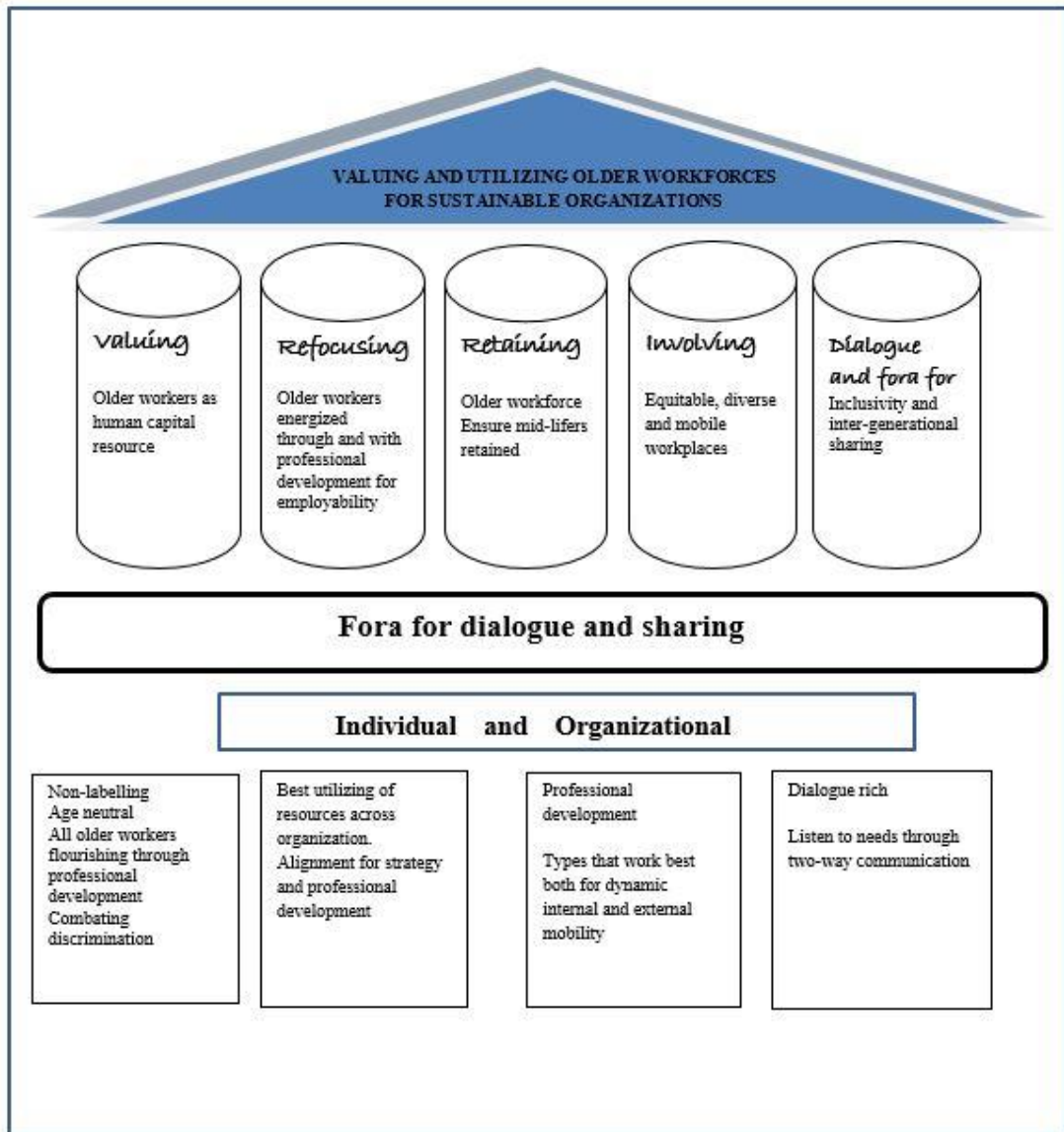
Silverman (2013) defines theory as 'a set of concepts used to define or explain some phenomenon' consisting of plausible relationships produced among concepts and sets of concepts (Strauss and Corbin 1994:78). The data themes discussed in Chapter 5 have translated to abstracted themes moving to a theoretical model (Barbour 2008) shown in the five pillars model framework below (Fig 6.1) representing an HE setting. The model offers a new framing for valuing older workers under five themes of *valuing, refocusing, retaining, involving and dialogue and fora for all* representing my higher order analysis. These themes representing categories

emerged as part of my process of meaning making and framing through the coding methodology through a substantive process of data abstraction, to address the research questions.

Miles and Huberman discuss the process of using increasing levels of abstraction to move themes to a higher level (Miles and Huberman 2014). The process of abstraction followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) steps (Fig 3.4 refers). To arrive at these new five categories the initial themes emerging from both the coding and the memo writing through the NVivo process were gradually sifted and sorted into higher levels of abstraction. As the refining occurred, I sought increasing levels of abstraction of axial coding where codes are grouped into categories (Miles and Hubermann 1994; Miles, Hubermann and Saldana 2013). This scrutiny resulted in a refined coding frame and suggestions for further analysis and ultimately explanation (Barbour 2008).

Next, I refined and adapted Braun and Clarke's 6 step model to Step 7 (Fig 3.4 refers) to include theorizing through the NVivo process. Through a further substantive process of abstraction and interrogation (Miles and Hubermann 1994) of the NVivo data addressing the research questions a further set of revisions, refining and re-categorization of sub-themes, connections and relationships took place which through an iterative process was refined to 20 named themes. This was eventually reduced and refined to the overarching list of five categories making up the model's five themes (Fig 5.1).

The specific process of theory making entailed a three-stage process. An NVivo coding framework with memo codes was constructed providing an expansive temporary framework (Appendix 17). At the next step through a hybrid grounded theory approach the first temporary constructs were combined and further refined (Appendix 18). At the final step, the final abstraction took place (Appendix 19) reflecting my adaptation of Braun and Clarke's model to a seventh step which resulted in the five overarching themes (Fig 5.1) representing my theoretical and empirical field.



**Fig 5.1 Valuing and utilizing older workforces for sustainable organizations**

Valuing older workers provides the roof which as a classical Ancient Greece construct represents humanity but has utility at its core. The classic Greek post-and-lintel system is made of columns with an architrave over the top. The solid columns supporting the roof indicate harmony with their surroundings, adapting to the environment. Sustainability is shown through Grecian architecture still in existence. At the base is the *buleuterion*, a utility gathering space for meetings and assembly of citizens for dialogue within the *agora* (Charytonowicz 2014). Flourishing is enacted through professional development *within and beyond workplaces* valuing and

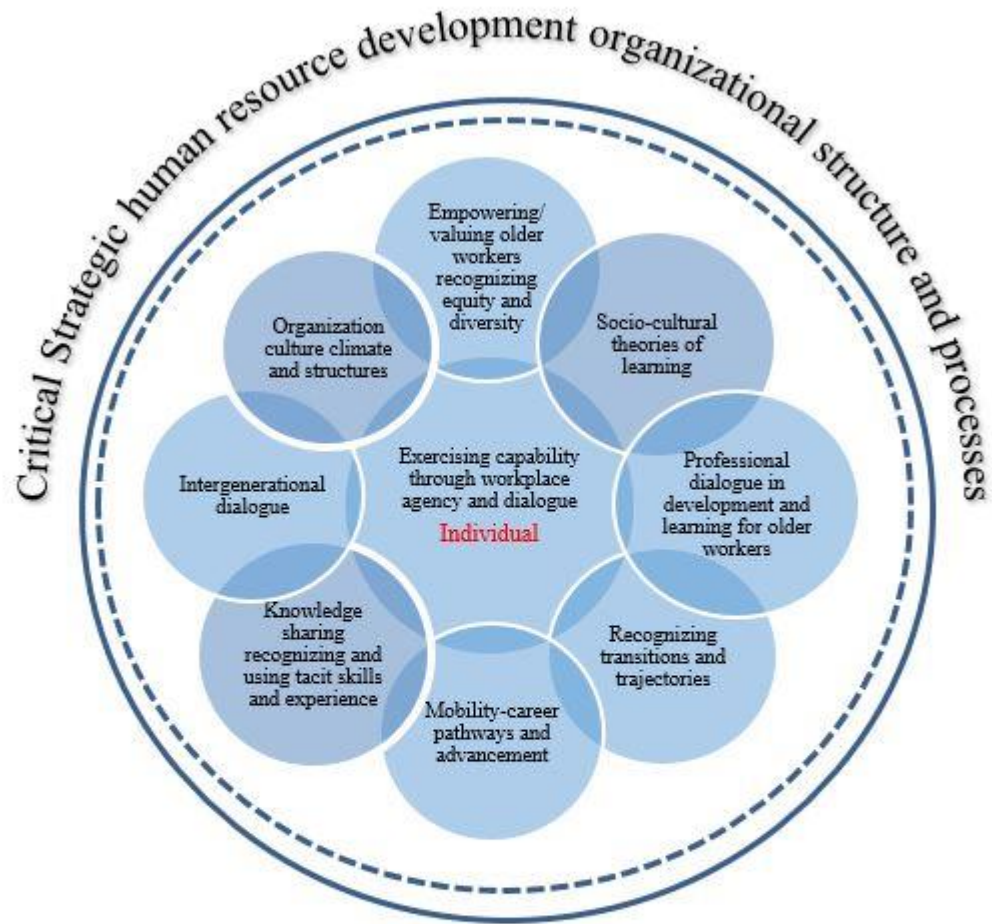
utilizing older workforces for sustainable organizations. While this figure could appear similar to UNESCO style representations, the diagram is based on Aristotelian notions of *eudaimonia* indicating flourishing drawing on Sen's capability theory and the creation of Habermasian spaces to encourage flourishing for dialogue and sharing. It is a continuous cycle of development. Responding to the construct a recommended organizational culture, climate and structure is proposed to address the challenge of sustainable workforces in demographic change for best practice in getting the best out of the older workforce including:

- Age as part of diversity model;
- Dialogue to promote inclusivity and empowerment;
- Changing the culture to one recognizing transitions;
- Organizational model for developing older staff;
- Perceptions of organization and staff career progression and development;
- Retention of older workers' policy and support;
- Development of a learning organization;
- Holistic development, learning and wellbeing;
- Model creating a strategic continuum for professional and personal development;
- Professional learning communities and networked learning (aligned to knowledge sharing).

I now turn to the revised conceptual framework Fig 5.2 which is linked to Fig 5.1 in that it acts as an enabler by which the empirical field in Fig 5.1 can be enabled or facilitated. So, the value of the conceptual framework is seen through its operation and implementation as a lever to facilitate older workers' professional development through changed organizational structures and processes.



## 5.6 Revised conceptual framework



Each element *enacts* on the other and *overlaps* with the central notion of exercising capability and community through professional development and spaces in which to develop.

**Fig 5.2 Critical human resource development structure and processes for older workers' empowerment and flourishing through professional development in HE**

The process of arriving at increasing levels of abstraction to move themes to a higher level (Miles and Huberman 2014) leads to a revised conceptual framework. A conceptual scheme can help make sense of conflicting levels of phenomena coming through the data, in a 'snapshot' in time embedded in an ongoing historical process having a relationship among and between them (Ritzer 2012).

This revised conceptual framework builds on the first frameworks (Figs 2.1 and 2.3 refer) reflecting development in my thinking around older workers' professional development acting as an enabler for my theoretical and empirical field. The major elements of the literature review and initial conceptual framework enabled development of this model through working symbiotically with findings. It resulted in a deeper understanding of what was occurring providing a bridge between the literature on socio-cultural and relationship theories of development and aligned with theories of flourishing, work agency and empowerment through the creation of Habermasian spaces. This study emphasized the HR aspect of Bolman and Deal's (2008) organizational frames in analysing organizational strategy which included individual skills, needs, competency profiles, relationships, motivation levels, enthusiasm, harmony and cooperation.

The framework's major themes are; the importance of empowering older workers in their vulnerability and lack of confidence, the value seen in informal and tacit learning, the importance of increased spaces for dialogue in Habermas's ideal speech situations, recognition of transitions, a call for increased mobility and pathways for advancement, the value of knowledge sharing and intergenerational perspectives for mutual support and role of enabling organizational climate and structures for supporting older workers in a more expansive form of professional development.

The most important theories are exercising capability (Sen 1992) and Habermasian dialogic spaces (Habermas 1984, 1987) shown in the central circle as a twin device for transforming critical social change to work against the rationalized organization for empowerment of older workers in professional development needs. To exercise both theories, the correct vectors need to be present shown in the overlapping enabling smaller circles given in the previous paragraph. The HR strategy is the overarching component shown in the outer rim in which all elements are nested indicating a strategic organizational role for HR. Each smaller circle (vectors) relates

to and enacts on the other in a dynamic environment for flourishing, moving some way towards a conceptual understanding of workplace learning.

The model accentuates that the organization's acknowledgement of the diversity of needs is absent as workplace learning cultures do not support older workers and recognition of that need would align with more holistic understandings of workplace learning supported by Tikkanen and Nyhan (2006). Sen and Habermas's respective theoretical frames are sensitive to notions of emancipation and agency having inferences for how learning is structured in organizations. Sen's framing required enabling pre-conditions to be present while Habermas's approach required dialogic communication legitimized in the workplace. Flourishing can help stimulate communication to develop positive institutional and departmental cultures. As Sen and Habermas's philosophical writings offered little insight into the practices of affordances that is possibilities for action (Gibson 1979) this study aimed to uncover what those might be and how they might be implemented. These critical theoretical underpinnings shown above demonstrate how the translation to hard processes moving the discussion from theory to praxis could occur (Terry 1997).

As discussed in the literature review social-cultural theories encompass an intersection of factors having most relevance to contemporary workplace learning (Baumgartner 2001; Evans et al. 2002; Unwin 2009; Hager 2010). Drawing on work agency and organizational theories the framework conceptualizes a new reciprocal and inter-dependent model suggesting a paradigm shift in organizational development to better reflect older workers' professional development needs but a model which is mutually beneficial to staff and management.

The themes shown contributed to my argument in proposing a bridge between existing theories of development and aligning the theories of flourishing, agency, and empowerment for a critical organizational structure arguing for different requirements across the life course. The framework advances the study in older workers' learning proposing a framework of use to both the older workforce and management when there is no overall conceptual framework or model existing at organizational level in how to implement workplace practices of benefit to older workers and the organization (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006).

Critical theory ‘seeks to highlight, nurture and promote the potential of human consciousness to reflect critically upon such oppressive practices and thereby facilitate the extension of domains of autonomy and responsibility’ (Alvesson and Wilmott 1996:13). My critical HR framework expands on the traditional literature considering social and demographic contexts of ageing workplaces. Traditionally, HRD literature has been based around functionalist and performativity perspectives with little attention paid to the wider social, economic and political contexts in which HRD operates (Elliott and Turnbull 2005).

This revised conceptual framing of older workers’ development aligns with Barnett’s (2012:3) multi-planar re-design for the twenty-first century university opening up spaces for intellectual collaborative thinking and imagining of possibilities where pre-conditions include an ethos of trust and ‘communicative openness’ and where ‘something approaching a Habermasian ideal speech situation (ISS) is logically entailed where hierarchy and boundaries need to be temporarily set aside’. Such a re-design supports having Sen’s flourishing vectors *in situ* for flourishing to occur in all staff including older workers.

The framework suggests a way forward for informed debate to be had establishing free speech situations without prejudice and fear of being labelled which when transformed into praxis permit a celebration of age similar to existing LBGT or BAME groupings in this context. It aligns with Sen’s capability in being able to speak without fear of reprisals, i.e. in ‘ideal speech situations’ (ISS) Habermas (1984, 1987). ISS related to organizations could shed light on an exploration of older workers in modern society approached from a pragmatic perspective to align the systems structure of HE and the everyday lifeworld of older workers to achieve an engaged, active and fulfilled workforce attempted by this study.

The concluding Chapter 6 summarized key findings, making recommendations for future policy and practice.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This concluding chapter summarized the findings discussion relative to each research question posed. It then summarized my reflections on the study undertaken. A set of eleven recommendations followed, linked to relevant theories and concepts. My reflections on the choice of literature and methodology used and the contribution of the learning to national and international research were considered. The limitations of the study and suggestions for future research were discussed, together with proposed plans for dissemination of the research. Finally, the thesis was summed up in a brief conclusion.

The research explored what value meant for professional development for older workers for staff and management in one HE case study in England leading to a re-imagining of older workers' learning possibilities when their contribution was not always valued. The argument made was that achieving human flourishing and potential was not the singular premise of younger workers; older workers have a legitimate claim to learning as *vessels of untapped potential*. How older workers might be drawn into the lifeworld of the university challenging restrictions of modernity and alienation, through engagement in dialogue via ideal speech situations (ISS), to achieve flourishing through enabling structures and processes was presented.

### **6.2 Research aims**

The study, one where theory and method 'creatively conjoined' (Perselli 2015) aimed to produce an account of professional staff's workplace perceptions considering ambitions, work engagement, progression and possibilities for careers in later life. The foci reflected more interest in professional learning and development than motivations but it was important to ascertain which types of professional development were valued by older workers and management. Value concerned whose interests were served, emphasizing a critical perspective. The study coalesced into twin themes of flourishing and empowerment for older workers and their development needs for mutual benefit through enabling workplace structures, when otherwise they might withdraw from the workplace. The field of older workers

learning was complex and multi-layered and interdisciplinary theories helped make sense of the field under study (Evans et al. 2002; Unwin 2009).

### **6.3 Summary of discussion/answers to research questions**

The summaries related to the research questions. Similarities in staff and management responses around types of professional development, values, and gaps in perceptions were presented, being conclusions arising from analysis of the primary data.

#### **6.3.1 Research question 1**

*What professional development do older workers see as valuable in the HE case study?*

Older workers needed to be much more active in their development which would result in them becoming more empowered as older workers, aligned to Harteis and Goller's (2014) notions of possessing work agency. Work agency is conceptually seen as a disposition. Its definition is of having the capacity and tendency to make intentional choices, act on those choices and to exercise control over self and the environment in work-related contexts (ibid.). The definition supposes that some people are more disposed to have work agency than others. That is, they are more capable of taking control of their own working lives and thus are able to actively shape their own destinies. Seen as a continuum, agentic people frequently take control over their work lives and 'tune their environment to their visions' (Goller 2017:88) while non-agentic workers do not exercise work agency at all.

Nevertheless, work agency is also influenced by the socio-cultural environment and will be affected by that environment. These socio-cultural factors can be considered as either working for or against older workers. Importantly, as work agency was considered a necessary pre-condition for successful work-related and non-work related lifelong learning (Harteis and Goller 2014) workers need to develop supportive strategies in the form of self-manage concepts. One way to do this is through participation in communities.

The findings indicated that spaces were required for discussing which development approaches were suited to older workers' needs and to combat vulnerability at this stage of life, increasing the possibility of having work agency which a Habermasian perspective would encourage (Habermas 1991).

Nevertheless, there was authentic engagement seen with the types of professional development needed. An overwhelming positive response to the value of informal learning aligned to the research (Evans and Kersh 2004; Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006) was deciphered. Part of what made that type of learning valuable was the importance of having informal learning experiences validated by management and others. External development, possibly through professional association memberships valued by management, was nevertheless unfunded. Age-related development was by no means entirely favoured. However, the literature from Finsden and Formosa (2011) showed age differentiated provision was beneficial but should be couched in terms of equity and not viewed as a deficit model.

Maintaining workplace currency with appropriate development was requested and desirable, which aligned to the literature (Tikkanen and Nyhan 2006; McNair 2011). It also aligned to the guidelines for the 'Agenda for New Skills and Jobs' initiative (EU 2011:9) which has called for more targeted lifelong learning and career guidance and innovation geared to raising employment rates, particularly for older workers. Being offered mid-life reviews was affiliated to the findings of NIACE's (2015) research, carried forward in Altmann's (2014) report to Government and was enthusiastically supported by the cohort under research.

Karpinska notes, 'investment in employability of older workers appears to be crucial, and investments in lifelong learning or policies that promote a healthy life style are among the tools that can prepare future older workers to the challenges of an extended working life' (2013). Transitions were not recognized by the organization but staff sought holistic development to take account of age and health which aligned Altmann's (2014) report to Government and Karpinska's research (2013).

Staff were not averse to performance management. A more transparent SRD for age-related discussions and a broader view of development including tacit and everyday skills was very valued, allied to Evans et al. (2002) research. These forms of learning should be fed into and included as part of HR strategic planning.

Finally, and of critical importance, there was a requirement for establishing development initiatives for empowerment and confidence raising. Empowerment was critical in the development of work agency and having the confidence to seek opportunities for development. However, in this study, confidence or lack of confidence was a major issue, which aligned to Ng and Law's (2014) research on loss in ageing.

### **6.3.2 Research question 2**

*What professional development does management see as valuable for older workers in the HE case study?*

That older workers should maintain currency was a priority for management, particularly around learning for renewal and refreshment. This demand for current skills was borne out through the literature calling for support for access to up to date skills for older people indicated by OECD (2006) and Tikkanen and Nyhan (2006). The support for keeping current included the provision of quality career services and better working conditions (OECD 2006). However, in the study there was little development for career mobility and progression even though it was considered useful by management. Soft skills were recognized positively for older workers such as workplace relationships, team working, coaching and mentoring partnerships but conversely management acknowledged it was not these skills (although needed in an education establishment) that gained promotion. Knowledge sharing was also viewed positively as championed by Finsen's work (2015). The adoption of mid-life reviews, recommended by (NIACE 2015), was widely supported and was also aligned to the value staff placed on them.

Unsure whether differentiated professional development provision was supportive, management nevertheless recognized the organization was possibly discriminatory in not providing it. More development should be offered around staged withdrawal/transitioning, recognizing the ageing process increased vulnerability, particularly affecting female staff on lower grades. More expansive views of development which have been signposted by Evans, Hodkinson and Unwin (2002)



aided participation, being more relevant to *both* staff and management and age-related discussions with a career service/coaching was beneficial.

*Questions 1 and 2 are connected by a discussion considering what and whose interests are served?*

Power relations were a concern for staff in a time of organizational change indicated by Rainbird et al. (2004). In this study, the tension related to whose interests were served in development afforded for existing roles and development for moving on or out. Having transparency over retirement planning would result in more trust in the organization when discussing retirement plans and avert suspicion over equity in development.

### **6.3.3 Research question 3**

*How might any differing views on what professional development should be offered be reconciled?*

This question concerned gaining understanding of how different interests in the process and outcomes might be addressed and by whom? It also explored any differences of gaps in expectations between the two groupings of professional staff and management.

While management and staff *both* valued maintaining currency and refreshment, development was not an organizational priority and perhaps as a result management were not viewed as fully supportive of professional development for older workers. This was disquieting for an education organization, particularly one having a strong professional development and education focus.

Perceptions blocking older workers' confidence and progress contributed to a maintenance view of professional development appearing as a default model, although recognised in this research and by Kooij et al. (2008), that older workers were not homogenous. This default view was disappointing as there was an eagerness and appetite to continue in careers in this study. Older workers wanted something different. They wanted perceptions to shift to acknowledge development and continue to be motivated and supported as Greller (2006) suggested in his study on college educated men aged 23-70 on career motivation where age was not a factor

in the hours spent on professional development and business networking, implying factors influencing investment in the former are similar regardless of age.

Older workers had an active role to play in their development and furthermore should make individual efforts to close any gaps, corresponding to having work agency (Harteis and Goller 2014) and to make use of and request spaces to discuss their needs as proposed by Habermas (1984). Older workers in this study also wanted spaces to discuss skilling, moving sideways or moving on, representing a gap in understanding and perception of their needs. Having the ability to self-manage and adapt to employers' preferences was particularly pertinent to older workers, often subjected to discriminatory attitudes as Cedefop's (2012) research, considering the interactions between learning, ageing and working to support lifelong policies has indicated. Through taking control over work situations, 'employees are able to take an active approach towards their professional development' as Goller and Billett (2014:13) suggested. But this adaptability is not necessarily occurring, as Patrickson and Ranzin's (2003) research and Virgona et al. (2003) research has indicated.

Mobility was viewed as advantageous to organizations in utilizing unused talent in other areas of organization. But there was scant possibility of mobility and career advancement offered within the organization or development for moving on externally. Older workers can contribute to innovation for mutual benefit if mobility was recognized at institutional level. In response, professional development for older workers should be seen as a tool for providing mobility both in and out of the organization for self-employment beneficial to being a dynamic organization as Altmann suggests (2014).

Development progression for new pathways and engagement would represent a life-course perspective maintained by Hodkinson et al. (2004) although limited attempts had been made by management to create pathways for progression but in the recognition that some wanted an exit strategy or support in the day to day role.

More needed to be done to sustain motivation and engagement which management agreed was absent. Kanfer and Ackerman argued work motivation may be improved by organizational strategies and managerial practices taking account normative patterns of adult development (2004) and could be addressed through HRM policies

and practices including ergonomic adjustments and continuous career development (Kooij et al. 2008). It should also take into account praxis of action of educational gerontology that is concerned with the processes of older adult learning which is advanced by Finsden and Formosa (2011).

The SRD should be re-positioned to offer a much wider view of staff development built around a busy life to include formal recognition of informal learning, tacit knowledge and informal meetings aligned to Evans, Kersh and Kontiainen's (2004) research which is seen more widely in development for chartered professions. It should be linked to a personal/professional plan more appropriate to older workers and later careers with provision of a career/coaching service and a space for discussion in the SRD.

The lack of line of sight between an individuals' SRD and strategic planning was disheartening for staff. Strengthening the link between HR and having specific support from HR and line management training acknowledging the transition process for older workers would help improve the effectiveness of the review, a point emphasized by Altmann (2014). Adapting to a performance management and appraisal process was considered helpful by both managers and staff to acknowledge the requirement to keep up and improve performance but sensitive line management handling was critical.

Transitions were at a tipping point recognizing Bauman's (2005) 'liquid life' where shape shifting was a constant feature of modernity and they needed formalizing into policies and procedures. Age was not considered by management in this study (diversity implications and possible discrimination being omitted) leading to a lack of succession planning as the organization had an ageing workforce profile. A pragmatic business case for diversity management, advanced by Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins (2013), supported an argument that diversity was good for business and profitability based on recruitment and retention of good staff, better services and products, better decision making and better reputation and helpful for movement in a dynamic organization. Modern workplaces are increasingly not only adopting diversity management strategies but are making their HR diversity management practice a central plank in their overall strategies and practices (Frost and Kalman 2016). Changing demographics meant the organization 'could no longer afford to

ignore talent found in women, disability and the older person' (Arvinen-Muondo and Perkins 2013:33) and regardless will be forced to adjust policies for pragmatic reasons. For this study, appropriate HR practices targeted at older workers and line management training, recognizing equity and diversity considerations, needed establishing sending a message that older workers were valued, respected and considered for development. Nonetheless, diversity and inclusion training is not without its critics according to Rock and Grant (2017).

The extent to which older workers felt supported by the internal culture was inconclusive. This finding and other staff perceptions of how valued staff were by management meant at best the culture towards them was lukewarm. However, an individualistic culture meant collaborative learning and knowledge sharing valued by older workers, referenced by Kanfer and Ackerman (2004), was poorly done with no formal structures. Understandings of knowledge sharing is under-researched, but where knowledge is created through group participation, Finsden (2015) argues it offers equal footing with younger workers. Supportive, interactive learning environments built on trust, openness and collective ownership encouraged knowledge acquisition and sharing, mirroring a Habermasian perspective, and where Smith (2001) considered optimum use of tacit and explicit knowledge supports organizations to realize competitive advantage.

Older workers valued soft skills and tacit knowledge opportunities aligned to Evans et al. (2010:360) proposal of establishing quality relationships, facilitated by dialogue, contributing to better understanding of the social nature of workplace learning. The forms of development most valued were mentoring, coaching, networking, sharing knowledge and team working. These forms aligned to research showing that making work more attractive to workers to encourage retention and development included encouraging support and training targeted at 55-64 age groupings; creation of knowledge sharing opportunities, encouragement for progression, monitoring equal opportunities and implementing supportive workplace elements such as flexible work/learning patterns (Crow 2006; AAT 2015). Professional development for staged retirement/withdrawal was valued bringing in professional development for later careers. A broader conception of staff development to widen out the learning, including tacit learning and informal learning away from the workplace should be recognized at least as significant as formal

learning and should be valued and used as part of formal process in reviews of development undertaken aligned to the extensive TLRP (2000-9) research.

#### **6.4 Summary reflection on the study and implications**

Spaces were required for engagement, with development approaches suited to older workers' needs and to combat vulnerability. Thus, Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (1984, 1987) through ideal speech situations (ISS) for older workers was seen to be crucial to the study.

The theory supports the realisation of the capability to flourish through having the right vectors in place, as Sen's (1992) capability approach suggests. The vector of dialogic spaces advanced by way of Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action (1984, 1987), through ideal speech situations (ISS), (which are communitarian rather than individual) acts as a mechanism for worker agency at the micro-levels of the workplace, providing open and free spaces for dialogue for older workers to be agentic over what their learning and development needs are.

The implication of Habermas's theory is that it affords a voice for older workers, which then can lead to an empowered community of older workers, able to articulate from the bottom up what they value in professional development and what their developmental needs are, identify opportunities and engage in learning activities. It provides a theoretical basis for professional development for this cohort which transcends bureaucracy and a marketized environment, in this case a university.

Establishing Habermasian spaces for dialogue, considered helpful by both staff and management, provide spaces where staff and management might come together to renegotiate and advance older worker contributions when not always valued. As a theory of integration (Englund 2006) generations can meet without prejudice of labelling and integrate to 'develop positive institution and department cultures' advancing business goals. These views are in concert in creating ideal speech situations through the TCA (Habermas 1984, 1987), argued by Habermas as a counterpoint to rationalized organizations.

Taking the theory of integration further, having an organizational practice of valuing older workers through diversity management would provide the foundation and culture for a more supportive environment to older workers. The organization should adopt progressive organizational policy making to include diversity management in a critical 'valuing the difference' approach appropriate as a public sector body and a beacon of best practice in HE in the UK to develop all staff potential as agency and structure theorists argue for (Ritzer 2012). This would support Sen's flourishing theories where all feel valued, talents utilized and organizational goals are met as advocated by Kirton Fuller (2003). Diversity management includes ensuring talents are well used and staff retained. Part of this is in creating a culture supportive to difference while discriminatory attitudes and beliefs are a factor in job market withdrawal suggested in an EU policy paper (EU 2012).

Social, cultural and organizational factors were relevant to older workers' workplace learning and learning as a process aligned with participation (Hager 2010). Learning appeared embedded within workplace activity and affected by these factors, argued by Baumgartner (2001) and by Unwin (2009). Organizational policy for transitions was needed which recognized a blurring of personal, individual and workplace life as supported by Evans, Hodkinson and Unwin (2002), due to caring responsibilities, not raised by management. Recognizing there is vulnerability in transitions supports an equity and diversity approach to people management to build an inclusive workplace environment. This approach signals to older workers they are valued and respected through HR practices targeted at older employees and should benefit from respectful treatment from supervisors and peers which is stressed by Armstrong-Stassen (2008).

A business blueprint for building values in multi-generational workplaces suggested learning gaps could be overcome through knowledge (K), skills (S), abilities and attitudes (A), (Rhoades and Shepherdson 2011). But Evans (2002) emphasized that a valuing all approach takes up a broader holistic viewpoint envisaging a dialogue between organization and employee recognizing competence development (knowledge, skills and attitude) was *only one* aspect in the process. Spaces for dialogue needed strengthening to champion older workers. This should be built into staff training and discussion groups to break down pre-conceptions to show staff they are valued, implying a groundswell of similar, communitarian thinking or norms (Habermas 1984:85-101, 284-8) and important for organizational culture as older

workers who reported feeling more valued were more likely to talk about positive workplace interactions and relations with younger workers as noted by Ng and Law (2014).

Union advocacy should be strengthened to play a more visible role through their equality units representing Habermas's reconceptualization (1971). Older workers, in exercising work agency, should be more pro-active contributors to consultative committees to self-initiate professional development and in meetings with unions. Dialogical spaces should be established for more formalized intergenerational learning and peer-to-peer learning as argued by Finsden and Formosa (2011), resulting in innovation of benefit to organizations and staff, where stereotyping can be challenged for more harmonious and productive workplaces as Zachery (2000) suggested.

McNair (2010) anticipated creating a *sense of a positive future* as a major influence on work and training decisions, supporting an argument for older workers not just as a business case but a social justice one which could be mutually beneficial, and viewed as supportive by Armstrong Stassen (2008). This approach recognized the *urgency* to reflect on professional development approaches and goals in the second half of life to protect against both unemployment and remain employable (McNair 2006; Altmann 2014). It results in a changing perspective where professional development moves from a maintenance perspective to a development perspective and where *mainstreaming progression becomes the norm*. The revised conceptual framework framed the recommendations below shifting older workers from being a burden to vessels of untapped potential, aligned to Habermas's reconceptualization of a rationalized organization (1990). Adler et al. 2007 suggested the shift considers the distribution of life chances of individuals through making more than minor adjustments, with older workers staking a rightful claim in the workplace, re-envisioning learning spaces for older workers and career progression.

Staff participants suggested an inclusive workplace environment to support transitions through a *valuing all* approach included:

- Recognition of caring responsibilities;
- Having voice for transitions (fora, discussions);

- Equitable access to development lost through caring responsibilities;
- Older workers' health issues;
- Developing self-esteem and work agency for empowerment.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

Eleven recommendations arose from this research aligned to the research questions and the literature, which relate to organization diversity management, dialogue to challenge culture and unconscious bias for mutual benefit, empowerment and confidence in changing demographics and professional development approaches. They also relate to empowerment and confidence, line management development, organizational learning policy, positive workplace climates to reverse plateauing, mobility and career progression being viewed as implicit, understanding and recognition of the positive benefits of both knowledge sharing, and intergenerational and intra-generational sharing and promoting of professional careers in HE through greater investment in training.

### **6.5.1 Organizational diversity management**

A business case for diversity recognizes changing demographics at micro and meso-organizational level by no longer ignoring talent from wherever it comes. Strategic plans, HR documentation, equality policies and staff development plans needed re-drafting to reference age drawing on wider policy and making reference to Equality Data Reports. The findings of this research aligned with Bolman and Deal's case for diversity (2008) based on a diverse society, although these authors stopped short of advocating for the explicit benefits of a diverse workforce which Boxall and Purcell (2011) and Green (2010) have proposed. The DWP (DWP 2013) has argued that innovative practices eradicating unfair or discriminatory treatment make sound business sense and are an effective means of signalling and maintaining a reputation as a highly respected employer. Through not appearing as a champion of equality the researched organization is out of step with its stated mission. The findings signalled the need for a critical HRD approach and critical HRD cannot ignore trade union



involvement which has a larger role to play in the studied organization (and in wider equality units).

The whole area of older workers had not been considered with many participants claiming they had not really thought about it before this study. An awareness raising campaign needed to be implemented on the basis that we are *all* going to get old.

Specific recommendations include:

- Conducting an organizational readiness audit. The NHS Working Longer Group (2015) has produced a checklist for the ageing workforce.
- Implementation of an annual staff survey to track progress in developing the organization as a workplace based on diversity management.
- Benchmarking by HEFCE or lobbying unions which are undertaking a large-scale survey around ethnicity in HE.
- Conducting longer term research considering what is progressive organizational policy making in relation to age (Syed and Ozbilgin 2009).
- Adoption by the university of the Age Positive Logo (DWP 2013).

### **6.5.2 Dialogue – challenging culture and unconscious bias for mutual benefit**

Fora, working groups and other ways of showing older staff they are valued need establishing. These findings explicitly link to Habermas's theories of communitarianism (1984, 1987). Furthermore, instituting intergenerational meetings can 'develop positive institution and department cultures' advancing business goals which are positive for staff and management, as suggested by Findsen's work (2015).

Paying attention to, and formalizing ways of working, is one method to extend participation and to challenge entrenched cultural ideas through reaching across generations.

- Consistent team building staff development across different and the same departments facilitated by an expert.

Careful attention should be paid to creating a culture supportive of difference thereby challenging unconscious assumptions and bias as suggested by Strauss (2013). The adoption of age-neutral language should be encouraged, aligned to the Altmann report (2014). Some strategies to reduce unconscious bias, but not necessarily only related to age as identified by Ross (2010) include:

- Becoming more aware of our biases and purposively strive to change them.
- Conducting an audit of the workplace by critical assessment of interview, hiring, promotion and termination practice.
- Administer organization wide surveys to specifically assess stereotypes and biases.
- Customized training and development for hidden bias, stereotypical behaviours and forms of unfairness.
- Establish team members of diverse groups.
- Create projects and images that portray older workers in a positive light to diminish stereotyping.
- Creation of an environment in which it is safe to disagree and discuss various viewpoints.
- Creation of an ombudsperson role and responsibility who is knowledgeable about unconscious bias (Ross 2010:291).

### **6.5.3 Empowerment and confidence in changing demographics**

Empowerment is critical in the development of work agency. A strong focus on empowerment and confidence through staff development and within departments was needed, supported by a buddy system.

- Skills assessment and needs analysis identifying achievements and gaps to support confidence, acting as bridge to future progression.

- Creation of spaces for individual or departmental dialogue, discussion groups/fora, decision-making tools and the use of facilitators representing role models.

#### **6.5.4 Professional development approaches**

Development could usefully take a form that recognizes progress and the enhancement of older workers' roles so as to support motivation and engagement.

- A personal professional development plan would be motivational and individual, representing ownership.
- Age specific provision is necessary, aligned to equality and diversity for older workers' best interests.
- Refresh skills and re-engage older workers with different types development to re-engage with the exterior, e.g. increased IT training.

The organization could gain competitive advantage by recognizing the role of informal learning through the following measures.

- A funded coaching service, cascaded down.
- Confidence booster training and discussion groups.
- Re-angling the professional development portfolio to capture and evaluate self-reflective learning where informal learning can be formalized alongside formal learning (TLRP 2000-9).

Future career progression development might be facilitated by the following steps.

- Establishing the SRD as a performance management and development tool through further dialogue with unions.
- Longer term planning, at least a 12-month plan with access to a coach or career service as the norm.
- Establishment of personal professional development plans as a component part of the SRD reviewed at intervals shared with a coach/buddy.
- HR work undertaken at strategic level to offer clear career pathways and policies.

#### **6.5.5. Line management training**

Line managers need to adopt specific approaches, understanding how age impacts perception, feelings and confidence. Line managers should be given the necessary tools to support individuals and assist them in exploring other opportunities as recommended by Altmann (2014).

#### **6.5.6. Organisational policy climate for learning**

A learning organisation should be implemented which includes Illeris (2004) competence development, and considers praxis of action of educational gerontology (Findsen and Formosa 2011). Informal learning away from the workplace should be recognised, at least as significant as formal learning, and should be valued, and used as part of the formal process in reviews of development undertaken (TLRP 2000-9).

#### **6.5.7. Expectations and empowerment for professional development and reversing plateauing**

The organisational model would include a positive workplace climate for empowerment and the development of work agency. Placing responsibility to develop firmly *in both the staff and organisation's expectations* makes the expectation part of the learning landscape. This helps with engagement as staff transition and where staff feel disposed to the organisation, retaining the psychological contract. There should be an opportunity to re-think skills, how older workers use them and how they might improve them (McNair 2011, Altmann 2014).

#### **6.5.8. Mobility and career progression**

Offering development for self-employment helps organisational movement and succession planning in a pyramidal structure and is mutually beneficial (OECD 2011). Professional qualifications currently undertaken ad hoc in this university setting should be funded. There should also be better use made of, and promotion of the career service.

#### **6.5.9. Knowledge sharing**

There was evidence of *gaining value from* and *giving value to* others in knowledge sharing and staff had adopted it more widely in some departments. Knowledge sharing helps break down silos and encourages more effective learning and new posts for academic research include a knowledge management aspect. Utilising skills and knowledge in different ways can bestow continued value on workers moving to the last five or ten years of a working career as Findsen and Formosa (2011) suggested.

#### **6.5.10. Intergenerational and intra-generational sharing and team working**

The value of mixed age workplace communities should be recognised (Findsen and Formosa 2011). There should also be an acknowledgement that healthy communities have a mixture of age groups, while business effectiveness is improved through team working of those age groups (Barnett 2013). However, it should also be understood that sharing of knowledge across generations can be difficult in hierarchical structures.

#### **6.5.11. Improving employability**

The OECD (2006) agenda for reform for older worker views employers as gatekeepers with one approach being that of greater investment in older workers training, as there is better ROI through longer pay off time, as well as offering wider benefits to society and individuals. Promoting professional careers in HE as a valid choice through enhancing their image (Duncan 2014) to retain and attract the best, would help ensure staff feel valued and improve retention. The membership organisation, the Association of University Administrators, have a role to play in this.

### **6.6 Reflection on literature choices and methodology**

The methodology reflected the subjectivity of the topic. Opie (2004) referred to assumptions about human nature and agency having clear implications for

methodological and procedural choices. My position was not one of searching for an 'objective' truth but rather trying to achieve an understanding of the perceived reality of participants. My assumptions were based on the premise of the right to agency and empowerment in learning as an older worker where too often the default narrative was of decline. My theoretical lens was an advocacy, participatory and world view perspective. The literature review emphasized the role of contextual factors, including social, cultural, organizational and other factors, in workplace learning being important for this study and which had been underestimated (Baumgartner 2001; Hager 2010). The inclusion of these factors along with other aspects, provided a platform to re-think the nature of continuing professional learning. It also represented a step forward to a theoretical grounding of how learning occurred for older workers transformed into praxis (Terry 1997) permitting a space to a shift of celebrating age.

An interpretivist research design was used with a case study effected through a flexible, sequential design, using multiple sources of evidence and triangulation to converge data and reach understanding. A mixed methods approach was appropriate to address the complexity and resulted in deeper insights than would otherwise have been achieved (Creswell 2009:203). Case studies, although accused of not allowing for generalization, permit exploration of real life producing in-depth understandings contributing to knowledge of the individual, group or organization. Although criticized for self-reported data collection difficult to verify, case studies are a key way of researching employee attitudes and perceptions (Yin 1990). The research was of wider value in that the knowledge created can be viewed as more than offering statistical significance as case studies strive for analytic generalizations (Yin 2014:68).

## **6.7 Contribution of learning to national and international research**

This pragmatic study has illuminated a topical concern with widespread application. This research was potentially important to HE and wider workplaces as numerically a tipping point was being reached with evidence from society, policy makers and government that older workers can play a positive role in the workplace. There was a role for intervention by regulation and government policy to recognize a diversity of needs in the workplace argued by Tikkanen and Nyhan (2006:9).

The academic contribution of the thesis was in its consideration that older workers in one HE site were productive and energized contributors to the organization when their value was sometimes questioned. The study has conceptualized a different model of organizational commitment to the professional development of one section of the workforce which is under-researched. Looking for a bridge between existing theories of development and aligning the theories of flourishing, agency and empowerment it proposed a new organizational structure addressing needs and requirements of older workers arguing for different requirements across the life course. Drawing on work agency theory and organizational theories, the thesis conceptualized a reciprocal and inter-dependent model suggesting a paradigm shift in organizational development. Some of the work aligned with Kandola and Fullerton's (2003) diversity framework including elements of a skilled workforce, aware and fair, mission, objective and fair processes, active flexibility, individual focus, and a culture that empowers where the links between a diversity oriented organization and the learning organization were made explicit. However, these authors state:

Managing diversity should not be seen as separate from the learning organisation; it should instead be striving to refresh such approaches with the principles of diversity by adopting a symbiotic approach. (ibid.:166)

The thesis expands the connection between managing diversity and workplace learning. Its contribution to international research is through building on socio-contextual relationships and processes in approaches to workplace learning relative to the structure-agency debate. Relational factors of empowerment and flourishing for older workers addressing individual work agency can be enablers in workplace structures and climates for learning but are contextual.

This study extends understanding of how ageing impacts on workplace learning in an under-researched area through accentuating that linking theories of empowerment and flourishing for individual work agency are central to learning being activated for older workers. The connection underlines what organizational structures and processes best support older workers' learning in modern workplaces for mutual gain when rising to the growing organizational challenge of demographic change and extended employability, leading to a re-imagining of learning possibilities.

## **6.8 Limitations of study and suggestions for further research**

As a study reflecting a snapshot in time it was limited as organizations are dynamic and the researched organization was undergoing dramatic change reflected by the data (Kotler 1996; Fullan 2007). However, this phenomenon was not unusual as HE mergers and restructuring are commonplace. A small sample restricted validity as findings cannot be generalized (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 1997). As a distinct organization specializing in one area, strategies and recommendations may exert a different influence on other universities. Nevertheless, as the sample was representative of most administrative functions findings were generalizable to other HE workplaces and sectors. Future research could study several HE locations and other sectors. Theory around older people's motivations for learning is not yet sufficiently developed suggesting the usefulness of advancing theory to understand the effects of ageing and adult development on work motivation and how best to motivate and manage older workers.

## **6.9 Dissemination**

Implications for my professional practice include the following steps.

- Discussions with HR to identify gaps in provision and improvement.
- Dissemination through peer-reviewed journals and a monograph with an academic publisher.
- Development of an online teaching programme.
- Contribution to a proposal for the development of an inter-disciplinary research programme into creativity and later-life to include extended working lives.
- Consultancy opportunities.

## **6.10 Conclusion**

This research has contributed to a holistic and more nuanced understanding of multiple facets of older workers' learning having generated *new perspectives* on the value placed on professional development for older workers by staff and



management. It explored what *forms* are valuable and why, exploring similarities and differences seen between older workers and management. It *shed light* on types of learning and professional development to understand how these forms of learning were informed gaining insights into vocabulary, practices and approaches for professional development. Finally, *strategic recommendations* at meso and micro-organizational level were made.

The research has identified a skills gap in the development of professional staff in a higher education workplace which could be relevant to other sectors. The implications of what it is to be an older worker as a professional staff member in a higher education workplace have not been addressed by this sector.

It is critical for older workers to have opportunities for development, capability and enabling workplace structures. The area of transitions in the workplace linked to adult learning perspectives is under-researched. More widely, the area of educational gerontology is still evolving and is still to find its place as a subset of adult and lifelong learning, as Findsen and Formosa (2011) state. It is hoped that this study goes some way towards the ambition of seeing older people as having the potential for continued growth and having their learning needs in the workplace addressed.

Developing older staff creates opportunities for progression for mutual benefit when organizations succeeding in the global information society are those that can identify, value, create and evolve their knowledge assets. Also, where high levels of work-related skills and occupational knowledge can secure long-term employment and employability (OECD 2012), promotion and work-related progression (Goller and Billett 2014).

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## **Glossary**

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CROW	Centre for Research into the Older Workforce
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
ISS	Ideal Speech Situations
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HRM	Human Resource Management - sometimes referred to simply as human resources (HR)
ILO	International Labour Organization
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
NIACE	National Institute of Adult Continuing Education
OLDER WORKERS	Defined for this study as aged 50+
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office for National Statistics (UK)



PIACC	Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (OECD)
SOAD	Staff Organisation and Development
TLRP	Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP 2000-9), Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
UCU	University College Union
UNISON	Amalgamation of three public sector trade unions, the <u>National and Local Government Officers Association</u> (NALGO), the <u>National Union of Public Employees</u> (NUPE) and the <u>Confederation of Health Service Employees</u> (COHSE)

## **APPENDICES**

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## **Appendix1: Consent Form for Research Project being undertaken by Domini Bingham**

### **Background information**

I am undertaking this primary research as my final thesis for my EdD (Doctor in Education) programme of studies at the Institute of Education (IOE), University of London. Please note that my project has been passed by the Xs Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

### **Aims of the research project**

I am interested in exploring and understanding meanings of engagement in the workplace and considerations for continuing professional development for professional staff, considered to be late careerists in higher education in England.

### **Title of Research project:**

Exploring professional development for older workers in the higher education workplace

### **Project design**

I am using a case study based around engagement in the workplace for professional staff in higher education

---

### **My pledge**

I guarantee you both personal and institutional anonymity. False names for both the institution and individuals will be used in my assignment. If you are interested in the findings of this project I am happy to forward you a summary of the report.

Please circle your response: **Yes/ No**

Name

Date

Signature

**Your consent**

**Please indicate where appropriate:**

I agree to **Domini Bingham** observing my participation in the project study outlined above and for the information to be used in her thesis. **Yes/No**

I agree for this interview to be recorded and for the information to be used in Domini Bingham's thesis. **Yes/No**

Please indicate your consent for the possible publication of this data at a later stage in my academic studies. **Yes/No**

Name .....

Date\_ .....

Your Consent

Signature .....

## **Appendix 2 Letter of Introduction to Interview Participants**

**Please note that you can withdraw consent at any time by contacting  
Domini Bingham at d.bingham@ioe.ac.uk**

Dear

**XX research into continuing professional development for professional staff as late  
careerists.**

I'd like to introduce myself. I am undertaking my doctorate of education at the Institute of Education, London and for my final thesis. I am looking at X senior professional staff and their engagement with professional development at later career stage. I am particularly interested in exploring and understanding what form and types of professional development are of interest and helpful to late careerists in senior professional roles in the organisation.

I am asking your permission to interview you for one hour to obtain some understanding of motivations around any career development and associated professional development at X. I would like to audio record these interviews for analysis. Please understand that you do not have to take part if you don't wish to. Also, if you change your mind you can withdraw from the study at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be anonymised and so there is no way it can be traced back to individuals.

I may wish to publish this work at a later stage, and therefore, I would also like your consent for the possible publication in the future. Any material gathered will be helpful to staff development in designing future workshops and professional development. As explained in the consent form, all the details that I include in my thesis for publications will be presented anonymously.

With best wishes and thank you very much.

Domini Bingham      **d.bingham@ioeoac.uk**

**Please complete and return to me**

Name.....

Date .....

Your Consent

Signature .....

### **Appendix 3 Survey Questionnaire-Phase 1**

I am in the final thesis stage of the Doctoral EdD programme at the IOE. I've been interested in adult learning and its barriers for a long time and I am researching professional staff - older workers and their professional development needs at X as my final thesis research.

We're all having to work longer and the date we can receive our pensions is being pushed back. This survey is inviting you to give your views about the organisation and its professional development for staff in an era of extended working lives! Perhaps until 70 years old.

The survey of 17 questions will take **no longer than 10 minutes to complete**. All questionnaires will be completely anonymous to everyone apart from the researcher. You do not need to give your name on the questionnaire but it may be helpful, if you agree to my finding out more through a follow up interview. Your identity will never be disclosed. All responses will remain completely confidential and not disclosed to anyone. This research has been approved by the IOE ethics committee.

**Please provide one answer to each question, putting a tick against the relevant box. If you feel unable to answer a question or it is not relevant to you then please tick that box.**

Thank you very much. Domini Bingham, EdD final year student [d.bingham@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:d.bingham@ioe.ac.uk)

**1. What is your job/group role (please choose one)?**

**My role is mainly Academic**

Full time

Part time

**My role is mainly Professional/ administrative support**

Full time

Part time

**My role is mainly Academic and professional**

Full time

Part time

**My role is mainly other professional support**

Full time

Part time

**2. My age is (choose one)**

25 or under

26- 35

36-45

46-55

56-59

60-64

65-70

**NB: If sent out by HR will adapt this to sample older age groups ONLY.**

**3. Do you consider yourself to be?**

White

Asian or Asian British

Black or Black British

Mixed

Arab

Chinese

Other ethnic background

Prefer not to say



**4. When thinking about age do you consider yourself?**

- Early adulthood
- Middle adulthood
- Late adulthood
- No opinion

**5. Do you consider yourself as an older worker?**

- Yes
- No

**6. Is that within the organisation or just generally? (Tick either one or both boxes)**

- Organisation
- Generally

**7. To what extent do you believe staff development should be age-related within the organisation?**

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Completely
- No opinion

Would you like to explain further?

**8. In your opinion, what are?**

a) the strengths of current professional development

b) the weaknesses of current professional development

**9. What types of professional development, if any, do you particularly currently value?**

a) formal types of training and development (internal organised training opportunities)

- Not at all valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Very valuable
- No opinion

**b) Informal types of training and development such as learning through colleagues,  
professional networks**

- Not at all valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Very valuable
- No opinion

**c) External professional development offered by professional membership  
organisations**

- Not at all valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Very valuable
- No opinion

**10. What gaps, if any, in your opinion, are there in professional development for older  
workers?**

**a) more generally?**

**b) in the organisation**

**11. What in your opinion could the organisation develop further for professional older workers?**

- a. **Coaching** (*Coaching targets high performance and improvement at work and usually focuses on specific skills and goals usually for a relatively short period*)

- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- b. **Mentoring** (*experienced colleague uses his/ her knowledge and understanding of the work/ workplace to support the development of a colleague – may be longer term*)

- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion

- c. **Setting up communities of practice where older staff can become involved?**

*(a community of practice is where groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better through interacting regularly)*

- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion

Other? Would you like to give your thoughts?

**12. To what extent, do you agree that the internal organisational culture values of older professional staff**

- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion

Other comment? Please say

**13. To what extent do you agree management considers professional development for older workers valuable?**

- Slightly agree
- Agree



Recognising better work life balance                    a) a lot   b) some   c) quite d) not much  
e) not at all

Offering flexible working                                    a) a lot   b) some   c) quite d) not much  
e) not at all

Tailored training/development for older                a) a lot   b) some   c) quite d) not much  
e) not at all

Opportunity of mid-life career review                    a) a lot   b) some   c) quite d) not much  
e) not at all

**16. To what extent do you agree you are supported in learning new technology and systems in your everyday work?**

- Slightly agree
- Agree
- Slightly disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion

Any further comment? Please say

**17. Any other final comments? Please say**

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your input is valued and could be used to make changes to professional development for older workers in higher education.

If you would be happy to be involved in a short interview (20 minutes) to expand further on these ideas your input would be most valuable. Please indicate by giving your email address here and I will be in contact with you. This will remain confidential.

- Yes, I would be happy to be interviewed.
- No I don't wish to be interviewed
- My name is \_\_\_\_\_
- My email address is \_\_\_\_\_



#### **Appendix 4 Interview Questionnaire – Phase 2 Management Interviews**

**The themes for the questions have all come from a professional staff survey circulated in autumn 2014. The questions emboldened are the most important.**

##### ***PART 1 Questions exploring value for staff development: what professional development (PD) do older workers see as valuable in the organisation***

1. What is currently professional development (age-related) in your organisation?
2. Do you believe that dialogue between staff and workers would help identify age- related PD.
3. If, so, what mechanisms/approaches (might) help individuals identify older worker needs?
4. Do you think the organisation provides equitable opportunities for all workers?
5. How, in your view might the organisation (senior management) develop career development for older workers? That is, both within the organisation and other careers outside?
6. Research (TLRP) is showing that people need different types of CPD at different ages and career stages. If you support this, what, in your view, might be appropriate for older workers?
7. What are the approaches to facilitate communication between different groups at different life stages or experiences, such as hearing about other perspectives or issues raised? Do they exist now?
8. To what extent is involvement in PD dependent on individual's self-promotion and self-worth?
9. How helpful is the language around older workers? Do you think the term 'experience related' rather than 'age-related' helpful? If so, why?
10. To what extent do you think soft skills/experience is recognised in the organisation? For example, team-working.

11. Do you consider that older workers require more support and guidance? (E.g. do they require a longer time frame if they have been in the job a while?). If yes, what kind of support and guidance?

**PART 2**      *Questions around strengths and weaknesses of PD for older workers*

1. To what extent in your view, does the organisation create career development/mobility pathways for older workers? Could it do go further? If so, how? E.g. a mid-life career review was strongly indicated by the staff survey.

2. What other types of PD other than that already offered, could be offered for older workers? The survey revealed over 50% sampled had no opinion, why do you think that might be?

3. There is a distinction between formal and informal professional development. What does informal professional development mean to you /the organisation?

4. Do you consider that recognition of these informal learning experiences is important? How would you see experiences in terms of development and practice?

5. How do you see the organisations' staff development policy in terms of PD for older workers?

6. Does the organisation recognise transitions that is different stages in life and life events, in staff lives in terms of types of PD?

7. There is a perception by staff that lack of time inhibits staff development? How might the current staff review and development (SRD) process be improved for older workers in this regard?

8. How might the organisation offer more funding for PD of professional staff (e.g. professional qualifications training)?

**9. What in your view are strengths and weaknesses of PD for older workers?**

10. What other types of PD than that already offered could be offered for older workers?

***PART 3 Questions exploring strategy and planning for PD learning***

1. What is effective professional learning for older workers?

2. To what extent does staff development recognise prior skills and experience when devising programmes, offering PD?

3. Is there differentiation in the PD programme to different staff groups e.g. teaching or administrative staff? If so, how is the balance of PD programme worked out between academic, professional and admin staff?

4. Who decides on the PD offer? Is staff consulted? How?

5. To what extent is PD of professional staff part of integrated strategic planning?

6. How is the evidence professional learning has an impact on the organisation gathered?

7. To what extent are line managers apprised of the importance of PD?

8. Do you see clarity about how an individual's SRD feeds into organisational practice?

9. Do you see the situation changing in the near future more generally around professional development for older workers? (E.g. due to merger/organisational culture changes)?

10. Do you think there is a role for follow up courses to PD offered?

11. To what extent does the hierarchical nature of the organisation stifle PD?

12. Do you see any discrimination in older women support staff?

13. Should PD be mandatory?

14. Should there be management development programmes? (Leadership programmes do already exist)

***PART 4 Questions exploring views on any gaps in PD in the organisation for older workers***

1. How does management see (if at all) the differentiation between PD for developing role in the organisation and career development outside?
2. To what extent could the organisation emphasise PD for personal job –satisfaction and organisational development which draws on the experience of the older worker?
3. Should there in your view be age segregation for staff in relation to PD? If not, might there be any instances where it could be helpful?
4. Could the organisation offer a more holistic PD which recognises career trajectories for older workers? If so, what?
5. Could the organisation offer focussed PD for workers in the last 5-10 years of their careers? If so, what?
6. Do you feel that line managers and management take the development of older workers seriously? Including lower grades?
7. Do you feel there is a lack of follow up support training for older workers– e.g. IT training?
8. To what extent do you think an in-house career service is useful?
9. Could the organisation do more to offer preparation for retirement?

***PART 5 Final comments***

1. Do you feel that older workers feel vulnerable? If so, why? Are female older workers susceptible?

2. Does workload hamper older staff's ability for career extension/development and taking on different roles?
3. To what extent is there a perception that older people are being supported to retire versus a consideration of the benefits of having older workers in the organisation? If so, how might be older workers be supported more?
4. With changing demographics should the benefits of having older workers be reviewed?
5. Do you think that managers need to adopt specific approaches in working with older workers? If so, why? And what?

## **Appendix 5 Data Collection Process**

### **PHASE 1 Electronic survey**

The survey was sent to the entire staff via the organisational intranet requesting all professional staff aged 55+ complete the questionnaire. It was hoped staff members would reflect differing levels of seniority, as far as possible. The dependent variable was age, role and ethnicity. Gender was a variable as was age.

### **Steps in the procedure**

Piloting the quasi-experimental survey instrument (Creswell 2009:155) was conducted to uncover any mis-understandings with wording or questions. Once satisfied, conversations were held on gaining permission for this to be sent out by HR with the survey emailed to them. However, due to staff availability, the questionnaire was placed on the intranet on two separate occasions as a news item, but was quickly crowded out as other items arrived.

A second sweep was needed to obtain sufficient data. The advantage being it did not emanate from the organisation so was seen separate from HR and management carrying no 'top down' connotations.

The questionnaire in three parts was timed to take 10 minutes to complete.

**Part 1** Closed questions gathered professionals' key biographical data: gender, age, and ethnicity, professional staff or not, grade, full or part time. The rationale being different biographical elements might yield specific insights.

**Part 2** Using an attitude survey from Googledocs.com, this section asked questions requesting views on type of PD and learning courses closely related to research questions. It did not canvass questions about pay/benefits. The aim was to assess existing PD programme effectiveness and in proposing other PD programmes, identify any gaps in provision. Questions were asked through a 6 point Likert scale, rank order and multiple choice questions. A small pilot of this structured

questionnaire was undertaken to identify any problems with clarity, comprehension or other issues with small changes made subsequently.

*Part 3* considered staff perceptions about their work in a range of dimensions, which could potentially include themes of communication, learning and development and work-life balance, drawn from the research questions. These aimed to get to the central areas of concerns of an issue as respondents see them (Thomas 2009:175).

### **PHASE 2 Interviews**

I planned to interview a total of 16 staff but widened out the pool of participants to ensure sample representativeness. I found people were intrinsically interested in the research and approached me to be included, feeling they had something to contribute. A total of 20, one hour interviews were conducted, including 14 professional staff and six management staff; a senior member of HR, a member of staff development, member of staff with responsibility for equality, two members of the university's senior leadership team and for the pilot, one staff member with line management responsibilities.

The interview purpose was to gain richer perspectives into older workers' perceptions of, and value seen, in PD and what forms they value in workplace learning. The intention to understand aspirations and motivations in undertaking PD and what skills older workers hope to develop for their future. It was crucial to understand any negative feelings that exist for those interviewed around PD.

Major survey themes formed questions for semi structured, audio-recorded interviews of an hour's duration I transcribed to be close to the material. Although questions were structured, responses were not, as I probed for further information, adding comments at intervals. Sometimes interviewees jumped from one question to another. A pilot of the structured questions was conducted with one professional staff member and one staff member with line management responsibilities to ensure

clarity, subsequently a small number of changes were made. Pilot interviews have been included in the findings.

Interviewing management was integral in obtaining holistic views of PD for older workers from an organisational and strategic perspective canvassing perceptions of value placed on PD for older workers and forms they valued. From the survey, 10 professional staff volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Additionally, further professional staff were invited to participate through opportunistic sampling to gain as wide a sample as possible.

### **Documentary review and analysis**

Documentary review and analysis was conducted on HR, equality and strategy policy documents, where access available. It was hoped background to the study would be strengthened through workforce data analysis considering; size of workforce, demographics; percentage of professional staff 55+ and percentage over 65; division between full and part time staff aged 55+ and gender split.

Due to restructuring of professional staff roles and upheaval caused by the potential merger it was difficult to obtain strategy documents from management despite requests. However, I obtained documents available from the intranet which have potential in analysing professional staff workforce in terms of diversity to include age and ethnicity. For external data, in particular, the government's Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force in April 2011 was accessed via the internet. Selection was based on use in triangulating findings, supporting staff and management findings, identifying gaps and making recommendations for future practice.



## **Appendix 6 - Major Themes – Phase 1 Survey Findings**

### **Spaces for dialogue**

Dialogue needed – importance of dialogue, enabling spaces to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities

Lack of clarity on who decides PD

### **Value of PD**

Line management little comprehension of value of PD

Workload issues – made for difficulties with undertaking PD

Workload should not preclude entitlement and expectations to professional learning for all

### **Value of older workers**

Discriminatory attitudes – particularly lower grades

Unfair allocation of development

Challenging conceptions of older workers – too individualistic

Female support workers particularly vulnerable in competitive environments

Shoulder family responsibilities

Take part time roles to their detriment

### **Differentiation mainly not necessarily the answer**

Assumptions not made about everybody

Age blind CPD – should be needs related regardless of career path

Age irrelevant, not differentiation

PD should be needs based investment approaches both individual and organisational for older staff development

### **Professional development opportunities**

Expectation of access to training needs being met due to work longer

Tailored PD age and career related

### **Weaknesses of PD**

Lacks planning and coherence

Further career opportunities and pathways required

No PD for pre-retirees – no place to go.

### **Strengths of PD offer**

Informal different approaches to PD

Uncertainty about value of PD offer

Wide ranging but non-differentiated – open to all, including opportunities for older workers

Pro-active PD possible in the environment

### **Mobility and career development**

Lack of mobility in roles – stale.

Lack of profession specific trainings opportunities to move into different areas

OW seen as career irrelevant

Keeness to continue in key careers as an older worker

In house career offer seen as helpful;

Gaps in career advice

More holistic view of career trajectories in staff development

Desire for confidential career development to support desire to progress

Recognition of adult workers transition through life.

OW will need to be supported as demographics changes.

### **Requirement for Staff development**

Constantly needs reviewing to adapt to external and internal changes

SRD mixed view in terms of reviewee expectations, achieving organisation objectives and relevant training.

Not seen as part of strategic planning and ineffective

### **Learning and pedagogy**

One-off courses do they follow effective PD and pedagogies for adults?

### **Self-motivation for learning**

Extent to which one needs to be responsible for one's own PD

PD seen as self-driven and dependent on self-worth and motivation

**Specific training approaches for OW**

Requirement for follow up support

**Appendix 7 – Survey Coding Structure Thematic Data Analysis (Sample)**

Question 7 b) to **what extent do you believe staff development should be age-related – within the organisation? Would you like to explain further?** – Where has this question come from – the literature – yes?

	<b>Phase 1</b>		<b>Phase 2</b>
	Themes		Codes
1	As an older worker, you have substantial <b>experience and soft skills</b> which may not <b>always be recognised</b> . As an older woman worker, I have had to take time out of full time work to <b>bring up children</b> which has had an impact on my career.	Experience; soft skills not always recognised Bringing up a family impacts on career	Disadvantaged through family responsibilities
2	I would like to <b>re-train</b> into a "professional" role, e.g. IT, HR, PR/marketing, accountancy or purchasing with HE, but this is incredibly difficult without losing the little seniority I have.	Desire to retrain; difficulty with losing seniority	Given poss. of career change for OW. Risk averse: Learning becomes narrowed due to keeping status
3	I think it is about what is <b>appropriate</b> and identified by the <b>individual</b> whilst taking account of the needs of the <b>organisation</b> . A dialogue required..... It's about <b>dialogue and needs identification</b> .	Blend of what is appropriate for both individual and organisation. Dialogue and needs identification needed.	Dialogue needed
4	Clearly, <b>assumptions</b> should not be made about the needs of more <b>mature employees</b> - but then shouldn't be any assumptions made about anyone regardless of age.	Assumptions about needs not appropriate at any age.	Assumptions should not be made about anyone
5		Tailoring not well.	
6	I'm <b>not</b> sure that <b>tailoring</b> anything is necessarily a good way to go.	Same SD for all.	Needs-related PD Ineffective SRD
	I think that staff development related to our roles and skills should be the <b>same for workers of any</b>	Adequacy. Career development provision beneficial	

7	<p><b>age</b>. However, <b>career development for older workers</b> may be an area where additional provision would be a benefit.</p>	<p>Organisation SD reflects grade not experience or other factors e.g. age</p>	<p>Adequacy – financial term Adequacy. But another level differentiation more meaningful? Career dev?</p>
8.	<p>It is inevitable in a <b>civil-service style set-up</b> where posts are graded, that staff development is generally offered <b>relating to the grade</b> of the current post held, <b>rather</b> than in response to the <b>age and experience</b> of the post-holder.</p>	<p>Willingness to keep learning and expectation of entitlement to training</p>	<p>Civil service grade hierarchy system in HE stymies development</p>
9	<p>I still believe in <b>lifelong learning</b> and that I should have <b>access to training</b> as I have <b>no plans to retire</b>.</p>	<p>Recognition of experience seen As a factor in appropriate PD</p>	<p>Expectation of access to training needs being met due to working longer</p>
10	<p>I'd rather use the <b>term 'experience related'</b> than <b>'age-related'</b>.</p>	<p>Inclusion, enabling other perspectives influenced by age/experience to be heard, valued</p>	<p>Sensitivity to language /terminology around age and experience</p>
11	<p>To <b>ensure inclusion, enable</b> groups to <b>hear the issues</b> that may be raised by those with <b>other perspectives</b> which are <b>influenced</b> by the <b>stage of life</b> / years they have <b>experience</b>.</p>	<p>Less investment in OW as payback shorter</p>	<p>Importance of dialogue/enabling and spaces to ensure inclusion and equal opportunities. Valuing older/experienced voices</p>
12	<p>I think that there is a <b>tendency not to invest</b> in the older worker because their <b>contribution</b> to the organisation is arguably shorter.</p>	<p>Age-blind, needs – related. Reflecting staff and organisation. Developing contribution in this org or elsewhere</p>	<p>Needs-based Investment approaches in workers may be age-related</p>
13	<p>I think that there is a <b>tendency not to invest</b> in the older worker because their <b>contribution</b> to the organisation is arguably shorter.</p>	<p>Age not a consideration. Relevance and right mind set required.</p>	<p>Holistic, needs-based investment regardless of age, or career path in</p>

14	Staff development should be <b>age-blind</b> and should reflect the <b>needs of individual staff, the organisation</b> they are working in and should <b>develop</b> their potential <b>contribution</b> to either their <b>organisation</b> or for a <b>career path elsewhere</b> .	Validity of new learning needs to be seen  Needs related. Irrespective of age/sex/grade	existing org or elsewhere.  Age irrelevant. Mind-set to new learning e.g. technology imp Training needs to be valid
15			
16	I don't believe <b>age has to do with anything</b> - if you need new skills and they are relevant to your job (or life), you can learn them at any time. I think you just need to have the right <b>mind set</b> to use new technologies, for example, <b>and/or see their validity</b> .	Needs-related. Specific SD e.g. Retirement planning offered widely	Holistic, needs based investment approaches for individual and organisation
17		Age-blind, no differentiation	
18	I believe staff development should be <b>according</b> to the <b>needs</b> of the <b>individual</b> and their <b>role</b> , <b>irrespective</b> of their age, sex, grade etc.		Holistic needs based approaches for individual and organisation. Older staff dev should be open to all
19		Perception of age is psychological	
20	No further explanation given		Age-blind, no differentiation
21	No further explanation given	Parenthesis on 'Older'. Training may take longer due unchanging roles. Insular.	
22	Staff development should be related to the <b>needs</b> of the individual and the organisation. There may be <b>specific staff development</b> e.g. 'planning for retirement' that may attract 'older staff' however it should be <b>offered to all</b> .  I feel that people should be treated the same <b>regardless of age</b> .		No requirement for age-related SD, no differentiation  Lack of mobility of those in roles, constricts /hampers development,

23	No further explanation proposed.	difficulties with technology, additional support	thinking needs challenging. Open to change. Stale.
24	No further explanation proposed  Age is a <b>state of mind</b> .	<b>needs related; dynamic</b>	
25	As a manager of 'older' workers may experience is that they need <b>more support and guidance</b> and may need <b>a longer</b> period in which to undertake <b>training</b> . This is not a symptom of older work but for those who have been <b>in a role for quite some time</b> .	<b>evidence based; CPD requires tailoring according to age and career</b>	Younger staff may adapt to new procedures e.g. technology faster. Additional support for OW
26	No further explanation proposed.		SD requires constant reviewing to adapt to OW.  Tailored PD age and career related
27	I have <b>difficulties with technology</b> for example; I <b>need much more help</b> that younger people who seem to whizz through anything new like nothing  I feel it should be <b>needs related</b> but that needs are <b>likely to change</b> in time		
28	<b>Research from the TLRP</b> showed that people needed <b>different types</b> of CPD at <b>different ages and career stages</b>		



**Appendix 8 Table of key a priori and inductive themes framework (a full set of themes is given in Appendix 13)**

<b>Survey a priori</b>	<b>Survey inductive</b>
Strategies and processes for organisational development	Clarity, coherence and effectiveness
Spaces for dialogue	
Valuing older workers Language Vulnerability	Experience being validated Challenging conceptions
Equitable opportunities	Discriminatory attitudes
Older worker perceptions of age	Career irrelevant Keeness to develop
Age-related PD	Older workers disinterested in age blind PD and learning Expectation of access Career related PD
	Organisation disinterest in support for career progression
Types/approaches of professional development	Clarity over process of PD
	Importance placed on informal learning by older workers
<b>Interviews A priori (further refined)</b>	<b>Interviews inductive</b>
Strategies and processes for organisational development	Vision Line management Supporting performance
Equality and diversity	Discrimination Age awareness Transitions Health support
Dialogue staff and management for PD	Identifying age-related PD Healthy relationships Intergenerational dialogue
Types/approaches to professional development	Retraining and revival Broader conception of PD
Organisational policy	Knowledge sharing Utilising talent
Value and perceptions of older workers	valuing and respecting Limbo
Intergenerational dialogue	
Value and perceptions for professional development approaches and types	Tacit skills
Vulnerability	Confidence and empowerment

Career progression and mobility	Mobility Managing later careers
	Caring responsibilities

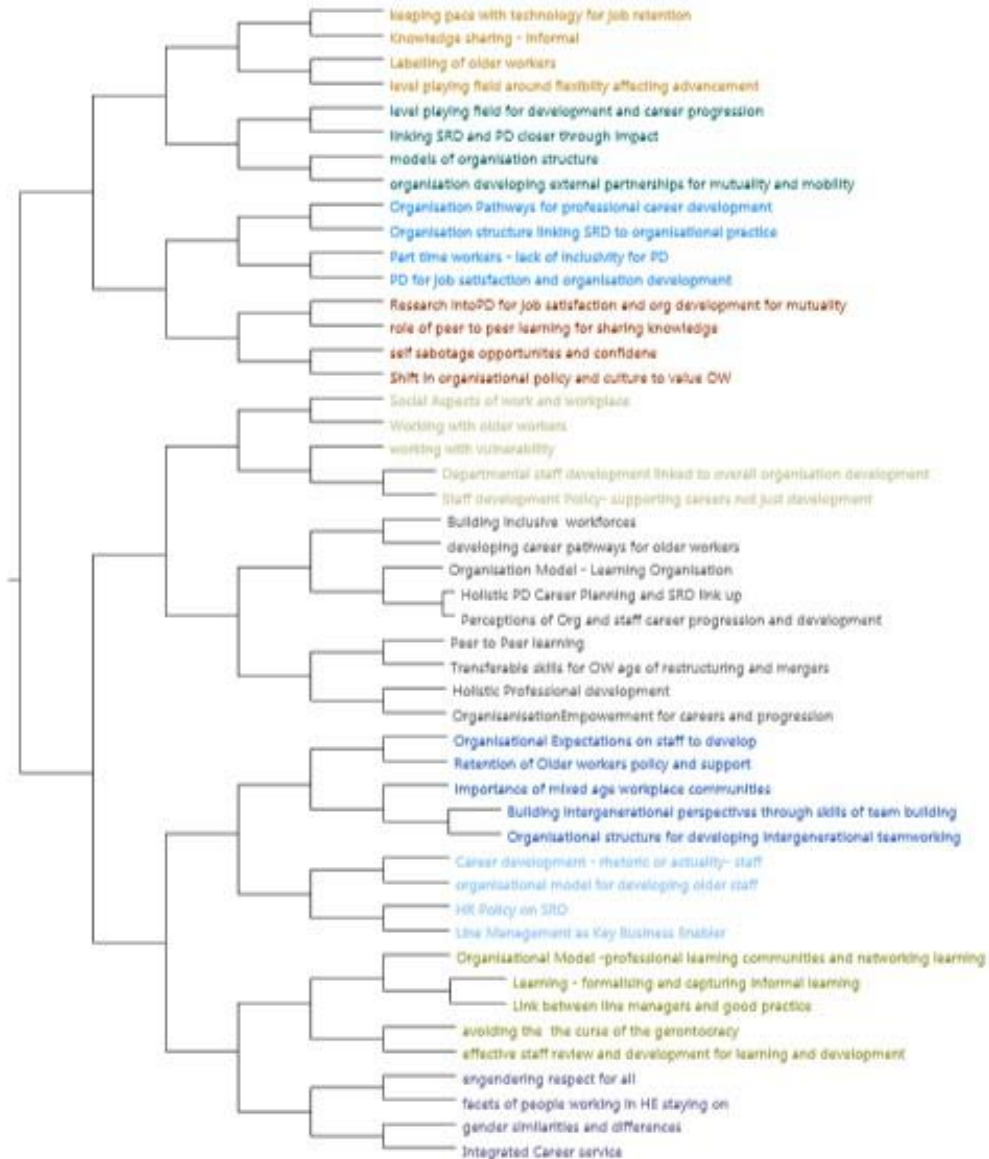
<b>Documentary analysis - a priori</b>	<b>Documentary analysis - inductive</b>
Organisational Planning and Policy for learning and development	Lack of process Older workers needs and age-related policy
Equality and Diversity	Age-related policies Inclusive workplaces
Staff and management dialogue	
Union representation and dialogue through formal consultation	Union involvement

## **Appendix 9 Analytic Memo Writing through the coding**

I had to stop at one point to decipher whether I was in fact merely duplicating the effort in creating a parallel coding framework, or whether in fact I was through the rising above the data thinking, adding rigour to the analysis. However, Charmaz (2006:12) considers memos provide ways to compare data, explore ideas about codes and direct further data gathering. I assigned initial colour codes to aid my further reflection.

Often memos were created in NVivo, generated when anything significant was spotted, something unusual, the goal being not to summarise the data but to reflect and expound on it. The last element is important as it allowed me to start to make informed hunches and allowed me a place 'to dump my brain (ibid), about participants, phenomenon and process under study in doing more thinking and writing. Each memo was given both a personal title sometimes taken directly from words in the data and sometimes using the same words as the coding. These memos included direct quotes from the data and NVivo allowed me to link these to other coded relationships. Decisions were made as to their place in the 'data corpus' (Saldana 2013) again evaluating what was important and less important in the data (Thomas 206:240). The memos also formed part of the final written data findings.

### Sources clustered by coding similarity



Braun and Clarke (2006) Analytic Memo Writing – N Vivo (Sample)

## Appendix 10 Braun and Clarke (2006) Coding Process

### Appendix 9 Steps taken using Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic framework – Steps 1-4 (adapted)

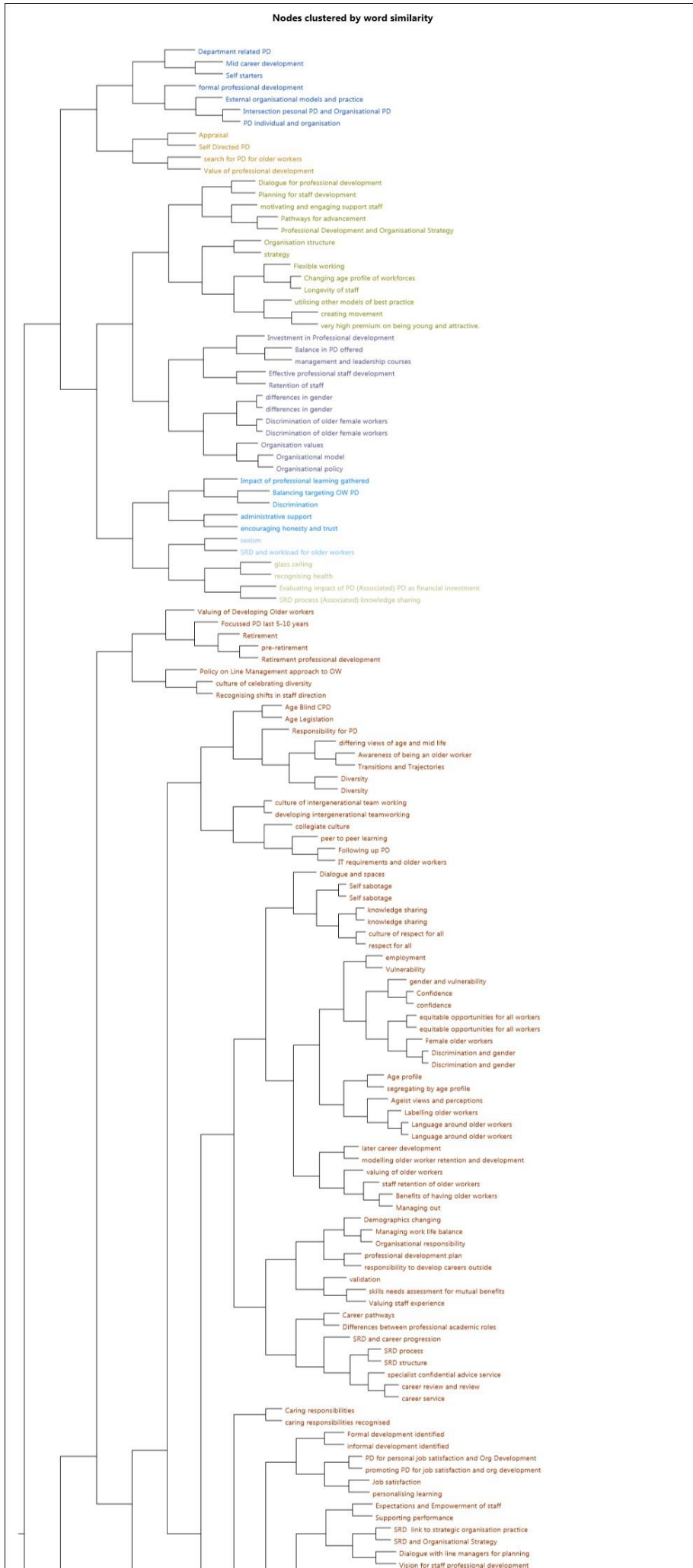
#### Step 1 Familiarisation with raw data

Each recorded interview was listened to several times (Appendix x). Verbatim transcriptions captured as much of the data as possible posing the question ‘What is a useful transcription for my research purposes?’ (Kvale 2015:213). I was not looking for linguistic analysis so focus was on the narrative.

#### Step 2 – Generating Initial Codes – first cycle and first level of extraction (Stage1)

Initial coding breaks down the data into discrete parts, comparing them for similarities and differences (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 2 in Saldana 2013). I used potential *a priori* codes based on reading of theoretical framework of the literature review, research questions and Phase 1 findings. This allows for the *constant comparative method* to include ‘considerations of parallels and disjunctures ‘between the researcher’s own findings and other studies (Barbour 2008). I drew on reflective notes made during fieldwork, or just after and in first reading of transcriptions for coding possibilities. Early coding categories were closely aligned to questions raised in semi-structured interviews and included; perceptions of older workers, organisation expectations, and types of PD. Negative categories and positive categories were recorded for Stage 2. Initial broad codes and related sub-codes through Nvivo were created. Code definitions and segments were collected and assignment to different codes made. All instances of a particular code could then be compared. (Appendix x). From analytic induction instances of contradictory ideas, comments, and exceptions or where surprising comments were made, were explored ‘it is these grey areas which ultimately allow us to refine our theoretical frameworks’ (Barber 2011:198). Re-coding took place and multiple coding used; coding at more than one location, NVivo memos on each significant code were written to maintain focused starting to form the basis of a parallel more discerning coding framework for Stage 2. Some authors consider coding is in fact the third level of analysis, if not more (ibid). As I Having made some codes through field notes, during transcription and *a priori* codes, I was already thinking and writing about connections, creating matrices. Thus, coding was becoming a conceptualisation rather than classification of categories.

# Appendix 11 – N Vivo Code frame (Sample)



## **Appendix 12 Professional Staff Interview - Sample**

### **PROFESSIONAL STAFF INTERVIEWS**

#### **PART 1 Exploring value for staff development**

##### **1. What is currently professional development (age-related) in the organisation? E.g. is there anything specifically for OW.**

I don't notice if there is something specifically age-related. There is quite a lot of professional development but have never had feeling that it is age-related. So much technology but never come across anything that is age-related. There used to be a retiring workshop but I don't think they happen anymore

I think they do but they have been rephrased –

I don't particularly like the word retirement.

##### **Why is that?**

I want to think about going into the next stage whereas I think retirement has a kind of you know... image around it. I think it conjures up 60, bus pass, daytime telly. I don't know, I just don't like the word, I would just rather talk about going into my next phase, the next stage of my life mmm and I don't know where the retirement workshop has maybe had an ending feeling rather than a different beginning or any new beginning.

##### **Mmm that is very interesting**

And mm, I was kind of ...I've not noticed or been looking for it before but I thought it was time that maybe I should go along. Or to something like that...And I couldn't see anything so that is why I am suggesting that I wondered if it had kind of disbanded if people weren't feeling the need for it.

So, that is the only thing I can think of that is possibility related to my age in terms of any kind of development.

**Do you believe that dialogue between staff development and workers would help identify age-related PD. How might individuals identify older workers' needs? For example, forums for discussion over needs/ surveys?**

Yes, I think it would. .mm I mean the next question you have got there is how might individuals identify their own professional development needs. I am part of the coaching service in fact I run it. And I do sometimes have conversations with people about what they want to be doing.

Yes

And I think that obviously, we are restricted by confidentiality in these conversations but it might be useful for us to maybe pick up on some of the things that people are saying they would like and have that conversation with staff development.

**So, what you are looking at is a kind of dialogue between the coaching service perhaps and staff development?** And, just generally other workers mmm I don't think we know enough about what is available to us in terms of ... some people know about flexi retirement, some people don't and I don't know that we know enough about what the options are once you get to a certain stage...age.

I think there are probably lots of people. I will talk about myself then... I would quite like to not work full time much longer than the next year.

And I would like to know more about what I can do part time. I would like a bit of choice in that mmm and I think that would be useful not just for staff development but with maybe senior colleagues so that one is not left with a feeling that oh there is a little point 2 here that somebody could do so could you just do that if you want to do a point 2. Rather than me saying I'd like to reduce and this is the part of my job that I would like to keep going. I think that would be a useful conversation to have but I don't know when I'm going to have that. We kind of gone off on a tangent here but.

No don't worry because we're going to pick up that a little bit later because I've got the SRD in there a bit later which might help with that.

**3. Do you think the organisation provides equitable opportunities for all workers?**

No, I don't think that is particularly age-related. I think that is just general, there is as feeling that for those of us that have got a very large teaching commitment we're not as highly regarded as those who bring in the money through research. And I think that is just an institute wide thing. So, when it



comes to promotion that's not equitable. I don't think that it is articulated clearly I just think that is kind of in there. So, I don't think we have equal opportunity.

**4. How might the organisation facilitate career development for older workers? That is, both within the organisation and other careers outside?**

I don't even think it is for older workers it's just for everybody – to recognise people's worth but also I think we need to review things like the workload management system. I think sometimes that restricts more than it creates opportunity because there are sometimes – I mean there are things I would quite like to do here but I don't have the time.

**What would you like to do?**

Well I've not long finished my EdD and I am supposed to write from it and my workload is so huge in terms of teaching I just haven't found the time to do that since I've finished and that would be quite a nice part of my career development to try and write from it but I am struggling time wise with that.

07.30

So, I don't know to what extent that's about older workers I just think that is just generally. I mean you can talk to someone twenty years younger than me that has just finished their EdD they'd probably find the same that they're commitment to other things is not allowing them...so I think...I mean I also last year had some ...work with King's College last year and of course I got paid very well for it or at least the organisation did –I got very little into my development account and that doesn't – that is not an incentive for people to do extra work over and above to pursue their career if they cannot be in some way rewarded for it.

I mean our development accounts I mean there is a limit to how many computers you can buy and laptops you can buy and books as that is all we can do with it and so I think if there was a bit more incentives for people as well to do things outside of the organisation they would.

So, in fact you've managed to keep certain percentage of that money which is a pot so it is a pot for you per the work you do

If I was to be accurate I did £2,500 pounds' worth of work and I got £549.31

That is not enough to buy yourself anytime out?

Well not really... no so I think that could be reviewed.

**5. Research (TLRP) is showing that people need different types of CPD at different ages and career stages. If you support this, what, in your view, might be appropriate for older workers?**

Technology but I don't know if that is an older worker thing. But I do sometimes and I've only noticed this year that I do sometimes go to meetings and I come out of them feeling like I am ancient because they're all talking in teccie speak. sometimes my younger colleagues and I come out thinking –feeling a bit stupid. Because I maybe not into Google hangouts of whatever as much as they all are. And it is probably society generally but I think it would maybe help if we got a bit more help with technology and that there were several times that we could go to particular course because they maybe run an IT course on such and such and with the best will in the world you just can't get there for various reasons – so that is part of our problem here –there are so many meetings and you're out at schools or you're out doing something else that if the one activity is on that day you can't do it. But I think it would be good to have more options mmm for us particularly in relation to IT. Just something very simple is that I recently got a brand-new computer and they just come and install it and they go. And there are lots of things on it that I don't know what I am meant to be doing.

**It could help speed up your work?**

It could help speed up my work but it would also help me not look quite such an idiot when I phone them up and say my Skype doesn't work and they say have you pressed the button on the top – No, didn't know there was one there. So, I would say around about that.

And you would not be worried that there is a bit of stereotyping thing going on there, would you?

Mmm, there probably is a bit of stereotyping. Teccie people sometimes are like doctors they talk to you in another language and assume that you understand it and get slightly irritated when you don't. So, I think a lot more help with IT kind of thing could be useful.

**6. How helpful is the language around older workers? Do you think the term 'experience related' rather than 'age-related' helpful?**

Not really, in that I don't like the word 'retirement;' really. It would be useful. I think it is more I would like to be known as having a lot of experience behind me... A lot of knowledge, how rather than age-related. I think we've got a lot to offer still.

**Any other word you would find abhorrent or helpful or neutral?**

It is not so much the kind of language I think sometimes there is expectations of what you do when you are older.

Pejorative expectations?

Yeah, or...I've often said and X and X interviewed me for a book they are doing about age and ageing and one of the things I said to them was that if you happen to be at home in the afternoon and you switch on the telly the adverts. I think it is appalling. It's all about what to do when you're dying,

what to do with your pet when you dying, have you made provision for your family, how to get a Stannah stair lift in. it's all a negative out there about those of us that are slightly getting older when it should be a bit more the next stage of life rather than the kind of ... a new beginning rather than a closing the life down kind of thing .Bu that is not really – I don't know whether that answers that question. So, I don't particularly like the 'retirement' because it suggests things.

**7. What are the approaches to facilitate communication between different groups at different life stages or experiences - such as hearing about other perspectives or issues raised? Do they exist now?**

I don't know that there are here really.

**I am talking about intergenerational conversations really**

Well we don't come together superficially to talk about generational things as I say you might be at meetings and you hear things through your young colleagues or indeed your older colleagues. I don't think there is anything.

**8. To what extent do you think soft skills/experience is recognised in the organisation? Can you give any examples from your own experience or of others?**

By soft skills you mean team working and all that kind of thing?

**Presentation skills, empathy, negotiation skills**

I don't know I think those skills are recognised as being useful at times I don't know to what extent they are valued because I still think it's down to... it is quite a hard culture here of it's got to make money. And so, while you may do things with the best will in the world for students or whatever, if it is not making money it's not often recognised. So, I think there is quite a hard culture of that. I think that is deemed more important. So, I don't know that soft skills...

I would say as well if you go back a stage to looking at the kind of promotion procedures here if you are somebody that's a lot of people contact in teaching then it is not quite as well recognised as the money-making side of things.

**16.27 Research and knowledge transfer, consultancy?**

Yes, all that.

**PART 2**      *Questions around strengths and weaknesses of PD*

**1. Could the organisation do more to create career development/mobility pathways for OW, If so, how? E.g. mid-life career review as strongly indicated by survey.**

I think it probably would be but when would you have it. Isn't that what SRD's do? But I don't know to what extent.

What would you say was mid-life? What is the meaning of midlife?

**If we say an older worker is anyone 50 – 55 onwards the middle was 40's to 50's**

**But also, later as well as people maybe not moving into retirement. Then perhaps moving into a different phase.**

A different phase as well because as I said I've just finished the Ed in April ... So, I don't know. I came in here in my 40s and I was a school teacher and of course I've completely changed. But that was more to do with my drive my own personal drive and seeing that there were opportunities here that I could take up. But equally you can sit back and not do anything. Mmm. So, but nobody, I don't... I wouldn't say I had a mid-life career review.

I think it would be helpful but to a certain extent that is kind of what the SRD is but I think there is a very cynical view that nothing happens as a result of the SRD and I think it is a paper exercise that we all do and you can say on that I'd like to do this or that but you have to do it with your own drive. I can't see that people sit and read these and say these people want to do this. We just all feel it is a paper exercise.

So only as good as your own drive?

Yes.

So sounds to me that you're not sure about this career review and where it should fit in /

I'm not quite sure, I think people have annual ones but I think it would probably be useful at a certain age, but then people are very different, women for example, may have taken x numbers of years out

to have families and things . I haven't but some people's mid life or mid career could be a very different point and not necessarily age-related really.

**2. Do you find that PD is energy lifting or is it functional (i.e. just to get the job done)? If so, in what way?**

Well most that I have done is functional. And the most professional development that I have taken part in apart from how to become a coach is mainly technical and to get the job done, to move forward and to keep up. And in some ways that is energy lifting but I know I'd probably wouldn't be doing it I didn't have to. But the coaching is energy lifting.

So it taps into you?

It taps more into what I like doing which is people you see so going back to the soft skills sometimes people say 'oh you do that touchy feely thing'. And that is usually said with oh you're not doing that kind of academic stuff you do that touchy feeling stuff. I occasionally get that.

Who does that come from? Interestingly, men. But I have to say the men I work with are absolutely great but they do sometimes say that.

**Does that come from the academic staff?**

Comes from academic

**3. How is PD decided? What do you think is the vision for the programme of PD?**

I reckon staff development have a big part to play here and I do actually admire a lot of things they do. Cos X gets a lot of things up and running.

**Do you know what the vision might be?**

23.03

I've never actually seen it I mean I know that she likes to give people opportunities for all sorts of things. So there is the aspire programme, a lot of them are very management driven and people that want to move on. Although I have to say it was her vision that put in the coaching service and she

especially wanted people to have that opportunity to develop personally. She had a big vision about that. It is a big strategic vision. But you see there used to be money...

But there isn't any more so that sort of tells you how the way it is valued in the organisation. So everybody who is part of that team does it voluntarily it's not built into the workload management or anything like that. I run the service with XX and we train the people and I've asked J several times if she could talk to management about getting this into our workload but they don't so that kind of indicates where it is on their priority.

So it is not in your workload at all?

No, that's my service to the institute.

**4. Is that PD learning experience used productively in the worker's and the organisation's development afterwards? If it is – can you give some examples?**

The other thing I have got to grips with other the last year or so is collaborate on blackboard, so I've had to learn how to work this whole system, in actual fact people now come and ask me about it. Did you not ask me about it?

And I've not run a session but I've sat in here with a colleague showing them how to use Collaborate and things. But that is very informal how I'm taking my own experience and helped other people with it. So we do a lot of sharing here but more on an informal level but then sometimes that's really useful because I would rather speak to someone ... that has learned something that is a bit tricky. I didn't find Collaborate easy and sometimes when you go down to the teccie people, as I said they talk to you in another language so I know that I can be quite helpful to colleagues specially to colleagues of a similar age, there you go. I've spoken to one or two colleagues about how to use collaborate and they're all my age-ish. And struggling with the new technologies. So maybe those of us that are older should share more. But it is very informal the way it is done.

It could be slightly less threatening way to learn

Mmm.

**5. What other types of PD other than that already offered, could be offered for older workers? (Survey revealed over 50% sampled had no particular opinion, why do you think that might be?) What would be helpful for you in particular? Why?**

I can't really think of anything but I'd love to see more things in here like ... I don't think you would class it as professional development - even things like one of the guys in the office wanted to try and

get up a yoga or Pilates class and wasn't allowed to. For some reason because there were no facilities here but there is the drama studio, and it be actually quite nice to just have some things like that. (Laughs). I suppose since I go swimming two or three times a week over in the pool at the student union and we do get subsidised but I think it would be quite nice to see some other bits and pieces and actually I know that J did things like learning at work days and that died a death and she did put in really some quite interesting things like wine tasting and so on. But there are other things like yoga, like Pilates, like coaching, like, that just might again make for older workers coming in and doing a Pilates class first thing in the morning before you go to your office quite nice. I know quite a lot of people do that but if it was offered in the workplace it might be quite nice.

But I know that when X was going to do some type of activity we were all quite keen and he wasn't allowed to do it for some reason like facilities, and yet the drama studio was available.

28.03

To be honest I think people may not know what they need. You don't know what you need until you come up against something.

**6. The survey asked about types of PD and their value. It made a distinction between formal and informal. For you, what do you mean by formal professional development? What does formal mean to you? Examples?**

Formal PD is something really directly related to develop your career. So for example I have just asked for a writing coach and I felt that was the only way I could get on with doing some writing. I see that as formal professional development.

**7. The survey asked people to consider if recognition of informal learning experiences is important. A high number said they did. What, in your opinion do you mean by informal experiences? Examples?**

I think informal learning is what I have described such as having a couple of colleagues sitting in here with me and going over how to use Collaborate with them, that is kind of more informal... and I suppose sometimes for example you know the SIG groups of which I am not a member as don't really

have the time but there are other things that go on – e.g. you look at the lifts and someone is doing a lecture on and I would.. a whole stack of us turned up to hear X because he is so interesting and I would see that as more of an informal learning experience as I did it in my own time and I wanted to hear him. Others might see that as formal PD because he is talking about something that is directly related to the work so that kind of informal learning experience can be about me personally and what it is I do with some of the things I might learn here.

**8. How do you see the organisations' staff development policy in terms of PD for older workers? What could be improved?**

I don't know if they've on one in particular for us. For older workers. Maybe that's something that needs... maybe there needs to be forum for those of us post 55 or whatever to discuss with staff development what we would like to have so maybe there needs to be more forums for older people.

31.02

**Have you seen the staff development policy at all?**

Probably but I haven't really ...you just look at whets relevant to you at the time.

**9. There is a perception from the survey that lack of time inhibits staff development?**

I think as well... some of the questions I think relate to workers generally .I recently put in an application for senior lectureship – I don't think that I will get it. I don't have any doubt that I do a senior lectureship role ... I'm sure something in the form will be not quite right. I think that there needs to be some kind of guidance about the promotion structure and how it works and for those of us at this end of the things who are going to be applying for senior roles and I'll tell you that the reason I am thinking that is because two wonderful colleagues who are senior lecturers gave me their forms and I looked at them and they were really helpful. And then when I went to hand it in because it is like this thick, my head of department said 'oh my gosh, there is far too much in there go and talk to head of HR and I did phone up X and I went to see her and she was lovely and she said right away come and have a meeting and I went down to her and she went through the whole process .now if nobody had said that to me I would never have known. And then I went back to a colleague and said do you know that they do this, this and this and they said 'No, no idea. So there is this kind of promotion thing and nobody knows the actual way of going through the process and what they are looking for and how it is actually done it is all a big secret – it seems to me (laughs)



And I was just lucky that I went to talk to X and she was really nice and said come and I will show you what it is about. And I think something like this in the SRD process and I have been really encouraged through my SRD process because she is great X– who does mine to go for senior lectureships but it's all been a bit in the dark.

So I think there could be more transparency around the promotion process certainly more opportunity and I think it needs to be opportunity for those of us with teaching roles. So I think generally it needs to be more transparent and we need guidance. No doubt I fulfil the requirements on the form.... but does my face fit when someone is marking it and all that.

**10. How might the current staff review and development (SRD) process be improved for older workers?**

I think it would be nice at this stage for me and my SRD to say this is the bit of my job I really enjoy and so this is the bit of my job I'd like to continue to do part time. And I think that that would be very helpful. Rather than that feeling of there is a little 0.3 down here, can you do that. That feeling of being stuffed into something and I think that sometimes does.

**So the time that you have to devote you want to ensure...**

Yes, that is it something I particularly want to do....

**Causes you to refocus what is important to you?**

Yes.

**11. How can mobility into other professional areas be encouraged for older workers?**

**Either within or outside**

**37.00**

That is kind of again to do with I know that in the retirement workshops they didn't just focus on the finance they did look at. I wouldn't mind doing something like becoming a governor of a school. I think it would be useful if someone out there could tell us what is open to us, I'll be 60 this summer and I am going to have a lot of skill and I'd quite like to know what is out there for me. And so it would be useful to have somebody that knows that can point us in those directions.

And what kind of things it would be useful too.

So what is available for you to do and I mean there are things like trustees and boards etc but it would be useful to have guidance on these things.

Some people are fortunate in not having to earn and others are not?

I think it would be useful to have some sort of professional development over what is available post academia or where might our skills be valued and used.

**12. Does the organisation recognise transitions, that is different stages in life and life events, in staff lives in terms of types of PD?**

That is the only thing I can think of. I don't think it offers PD in terms of stages in life. I think it might be helpful.

**13. How might the SRD be more effective to allow for PD?**

**You told me it was a rubber stamp exercise?**

That is how it kind of feels. We write down our three targets we are going to make for next year and then we meet up next year and have we met the three yet.. And yes. So let's set the next three for next year.

And it is linked to the next bit – it's quite self-driven so you say I really want to learn about more about this part of technology or something but then it is for me to have a look at what 's available.

I just think that none of us really knows what happens to the SRD other than they are filed somewhere. If someone had a collation exercise to do so that 10 people have said that they want this or let's run a course on that, 20 folk have said that. So it might be useful to look at this and see what people are asking for. That would make it more effective.

There is just that feeling it does go into a big hole. So more transparency in what happens to these things that we fill in and ask for.

**14. To what extent should PD be the responsibility of an individual to push forward/own their own professional development?**

But I do in the next question, I am someone who drives forward myself because I feel that is quite important and I feel that we've all got a responsibility to look after ourselves and see to ourselves.

So it is a combination with it being your responsibility but then hopefully the org will pay attention to what it is you would like to do.

**Do you think that motivation to push forward own professional development is particularly related to those who work in higher education?**

I think it should be a general thing. I'm quite big on personal responsibility.

***PART 3 Exploring strategic dimension and planning for PD***

40.11

**1. Do you see clarity about how an individual's SRD feeds into organisational practice? That is how the organisation runs itself.**

I think it needs to be more clear. Transparency.

**2. To what extent are line managers made aware of the importance of PD?**

Line managers are all sorts of people not just heads of department. I don't really know who my line manager is. I went to my head of department and said who is it?

But I have been a line manager so I am aware personally and still line managing. But I particularly put things his way that he needs and I see things that I think he should be aware of or useful for him to do that for his own professional development. So I think there is possibly folk a bit like me that do that I don't know how formalised it is that line managers are made aware of how important it is.

I think most are.

Have you had training?

No, you just find yourself doing it. I was put into doing a job I didn't want to do so that meant I was managing a team of people so I just got on with it. I squealed about it – the job I didn't want to do nothing to do with them.

**3. Do you see any discrimination towards older women support staff?**

When you say support?

**More on the administrative side**

I don't know ... there were two women on this corridor who were definitely much older, one was nearly seventy and they both went and got voluntary redundancy last year.

**Did they see that as discrimination?**

No I don't think they did, they both had just decided at their late ages – good on them that they had worked till 69 or whatever and that's was they wanted to do. And I think they saw it as an opportunity to go and also get a bit of money. Fair enough. So I don't know they would have said there was any discrimination.

People are here till ... you see a lot of older people here working away still. I don't know if it is particular to women.

**4. Do you think there is a role for follow up courses to the PD offered?**

Yes. You can learn about something in IT that might be useful to follow that up months later with holder workers you are getting on.

**5. To what extent does the hierarchical nature of the organisation stifle PD?**

I don't know really. There is a culture of hierarchy here. It stifles promotion rather than professional development. They're inextricably linked aren't they?

If you get the professional development or the time then you might get the promotion.

**6. Should PD be mandatory?**

Yes, you can't stay static and if just even for the day to day doing of your job because there are so many changes all the time just generally in society you have to keep abreast of that.

**7. Should there be management development programmes? (NB: Leadership programmes do exist)**

Well they do exist. I think things like the Aspire programme.... people put themselves on and apply for that. I don't know to what extent somebody comes along and says you've got management qualities why don't you go on that course. Maybe they do I don't know....

But there are management programmes as I am aware of that.

***PART 4 Exploring views on any gaps in PD in the organisation***

**1. How does management see (if at all) the differentiation between PD for developing roles within the organisation and career development outside? Why? In your view?**

Honestly I don't know. I would think they would want professional development for staff to develop within the organisation rather than develop them and to move off somewhere else.

**2. To what extent could the organisation emphasise PD for personal job satisfaction and organisational development which draws on the experience of the older worker?**

The reason I am thinking of this, I read such a lot for my own thesis, one of my arguments was along the lines that an awful lot of organisations view coaching as an investment as a financial investment so they see it if they're paying for this then they would expect to see people improve in their work to the point of the financial efficiency of the organisation becoming more effective.

Whereas my argument was that coaching should be about the person who may eventually have an impact but it shouldn't be the sole central purpose of it. And there was a lot of literature I thought swayed more to towards the organisation implementing it for financial return rather than for personal satisfaction and development.

To be fair I didn't think that the organisation does this because it doesn't pay for the coaching but on the other hand whether it values it enough to pay for our time or whatever I don't know but I don't really know about that question.

In fact you're saying coaching is not being paid for. It's a double edged thing because a lot of organisations pay for it to be expecting there to be a financial return indirectly. They don't pay for it here but I don't know to what extent they value it.

**3. Should there be age segregation for staff in relation to PD? If no, are there any instances where it might be helpful? If yes, why?**

What you mean advertise a course for the over 50's

**Yes,**

I don't know I think folk might take a bit of umbrage....

**Except retirement courses?**

Yes, and people need to decide at which stage they want to do that and again the word retirement is in the title. It tells you that what it's for. It might be really nice to have a yoga class. Nifty at fifty. Maybe health related things. It would be quite interesting to have something that was more focused on ... I don't go any of the classes across at the union – as everyone's about seventeen. If you were to have any health professional development, it would be quite nice.

**4. Could the organisation offer focussed PD for workers in the last 5-10 years of their careers? If so what?**

Yes it thinks so and I think that could be related to the question earlier on what is there for us after we work. Could there be a shift... a change... I mean I have never been a governor of a school so I've no idea what the role involves .it would be quite interesting to find out. Even before I decided I was definitely going to do something it would be quite nice to exactly what the role involves and how you go about it. So there must be other things that like that that we could do in the next phase. It would be useful to have development about. So I think there are probably specific things like that – obviously people can do it anytime but it would be really useful towards the end of your career. People come in and say here's the kind of things you could do and then here's what it's all about.

**5. Do you feel that line managers and management take the development of older workers seriously? Are lower grades taken seriously?**

That is interesting as one of my gripes is that the older I am getting the harder and longer I'm working.

And I don't think there is any kind of notion of ... it's a difficult thing as you don't want to be doing things just because you're older but it would be quite nice to have a kind of staged withdrawal from the workplace and I suppose that is what the flexi retirement is. But we don't know enough about it, that is only hearsay. I suppose it is on the internet. But the older I am getting the harder and longer hours I am working so I feel as if I'm winding up rather than winding down and I am sure I am not alone in this ...

**Do you think lower grades are taken seriously?**

No,

**6. The survey asked about support for learning new technology and systems in day to day work. Is there are lack of follow up support for IT, if so, what kinds of support would you consider helpful? For example, one to one training and follow up support?**

You need follow up and they shouldn't just come in and leave a computer

**7. To what extent do you think an in house career service is useful?**

Yes.

**8. Could the organisation offer a more holistic PD which recognises career trajectories? E.g. in the SRD? Or career planning?**

Yes.

**9. Could the organisation do more to offer preparation for retirement?**

I think there could be more and I don't just mean finances. I mean activities both in terms of work and others.

I have a lot of things I'm interested in so I can't imagine I would be stuck but sometimes people aren't quite sure what to do with themselves.

#### ***PART 4 Final comments***

**1. Do you feel that older workers feel vulnerable? If so, why? Are female older workers, in particular, susceptible?**

Yes, because I think sometimes they feel ... if there was the voluntary redundancy or redundancy they might be the first to go and I think you can so easily be left behind in terms of technology and progress in that way so I think people feel a bit vulnerable in that way. I don't know so much about women workers in particular. There are a few men here in their 70's and I don't know whether they feel vulnerable.

I think they might just think they're out of the door, especially with the merger so although I think the fallout will be in a year rather than over the next year. It is not just older workers feeling vulnerable – I think a lot of professional staff feel very vulnerable.

**2. Does workload hamper older staff's ability for career extension/development and taking on different roles?**

Yes, I definitely think workload hampers your ability for career extension or just things towards the end of your career that you would quite like to do. I am now in the position I have got a list of things I would like to achieve before I go... and one of them is if I finished up as a senior lecturer I would be very happy and I felt that like putting that on the bottom of my form that I am going in the next couple of years.. Just give me this before I go.

It is nice to have some recognition at the end of your career or to be able to do some things that you really want time to do like write another couple of papers ...for me workload is absolutely hampering that.

**3. To what extent are there perceptions that older people are being supported to retire versus a consideration of the benefits of having older workers in the organisation? If so, how might be older workers be supported more?**

I don't know that there is a feeling that they want people who are older to retire here ... I don't know to what extent they see benefits of having older workers probably there is some of that but I don't think we're are fully supported to retire here so I suppose that may be saying something.

**4. With changing demographics should the benefits of having older workers be reviewed?**

Yes, people have got a lot to bring, a lot of experience as do younger people. I think it is great to see younger people coming in and new ideas



So I think there is a lot to be gained from both, from those of us that have got forty years' experience and those that have got twenty years' experience. And we could tap more into both of these. There is just a feeling of rhetoric or the narrative around the older people just now ... through the media – how costly we are because there are so many of us now.

So I think that is a bigger thing that needs to change rather than us being a burden I think we should be more of an experience and I think that touches on the next question.

**5. How do you feel about knowledge sharing between 'older' and 'younger' staff? Touched on this Q7 part 1 but I'd like to explore further.**

I am very lucky with the guys I work with and they do. One in particular is younger and does defer to me as though I am some kind of senior guru....which is something really nice.

**6. Do you think that managers need to adopt specific approaches in working with older workers? If so, why? And what?**

I don't know – I would hate it if someone came and spoke to me because I was sixty really in a particular way. But on the other hand it would be nice to be recognised as having a lot of experience.

I don't know that they need specific approaches just recognition of your experience.

I've found myself at a couple of meetings and come out thinking I don't want to be doing this any longer I feel an idiot because everyone is twenty years younger and they're talking about Google hangouts ... part of that is because I'm not really interested.

## **Appendix 13 Chapters 4 and 5 All Themes and Sub-themes**

### **ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING AND POLICY**

#### **Recognising the value of PD**

All management participants recognise the value of PD and incumbent upon the organisation to fund it as the strategic staff development plan (SOAD) indicates.

#### **Diversity and Equity - Equitable Access to Professional development Opportunities**

Having caring responsibilities as older workers catapulted into implications for equitable access to PD and that government policy should recognise this cuts across law or human rights principles

#### **Segregated professional development for older workers**

The position taken by the organisation has an approach to career development, an approach to promotion, an approach to professional development which is age blind.

#### **Succession planning**

All management participants recognised DRA posed challenges for succession planning.

#### **Reviewing organisational policies**

Flexible working policies for OW, implementation of procedures and policies would be required in future planning. The benefits of having OW being reviewed. Evolving view of OW contributions and how the organisation used OW skills and how to get others to see the benefits

## **CAREER PATHWAYS AND MOBILITY**

### **Transparency and equality**

A lack of transparency and inequality for mobility related to roles and transparency.

Pathways for development were not transparent. Little understanding about who shares that vision for PD learning in the organisation and is fragmented. Some management do not see clear career pathways for professional staff, the emphasis is on academic staff development. Others see it fixed on organisational benefits not investing for those to move on.

### **Development of staff for external progression**

Doubt over the organisation's intent to develop staff for another organisation's benefit aligned to a management response. Intention to develop varies, some managers thinking people should not stagnate, encouraging moving on, giving them opportunities. Career progression is not homogenous with some winding down, others not necessarily wanting the next grade up but wanting to deepen skills in the same area and share learning. Having skills for consultancy was suggested allowing, such as skills for self-employment.

### **Mid- life career reviews for ageist job markets**

These were warmly welcomed, chiming with the survey and long term planning. Career development becomes more urgent as you age as the job market is ageist and people over the age of 50 struggle. Firm support for mid-life career reviews and establishing links with the career service was welcomed SRD and considered possibly better to undertake a mid-life career review in your forties, Career development will vary so an assessment of what skills and knowledge provision is called for.

### **Career development for protected characteristic groupings**

Management affirmed there is career development for the BME grouping but that it had not even occurred to management to consider provision for OW.

### **Joint responsibility to develop careers**

Most staff felt a joint responsibility to develop careers but accepted that you could sit back and do nothing with personal motivation a driver.

### **Staff retention**

There is not necessarily a correlation between extensive PD and moving up the hierarchy, people tend to leave having done development taking skills with them.

### **Utilising under used talents**

Mobility could be advantageous if talents were underutilised. Needs assessment and job shadowing could support mobility. This was seen as a signal the organisation values staff.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

**Lack of serious vision for PD across the organisation for anyone.**

### **Discrimination**

The term was not much evidenced in related to age, but raised in relation to general questions of equity such as men promoted over women for doing less work. But it was felt to be an issue at all levels not just support staff but took the shape of low level discrimination, such as churlishness and disdain.

### **Diverse workforce and positive image around age**

Compared to other organisations there was thought to be a positive organisational view about OW...

## **TRANSITIONS**

### **Line management**

Organisation consistency needed improvement as line management currently relies on individual manager's experience and initiative.

### **Absence of valuing**

Seen in a sense of closing down suggesting a kind of limbo for OW with the organisation not seeing the benefits and how to move forward, rather seeing it as the end a career, neither supported to retire and no conversations about benefits of having older workers. Whereas, it should be around valuing and respecting and asking how to support staff in transitions having been loyal workers to the organisation.

## **INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES DIALOGUE AND KNOWLEDGE**

### **SHARING**

#### **Communication around diversity and intergenerational dialogue**

Management believe more communication needs to be had for how to support enthuse and motivate OW but also how to get different age groups supporting each other. But formalised organisational structures were not initially considered helpful. No age equality group exists in the same way there is a race equality group and the LGBT groups who are bottom up.

But views are mixed whether inter-generational spaces should be created where people can share tacit knowledge.

### **Healthy working relationships are good for business**

Healthy working relationships, having validation around experience based on respect, where people need to feel *equally valued* regardless of generation is important and can improve business effectiveness. Compositions of future workplaces should be balanced.

### **Intergenerational sharing using tacit skills.**

There was a mixed view over intergenerational sharing using tacit skills thought very beneficial and useful a few considered facilitating communication as extraneous, time consuming, contrived or happening naturally with colleagues of different generations Structuring age groups around dialogue was valuable to discuss these things with the same generation and all generations and sometimes critical in getting the day job done. Significantly, some find it easier to be engaged in dialogue, formalising was a way to include participation and reach across generations emphasising the skills of team working.

### **Knowledge sharing**

How knowledge was shared and proliferated set around professional advancement was poor, with no formal/ informal mechanisms for cascading knowledge although there was almost unanimous enthusiasm that informal sharing of knowledge and should be more encouraged but was sensitive due to power issues. It was valued for knowledge exchange as a mechanism for continued work engagement. Some departments appear more advanced than others with people supporting each other, learning from other members of staff;

### **Mixed age workplace communities**

Mixed age workplace communities modelling best practice in organisation demographic structure was considered healthy and valuable learning (OW2), older workers are sensitive to young people and could support them (OW7). Bringing people together of different ages acknowledges different challenges at different career stages (OW13). But wider reflection on compositions of future workplaces is 'the *curse of the gerontocracy* having too many older workers as well as too few.' (OW6)

## **Health support**

Health issues will affect both men and women and support is required for older workers. Female health issues such as the menopause and its implications are rarely considered

## **PERCEPTIONS AND LABELLING**

Perceptions spread out from negative media driven narrative around OW. A sense a change of perception was needed, shifting OW from being seen as a burden to more of an experience. It was seen as very important for younger people to understand older colleagues. Formalising spaces for dialogue would shake up pre-conceptions. But OW should not be passive –they have a role to play in closing the gap. Labelling could arrest development as once assigned it is difficult to break away from what has been assigned.

## **VULNERABILITY**

Feelings of vulnerability and lack of confidence were widespread for both male and female staff and some management. Although it was suggested female OW are particularly affected, and the majority of administrative staff are female, with a significant proportion of female older workers with female workers taking on the burden of caring responsibilities. Health vulnerability was raised around age, losing their jobs, status, potency, health and in professional life. Losing confidence was allied to vulnerability. Health aspects will have implications for organisations. Work provides a social network and there is for some a fear of leaving work after 30 or 40 years. Socially it seems more acceptable to be an older man than a woman. None of the above aspects can be seen in isolation as they affect participation in PD, career progression and mobility.

## **Confidence and empowerment**

Staff and management seem agreed older people become humbler in age and further support was needed.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Professional development appropriate to needs of older workers**

Effective PD for OW is 'geared around organisation needs and valuable to individuals not only in doing the job they do but in terms of how they might progress within the organisation, outside in a different job or in personal life. Dialogue between management and staff to identify age-related PD had *not* been considered apart from pre-retirement courses but should happen. Dialogue is needed between line managers of OW and staff development.

### **Retraining and Revival**

Management and staff both valued maintaining currency. Revival skills might support and could be tailored to the OW to allow for winding down or doing something different or reviving something that staff have been doing for thirty years or so.

### **Specific provision in PD for OW**

This stimulated widely varied comments, for management and staff participants, some seeing it irrelevant, discriminatory or labelling aligned with survey data. But management raised the spectre of inadvertent discrimination against OW by not undertaking it. Specific confidence training was advocated through training and discussion, to speak up. And



perceptions need to shift to acknowledge development, to continue to be motivated and supported.

### **Pathways of progression**

Some attempts have been made for pathways of progression by staff development. But broader development in transitions wasn't recognised.

### **Pre-retirement**

Management acknowledge more could be done around pre-retirement, although this is not the term anymore, how to manage later career years is difficult but management should find out the issues recognising a lack of homogeneity for some it is an exit strategy, for others coping with changing everyday demands.

### **Professional Development linking to the Strategic Plan**

It wasn't thought PD was part of integrated strategic planning. However, this may well reflect a point in time as the merger was seen to have affected the strategic link between Strategic plan and PD possibly being lost in the in organisation review, restructuring, and the merger becoming the 3 strategic objectives of HR and staff development lost out.

### **Informal and tacit learning**

Soft skills and experience such as team working, empathy skills, negotiation skills of use in intergenerational and knowledge sharing, considered valuable, often go unnoticed and are not captured in the SRD. There was a suggestion to formalising the informal by make explicit how networking learning operates. Best fit PD for older workers was not currently

offered and revolved around mentoring, coaching, workplace relationships, team working, and partnerships.

### **Broader conception of PD required**

A broader conception of what PD is offering a more expansive view of development would help participation and make it more relevant, an everyday occurrence applicable to staff and management. This could include 'coaching and mentoring' in the formal box but more self-directed knowledge such as meeting with peer colleagues, reading around the subject, writing, participating in national working groups, and staff development personal development plans.

### **Improving the SRD annual review**

Management themselves do not view the current SRD as fit for purpose as insufficiently appraiser led. It would help managers and staff if the SRD process was much more clearly a performance management and appraisal process but persuading trade unions, is extremely hard. The process needed proper quality assurance on it. The SRD form, although improved, was still a tick box exercise, short term and the learning formalised. Staff and management were clear that it could be less structured, linked into informal learning.

### **Participation in SRD**

A broader conception of what PD is would help participation and make it more relevant, an everyday occurrence applicable to staff and management. The return rate of the annual SRD is low, not seen as very helpful by staff or managers. It should be linked to strategy, longer term, sharing of objectives across department, more transparent, been given feedback and more of a performance management tool.

SRD should be about widening possibilities, something around goals, within the SRD process. The SRD should tell a narrative of your progression and include inter-departmental sharing of objectives for improving planning. Improving effectiveness of the review for OW is in strengthening the link to HR and line manager training. Ideas of shadowing, pro-actively encouraging movement and moving it beyond a formality to facilitate personal learning were suggested. Some found it hard to know how their department fits into the organisation due to the organisation being a silo organisation where different parts are not well connected, so there is no overall view. Staff should know more clearly how their reviews fit into overall strategic planning and their impact.

### **Awareness training for age**

With changing demographics awareness raising for age is needed in future development planning. Line managers need to adopt specific approaches to understand how age impacts perception, feelings and confidence.

### **The role of line management in Development**

Around 50% of staff are line managers. The extent line managers are apprised of the importance of PD was diverse. At best, there is lukewarm recognition in an acceptance of that responsibility related to role and it was inconsistent. Staff responses were mixed, for some there was a lack of organisational joined up thinking around development and line management. For some management, there was an expectation, with PD professional development of staff high on the agenda, that SRD is a constant theme and soft skills played an important role in the dialogue between staff member and line manager.

### **Performance**

### **The role of line management training for staff performance**

For some SRD procedures are considered meaningless as there is no formal requirement for managers to take career development seriously. There was a limitation on what SRD can cover and autonomy held by line managers. Line management have a responsibility to nudge and encourage and support and through updates assess whether SRD objectives are being realised but although some line manager hold expertise or experience needed, some do not.

### **Supporting performance**

Management consider HE has not taken staff review and performance, seen as closely as seriously as it should have done. In turn it may be that this is reflected in staff attitudes in not taking SRD seriously and not engaging with the process. It potentially needs tightening, looking at certain expectations within SRDs and setting development goals. However, performance is closely linked to encouragement and support was felt lacking, a different form of review such as a personal professional development plan would be more motivational and encourages pro-active behaviour.

### **Appendix 14 Documentary Review and Analysis Phase 3**

The data was selected based on potential use in helping to triangulate the findings; specifically supporting the findings from the staff and management. Analysis was conducted using thematic analysis with the specific intent to point to gaps in provision for professional development of the older professional workforce and where recommendations for future practice for older professional worker's professional development can be made.

Gaining access to internal data proved very difficult to obtain, despite requests. This may well have been due to reasons of confidentiality. An additional difficulty may also have arisen due to workload intensification and upheaval caused by an imminent merger and potential change in organisational strategy, staff remits and roles.

For HR documentation, I sought authorisation from the Director of HR to be given access to any documentation around older worker policies, and staff organisational development policies more generally. Although supportive, HR advised that there are no specific policies for any documentation around older worker policies, except for a Preparation for Retirement which although sought out by a HR member of staff with the Director's permission, was not found. Not on the intranet, I obtained a staff development strategy document.

However, I obtained access to some freely available documentation on the organisation's intranet which has allowed scrutiny. Types of documents collected from the intranet included equal opportunities policies, diversity policies, HR strategic documentation and from staff development, and union data, representing formal dialogue with the university around professional development.

Gaining access to external data the government's Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty which came into force in April 2011 was obtained via the internet. Further and higher education institutions are considered to come under the category of public authorities (ICO) <https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1152/public-authorities-under-the-foia.pdf>). Documentation was obtained from professional associations' websites to discern professional learning strategies; where access was available.

Furthermore, the potential merger document outlining the rationale for any merger, although including diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity, makes no mention of age as a characteristic for diversity.

#### **Documentation viewed**

1. Equality Data Report – Staff, Equality and Diversity Committee (October 2013)
2. Equality and Diversity Training Packages – ‘Equality in the workplace’ and ‘Unconscious Bias’
3. Merger briefing document – confidential for internal use only but available on the www.
4. Staff survey results (2014)
5. Staff and Organisational Strategy (SOAD) 2013-14, 2014-15
6. Staff and organisational development strategy action plan audit 2013-14-2014/15
7. Staff Review and Development ‘Process Guidelines Workshop
8. University Strategic Plan (2012-17)
9. Union Representation
10. Equality Act

**Equality Data Report – Staff, Equality and Diversity Committee (October 2013)**

**NB Emphasis in bold is the university emphasis.**

This document makes reference to Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 known as the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The PSED has three aims. It requires public bodies to have **due** regard to the need to

**Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;

**Advance equality of opportunity** between people who have a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

**Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Furthermore, employers must also pay due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity, which involves considering the need to:

Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;

Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics; and

**Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life** or in other activities where their participation is low.

In this document the university reports on the additional equality categories of; sexual orientation; religion and belief; and gender identity. But it does NOT report on age which is a protected characteristic.

The main findings of this report are related to;

BME staff, disability and gathering data on gender characteristics: lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Whereby the report states that the university aims to become more inclusive and by gathering the data aims to ensure that policies and practises reflect the diverse characteristics of the staff.

The findings for instance refer to staff responses stating their sex was not the same as at birth. Although the numbers are small it suggests that this response indicates more work could be done in relation to this protected characteristic group. It acknowledges the percentage of female staff in senior management grades has decreased by 3% since 2012 – although it does not make any suggestion in this particular report about how to reverse and indeed encourage further participation. Grades by ethnicity have largely stayed the same. The largest percentage of BME staff being Grade 6 and below but there have been some increases in the number of BME staff in Grade 8 roles (increasing by 6) and 2 at Grade 9.

### **Gender profile**

As at October 2013, 68% of staff were female, and 32% male. Gender profile has remained largely the same. The Equality in Higher Education in 2012 report across HE in the UK, shows that in HE 53.7% of staff were female, with 46.3% male. The relatively large proportion of female staff at the university has been reflected in previous equality reports and reflects academic disciplines. Ethnicity profile at the university and disability were referred to and to what has been provided. The university was a majority female workforce in 2013, higher than the UK average, 68% of staff are female, against the UK average for female staff in HE given as 53.8%. (HEFCE Equality Challenge Unit (ECU)).

<b>2013</b>		
	Male	Female
University	32	68
UK average	46	54

**Fig 3.2 Gender of staff (percentage) 2013**

### **Age**

Reference to age does appear on p5 (2013) whereas at October 2013, the largest majority of staff were in the 41-55 age category. The figures are

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>
<b>20-25</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>26-40</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>340</b>
<b>41-55</b>	<b>360</b>	<b>349</b>



<b>56-69</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>70-78</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>

However, in this document there is no reference to good practice to ask any questions around age to ensure that organisations offer a supportive and inclusive environment that they offer around other protected characteristics. This is what one would expect of a university and to meet the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 as age is a protected characteristic.

### **Strategic Plan 2012-17**

There are six priorities. Relevant for this study is priority 6- Inclusive workplace – Building a culture that provides opportunities for all to excel and advance. It states

‘the university aspires to be an exemplary employer, where staff feel valued and can see how they contribute to the whole. We will promote a unified community, where all colleagues are respected for the role they fulfil and for their ideas, experiences and perspectives.

We will provide opportunities for colleagues to develop their professional capabilities and enhance their career prospects, responding to individual needs, but also to the needs of teams and services in realising strategic priorities.

Fundamental to this – and underpinning provision for reward and recognition – will be the embedding of a strong client-centred service culture and a strong performance culture.

Internal communications and collegial engagement, for staff and students will be given a high priority’.

**Strategic Priority 6: Priority 6- Inclusive workplace – Building a culture that provides opportunities for all to excel and advance.**

‘The university aspires to be an exemplary employer, where staff feel valued and can see how they contribute to the whole. We will promote a unified community, where all colleagues are respected for the role they fulfil and for their ideas, experiences and perspectives.

We will provide opportunities for colleagues to develop their professional capabilities and enhance their career prospects, responding to individual needs, but also to the needs of teams and services in realising strategic priorities.

Fundamental to this – and underpinning provision for reward and recognition – will be the embedding of a strong client-centred service culture and a strong performance culture. Internal communications and collegial engagement, for staff and students will be given a high priority’.

Key actions to achieve this objective are in

1. Promotion and facilitate collegial relations and joined-up working.
2. Revise staff review and reward frameworks to strengthen performance culture
3. Introduce more regular updates for staff and students on activity and achievements across X
4. Introduce an annual staff survey to track our progress in developing X as a workplace.

### **Staff and Organisational Strategy (SOAD) 2013-14, 2014-15**

The SOAD strategy comprises a set of principles and strategies to fulfil the objectives of the Strategic Plan (2015-17). The website advises SOAD aims to assist *every* member of staff (academic, research, administrative, all other grades, including temporary and contract staff) to develop to their full potential in the work they undertake within the university and supports their personal career development. In doing so, it recognises the importance of

staff development and appraisal (Staff Review and Development (SRD) offering opportunities for all staff to be involved.

For 2014, a strategic aim was to continue to explore how best to promote staff development activities across the university through exploring access to the Central Organisational Development programme including supporting staff in understanding equality of opportunity, their legislative responsibilities, best practice in equal opportunities and ‘outreach’ into the local community through Equality Training for Line Managers.

The Staff and Organisational Strategy Plan 2013-14 and 2014-15, focuses on a number of PD opportunities, mirroring the organisation’s strategic plan priorities.

Of specific interest, is the encouragement for both academic and professional staff to engage in the Erasmus Staff Mobility programmes, the encouragement to extend professional engagement through workshops to communicate with peers in other universities, such as peer shadowing schemes, and staff development support for local or cross department events and other initiatives.

**Staff and Organisational Strategy (SOAD) – 2013-14 and 2014-15** to fulfil the objectives of Strategic Plan (2015-17). A strategic aim was to continue to explore how best to promote staff development activities across the university. (X = existing university XY = proposed merger university)

Actions: Workshops included:

**Publicise extensively workshops and other related events to ensure the widest audience for staff development activities**

#### **2013-14**

- Learning at Work Day
- Team effectiveness for finance
- Team effectiveness for HR Introduction to Project Management

- CMALT
- Introduction to project management
- ICT First impression customer service

**To support staff in understanding equality of opportunity, their legislative responsibilities, best practice in equal opportunities and ‘outreach’ into the local community:**

- Erasmus Staff Mobility
- Equality and Diversity Training
- Equalities Analysis Training
- Work recognition enhancement Programme for BME Staff
- Dignity and respect in the workplace

On-line learning materials for X staff:

- Biennial Aspire programme for existing and aspiring leaders
- SPIRE Leadership Programme

**Continue to develop a programme of leadership and management development for X;**

**Develop competencies for**

- Heads of Department
- HR business partners
- Professional support staff: Basic Technology One training and 1:1 appointments

**Provide ongoing professional development support to senior colleagues through mentoring and coaching**

- External Coaching Service.

**Contribute to the development of an effective strategy for succession planning to identify future leaders and managers by working closely with the Director and Deputy Director of Human Resource**

- ASPIRE Leadership Programme

**Develop relevant professional development programmes for line managers:**

- Design self- assessment competence framework
- Framework produced plus behavioural competency framework.

**2014-15**

**Continue to explore how best to promote staff development activities across the X**

- Access to XY Central Organisational Development programme
- CMALT
- Introduction to Project Management
- ICT First impressions customer service
- Erasmus Staff Mobility

**To support staff in understanding equality of opportunity, their legislative responsibilities, best practice in equal opportunities and ‘outreach’ into the local community:**

- Equality Training for Line Managers

**Continue to promote equality of opportunity and encourage staff to participate fully in X activities**

- CMALT Accredited Programme with X for Course Administrators
  - Erasmus Staff Mobility – ongoing through Central Programme of activities.
  - Explore shared access with X to online resources. U-mentor scheme; access to professional development programme, Good Practice Guide.
- 
- Stand-alone workshops for staff in management or leadership roles: - Line Management Development Programme.
  - Continue to develop and pilot competency frameworks for:
  - Proposal for competency framework for senior managers produced by participants on the ASPIRE programmes.

**Continue to develop a programme of leadership and management development for X;**

**Develop competencies for**

- Heads of Department
- HR business partners
- Professional support staff: central programme

**Provide ongoing professional development support to senior colleagues through mentoring and coaching**

- External coaching for heads of departments (HOADs)
- Establish mentoring scheme for new heads of departments HOADs
- Essential briefings for HOADs – Managing proposed merger
- 1 to 1 Coaching: External coaching for HOADs

**Contribute to the development of an effective strategy for succession planning to identify future leaders and managers by working closely with the Director and Deputy Director of Human Resource**

## **Research Schemes/Policies in other universities**

- ASPIRE course participants have researched and produced competence framework for senior managers.

## **Develop relevant professional development programmes for line managers:**

### **Line Management programme to include**

- Handling Difficult conversations
- Performance management
- Management – Emotional Intelligence

## **Union Representation**

Two recognised unions represent staff in the case university. UNISON (1.3 million members overall) predominantly represents the lower grades of administrative staff (for roles not contracted out to private providers). The University and College Union (UCU) represents academic and professional staff, representing over 110,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK.

UNISON's stated (1.3 million members) is formed from the merger of three trade unions, having an education branch predominantly representing the lower grades of administrative staff, representing some 350,000 members in education. Its website give a main stated aim is to help workers fight for fairness and equality in the workplace and beyond. It campaigns on key issues of inequality, unfair pay and work issues and the quality of public services. Its website has specific headings for black, disabled, LGBT, women and young member but not specifically for older members. Their website refers to the ability to live and work without prejudice is a fundamental right, regardless of your background, colour or sexual orientation but singularly omits age (a protected characteristic).

The University and College Union (UCU) represents over 110,000 academics, lecturers, trainers, instructors, researchers, managers, administrators, computer staff, librarians and postgraduates in universities, colleges, prisons, adult education and training organisations across the UK. It states on its website it is fighting for equality in education and beyond. It has four formalised equality standing committees and special employment interests groups which advises the NEC's work for disabled, black members, LGBT and women members and also an anti-casualisation committee and academic-related, professional staff committee. The committees can send motions to national annual congress and sector conferences but there is no representation for age on the national committees. However, its equality participation unit, has a post of quality support official with a specialism for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans equality and age equality. A briefing document to branch representatives calls for the requirement for updating policies with reference to discrimination to include Age (association).

Unions play a formal role in committees such as the two staff consultative committee meetings, where staff are represented at Joint Consultative committees meeting 3 times per year to discuss general matters concerning clerical and related administrative staff and manual and ancillary staff chaired by the Pro Director of Strategy and Organisation . While UCU attend an academic and related staff joint committee, chaired by the director and HR which takes up grievances, both personal and group relating to terms and conditions of employment not resolved at Faculty / Department / Unit or at Secretary level.

The function of the Joint Committee shall be to make agreed recommendations to the Council through the Finance and General Purposes Committee on the following matters:

1. Contractual and customary conditions of employment, including the procedures governing career movement and structure, of Academic and Related Staff, except insofar as they may be determined (with the agreement of the Association of University Teachers) at national and/or University of X levels;
2. Matters arising from any procedural agreement that may be jointly agreed;



3. Any relevant matter referred by the X as employer or by the Local Association whether collective, group or individual.  
See Procedure Agreement (link above) for further details.

Minutes showed union representation at a consultative committee (2013) calling for a consistent approach to staff development opportunities for professional staff, noted by management, and concerns raised about inconsistency in flexible working policy. A Joint Committee meeting held SLT (2014) whose members included the Chief Executive and union representatives, listed agenda items for academic study leave concerns, inconsistencies around staff development accounts, staff survey data and action plan, a review of the fee remission policy with establishment of a working group, efficiency savings and equality impact analysis of the fee remission policy.

### **The Equality Act (2010)**

The Equality Act (2010) allows for positive action measures to be taken to help overcome disadvantage both for staff as well as for students. Adopting positive action is voluntary and can help alleviate disadvantage experienced by people who share a protected characteristic, reduce underrepresentation in relation to particular activities, and meet particular needs (Section 158). This applies to all protected characteristics. The Act says measures would need to be a proportionate way of achieving the relevant aim. For this context, a set of realistic Equality Objectives (2012) were developed after consultation with staff and students alongside review of data. Progress is reviewed annually, published on the website and reported back to the Equality and Diversity Committee. In 2013, an equality analysis process was introduced, embedding an equality section into papers and report templates, needing approval from the SLT. New guidance equality analysis was developed with the process piloted with specific departments to ensure it was fit for purpose whilst general training was

offered on how to make equality analysis meaningful. The SLT attended this equality analysis session.

## Appendix 15 Professional Staff in UK Higher Education

In July 2011, 381,790 staff were employed in UK HEIs, of which 118,115 (47.46%) were academics and 200,605 (52.54%) non-academics (HEFCE, 2012). In 2008-09, (latest available figures), 52% of the HE workforce in England held a professional or support role, a further 3% held dual roles combining professional and support and academic roles, equating to 171,565 people and greater than the academic workforce (ibid).

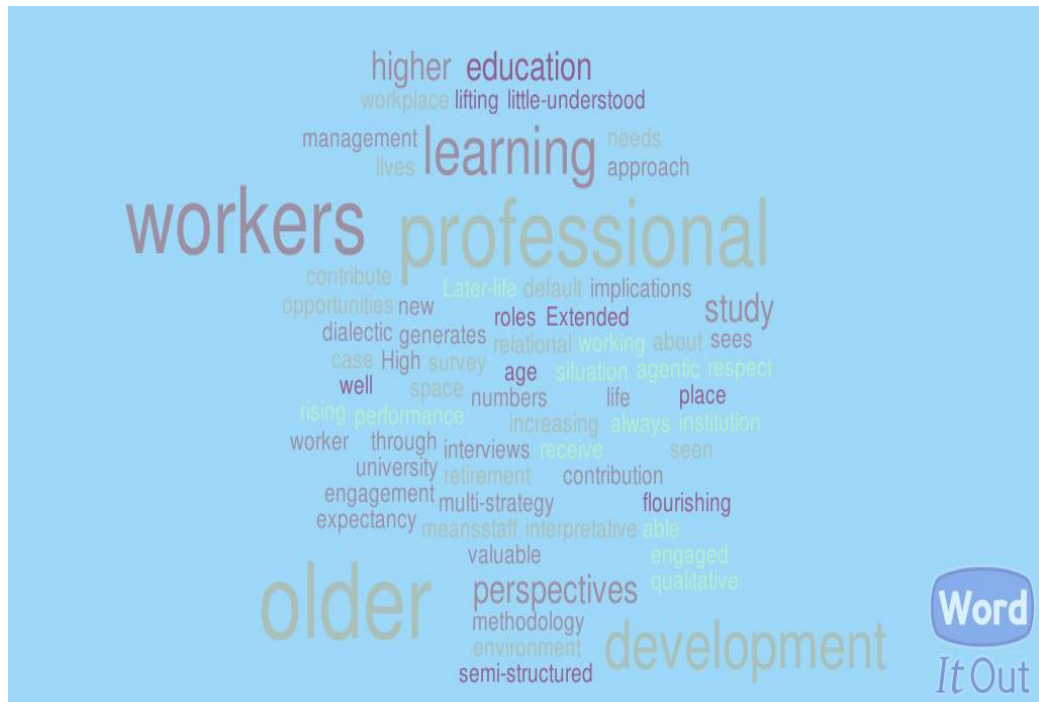
Professional and support staff are more skewed towards younger age groups than the academic population with 16 % under 30 compared to 8% of academics in 2010-11. The proportion of the former aged 60 and over increased between 2003-04 and 2010-11, from 6 per cent to 8 per cent (ibid).

Age	50-59	60+
Professional occupations	6605 (21%)	1690 (5%)
Associate professional/ technical occupations	7020 (20%)	2035 (6%)
Administrative and secretarial	1170 (21%)	3355 (6%)

### Professional and administrative occupations across the UK in 2012 (HESA 2012)

As Fig 2.2 shows, professional and support staff undertake a diverse range of occupations typically involved with delivery of and developing professional services. Many staff [including accountancy, marketing, IT and library specialists] undertake formal development to keep professional expertise updated annually to maintain chartered status in their profession.

**Appendix 16 Wordle Diagram of initial interview key words**



**Appendix 17 Step 2 coding N Vivo coding framework with memo codes included for expansive temporary construct framework**

**DIALOGUE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Spaces for dialogue

**ORGANISATIONAL POLICY**

Org policy-developing career paths for prof staff

Org developing external partnerships for mutuality and mobility

Org investment in PD

Org reaching demographic tipping point

**INTERGENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES**

Intergenerational

Org structure for dev- Intergenerational team working

**LINE MANAGEMENT ROLE IN PD**

Link between line managers and good practice

**APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH OLDER WORKERS**

Working with older workers

## **KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

Knowledge sharing informal

## **HOLISTIC PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Holistic professional development

Perceptions of org and staff career progression and development

Creating expansive views of development

PD for job satisfaction and org development

## **CAREER PATHWAYS**

Developing career pathways for older workers

Lack of clear career pathways for professional staff

## **RETIREMENT**

## **PARTICIPATION IN PD**

## **TRANSITIONS AND TRAJECTORIES**

Organisational transitions for inclusivity

## **AGEIST VIEWS AND PERCEPTIONS**

Labelling

Stereotyping

## **ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE**

Organisational empowerment for careers and progression

## **EXPECTATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT OF OLDER WORKERS**

Seeing the benefits of older workers

Self-sabotage, opportunities and confidence

Organisational expectations of staff to develop

## **ORGANISATIONAL MODEL**

Age as part of diversity model

Organisational model for developing older staff

Responsibility to develop older staff

Perceptions of org and staff career progression and development

Retention of older workers policy and support

Organisational model – learning organisation

Organisational holistic development, learning and wellbeing

Organisational model creating a strategic continuum for professional/personal development

Organisational model – professional learning communities /networking learning

## **MOBILITY**

### **ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Importance of mixed age workplace communities

### **STAFF REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

Holistic PD career planning and SRD link

HR policy on SRD

Linking SRD and PD closer through impact

SRD and performance management

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR OLDER WORKERS**

Learning – formalising and capturing informal learning

Learning not retirement anymore for development

Peer to peer learning

### **WORKPLACE CLIMATE**

Validation

Vulnerability

Equitable opportunities

Diversity + org structure



**Appendix 18 – Step 3 Braun and Clarke (2006) stages and hybrid grounded theory**

Further refinement from Step 2 of memos/codes from temporary framework construct

*Ageism and the spectre of uselessness*

Age sensitivity and development      **Reconceptualisation**      **Empowerment**

Fear linked to vulnerability

(Valuing all?)

Change recommendations

*Collaboration culture*

**Culture**

**Workplace climate**

Knowledge sharing

Professional learning communities

Intergenerational perspective

*Deficit or positive model*

**Reconceptualisation**

Habermas life world versus system world

Spaces for engaging in dialogue

*Holistic development*

Personalising learning/tailoring for life course

**Holistic development**

Plateauing

Skills in transition

Learning –self directed

*Mobility career development*

Strategic goals

**Retaining**

**recycling and**

Provision of careers to move and on

**Renewal**

*Modelling effective professional development*

*for best and leading practice*

**Re-imagining**

**professional**

**development**

Organisation strategy

Learning organisation refocus

Part time workers and professional development

for effective learning

Reconceptualisation of older workers

**Reconceptualisation**

Reconceptualisation of retirement

**Re-imagining**

**Appendix 19 – Step 4 representing Step 7 of Braun and Clarke’s steps abstraction to create a model framework shown in Fig 6.1.**

Both at individual and organisational level

**VALUING OLDER WORKERS**

**RE-IMAGINING**

**RETAINING**

**SUSTAINING**

**EMPOWERING**

**CONFIDENCE**

**EMPLOYABILITY**