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Staff Perceptions of Lesson Observation and Feedback in a UK Secondary School: CPD, Identity, and Organisational Culture

Thesis

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Staff Perceptions of Lesson Observation and Feedback in a UK Secondary School: CPD, Identity, and Organisational Culture

By

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ABSTRACT

Lesson observation and feedback is one of the main tools used to improve teaching and pupils' learning and is seen as a key aspect of teachers' continuing professional development. However, during a time of increasing accountability and performativity, the process is also linked to performance management and can be perceived negatively. Yet there is little research that looks precisely at this issue, especially from the perspectives of both teachers and middle leaders.

This study investigates teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions of lesson observation and feedback in a UK secondary school. The conceptual framework consists of three main interrelated concepts: (i) continuing professional development (CPD); (ii) professional identity; and (iii) organisational culture.

This study, situated in the interpretive paradigm, uses a qualitative case study method. Sixteen participants were interviewed: ten teachers, five middle leaders, and a teaching and learning coordinator. Data were also collected from documentary analysis of relevant policies and paperwork. These data were analysed using established thematic coding techniques.

The study reveals that nearly all participants recognised that lesson observation and feedback was very closely linked to their students' learning, improvement of pedagogy, and the desire to develop their own teaching practice to become skilled professionals. Teachers responded positively towards their teaching when taking part in all types of observation and feedback, and collaboration, communication and trust were important elements of the process. Teachers' major concerns were associated with certain aspects of the feedback given, for instance lack of time allocated to deliver constructive feedback, the subject specialism of the observer, and consultation in decision-making regarding their CPD needs. The study recommends that leaders should allow time with teachers as part of a genuine consultation, allowing thorough feedback. It appears that promoting and facilitating collegiality within the process of lesson observation helps create employee commitment and loyalty, thus eliminating some of the negativity associated with the process linked to accountability.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my beloved late mother, who passed away two months before I embarked on the Education Doctorate (EdD) degree journey. It was her passion, enthusiasm and desire for knowledge that has truly inspired me to fulfil my ambition in completing this thesis and being awarded this degree.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the motivation for the thesis. It presents the topics to be investigated, the methods selected and the theoretical concepts behind the investigation. The objectives of the research are explained, and a synopsis of the study is presented.

In recent years, lesson observation and feedback has become such an essential part of school life that almost every school is now developing or has developed its own lesson observation and feedback policy (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Marriott, 2001). However, while starting out as a continuing professional development (CPD) activity to help teachers develop as professionals, there is a perception that it is increasingly being seen/used as a performance management activity in an age of increasing accountability and performativity (Clay, 2016; Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). While this may be the case, and although researchers and practitioners have been writing extensively on teachers' professional development, lesson observation and feedback remains under-researched (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014).

The importance of performance management, with lesson observation and feedback at its core, has been ascribed to the fact that it seems impossible for senior leaders or middle leaders in schools to successfully manage any school or department without access to adequate data on how teachers are performing, and how they are meeting their goals (Fleming, 2014; MacDonald and Tyler, 2010; Marriot, 2001). For example, these data are now considered to be vital for making decisions on pedagogical matters, improving teachers' teaching, pupils' learning, and planning for the future of schools (O'Leary, 2014; Bush, 2003; Marriot, 2001). However, viewing lesson observation and feedback purely as a performance management process may lead to negative attitudes from teachers towards the activity, which in turn may have undesirable effects on motivation, commitment to learning, enthusiasm about professional development, involvement in decision-making, and loyalty (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009).

Therefore, in addition to understanding the effects on lesson observation and feedback on teachers' performance and accountability, there is also a need to understand the most effective approach, as it has been shown that lesson observation and feedback processes

conducted in the right manner can result in a constructive outcome for all stakeholders involved (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). How do staff and leaders perceive and experience this crucial process? And how can the activity be seen as beneficial for the professional development of staff, while at the same time satisfying the school's accountability and performance management procedures? It is this problem that lies at the heart of this thesis.

Why this topic?

My choice for this research topic stems from my experience as a middle leader in the science department of a comprehensive, state-funded 11-18 academy in England. As part of my job description, I frequently visit my colleagues formally and informally in their classes and watch the valuable work they do with their pupils. The school I work in has changed from a comprehensive, state-funded school to one with academy status where many of its internal policies are reviewed to accommodate the expectations of its sponsors (academies are sponsored by a board of trustees). The lesson-observation policy is one example.

I have always found the area of lesson observation and feedback to be a very sensitive and controversial one. For example, it is suggested that a lack of leadership in the way it is conducted can contribute to problems and issues with the process (Fleming, 2014). Therefore, I was interested in exploring other teachers' and middle leaders' views regarding their practices of the lesson observation and feedback process. In the light of this, I was curious to find out how lesson observation and feedback is conducted in different departments within the school and how this links to the overall school culture.

Moreover, ever since its implementation, lesson observation has proven to be a widely controversial aspect in teaching (Barth, 1990). Teachers are notoriously insecure about being observed (ibid). Having the observer in your class can be perceived as a threatening experience because the teacher is now on show (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

So, I wanted to apply my learning from this research (as a researcher) and put it into practice to enhance what I was doing in my profession (as a practitioner). In addition, I have an intense desire to see things move forward at my school in terms of its policy and practice related to lesson observation and feedback, and to improve the effectiveness of teachers' teaching. Thus, through my research, I hope to be able to offer insights to teachers and middle leaders into one of the most significant processes in the teaching profession, which

can then help them to become better practitioners. Through this work, I am interested in exploring several professionally relevant questions: Is lesson observation and feedback perceived as a professional development activity or a performance management activity? Can lesson observation and feedback be both? And what do teachers and leaders think about this and how do they experience the process?

Research aims and questions

The main aim of this study is to explore and to deepen our understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback within the context of a UK secondary school.

The main research question is:

>   What are teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback at a UK secondary school?

The research sub-questions raised by the literature review are as follows:

1) How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

2) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

3) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

4) How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

The next section briefly introduces the key concepts which framed the study. This framework will be elaborated on in chapter 2.

Conceptual framework

The lesson observation and feedback process does not exist alone within the teaching and learning systems of schools without being influenced by other factors (O'Leary, 2014). Therefore, conceptualising lesson observation and feedback is challenging since it transcends and is influenced by many concepts, such as CPD and teachers' professional identity (O'Leary, 2014). Other researchers (Fleming, 2014; Steward, 2009) have identified school culture to be another influencing factor on the process of lesson observation and feedback. Hence, in order to provide new theoretical and practical insights into the process,

a framework interlinking the key concepts of organisational culture, CPD and professional identity is used in this study.

Organisational culture

Culture is a unique system whereby different individuals interact and communicate with one another regarding their work affairs within a particular organisational setting (Bush and Anderson, 2003), because it is argued that understanding the organisational culture allows teachers to be more conscious of the details about different schooling aspects (Steward, 2009). Certainly, this understanding may be seen as a way to resolve issues of organisational problems but may also help to explain how teachers and middle leaders interact within organisational culture in order to improve their delivery of lessons. Therefore, organisational culture is important to lesson observation and impacts on the performance of individuals (Bush and Anderson, 2003).

Continuing professional development (CPD)

Continuing professional development is widely regarded as being crucial to the future of education (Steward, 2009) because it gives teachers the prospect of furthering their profession and provides schools with more skilled staff, leading in turn, it is hoped, to improved learning in the classroom (see, for example, Fleming, 2014; Steward, 2009).

Good CPD programmes also provide opportunities for teachers to step back from their day-to-day routine to reflect on good practice, raising awareness of different teaching strategies (O'Leary, 2014), improving cultural understanding, and raising levels of excitement and motivation in pedagogy.

If it is the levels of these benefits upon which a CPD activity is judged, then it is the concern of this study to identify how these benefits can be maximised in order to improve the experience that teachers encounter during their lesson observation and feedback.

Professional identity

The professional identity of teachers is understood mostly in the context of schools' cultures and also based on their understandings of their day-to-day work (Murray and Kosnik, 2014; Wilkins, et al., 2012). It appears that a teachers' identity is influenced by two dimensions: inner qualities, which are related to their life before embarking on the

teaching career, and external qualities, which are related to their teaching experience (Olsen, 2008). Stemming from this, then, it is possible that teachers will have their own personal identity that is different from that of the rest of the professional group with whom they are working within a certain setting. In addition, each teacher's identity is further influenced by various other factors, such as their length in service and their personal beliefs (Murray and Kosnik, 2014; Akkerman and Meijer, 2011; Beijaard et al., 2004). Moreover, among the other factors, performativity, with everything it entails in terms of accountability, has been viewed to have a great influence on a teacher's identity (Wilkins et al., 2012).

Thus, it can be seen that in order to comprehend the lesson observation and feedback process, it is necessary to explore the inter-relationships between these three core concepts. This framework is used in this study to provide new insights into staff perceptions of lesson observation and feedback processes in a UK secondary school and is fully discussed in chapter 2.

Methodology

The aim of interpretive research is to ascertain how individuals rationalise scenarios that confront them in their day-to-day lives, and to fathom those peoples' lives (Newman 2014). This is the focus of this study – that is, to follow this 'interpretive paradigm'. For Cohen et al (2011), the essence and main thrust of the interpretive paradigm approach is to make sense of the choices people make, that is to say: where this deviate from objectivity, according to Creswell (2013), provides greater fathom of different experiences and events related to people's perceptions than that which can be gleaned from numerical data alone.

A case study qualitative method approach for this study was considered appropriate, as it allowed the researcher to retain an overall sense of the true-life events (Yin, 2013). Qualitative thematic methods (Newby, 2014) were employed to analyse and interpret the data, and the NVivo10 software package was used to categorise and code the data prior to interpretation for the qualitative data analysis. I interviewed sixteen participants (ten teachers, five leaders and the teaching and learning co-ordinator) using flexibly guided, semi-structured interview schedules. Data were also collected from documentary analysis of relevant policy documents and paperwork in the school.

The methodology and methods are explained further in chapter 3.

Significance and outcomes of the study

The study was designed as an investigation within the understanding that there is an increasing need to improve education quality in ongoing educational reforms, with the teacher's development at the heart of it all in order to be an outstanding practitioner. One example of this is the Department for Education's recently published document in which they encourage members of the teaching profession to reach an outstanding criterion (DfE, 2014) through recognition of the value of a teacher's CPD and learning. Teachers who are supported in their practice understand how they may be able to relate this understanding and exploit knowledge acquired to support an ethos of co-operative accountability for better outcomes for themselves and their students' learning (MacDonald and Tyler, 2010). Lesson observation and feedback, if properly conducted, will become an asset for teachers and middle leaders as it should improve their continuing development, their feeling of identity, and their students' learning (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). This will reflect positively on a school that implements this type of process within the performance management system, since teachers lie at the heart of any school improvement process.

Much of the research regarding lesson observation and feedback process is associated with improving teachers' teaching and, similarly, pupils' learning, for example students' grades. Nevertheless, in an age of increasing accountability and performativity, the process is also linked to performance management, and can be perceived by teachers as a form of scrutiny with possible undesirable implications, such as their positioning one the pay scale ladder. There seems to be insufficient research that looks specifically at this issue, especially from the perspectives of both teachers and middle and senior leaders. This study sought to address the gap in current research regarding staff perceptions of lesson observation and feedback in a UK secondary school.

Through an insider researcher approach (Floyd and Arthur, 2012), an interpretation of perceptions and experiences of staff at a UK secondary school was obtained to help improve future lesson observation and feedback processes in the school. The data acquired from this study will enable the move from theory to practice and highlight professional implications which will help develop the process of lesson observation and feedback based on research evidence. Therefore, the primary aim of this thesis is to explore teachers' and leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in one UK secondary school with the aim of identifying challenges, areas of good practice and

suggestions for improvement. Additional important purposes of this research were to identify how teachers and middle leaders understood the interactions with each other during the feedback session after lesson observation in different subject areas, and to identify how any perceived benefits of CPD can be maximised in order to improve the experiences that teachers encounter during the process. While it is not claimed that this research is fully generalisable, it is hoped that it will be useful to teachers, middle leaders and schools in structuring future policies on lesson observation and feedback in similar secondary school settings, and useful to other researchers in the field.

Overview of the thesis

The study consists of seven further chapters.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, is categorised into three main parts. The first part deals with the relevance of CPD in relation to lesson observation and feedback. The second section examines organisational (school) culture and sub-school culture with a further literature review of the different types of school cultures. The third section reviews the literature of professional identity, including performativity, seeking to explore the influence each concept has on the process of lesson observation and feedback.

Chapter 3, the methodology, explains why an interpretivist paradigm with a qualitative methodology was chosen for this research, and justified the best case study approach. Data was collected through the use of flexible, semi-constructed interviews, taken from all teachers and middle leaders, including the teaching and learning coordinator. Thereafter, the data analysis techniques employed are discussed.

Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 are dedicated to analysing the data and discussing it. Each of these chapters takes a supporting research question in turn and combines the analysis and the discussion of the data collected in this study to present the findings related to the four research questions. Each chapter ends with an interpretive explanation of the main themes identified in relation to the conceptual framework of current literature, past research and my own understanding.

Chapter 8, the conclusions, summarises the most important findings under each sub-research question, and implications and recommendations for further study are presented in the light of the findings of this research study.

Summary

Chapter 1 offered an introduction and an overview of the thesis. The next chapter presents the literature review.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to explore and to deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of a UK secondary school.

The main research question:
What are teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation at a UK secondary school?

Sub-questions:

1) How is lesson observation and feedback positioned within the school's overall CPD provision? How is this managed?

2) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

3) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

4) How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

The aim of this chapter is to discuss and evaluate appropriate literature regarding the key concepts of organisational culture, CPD, professional identity, and lesson observation and feedback. By doing so, it aims to establish the study's conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, critically review relevant literature to show how the study links to previous work, highlight gaps, and demonstrate how the study's research questions have been formulated.

Relationship between the concepts

The study's conceptual framework is presented in Figure 2.1 to show how lesson observation and feedback is influenced by the concepts of organisational culture, CPD and professional identity. It is argued that only by exploring these three interconnected concepts, is it possible to comprehend some of the challenges and problems that teachers face when undertaking the lesson observation and feedback processes in a secondary school context. The three concepts have been chosen for a variety of reasons. Firstly, lesson

observation takes place within an organisation which has a certain overarching culture, and that culture might have a desirable or undesirable impact on the way lesson observation is conducted and used to fulfil the goals and aims of any organisation (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). Secondly, CPD is considered to play a role in the improvement of teachers' attributes and pedagogy in order to enhance the delivery of lessons, which also interlinks with the organisational culture approach to teachers' CPD (Fleming, 2014). Thirdly, teacher identity plays a significant role in directly and indirectly influencing the quality of lessons delivered, and organisational culture and CPD interlink with the way teachers' identity is developed or threatened (Steward, 2009). Understanding the influence of these theories with respect to lesson observation and feedback will, therefore, provide new insights into the issue under exploration.
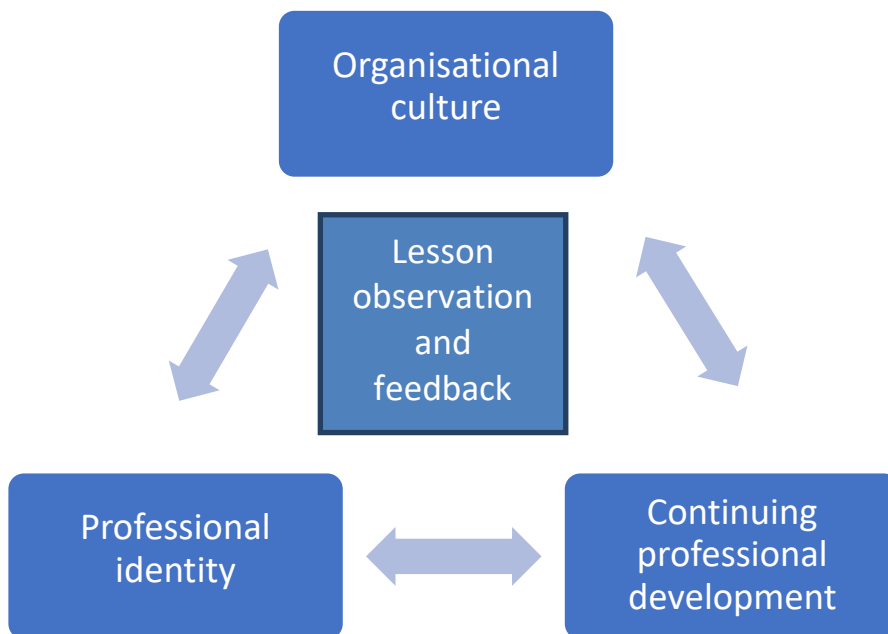
Figure 2. 1. Conceptual framework for exploring lesson observation and feedback.

Lesson observation and feedback

Research concerning lesson observation, feedback and the many positive influences this may have on teaching and learning is plentiful, for example, effective teaching of literacy. In an age of growing accountability and performance, the process is also associated with negative aspects and less is known about this. Therefore, there is a significant need

for greater understanding of this issue, especially from the teachers' and middle and senior leaders' perceptions.

Research studies have identified that lesson observation and feedback is one of the most popular methods of assessing both teachers and middle leaders and is regularly used to evaluate their ability in relation to accountability, new posts, and yearly pay rises within the lower end of the teachers' pay scale (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). The lesson observation and feedback process is aimed at improving overall teacher performance, and leaders are expected to fully engage in assisting their teachers to achieve their potential. These practices are not visible when leaders are not willing to collaborate to promote such a culture (Sheal, 1989; Hoerr, 2005). The strength of the collaborative approach is to include teachers and provide them with access to the leadership teams; and through these collaborative means, they can make continuous improvements to improve instruction and delivery and, ultimately, the students' learning (MacDonald and Tyler, 2010). However valuable these ideas are, they do not seem to take into account sufficiently the complex nature of lesson observation and feedback. Complexity may arise from the various interruptions leaders, middle leaders and teachers encounter, for example where schools are driven by results.

Further, policy-makers have produced many policies governing the process of lesson observation and feedback. In these policies, lesson observation and feedback is defined, relationships between teachers and observers are evaluated, and useful suggestions for schools are discussed, such as the need schools have for involving teachers during the whole of the observation process at a collegial level. Feedback is an imperative component of any lesson observed; this is where teachers and observers discuss the quality of the lesson observed (Steward, 2009). Feedback after lesson observation is, in fact, the process which adds value to lesson observation (Farrell, 2011; Hoerr, 2005).

There is evidence in the literature that the relationship between lesson observation and feedback, on the one hand, and culture on the other hand is so closely associated that the two are almost intertwined (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). The school culture has an influence on the way the lesson observation and feedback process is conducted in schools and also on the way teachers and middle leaders interact with one another during the process (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). However, the lack of a clear understanding of how culture influences the lesson observation and feedback process

creates a problematic stance in determining whether certain cultures are more powerful than others in influencing a more beneficial approach to the process. Additionally, the cultural context may result in teachers not being able to engage efficiently in implementing the feedback specified, thus limiting the ability to pass on useful information to teachers and limiting the teachers' ability to respond without feeling undermined or threatened. Therefore, in this study, the participants' perception and experience of their school and departmental culture is investigated in relation to lesson observation and feedback.

A supportive culture is valuable in promoting collaborative CPD, where less experienced teachers interact with more experienced ones, for example during observations (Cordingley et al., 2005). This professional support may, for example, promote a positive experience amongst teachers when seeking CPD training related to lesson observation and feedback. Moreover, lesson observation and feedback has a well-established role in schools' CPD provision and it is used to develop key pedagogical skills and teacher learning, and to improve motivation in pedagogy as a way of meeting teachers' needs (O'Leary, 2014; Palmer, 2006).

Lesson observation

Lesson observation is an important aspect in today's education system as most of the new school reforms are reliant on its contribution, for example, teachers' performance management (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Hoerr, 2005). The use of lesson observation in England first began in the middle of the 19th century. The purpose of its introduction was to make sure public money was being wisely spent on the State schools for the poor (O'Leary, 2014; Bush and Middlewood, 2013).

A definition of lesson observation is provided by Hoerr (2005, p. 92), who states that: "Teacher observations capture interactions between and among a teacher and her students." He further (p. 92) clarifies that: "Meaningful observations of teachers include looking at what takes place during the lesson and the context of the lesson... [because they] …focus on pedagogy." O' Leary (2014) states that government intervention has made lesson observation a compulsory aspect of the teaching and learning in schools. Performance management systems used to be more flexible, but the process has recently become more formalised because teachers are required to be accountable for their work (Clay, 2016; Fleming, 2014).

Observers are generally looking for rapport between teachers and students, and assessing teaching and teacher performance (Hoerr, 2005; Fleming, 2014). O'Leary (2014) suggests that observers should approach lesson observation with objectivity in order to minimise the feeling of being a threat. However, he further acknowledges that observers' own personal experiences may affect the lesson observation process, and Hoerr (2005) adds that it will also limit a teacher's ability to reflect. Other researchers agree and suggest that lesson observation may emphasise the less important aspects of teaching rather than inspiring teachers to become reflective practitioners (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009).

Policy-makers have produced many policies governing the process of lesson observation, for example, the Department for Education (DfE, 2012), the schools themselves (see, for example Appendix I), [1] and the teachers' unions (Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL), 2012; National Union of Teachers (NUT), 2011; NASUWT, 2011). In these policies, the approach to lesson observation and feedback is defined, relationships between teachers and observers are evaluated, and useful suggestions for schools are discussed, such as the necessity for schools to involve teachers during the whole of the observation process. This approach suggests that lesson observation remains an issue that is constantly being reformed, taking up a considerable amount of time for all stakeholders, such as schools and teacher unions.

One of the main purposes for schools in carrying out lesson observations is to improve students' progress through assessing sound teaching (see, for example, Steward, 2009, Fleming, 2014). The Department for Education claims that this was so that managers could demonstrate the capacity to bring about further development in the value of teaching and learning (DfE, 2012), which can be challenging, particularly in view of the link made between lesson observation and performance (O'Leary, 2014; Bush and Middlewood, 2013). However, Hoerr (2005) suggests that lesson observations should go beyond the basic interaction in the classroom and be linked to students' progress and teachers' performance. However, lesson observations provide only a partial insight into a teacher's whole performance (Hoerr, 2005), and may distract practitioners from freely teaching and force them to comply with a set of stated targets. This could create something different from real development (O' Leary, 2014; Didau, 2013; Richards and Farrell, 2005). Didau (2013) believes that it is disturbing that many practitioners use lesson observations as the universal,

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[1] Data analysis will also draw from this policy.

recognised and unquestioned method for monitoring teachers and making them accountable. The controversy of this practice is brought into sharp relief in its impact upon performance-related pay.

Further, using the three formal observations per year for each teacher, as recommended by the DfE, to address the issues above may be a challenge, and hence the process can be viewed as an exercise undertaken in schools in a 'going through the motions' mode, without paying attention to other additional aspects that may influence lesson observation and feedback (Didau, 2013) such as, for example, time, students' ability and subject specialism of the observer. The process can be viewed as being incomplete, as quality teaching cannot be assessed using checklists (Steward, 2009). However, if these observations were to be completed competently, they could be used as a driving force for improving teaching quality (Fleming, 2014). Furthermore, if the lesson observation process is conducted as simply ticking the boxes, it may have an adverse effect on the teachers' sense of identity due to the accountability attached to performance (O'Leary, 2014). Thus, there appears to be more to the process than just observing another teacher – it should address teachers' needs to reflect continually and to develop professionally (Fleming, 2014; Steward, 2009; Bolam, 2007). For such a performance system to become more efficient, teachers must be working collaboratively to improve the delivery of lesson observation and, subsequently, feedback (Fleming, 2014; Didau, 2013).

Taking a more managerialist view, Myatt (2013), an Ofsted Lead Inspector, asserts that we should accept that lesson observations provide an opportunity for quality assurance of teachers and institutions. She further adds that education without proper quality control will not provide the process any credibility.

An alternative to formal observations centred on an observer and the observed, is the lesson study. In this system, teachers work collaboratively to plan lessons and observe one another (O'Leary, 2014). This system may have the advantage that the observer has an insight into the rationale, direction and foci of the lesson. This suggests a clear shift in the practice expected from observers and teachers during feedback sessions, clearly advocating more collegial leadership. Teachers and observers could reflect on these aspects, which might help in developing an appreciation of the feedback role. One downside of this approach is that this process could be very time-consuming, given the nature of the timetables teachers have and the need to arrange cover for both the observer and the observed.

With the above discussion in mind, and with the aim of probing more deeply into the whole of the process of lesson observation, the section which follows reviews the literature on feedback conducted after lesson observation.

Feedback

Constructive feedback is a crucial part of observation and should provide useful insights and recommendations from the observer to improve the overall effectiveness of teacher and student learning (Sheal, 1989). Therefore, it might be said that feedback is of paramount importance following observation of a lesson and is an essential part of the lesson observation and feedback process (University College Union (UCU), 2012) as it offers a chance for both teachers and observers to reflect jointly on the process (Hoerr, 2005; Sheal, 1989). It can be argued that the purpose is to identify what went well and to set clear focused targets for subsequent lessons, so that teachers can improve their teaching practice and hence their pupils' learning.

Traditionally, feedback on lessons observed has been approached as a one-sided process, conducted by senior teachers with the observed teacher at the receiving end (O'Leary, 2014; Farrell, 2011). The purpose was teacher evaluation (Sheal, 1989). Sheal's views certainly reveal a rather less comfortable side from the teacher's viewpoint, in that their lesson can seem as though it is being put on trial and interpreted by a "judge" whose recommendations or decisions may seem subjective and final. This can elicit a defensive stance on the part of the teacher (Teacher Toolkit, 2014). Ideally, teachers and observers involved in the process of lesson observation should share the development of observation criteria (Sheal, 1989), rather than the shocking stories of judgments before any dialogue is even conducted (ibid).

The guidelines of the DfE for the requirements expected during the feedback after lesson observation for teachers and observers in order to facilitate a balanced dialogue (DfE, 2011) prescribe that: (i) teachers should be prepared to be proactive during the feedback session; (ii) teachers need to be able to demonstrate that they are able to reflect on their teaching; and (iii) observers should view the feedback session as a tutorial in order to develop the teacher's knowledge and understanding further in a very supportive and sharing manner. This would seem to be a laudable guideline, and this study aims to find out the perceptions of staff on lesson observation and feedback, including how they understood the interactions between each other during the feedback session.

The value of the feedback provided to teachers has been acknowledged in promoting learning and CPD (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary 2014). On the other hand, although research on the many qualities that lesson observation may contribute to teaching is plentiful, there is less research concerning the way feedback is conducted following lesson observations (Kelly, 2014). Consequently, the significant perceptions which may apply to the way lesson observation and feedback is conducted need to be addressed. Because lesson observation crosses over into several disciplines, it has been difficult to conceptualise (O'Leary, 2014). It is argued that the choices a school makes regarding conducting lesson observation and feedback depend on the organisational culture and the way this culture values the CPD of teachers. This, therefore, needs to be examined. To address this aspect, the next sections of this chapter will explore each of the concepts which influence lesson observation and feedback (organisational culture, professional development, and professional identity) separately.

In order to continue addressing the central research question, the subsequent section turns firstly to the concept of organisational culture, examining relevant literature and critiquing research.

Organisational culture

An understanding of organisational culture is important because it is the key to organisational excellence, in as much as it makes a difference to performance within the workplace (Schein, 2010). Indeed, such an understanding can perhaps be viewed as playing an important role in explaining almost all the different situations related to teachers within an organisation, as advocated by Steward (2009), who felt that school culture enables teachers to become all that they are capable of being.

Culture is a highly challenged concept and complex phenomenon, with several perceptions about it specifically in relation to education (Dubkevics and Barbars, 2010). Culture refers to values, beliefs and habits of individuals in the organisation, and is manifested through signs and rituals (Bush and Middlewood, 2013). Additionally, as Floyd and Fuller (2014, p. 5) point out, "cultures are socially constructed, shifting and experienced differently by diverse groups of people".

Schein's influential definition of organisational culture is:

> *"A pattern of shared basic assumptions that a group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems"* (Schein, 2010, p. 18).

Teachers can be unaware of the expectations that shape their duties, and these expectations can be premised upon certain beliefs that they hold in error. It is only after observation and feedback or an outside influence (such as a parental meeting) challenges the beliefs (Stuhlman et al., 2012) that underpin unreconstructed expectations, that progress can be made.

A culture should represent the basic values and beliefs that are collectively shared amongst individuals (Schein, 2010). For example, teachers may view respect for other colleagues to be important or may value collaborative work with other teachers during certain processes such as lesson planning, classroom management or lesson observation and feedback.

Finally, Schein's (2010) definition of an organisation culture encompasses artifacts and practices such as signs, heroes and traditions. In the education environment, an example of these might be that certain forms are a mandatory Ofsted requirement and teachers are requested to complete them prior to any lesson observation practice.

In the light of these arguments, this study adopts Schein's definition for organisational culture (see Figure 2.2).

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Artifacts          Visible and feelable structures processes (Difficult to decipher)


Espoused Values    Ideals, goals, values, aspirations, ideologies and rationalisation
                   (May or may not be congruent with behaviour)


Basic Underlying   Unconscious, taken for granted beliefs and values
Assumptions        (Determine behaviour, perception, thought and feelings)
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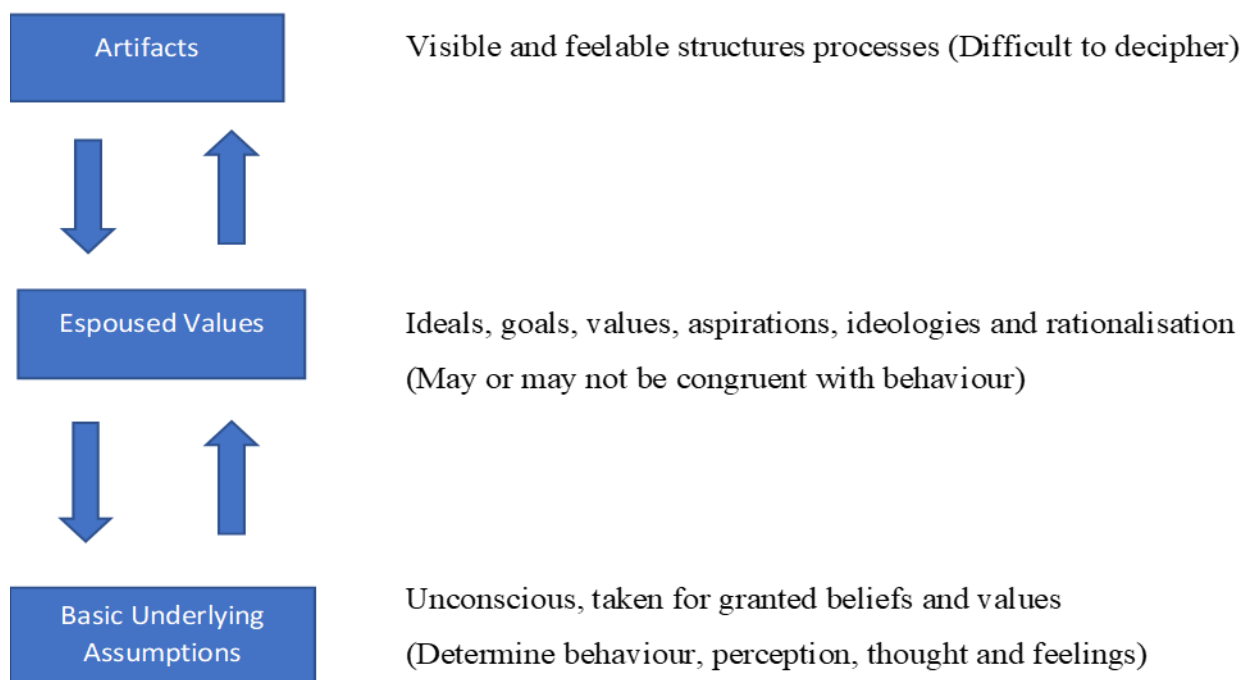
Figure 2. 2. The three levels of culture model (Schein, 2010, p. 24).

School staff can often make assumptions influenced and shaped by the culture and practices of their institution. These assumptions can constrain students' progress. Organisational culture is a broad term affected by various inherent factors (O'Donnell and Boyle, 2008) of schools, including their hierarchical nature and over-emphasis on bureaucracy. However, it is also argued that in any single school there will be several cultures – main school culture, then subcultures (Floyd and Fuller, 2014) – and this will be addressed in this section.

School culture

Having considered the concept of organisational culture in general, the review now turns to school culture, because the school is a specific example of an organisation in terms of its complexity, set-up, composition and size, and as such is an organisational machine (Salo, 2008). Organisations such as schools are regarded as systems of interaction where staff are bound together for a common purpose, to achieve specific organisational goals (Bush, 2011). A school can be classified as an organisation with strong hierarchical and bureaucratic elements with delineated control structures (Salo, 2008).

However, while schools can be perceived as being similar from the outside, they each have different cultures, distinguishing them from other schools. Each school is believed to have

its own unique culture, with no two schools being identical. School culture is one of the important aspects that play a vital part in school effectiveness at all levels including, for instance, the approach to lesson observation and feedback. Since culture has a vital part to play in the efficiency of organisations (Bush, 2011), schools as organisations must recognise that their organisational structure, behaviour and performance are all the result of the culture of the school (Salo, 2008).

Awareness of the culture amongst a school's teachers can motivate teachers to engage in different activities to improve their practices, since teachers within a school are the main component of what comprises the organisation's strategies (Steward, 2009). Consequently, it can be argued that a specific culture model is a precondition to activate teachers to engage in activities to promote growth in individuals in the organisation and, hopefully, to help teachers develop in their careers. This idea has prompted the need to explore how the participants in this study experienced and perceived the process of lesson observation and feedback within their school's culture. The following section will review the different models of school culture.

Models of school culture

It would be difficult to distinguish school cultures in the daily life of schooling without some understanding of models of organisations (Clabaugh and Rozycki, 1990). This is because, in this time of high expectations, organisations such as schools operate in a challenging and changing environment (O'Leary, 2014). Consequently, a school has to be flexible with the aim of meeting the needs of its teachers in relation to their CPD (Fleming, 2014) or when implementing new policies with regard to, for example, lesson observation and feedback to raise standards in teaching. Various types of school culture are suggested in the literature (Stoll, 1998). One way to classify cultures is applied by Carnall (2007), in his model of old and new cultures after Hastings (1993), (see Table 2.1).

Old cultures (Formal)	New cultures (Collegial)
Hierarchical	Teamwork
Administrative	Empowerment
Protective	Trust, support
Clear boundaries	Innovativeness
Control (no risk involved)	Risk-taking

Table 2. 1. Old and new cultures, Hastings 1993 (in Carnall, 2007, p. 32).

The interrelationship of the formal and informal models of culture is complex, and problems can arise and become exacerbated by individuals who lack understanding and/or empathy with opposing cultures, whether by ignorance or design, in areas where cultural differences overlap. (Bullen, 2009).

An alternative approach to address models of cultures was developed based on Hargreaves research (1995). As shown in Table 2.2, Hargreaves categorised school culture by two factors: (i) social control, which is task driven; and (ii) a more open factor reflecting social cohesion amongst the individuals in the organisation.

School culture	Characteristics	Limitations
Formal	Controlled culture based on hierarchy.	No culture of collegiality (collaboration).
The welfarist	Friendly relationships between teachers and students.	Academic results are poor.
The hothouse	Based on results and performance. Staff work under pressure.	Academic results are good. Staff work with no support.
Isolated	Teachers work in isolation	Performance is low

Table 2. 2. Types of school culture, Hargreaves (1995).

The above culture models are viewed differently according to the understanding of each one in terms of their effectiveness (Stoll, 1998). Teachers will achieve their full potential when both their personal motivation and the organisational culture are interrelated with one another (Wallach, 1983). Wallach adds that this notion must be considered in all aspects related to leading and managing teachers, such as when recruiting, motivating, developing and retaining teachers. The execution and accomplishment of these tasks may all be reliant on the overall culture in the school. Hence, the overall school performance may be improved if the teachers work in teams, which in turn might have a more constructive influence on students' learning.

Both these models are of value to research on school culture. The main difference is that the Hargreaves' model is more useful for distinguishing what makes a school unique in terms using the model's two distinct factors (social control and social cohesion), whereas Carnall's model is more useful at finding patterns of activity that are practical for each school culture. Carnall's model offers greater possibilities for comparing school models on certain cultural aspects that are believed to be opposite to one another. This may be important for any current school culture in terms of improving school effectiveness and the delivery of any aspects related to teaching and learning.

Therefore, the Carnall approach can arguably provide a better framework when uncovering cultural aspects related to a school's approach to lesson observation and feedback. For this reason, the relatively simpler model of a formal–collegial spectrum of school cultures based on Carnall (2007) is adopted in this study.

In the next section, both the formal school culture and the collegial school culture ends of the spectrum in Carnall's model are further explored.

Formal school culture

Culture based on the formal model is managerial (Bush, 2011), focusing on set tasks, functions and behaviours. The focus is on achieving set goals for the organisation, and the behaviour of members is rational (Leithwood et al., 2004). In other words, the school has an organised, well-defined system, where power is rigidly hierarchical and responsibilities clearly laid-out in lesson observation (and subsequent feedback). Wallach (1983) views these institutions as having an advanced and stable structure.

A criticism of this model by Bush (2011) is that authority is vested in the main principal of the organisation. In the case of schools, this will be the head teacher (accountable to the local authority) or, in the case of academies ("Academies are free, state-funded schools which are run by charitable trusts; they cannot be run for profit" (DfE, 2016, p. 1)), this will be the principal (accountable to the board of trustees). According to the model, members accept the goals set by their superiors and feel obliged to realise them.

Bush (2011) viewed this as a weakness and unrealistic. Schools have a variety of goals, related to individuals, groups, and leaders of the organisation (Bush, 2011); elements in an organisation are regarded as irrational, which affects the nature of decision-making in education. Another perceived weakness is that the formal approach views organisations as stable, yet staff may come and go. More importantly, the head teacher needs to observe those allocated as leaders closely, and monitor their progress (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012). This is because some teachers may exploit the position allocated to them to guard their self-interest regardless of other stakeholders in the school (ibid). For example, during the process of lesson observation and feedback, newly appointed teachers might voice an opinion, and such an action might be seen as a nuisance to the existing state of affairs, especially if the view is different from the opinion of the more established colleague or senior leaders.

While teachers may prefer to be empowered to fulfil their professional duties, the leader still needs to remember that each person also needs assurance, support and some occasional direction (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012). What is suggested here is that a balance can and must be brought about in order to facilitate the process of developing teachers professionally, especially in such complex organisations as schools. The following part of this section moves on to describe in greater detail the contrasting model, the collegial school culture.

Collegial school culture

In contrast to the formal culture described above, other scholars describe a culture where decisions are made by means of discussion and power-sharing within the organisation. It was suggested by Bush and Middlewood (2013) that an alternative to the formal model is the collegial model, where the culture is seen to be approachable, supportive, non-threatening, impartial, friendly and co-operative (Wallach, 1983).

As a starting point for understanding this perspective, the simplest meaning of collegiality can be seen as dealing with the relationship among a group of colleagues working together in a professional setting (Freedman, 2009; Kelchtermans, 2006; Hoerr, 2005; Martinez, 2004). Yet Barth (2006) claims that the meaning of collegiality is far more complicated, and it involves a wide range of practices. For example, it can range from simple tasks such as sharing resources to much deeper practices, such as teachers learning from each other, and sharing and developing expertise together (Hargreaves, 2000). Wallach (1983) describes a collegial organisation as a place where an open, equitable, harmonious and collaborative culture exists. On the other hand, in a recent study conducted in 11 secondary schools in England, Jarvis (2012) describes collegiality as being borne from teacher collaboration rather than describing it as a culture per se. In this, he is backed up by Hargreaves (2000), who accredits this sharing ethos to professional expertise. The term collegiality carries with it a positive value, referring to good supportive, stimulating, rewarding and democratic relationships among equals (Kelchtermans, 2006). However, Hargreaves (2000, p. 1482) warns that one should be careful about assumptions around the meaning of collegiality, "which is often discussed as if it were widely understood".

The term collaboration is also often mentioned in the same breath together with or even integrated into collegiality (Kelchtermans, 2006). While Jarvis (2012) agrees that the two terms are closely related, he emphasises that they are certainly not the same. Collaboration is a descriptive term, referring to co-operative actions, activities, functions carried out by colleagues and is a means of working harmoniously with colleagues and sharing ideas (Hoerr, 2005). In contrast, collegiality refers to the quality of the relationships among staff members in a school and learning from and with one another (Kelchtermans, 2006), such as teachers working on across-department project towards a common goal.

Despite this distinction, researchers write about the fact that both collaboration and collegiality constitute important working conditions for teachers. Hoerr (2005, p. 1) brings together some of the key arguments that "collaboration has much in common with collegiality". He further adds, that: "both terms imply a setting in which people work as colleagues and benefit from their relationships. Collaboration implies working with others, being teammates, and perhaps sharing ideas. It does not, however, focus on learning with and from one another, and that is what distinguishes it from collegiality". This quote highlights the idea that collegiality implies a normative dimension that goes beyond mere description and refers to an aspect of the school's organisational culture (Kelchtermans,

2006). This can have an effect, for example, on the way that the process of lesson observation and feedback is conducted within the school and department. Neither term (ibid) operates within a vacuum; they reflect one another, and both are highly influenced by the degree of culture and personal relationships that pertain within a school. Both collaboration and collegial relationships, therefore, influence the professional development of teachers (Cordingly et al., 2005).

Research shows that teachers are increasingly being advised to move away from the conventional settings of isolation and autonomy and move towards greater collegiality and collaboration (Rogers, 2006; Hoerr 2005; Martinez 2004). Researchers also highlight the positive input of collegial interactions to school development and achievements. Timperley and Robinson (1998, p. 1) argue that "collegiality can effectively address complex, school wide problems requiring shared expertise or cohesive school wide action for resolution". Therefore, Kelchtermans (2006) advocates that collaborative actions and collegial relations are important because they influence the professional development of teachers, and the development of the school as a whole.

Collaborative and collegial sharing of skills, expertise and experience will create much richer and more sustainable opportunities for rigorous transformation than can be provided by isolated situations where the leader is working at a micro level (Notar et al., 2008; Pont et al. 2008). Stability and consistency in teams help to support the organisation's identity, and development and good performance are linked to good leadership across the whole school. This is, perhaps, what Timperley and Robinson (1998, p. 1) are alluding to when they claim that "traditional teacher autonomy may inhibit such collegiality".

The main five components of collegiality as viewed by (Hoerr, 2005, p. 22) are: (i) teachers talking together about students; (ii) teachers talking together about curriculum; (iii) teachers observing one another teach; (iv) teachers teaching one another; (v) teachers and administrators learning together. Numerous benefits from collegiality have been seen as evidence of the need for building a more effective collegial culture in departments and schools (Jarvis, 2012). The most significant benefits of collegiality, amongst many things, are the improvement in teacher professional development and student behaviour, attitude, and achievement (Shah, 2012).

It seems, then, that operating collegially in a team increases the capacity of individuals to perform well (Notar et al., 2008). However, collegiality is not without its limitations

(Hargreaves, 2000). For example: (i) it is normative as it tends to obscure rather than portray reality; (ii) decision-making is slow; (iii) decision-making is influenced by micro-politics and lobbying within the organisation; (iv) head teachers remain accountable to various external educational bodies outside their organisations; (v) it depends on whether staff are willing to support one another; and (vi) it relies on both senior management and staff supporting the process (Bush, 2011). The decision-making process might present difficulties in leading and managing staff within the school and in departments, ultimately resulting in blurring meanings and allowing assumptions to pass untested. These limitations of the collegial model are actually very similar to those associated with the "specific, technical, managerial nature" of a formal culture (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 1482).

Timperley and Robinson (1998) argue that the assumption that collegiality is necessarily associated with improved problem-solving is increasingly being questioned. They further explain that (p. 3): 'Teachers might not have the time to collaborate and so prioritise more immediate tasks over collaborative planning, and collegiality is limited when teachers have insufficient knowledge of either the curriculum or the collegial role to engage in an effective process.' This suggests that there is a risk of collegiality becoming a burden rather than a way to mobilise the workforce.

Jarvis (2012) claimed that it was apparent that middle leaders considered the collegial culture to be their favourite departmental style (ibid). He concluded that while teachers described encountering certain friendly behaviours in their departments, they still did not believe that the departments could be categorised as collegial (ibid). This implies that participants were aware that collegiality entails more than the friendly informality they were encountering. Collegiality helps not only to manage people effectively, but also to facilitate individual performance. Consequently, it is suggested that the relationship between middle leaders and teachers in their departments is based on a shared responsibility for the departments' activities and the pupils' learning. In this mutual relationship, middle leaders and teachers collaborate to achieve shared goals and results, for example during the process of lesson observation.

While recognising some of the less positive viewpoints discussed above, this study takes the position that collegiality contributes to improving relationships among teachers and leaders which will have a positive influence on students' learning (Leithwood et al. 2004; Barth 2006). It also subscribes to the idea that there is more to collegiality than a simplistic

understanding of cooperation; it involves a far wider range of practices many of which will have an impact on the delivery of the process of lesson observation and feedback in such a culture. A collegial organisation has the potential to achieve a capacity that none of its members could attain independently (Notar et al., 2008). This is because this culture can create greater interdependence, collective commitment, shared responsibility and, perhaps most importantly, 'greater readiness to participate in the difficult business of review and critiques'.

In summary, it might be argued that as the formal and collegial cultures are at opposite ends of a spectrum, there is no definite separation between the two, but rather a gradual shifting of the level of mix of each along the length of the spectrum. In practice, in any organisation, there will be some elements of both, especially in such complex organisations as schools (Bullen, 2009). This balancing of the two cultures within a single environment can, however, be challenging for lesson observation and feedback, as it can create confusion amongst teachers and their observers (in most cases their middle leaders within their departments). This is because departments within schools tend to work with a great deal of autonomy from the main, overarching school culture (Floyd and Fuller, 2014; Hoerr, 2005). They may even have a different culture. Such a statement leads towards a refinement of the idea of organisational culture: organisational culture can be made up of a main culture and departmental cultures (subcultures). Recognising that there are subcultures within schools is relevant, since this study pays specific attention to teachers and middle leaders who are involved at departmental level within a secondary school through joint experiences during lesson observation and feedback.

Form the above discussion, it can be seen that teachers work within a broad cultural environment and within a broad political framework. In addition, in schools, there is a level of micropolitics which affects teachers' working environment.

Micropolitics

Any school as an organisation embodies multifaceted relationships among its stakeholders (Chahkandi et al., 2016). Schools offer a stage for the demonstration of interest, control, influence and power by its staff, and are characteristically political (Ball, 2012). Thus, in any school, "interorganisational politics are a daily occurrence, there are political forces within schools that dictate how things have been done, how things are done, and how things will be done" (Brosky, 2011, p. 2).

Achinstein (2006) states that micropolitics refer to inter-organisational political practices which encompass dialogue amongst its stakeholders within a daily routine of schools. Micropolitics, in its simplest meaning, then, refers to the approaches and means used by people to: (i) influence the value of their working conditions; (ii) negotiate with others to pursue their own interests; (iii) interact in social relations within their place of work (Ball, 2012; Lindle, 1999; Kelchtermans, 1996; 1993), such as a school. It follows that teachers are faced with micropolitical power constraints where they work (Ball, 2012), in addition to their own preferences, values and desires (Kelchtermans and Ballet, 2002). For example, in the cases where teachers desired choices of lessons observed are not met, they may feel disengaged and detached from fully participating in delivering quality lessons. As a result, "teachers' perception of what they consider valued working conditions is inevitably tied to and shaped by the wider socio-political context in which they find themselves" (Chahkandi et al., 2016, p. 88). Kechtermans and Ballet (2002) further summarise the influential factors that micropolitics have on the teachers' environmental working conditions as: (i) school population composition; (ii) facilities; (iii) workload; (iv) parent involvement; (v) helpfulness of school staff; (vi) students' readiness to learn; (vii) the quality of interpersonal relations. It is clear that the lesson observation and feedback process cannot be seen to be conducted without considering the micropolitical power tensions within the school and departmental cultures.

It is within the above context that the literature on CPD will now be considered.

Continuing professional Development (CPD)

All acquired learning experiences are encompassed by CPD (EPPI, 2003). The various types of ongoing CPD, including in-service training (INSET) are understood to mean professional learning undertaken by teachers after their initial training (Craft, 2000). This study will adopt this view and use the term CPD to cover all the various forms of continued professional learning.

Aims and perceived benefits

The two main aims when managing CPD are: firstly, to motivate then encourage teachers' professional development, and secondly to enable the institution to introduce new structures and procedures for managing improving performance (Fleming, 2014; Steward,

2009). CPD is a shared concern of both the school and the teacher (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012). This responsibility in turn leads to a striving for effectiveness in providing teachers with their professional needs, as well as exploring individuals' effective performance. Moreover, the importance of the role of teachers in improving student learning, especially those that are fully engaged in relevant CPD, has been acknowledged (Bubb and Earley, 2007).

A literature review of 45 studies which explored the influence of continued CPD on staff and teaching found that in the vast majority of the studies they reviewed, the teachers involved changed or substantially developed elements of their teaching (EPPI, 2003). The UK Secretary of State for Education at the time was advised by the General Teaching Council for England that there was an inclusive and strong sign that "investing" in teachers' CPD enhances the value of teaching and learning (Bolam, 2007, p. 1).

Further research indicates that CPD holds potential for improving student achievement. Cordingley et al. (2007) list a range of academic sources where improved student learning has been linked to forms of CPD. These include improved understanding of different ideas, maths, literacy and the use of ICT (ibid). Steward (2009) found that student attainment was linked to teachers' involvement in CPD. She claims that improved grades of pupils are the result of a good CPD. Therefore, the literature appears to show that CPD can achieve its two main objectives in improving teaching pedagogy and student achievement.

For CPD to be considered effective, it needs to be seen as ongoing, continuous, sustained and reflection practice (O' Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009; Bolam, 2007). Furthermore, it is suggested that systematic, regular, structured and collaborative interactions should take place before and during the CPD process with co-ordinated follow-up activities (Boyle et al., 2004; Steward, 2009). This can result in a powerful mechanism that supports individual improvement (Fleming, 2014). It is also argued that middle leaders must be committed to the ongoing learning and development of their staff (Fleming, 2014). School leaders are of significant importance; they influence teachers, manage support, manage their CPD and consequently affect the learning experiences of students, all of which creates progress in the school (Cardno, 2005). This suggests that CPD, including lesson observation and feedback, is the cornerstone of successful improvements to school systems. This aspect will be discussed later in this chapter.

Barriers and criticism

Stannard and Matharu (2014) suggest that involvement in CPD activities differs significantly from institution to institution. They add that CPD is not always clearly defined in organisations and that policies and procedures reflect this less positive approach. In a report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) (2003), it was found that one of the most frequently acknowledged problems in CPD is the perception of teachers about their own CPD. For example, when a school does not have a clear written policy with regard to staff CPD, it is often left to departmental heads to assign individuals to go on certain courses in order to fulfil the school development plan. The DfES (2003) document advises that this may be overcome by considering the needs of both the school and the teachers throughout, which it is hoped will ensure a balance between the two.

Stannard and Matharu (2014) claim that a further challenge relates to quality. For example, outside speakers may be invited to deliver a CPD-related activity without having any idea of the needs of the school and its teachers. They further claim that this is often the result of a non-existent CPD planning policy in the organisation. This may limit the perceived positive impact envisaged.

It is typical for organisations to arrange CPD activities a number of times a year (ibid). An example of this might be master classes where teachers choose to attend at least three different sessions in the year, each one lasting for one hour. These may be delivered by other colleagues in the school who have expressed interest in particular areas such as lesson observation, numeracy and literacy. However, frequently no follow-up sessions are provided for evaluation or reflection. In the DfES (2003) document, it is argued that good CPD requires time to reflect and set objectives. This suggests that training without time for participants to reflect and evaluate may just be an opportunity wasted to move the teacher forward within her or his career.

The effectiveness of CPD training can be better measured if it is implemented over a longer period of time (Stannard and Matharu, 2014). As one research participant (SL2) described it, 'It is my observation that CPD failure is not due to infrequent CPD but to too much over a very short period of time.' Too many courses in a school are the result of the number of ongoing policies and meetings. Teachers may not have enough time to act upon any of the training provided, as the time available to implement any of it is limited, and this in turn will have an impact on the school's commitments towards its teachers' CPD.

CPD and lesson observation

O'Leary (2014) advocates that the process of lesson observation has a dynamic part to play in the schools' provision of CPD. Researchers further recommend that every teacher should be dedicated to their CPD and learning through critical reflection on their own practice (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012; Raymond, 2006). In addition, it is claimed that a CPD practice that gives time for reflection provides schools with better trained professionals, leading to improved student learning (Fleming, 2014; Hattie, 2012; Bolam, 2007). Peer reflection amongst teachers and taking part in successful CPD activities to enhance classroom practice are also imperative in developing teachers' identity (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009; Raymond, 2006).

Several types of CPD activity, including observation, feedback and coaching where teachers work together collaboratively, were listed by Cordingley et al. (2007). Collaborating with professional colleagues almost certainly contributes to teachers' learning of their craft (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012). This may suggest that when teachers observe each other and discuss their findings, it can be considered a valuable source of CPD.

The responsibility to provide opportunities for training for all team members falls upon leaders and middle leaders (Fleming, 2014). This allows for professional development, which leads to improved skills that are crucially needed to engage in healthy team performance and to further develop their teaching (DfE, 2011; Cordingley et al. 2005). In practice, this can be a difficult issue, especially considering the budget constraints and cuts that schools have to deal with at present. None the less, without special training, teachers will be unable to undergo the changes needed to help foster effective team relationships and behaviours (Fleming, 2014), for example the implementation of the new curriculum for Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8 and 9), Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and Key Stage 5 (Years 12 and 13). In the context of lesson observation and feedback, another reason that training might be relevant is pointed out by Fleming (2014) who argues that teachers highly value the experience when they perceive the observer providing feedback as being competent. Therefore, leaders should be trained to recognise appropriate components of effective lesson observation (McGill, 2011).

In three individual studies aimed at reviewing studies published after 1991, Cordingley et al. (2005) investigated the possibility of how collegial interactions between teachers had an influence on their work. The investigation involved teachers of the five-to-sixteen age group. CPD was the main emphasis of the first 26 studies, while 55 other studies focused on collaborative CPD, using in-depth review process and findings. They found that collaboration has had an influence on improving teachers' commitment towards their work. Collaboration encompassed lesson observation and feedback, where teachers learned from one another when good practice was shared.

In addition, an investigation of two case studies was conducted by Stuhlman et al. (2012) in two different secondary schools using experienced and inexperienced teachers. The first case study dealt with the importance of collaborative relationships between the teacher and the observer and found that communication is a vital element in the process of feedback. The second looked at how providing effective feedback is linked to finding common ground amongst both parties about one specific area in classroom practice. Stuhlman et al. (2012) advocate that observation and feedback CPD events are recognised to be more efficient when they are approached in a collaborative style amongst the staff involved and creating a shared vision for effective practice will lead to clarity, consistency and collaboration.

In sum, therefore, CPD may be suggested to be the main aspect of successful improvements to the school system in general, which encompasses the development of teachers and student achievement. This notion has provoked the need to find out how the participants in this study experienced and perceived the positioning and management of lesson observation and feedback in the school's CPD provision. However, in order to acquire further knowledge of how lesson observation and feedback are implemented within a CPD system, professional identity also needs to be taken into account. Therefore, the next section moves on to consider the final core concept underpinning the study's conceptual framework: professional identity.

Professional identity

Identity is a complicated and varied concept (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011). It is commonly defined as: how someone identifies herself/himself, or how they like to be perceived by others (Beijaard et al., 2004). Over time, the concept of identity has also been used to describe different facets of people, such as professional identity, social identity and

individual identity. This study will explore teachers' professional identity only in so far as it influences lesson observation and feedback in a secondary school setting.

"Professional identities not only relate to what being a teacher/nurse/social worker means for the individual", but also how "they perceive their identity in relation to their specific role/s within their profession (for example, a ward sister or a maths teacher)" (Floyd and Morrison, 2014, p. 16). Thus, professional identity has a great influence on the way lessons are delivered by teachers and the way lessons are observed too.

Professional identity as a concept has become popular amongst various professions, for example medicine and the legal profession. However, Beijaard et al., (2004) suggest that in the field of teaching the concept of professional identity has been used differently. Moreover, Beijaard et al. (2000) concluded after analysing a survey sent to teachers in a secondary school that the teachers' perceptions of their professional identity have changed significantly since joining the teaching profession. This suggests that teachers' identity is continuously developing over time.

In summary then, professional identity is an evolving area in the field of social science and it would benefit from more researchers exploring it (Akkerman and Meijer, 2011). This is because the concept acknowledges: (i) the personal and professional sides of the teaching profession (professionalism) and its difficult nature; (ii) the teacher's professional performance (performativity); and (iii) the link between CPD and performance management (O'Leary, 2014; Beijaard, 2009). The implementation of professional identity has to be observed in relation not only to the dominant culture and subculture within the school but also to how it is practised within the school leadership (Boisnier and Chatman, 2002). Teachers' identity, therefore, is suggested to be linked closely with teacher's performance. The next sections will review the following links closely: (i) professional identity and professionalism; (ii) professional identity and performativity; (iii) professional identity, performance management and CPD).

Professionalism and professional identity

The profession of teaching has transformed over the course of time and there now appears to be more focus on putting pedagogic knowledge into practice and thus gaining credibility (Hoyle, 1995). While Hargreaves and Lo (2000) warn that the professionalisation process naturally arises as a wish to gain professional status, it evolved in a very inconsistent way,

as it was politically motivated, not least in all aspects related to the process of lesson observation and feedback.

Walker et al. (2010) highlight that in 2003, the Department for Education and Skills and several education unions agreed on reducing workloads in order to raise standards in the teaching profession. This arrangement may initially have been aimed at reducing pressure on teachers' working hours, such as needless meetings and administrative tasks. These improvements have led to a new focus on professionalism for teachers, including CPD and performance management as essential parts in the life of schools and their teachers, with the aim of enhancing the value of teaching and learning (ibid)

Bottery and Wright (2000) state that teachers nowadays are encouraged to act professionally and are also expected to take on board certain aspects of this without any explanation. They further claim that this approach has resulted in teachers losing their ability to work independently because this new professionalism is being addressed through various controlling policies. For example, a new lesson observation policy has been introduced, which proposes that every teacher should be observed formally three times a year by her or his line leader completing a specific form to show that it has been done. On the other hand, Raymond (2006) argues that professionalism is not only about completing paperwork, ticking boxes, going on various CPD activities or completing self-assessment forms.

Furthermore, it is argued that reforming schools, for instance, the deployment of new policy on performance management, may create a sense of misunderstanding and uncertainty amongst staff (Di Benedetto, 2006). As some of these main reforms are increasingly reliant on lesson observation (O'Leary, 2014; Walker et al., 2010), this reform experience suggests that teachers may find themselves moving further away from the key issues in their teaching and learning. For example, teachers have been made more accountable recently towards their lesson observation and feedback and achieving certain grades in order to be viewed as outstanding practitioners (Fleming, 2014; Cordingley et al. 2005). On the other hand, teachers may perceive the reform as a positive experience that creates an effective method for improving students' learning. Therefore, a new generation of strong teachers must be given acceptable autonomy and authority to function in their rightful capacity as leaders for academic success rather than being confined to roles of compliance (Day et al., 2000).

However, there is a need for accountability, as this is important to the development of teacher professionalism (Furlong, 2000). This is a concept which bears further exploration.

Accountability

The term accountability describes the minimum accepted requirements in relation to the efficiency of an occupation and/or an obligation to give an account, explanation or reason for an action (Acquah, 2013; Brundett and Rhodes, 2011). An accountability practice may be employed for something complex such as teaching and learning, or it may be limited to definite policies, such as teachers' performance management (Stobart, 2007). Acquah (2013, p. 2) further advocates that "the rationale for accountability in relation to the education system exists in the fact that it is a publicly-funded and universal state service". According to the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee (2009), the education system should be made accountable nationally and locally to all its stakeholders as it is in the interest of everyone.

Furthermore, accountability as a concept is complex and diverse with many types associated with it (Acquah, 2013). Five types of accountability are most frequently acknowledged in the literature: (i) organisational; (ii) political; (iii) legal; (iv) moral; (v) professional. The types of accountability are distinguished in terms of who is accountable to whom, what they are accountable for, the several types of potential sanctions and the likelihood and severity of such sanctions (ibid). Every type of accountability, therefore, has its own methods of operating.

Organisational accountability works through hierarchical relationships between its stakeholders for different areas of their performance (Acquah, 2013). For example, academies and their boards of trustees are accountable to various organisations such as Ofsted for their performances. Political accountability depends on its elected establishments and procedures to hold different organisational bodies to account (Mattei, 2012a), for example through the introduction of various policies regulating the current education system. Legal accountability is based on the implementation of laws and regulations by courts to safeguard rights and correct mistakes (Levitt et al., 2008). Moral accountability relies on individual's own values and beliefs (ibid.).

Professional accountability is disseminated through codes of conduct or practice and systems of regulation designed and operated by various individuals in an organisation with

the trust that it is implemented thoroughly (Acquah, 2013), such as in the case of consistency in conducting thorough lesson observation by middle leaders to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, it has been argued by researchers and policy-makers recently that trust in professionals is not in itself enough for implementing the changes required to enhance the quality and effectiveness of any public service such as the education system (Le Grand, 2007).

O'Neill (2002) argues that this issue of trust resulted in the need to impose greater criteria for accountability to implement more transparency within any school. Consequently, two functions were introduced into the English educational setting: (i) performance related accountability; (ii) greater visibility of school results and outcomes to the public (for example, through league tables which allow comparisons across a range of different measures) (O'Leary, 2014; West et al., 2011). These two functions have been drivers of improvement in those schools and a means of enhancing teachers' own professionalism (Bush and Bell, 2002; Furlong, 2000).

Levitt et al. (2008) argue that even though implementing accountability criteria is intended to lead to positive outcomes, too much accountability or wrongly imposed accountability can have negative consequences. For instance, reviews and inspections conducted by Ofsted in schools are believed to result in enhanced performance. However, the strong emphasis on measurable performance has been criticised (MacDonald and Tyler, 2010), for example, the link between league tables, exam results and performance-related pay. Several researchers have also discussed the negative consequences on teaching and learning of accountability measures relating to lesson observation and feedback (Clay, 2016; Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Stobart, 2007). Extensive dependence on such procedures of monitoring to implement an accountable system to improve organisational performance, is viewed as a negative feature that is damaging the professional trust, values and criterions at the expense of the overall quality of the professional work (Menter et al., 2004; O'Neill, 2002).

The following three subsections (Professionalism and professional identity, Performativity and professional identity, and Professional identity, performance management and CPD) will discuss further the literature related to accountability within their contexts.

Making teachers more accountable has also increased expectations of achievement and teachers have increased responsibility not only for their students' academic progress, but

also for their own development as teachers (Bush and Bell, 2002). Professionalism is encouraged by expecting colleagues to work closely with each other and staff must pay more attention to their CPD to improve teaching and learning (Hargreaves and Lo, 2000). Thus, this approach may be considered as the way forward when lesson observation and feedback is conducted.

In summary, it has been shown from this review that a danger to the identity of individual teachers can be associated with the introduction of new policies (O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). One of these is performance management policy. This may imply that forcing changes on teachers creates uncertainty because the changes may not take into account the needs of each teacher, such as how lesson observation and feedback may be conducted in a way which is beneficial for them. There are other developments which may have an undesirable effect on teachers and teacher professionalism. For example, the new set of standards and statistics that is expected to be provided by teachers and schools in order to demonstrate progress and achievements. It appears that teachers' pay rises are dependent on achieving certain percentage targets with their teaching groups. This holds especially for student attainment and in the practice of lesson observation, as they serve as the main tools in providing such required data.

Based on the ideas put forward in the literature discussed above, it is not surprising that the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NCSL, 2010) claims that the aim of introducing the new changes, such as lesson observation and feedback in schools, is to develop teaching and learning so that this becomes a world-class experience. As a result, these changes are introducing clearer guidelines for teachers to follow in order to develop their practice and students' achievements. However, the NCSL does not explicitly discuss the role of senior leaders in the facilitation of such factors. What is also unclear is the extent to which teachers' own input is of value or taken into account in school policies and decision-making processes.

Finally, the principles which guide teacher professionalism indicate that performance management and CPD are closely linked (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Bush and Middlewood, 2013; Hoerr, 2005). These links are seen clearly in improving and contributing to students' learning, especially when teacher development takes centre stage in any future change (Walker et al., 2010). This will be discussed further in the section which follows.

Performativity and professional identity

Performativity in schools is justified as a means to improve standards and increase teachers' accountability (O'Leary, 2014). Accountability is described by Brundett and Rhodes (2011, p. 22) as an official connection between two working parties, such that one is required to report formally to the other, on certain conducts with regards to their "performance".

Moreover, a performative system is best recognised as an "inspection framework" that exploits certain "market" aspects to offer encouragement or even implement retributions (Wilkins et al., 2012, p. 3). An example of this is performance-related pay for teachers who have just joined the profession (Walker et al., 2010).

New policies have been developed by recent governments and have established national goals for individual teacher success and schools. Since 1992, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England has been overseeing schools' and teachers' performances. Critics claim that the old-style system in schools which emerged in the past through professional negotiation amongst all stakeholders is being made redundant as a result of formal policy and official guidance insisting on schools following specific models of style of leadership (O'Leary, 2014).

An additional key factor of government policy is the growing increase in accountability of teachers, for example when incremental pay rises were related to a teacher's performance (Fleming, 2014). This resulted in the introduction of performativity to schools in the last two decades with the aim of improving productivity and performance level of each individual, and with a view to improving organisational effectiveness (Brundett and Rhodes, 2011). Teachers are said to be faced with threats that "the beatings will continue until quality improves" (Scott and Dinham, 2006, p. 1). This can lead to false "practice" amongst staff because no justification is provided for what has been implemented or for what they have been asked to do (Ball, 2003, p. 87). However, in a study by Poulsan (1998) it was found that reforms associated with performativity has in some cases been recognised constructively, and that teachers were mindful of the burden to adapt to the external pressure forced on their schools. This may indicate that teachers viewed the changes brought about by performativity as a way forward in the development of their careers and identity.

However, this change can also be viewed as a rigorous method of exploring teachers' performance efficiency. Floyd and Morrison (2014) argue that teachers are held

accountable for the success of schooling, as their role is made more central, which makes them more vulnerable to criticism. They indicate that in order to enhance teachers' performance, it is essential to develop autonomy. In relation to this, Avis (2005) recommends that teachers' identity must be viewed from a perspective halfway between accountability and autonomy as this can influence, mobilise and encourage teachers to do more for their pupils and the school as a whole. For example, as revision sessions with exam classes are normally scheduled outside teaching hours, if the focus is solely on accountability, some teachers may think twice before offering to do those extra hours and just keep to the directed time system (the formal number of working hours for teachers per year).

In summary, there are many different factors driving performativity: to make the workforce more accountable, to recommend a pay rise, and to provide suggestions for CPD (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Brundett and Rhodes, 2011). It will also help to identify the need for further CPD (Fleming, 2014). Lesson observation and feedback has become firmly rooted as a mechanism for performativity within school systems, with its complex influence on teacher identity (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Wilkins et al., 2012; Brundett and Rhodes, 2011). This prompted the need in this study to find out how a participant's sense of identity is related to lesson observation and feedback at a time where there is a great emphasis on performativity.

Professional identity, performance management and CPD

It is suggested in the literature that there is a certain relationship between performance management and raising standards in academic achievement (Clay, 2016; O'Leary, 2014), since performance management has the capacity to shape and reshape schools' and individuals' identities (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). This may imply that performance management is expected to improve students' learning through the implementation of certain models of practice, for example lesson observation and feedback policy. A question may arise here concerning the extent to which this improvement is happening, as performance management may simply be seen as intimidating and onerous, particularly when it is associated with pay, and therefore affects teachers' identity.

Since an inclusive performance management system should take its place between development and accountability (Middlewood and Cardno, 2001; Cardno, 2012), it is suggested that for performance management to be effective, it must take into account the

two issues of accountability and CPD, i.e. pay attention to accountability for the school and teachers and provide ways for the school and teachers to grow and improve. However, these two goals may sometimes appear to conflict with one another. For instance, observation associated with learning walks or book look may force teachers to be passively involved and playing safe, rather than trying out new ideas. In contrast, it is suggested that effective performance management occurs when teachers are empowered to try new initiatives, assess their work and reflect. This type of understanding is needed because it is only through critically analysing and reflecting on their own actions and learning from such reflections that teachers are able to develop professionally (O' Leary, 2014; Bolam, 2007; Raymond, 2006).

While leaders may associate performance management with CPD, teachers think differently about this (Cardno, 2012). Walker et al. (2010) claim that performance management can enhance students' achievement if it is organised systematically amongst schools' staff.

Additionally, as soon as the determinations of accountability and CPD are well balanced, effective performance management will take place (O'Leary, 2014), suggesting that teachers should also view this as an opportunity to highlight their CPD needs after their lesson observation and feedback. Performance management should be viewed as being not only about developing one's needs as a teacher but also about developing one's practice (Clay, 2016), with the process of lesson observation and feedback at its core.

In summary, it has been shown from this review that teachers play a key part in influencing classroom learning (Steward, 2009). It is argued that teachers will be better able to influence teaching and learning if their sense of identity is clear to them (Thomas and Beauchamp, 2011). In line with this, when teachers are aware of their own identity, they become more aware of their classroom practice (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2104; Steward, 2009). Thus, whatever teachers choose to do in lesson observation and feedback reflects their identity. This review has reinforced the need to find out how the participants in this study experienced and perceived the influence of performance management on their sense of identity in the context of lesson observation and feedback in the school's CPD provision.

The following section summarises the issues highlighted by the literature review.

Summary

This study's main research question is: what are teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback at a UK secondary school?

This chapter approached the three main, influential, theoretical concepts that underpin the study's exploration of lesson observation and feedback which are closely related to this research: organisational culture (school culture), CPD and professional identity in the context of a secondary school setting in order to understand the influence they have on lesson observation and feedback.

The literature review informed the purpose and the four sub-research questions of this study. Sub-research question one, 'How is lesson observation and feedback positioned within the school's overall CPD provision? How is this managed?', deals with CPD as a means for development and improving skills, under the title 'Continuing Professional Development' with three further sub-sections: aims and perceived benefits, barriers and criticism, and CPD and lesson observation. The second sub-research question, 'How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?', deals with the process of lesson observation and feedback, which was reviewed methodically under the title lesson observation and feedback. This section provided a brief historical summary before outlining the reasons behind the introduction of this highly controversial process into the schooling system. Some of the issues related to assessing effective teaching were also reviewed, such as inflexibility and the importance of feedback within the process.

The third sub-research question, 'How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?', deals with the school culture and departmental culture. It was covered in four sections titled organisational culture, school culture, sub-school culture and model of school culture. The review of the literature indicates that school culture, models of school cultures and subcultures are factors which are of paramount importance for understanding how the basic assumptions, values and artifacts in organisations limiting or delimiting the supporting, teamwork and collaboration of teachers in lesson observation and feedback are constructed.

Finally, the fourth sub-research question, 'How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?', deals with teacher

identity under the title professional identity. Since introducing new policies regarding education seems to be the most evident factor in today's professional identity concept, it included aspects of accountability in relation to performativity as part of the professional identity. This sub-research question will generate data regarding the way lesson observation and feedback is implemented and perceived by the teachers in the school as a process within the professional development and CPD provision. The concepts raised by the review of the literature led to the introduction of a conceptual framework (Figure 2.1), which frames this study.

Furthermore, the literature identifies three key factors to be considered when schools and middle leaders attempt to conduct a successful lesson observation process: the role of the culture, the building of trusting relationships, and collegial involvement in the process. On the other hand, the literature also highlighted several issues that are involved with the process. These issues include a tension between the dual purposes of accountability and performance, and the conflict of interests between the teachers' CPD needs and the needs of the school.

 The next chapter discusses the methodology employed in this research.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology in this study. The study was planned as qualitative research in one school which proposed to explore and to deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the whole school context. This chapter discusses the methods and the processes of the research, justifying that the case study was the most suitable method for this type of study. Finally, ethical issues, and insider researcher concerns were addressed, and a description of how these issues were dealt with is provided.

The research plan aims to address the central research question:

> What are teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation at a UK secondary school?

The research sub-questions raised by the literature review were as follows:

1) How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

2) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

3) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and departmental culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

4) How does lesson observation and feedback relate to teachers' and middle leaders' sense of professional identity?

Paradigm rationale

The process of investigation starts with the choice of a research paradigm and a design for following the methodology within the chosen paradigm (Creswell, 2013). By paradigm we mean the complete model or pattern from initial conception, method, acting, examining and officially accepting in association with scientific reality or similar scientific theories (Newby, 2014) or 'worldview' as denoted by Creswell (2013). Further, Cohen et al. (2011) added that it is a basis for comprehension, for interpreting social reality.

The literature describes different research paradigms. Positivism and interpretivism appear to be the most used and perhaps the most effective approaches in social research (Plowright, 2011).

Positivist research deals with objective reality that we can observe and experience (Gray, 2013). Positivism suggests that through linking events and observations to general laws, we can provide explanations of these events (Robson, 2002). Therefore, invisible or theoretical entities are avoided, and facts or objects are valued as real knowledge (Robson, 2002). Information or quantitative data is gathered through numerous means, namely surveys, experiments and measurements, with the data gathered analysed to test hypotheses (Neuman, 2014). In criticism, the danger with a positivist paradigm is that it fails fully to take into account human interactions and their complexities. It attempts to read people through measurable variables, but complex human dynamics cannot be fully appreciated by reducing them to simplistic patterns (Schrag, 1992). The positivist paradigm claims that there is just one reality. Due to the inflexibility of this approach, it is not suited to the different opinions that this research is trying to investigate. Hence, the positivist approach was deemed to be inappropriate for this study.

On the other hand, the main aim for interpretative researchers is to appreciate fully the complexities of a subject's life or people's lives in order to discover how they exist in their natural context (Neuman, 2014). It aims to uncover what people really think and believe, and it is considered through the eyes of participants (Robson, 2002). Moreover, data is constructed not only from external observation alone, but also from aspects that cannot be directly seen, such as values and beliefs (Cohen et al., 2011). Thus, interpretative research goes further into exploration of behaviours than positivist research, and observations are detailed rather than superficial. Thus, social science is viewed as subjectively-based knowledge which enables us to comprehend human experience from a subjective point of view (Cohen et al., 2011). As this study is concerned with providing a greater understanding of teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the process of lesson observation and feedback, it lends itself to a more subjectivist and interpretive style of research (Cohen et al., 2011).

None the less, as Plowright (2011) points out, the interpretive approach can be criticised for its inability to provide reliable, valid and generalisable data despite the fact that it has the ability to offer thorough knowledge in relation to individuals' assumptions in their work

setting (Plowright, 2011). It needs also to be noted that while Cohen et al. (2011) agree that the internal limitations of the interpretive approach can be criticised, they also argue that there is a limitation associated with external forces because they might have an impact on people's performance. However, generalising the findings was not the intention of this study. This research is a small-scale case study (this will be discussed further in the next section) designed to explore and understand teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding lesson observation and feedback in their departments within the whole school context.

Since constructed reality is messy and challenging to understand, an interpretive paradigm is thought to be useful in this regard. It allows for less structured qualitative data collection methods, meaning that in an interpretive paradigm, there is a flexibility that allows the investigator to capture all the necessary and rich data in a complex context such as a school. With this understanding in mind, although the current study concerns just a small-scale case study – one school – it will be 'microscopic' in the sense that it will offer rich accounts based on in-depth descriptions and interpretations of comprehensive observations (Henn et al., 2006).

Furthermore, as Creswell (2013) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) advocate, qualitative research requires analytical, evaluative and constructivist approaches to the world (as the researcher found himself to have), which endeavour to understand and explain events in relation to the understandings individuals bring to them (as is the intention of this study).

The researcher has assessed his own beliefs based upon his own experience and has also taken into account epistemological and ontological assumptions in order to define his chosen paradigm. Therefore, after reviewing the literature, it was chosen to undertake this study as qualitative research through an interpretive paradigm, accepting that both researcher and the participants are connected to and have constructed the actuality.

Research design and case study

Research approaches which fall within the qualitative paradigm, such as for example grounded theory, ethnographic study and case study, were explored (Creswell, 2013). A case study approach was employed for reasons that will be discussed later in this section. Since the research questions tend to be "what" and "how" questions, this study is exploratory in nature within a real situation (Yin, 2013).

Punch (2009, p. 119) advocates that the case study aims to "understand the case in depth, and in its natural setting, recognising its complexity and its context". Thus, the case study approach is seen as a plan rather than a technique (ibid). Moreover, case study investigation is known as a method that includes multiple approaches, incorporating certain means to collecting data and consequently its analysis (Yin, 2013). Therefore, it is the preferred strategy in the case of the current focus (the process of lesson observation and feedback) not least because of its nature in using various data, such as group discussion (Yin, 2013).

The literature on lesson observation and feedback within a school setting indicates the importance of understanding its uniqueness in each setting (amongst others, O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). Consequently, it is argued that exploring lesson observation and feedback within a school culture as an organisation not only lends itself more closely to qualitative methods but also to the single case study approach (Stake, 2008). While Stake argues that the case study method is an approach commonly used to conduct qualitative research, he points out that it is not linked to qualitative data only, since data might be quantitative, or even a mixture of both (Yin, 2013). Case studies can also be useful in capturing the growing new features of organisations, especially where they are changing rapidly (Hartley, 2004). Hence, the case study can be considered a prime tool to use to investigate the way performance management and teacher accountability are viewed in schools which use lesson observation and feedback.

Case study investigation is appropriate because it allows for the complexity of a specific event to be taken into account (Stake, 2008). It lets the researcher hold the overall sense of the real events within the setting (Yin, 2013). Additionally, case studies provide a better understanding of participants' views about events (Cohen et al., 2011). Indeed, Yin (2013) argues for many case studies, to enable the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. He further explains that this is because the aim is to imitate findings across cases. Despite this, rather than each individual (teacher, middle leader) or department being treated as a separate case, this study adopts the position that the school as a whole will be considered as one case study, as the school implements one policy for lesson observation and feedback throughout its departments.

The case study is an approach that has identifiable strengths and limitations. The most serious criticism of this approach is that generalisation is not always possible (Yin 2013; Bassey, 1999). However, generalisability in any case study depends on how close the

findings are to other case studies of a similar type (Ritchie et al., 2013). According to Bassey (1999), this idea of trying to demonstrate where findings fit in is done by making a "fuzzy generalisation", which arises from studies of individualities. That means that the language used in reporting the findings and when making claims needs to be carefully chosen. Therefore, expressions such as; maybe, "it is possible that", "it is likely that" or "it is unlikely that" will be implemented as suggested by (Bassey, 1999, p12).

Criticism of the case study also stems from the fact that it contains a bias towards authentication (Flyvbjerg, 2006), therefore leading to a lack of validity in the study. It is clear that reality is being constructed in this study by the researcher and the participating staff (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, validating data in the study of single events, such as a case study, has been criticised by some researchers, while others have expressed concerns about selective reporting and the possibility of distortions of information (Ritchie et al., 2013). In order to deal with this issue, participants were presented with a summary of their accounts to verify and check.

Additionally, other critics believe that the case study is valuable only for probing, making it more appropriate for the initial phases of study (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In fact, this makes the case study appropriate for this research, as it was intentionally considered as probing participants' perceptions and experiences of the lesson observation and feedback at the school (the case study), therefore adopting Yin's (2013) understanding.

On the other hand, the case study approach has its strength in the reality it reflects and in the real world where perceptions can be put into direct practice (Ritchie et al., 2013), such as in the lesson observation and feedback process. Therefore, this study aims to establish a comparison between what the participants perceive and what happens in reality. Moreover, the in-depth type of case study employed allows the researcher to bridge gaps between both research and practice (Yin, 2013).

In summary then, case study research will potentially be of help in the development of our understanding of the process of lesson observation and feedback within a school setting, as it gives insight and interpretation with a focus on the description and explanation of the process. Its use within this case study not only allowed questions about lesson observation and feedback in the specific school to be explored, but perhaps also allowed additions to knowledge of lesson observation and feedback process to be made. Therefore, in this study the understanding stated by Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 241) that the "case study is a necessary and

sufficient method for certain important research tasks in the social sciences, and it is a method that holds up well when compared to other methods in the gamut of social science research methodology" was adopted. However, since addressing the authenticity of the case study is also important (Flyvbjerg, 2006), the following section will explore issues related to authenticity in order to eliminate bias in the study by exploring its trustworthiness, validity, reliability and objectivity, and further discussing its generalisability.

Context of the case study [2]

The school is an inner-city school with approximately 700 students; however, in the past, the school accommodated 1,200 students. The academy is smaller than the average secondary school (Ofsted, 2006). Nearly 50 per cent of the pupils are from different ethnic groups and almost 25 per cent of the pupils speak English as a second language. The entitlement for pupil premiums is at the national average, and the number of students who have school support or a statement for their additional needs is just above the national average (Ofsted, 2016).

The current head teacher has been at the school for approximately one year (in the last year of the research). The school was confronted with major changes in 2010-2011, going from State school status to academy status. Participants in this study expressed their concern over this change and expressed the view that it had had a negative influence on their work. Although the school had had an unsatisfactory status in the past within its local community, the previous head teacher and staff worked diligently to improve work ethics and enhance pupils' progress. This commitment resulted in the school becoming popular again. This is evidence by the fact that the current places available for year seven this academic year (2017-2018) are full, nearly 180 places. However, the 2016 GCSE provisional performance data demonstrates a dip in outcomes for students, with only 61 per cent of the pupils achieving A*-C, which is below the national average. Much emphasis is placed on improving the teaching and learning in each department. This involves an increase in the number of lessons being observed (the three-yearly observations recommended by the unions, and the so-called learning walks) by middle leaders. It is expected that the majority of formal observations should be carried out by two observers. Teachers should be given at least five working days' notice of an observation and told the focus or purpose e.g.

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[2] Data and statistics in this section are from internal sources and Ofsted. These will not be included in the references, to ensure anonymity of the school.

performance management. Teachers have a right to high-quality, professionally delivered developmental and evaluative feedback on their classroom practice with the aim of identifying its good qualities and areas for improvement. The policy also states that the feedback should take place within 24 hours after the lesson has been observed and it can last for up to 40 minutes (see Appendix I).

Pilot study

Before the main study was conducted, a pilot study was undertaken. This study provided valuable insights, both from the participants whom the researcher interviewed about their lesson observation and feedback process, and from a questionnaire sent to all teachers in the school. Sixteen members of staff out of 32 teachers responded to the questionnaire, showing willingness to take part in the research. As a result of this interest, which informed the researcher that they had the attitude and aptitude to take part in the final study, these 16 participants were later selected for the main study. Furthermore, the thorough responses from the participants to the long, open-ended questions gave the researcher clearer insight that the best approach for the final research would be a single data collection method (semi-structured interviews). Building on the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a series of interviews (four teachers and four middle leaders) to gather further information regarding the research. While it should be acknowledged that a certain amount of bias may have been introduced by including only those participants who responded in detail to the pilot questionnaire, the views represented in the subsequent interviews encompassed both positive and negative input and were therefore deemed to provide valuable insights.

Overall, the participants in the pilot study considered both formal and informal approaches to lesson observation and feedback as being positive towards their work. Despite this, their major concerns were: lack of time, the voice of the observed, the order of presentation of lesson observation feedback, and consultation in decision-making regarding the lessons observed (team work). It was suggested during the pilot study that teachers need to be playing a greater role in the whole of the lesson observation and feedback process and to be involved fully in the feedback session on a mutual basis with their observers.

Although the pilot study was small-scale in nature, it provided a valuable learning curve in terms of becoming more critical about the work, engaging in research topic arguments in a more meaningful way, and understanding diverse and competing methodologies within

educational research. The researcher believes that the feedback and guidance he received on this pilot study, although it was a steep learning curve, further contributed to his final study and his knowledge of educational research in general.

Participants

The selection of participants in a case study does not need to be done through random selection. Rather, the researcher can choose the selection from within the settings available (purposeful sampling, Robson, 2002). The participants for this study were selected from the staff list of 32 teachers. Everyone contacted agreed to be involved in the study based on the informed decision made after completing the pilot study as discussed in the above sub-section. Following Robson's suggestion, 16 participants were chosen to take part in this research according to their position and length of time in the profession. Selecting participants based on experience and position has been described as an effective approach (Cohen et al., 2011). This style of sampling gave the researcher confidence in the research plan, data achieved, data analysis and conclusion. However, this type of sampling represents a small population (Cohen, 2011). None the less, the main objective of this research is not to offer results which are generalisable, but to give full insights into the views of the participants in this study about the lesson observation and feedback process. Lodico et al. (2010) see this type of sample selection as appropriate where the research is mainly concerned with interviewing those who are holding relevant information in relation to the aim of the study.

Of the 16 participants who were interviewed, ten were teachers at the school, and five were middle leaders because in order to understand teachers' views about the process of lesson observation and feedback, the middle leaders need to be included in the study. In addition, lesson observations are normally conducted by middle leaders. Newly qualified teachers (NQT) were also approached to participate in this study to give an insight into their view on how lesson observation and feedback process is conducted at this level. Finally, the coordinator of teaching and learning in the school was interviewed with the aim of understanding the school's approach to lesson observation and feedback within its policy and the school CPD provision. For details of interview participants, see Table 3.1.

It was made clear that staff were free to choose whether to participate in the interviews or not. The participating school was notified. Permission letters were sent to the principal

explaining the intentions of the study and seeking support in allowing the researcher to conduct the interviews with the participants in the school (Appendices C and D).

Participants	Position	Length in service (Years)	Department	Observer	Observed	NQT
SL2	M. leader	31	Religious studies	Yes	Yes	No
SL1	M. leader	15	English	Yes	Yes	No
SL3	M. leader	10	Geography	Yes	Yes	No
SL4	M. leader	8	History	Yes	Yes	No
SL5	M. leader	20	Maths	Yes	Yes	No
ST1	Teacher	15	Science	No	Yes	No
ST2	Teacher	4	ICT	No	Yes	No
ST3	Teacher	1	Maths	No	Yes	Yes
ST4	Teacher	3	English	No	Yes	No
ST5	Teacher	1	History	No	Yes	Yes
ST6	Teacher	1	Design Tech.	No	Yes	Yes
ST7	Teacher	15	Languages	No	Yes	No
ST8	Teacher	5	Music	No	Yes	No
ST9	Teacher	9	Science	No	Yes	No
ST10	Teacher	6	PE	No	Yes	No
SC	Coordinator	17	Senior teacher	Yes	Yes	NO

Table 3. 1. Interview participants.

The following sections will explore the method of data collection and analysis.

Data collection

A qualitative data gathering (Plowright, 2011) was used. A data collection technique of semi-structured interviews along with examination of related documents was employed to gather data to answer the research questions. As noted above, because of the experience of the pilot study, the original plan to use a questionnaire was discarded. This decision was based upon the fact that answers were often open-ended, reflecting the enthusiasm of the respondents, and therefore failed to be targeted and precise. This prompted the researcher to revise the questionnaire to write a series of more detailed questions for use in a semi-

structured interview process, rather than using a mixed method approach. Following from that, pilot interviews were used to trial and adapt this design.

Consent forms were signed, and participants were promised confidentiality (see Appendix B). The interviews were conducted using interview schedules (see Appendices, F, G and H). The interview questions were framed by the overarching conceptual framework discussed in chapter 2 (see Figure, 2.1), with its three main interrelated concepts (organisational culture, CPD and professional identity). The themes covered by the questions emerged from the review of the literature of these concepts and the sub-research questions. The first set of questions asks the view of participants on the organisational culture of their school in relation to the lesson observation and feedback process. The second and third sets of questions are based on the concepts of CPD and professional identity. They allow the participants to share their opinions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback as part of the CPD provision and discuss its impact on their professional identity. A final set of questions addresses the participants' general perceptions of the lesson observation and feedback process as a whole. While interviews may take time to administer and involve smaller samples, they do have the advantage of flexibility over surveys (Lodico et al., 2010).

Semi-structured interviews

There are many reasons for using interviews as a research instrument for collecting qualitative data, the main reason being to collect greatly individualised information, and where opportunities for further probing are required (Gray, 2013). Interviews allow people to express their views more openly and freely without being confined to fixed numerical data, but rather, as Lodico et al. (2010) explain, enabling the flow of dialogue during the interviews whether with one individual or in a group discussion. Therefore, data generated from interviews give the researcher an authentic insight into people's experiences (Newby, 2014). Newby further explains that the main reason for using interviews in this type of research rather than using other methods, is to dig deeper into the participants' perceptions with the aim of gaining in-depth knowledge of their views about their work place, including processes such as lesson observation and feedback.

Lodico et al. (2010) suggest that the researcher can use structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews in qualitative research as there is a certain aspect of flexibility associated with this type of research. Additionally, they explain that during a structured

interview, the interviewer arrives at the interview with a pre-planned set of questions, sticks to them all and does not alter any of them throughout with all interviewees. The researcher did not consider this type of interview suitable for this research because the rigid structure does not allow for further exploration of topics which arise. This may have affected the richness of the data which could be collected.

In contrast, Lodico et al., (2010) highlight that unstructured interviews are not inflexible but rather best described as dialogue-like. They suggest that the interviewer can write down a few issues she/he wishes to investigate with questions that are flexibly presented. They further add that the researcher should allow interviewees to speak freely and react in an informal fashion, posing extra questions in order to collect further information and maybe redirecting the conversation to address other aspects that are not entirely expressed in the interview.

This type of interview was also considered inappropriate for answering this study's research questions because minutes from the interviews would be required to be thoroughly recorded, which had the potential for a negative impact on certain aspects related to ethical issues, while also requiring high-level skills from the interviewer. Moreover, the flexibility in this type of interview may lead to too much loose input by the interviewees, resulting in unnecessary data that may be difficult to align with the study's context.

In this study, semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were employed to explore the teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions about the lesson observation and feedback process. Such interviews are often designed with a main topic, progressing through general themes and specific questions (Lodico et al., 2010). Yin (2013) advocates that interviews are essential in case study investigation. Robson (2002) claims that open-ended questions provide no restrictions on participants' answers; they are more likely to produce interesting and unanticipated answers, which allow the emergence of unexpected themes. This method enabled the researcher to explain the questions thoroughly if they were not understood and to investigate the research issues further.

Questions for the semi-structured interviews were tested and refined during the pilot phase. Thereafter, interview schedules with prompts and probe questions as shown in Appendices F, G and H were used with teachers, middle leaders and the coordinator of teaching and learning. The interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes on average.

In recruiting participants, invitation letters were distributed to all participants, outlining the study and its process, and detailing what participation involved and the voluntary nature of the participation (see Appendix A). The researcher formally notified all participating staff of the aims of the study and they signed informed consent forms. The interviews took place during June and July in the summer term of the 2016 academic year.

Documentary analysis

Documentary analysis of the school policy's mandatory requirements on lesson observation is used in this study to supplement findings about the teachers' and middle leaders' perception and experience of lesson observation and feedback. Using documentary analysis in research can offer alternative details to validate data from other sources (Yin, 2013).

Additionally, the school policy documents provided a context for data that could be predicted and provided by the participants during the interviews (Bryman, 2012). It must be recognised that there can be a difference between policy and practice as teachers may not feel ownership of a policy (Fleming, 2014). This was an important consideration when the data from the school policy document was analysed.

Difficulties with gaining access to school policy documents can be seen as a main disadvantage of this method (Yin, 2013), particularly following the Bryman (2012) guidelines that the researcher also has to check the authenticity of the documents provided. However, in this case, the head teacher provided access to all policies relating to lesson observation. The school policy document is listed in Appendix I.

Data transcription

Interviews were digitally recorded with participant permission (Appendix B). In this study, all interviews were transcribed in full to avoid data loss (Cohen et al., 2011) and to avoid bias; this is an important stage, as possible loss and misrepresentation of the data may occur.

As an aid during the process of transcription and to maintain confidentiality, the ten class teachers who were participants in this study from the school (S) were referred to as ST1, ST2, ST3, ST4, ST5, ST6, ST7, ST8, ST9, and ST10. The five middle leaders from the school were referred to as SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4 and SL5, and the teaching and learning coordinator in the school was referred to as SC.

Data analysis

The analysis stage of the research is a very important stage after the collection of the data (Creswell, 2013). The decision regarding a qualitative approach to this study has already been justified in this chapter. Creswell states that good qualitative research also includes thorough approaches to data gathering and analysis which result in strengthening its methods.

According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 491), conducting data analysis of qualitative data allows the researcher to: (i) comprehend it; (ii) assimilate it; (iii) categorise main themes; and (iv) draw conclusions. This acknowledges the need to analyse and organise the data collected in order to make sense of what has been said in the interviews. Therefore, after each interview, the most important issues and questions that were established for further analysis were documented. This approach gives a better overview of what the interviews included and ensures that nothing was left out (Bryman, 2012).

NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis program, was employed to help organise the data collected throughout the semi-structured interviews. The data from the interviews were interpreted and analysed with coloured highlighters (see example in Appendix J), integrating procedures and experiences considered appropriate for lesson observation and feedback. This analysis process consisted of three phases (see Fig. 3.1).

Phase 1 — Initial coding phase → Phase 2 — Selective coding phase → Phase 3 — Theoretical coding phase
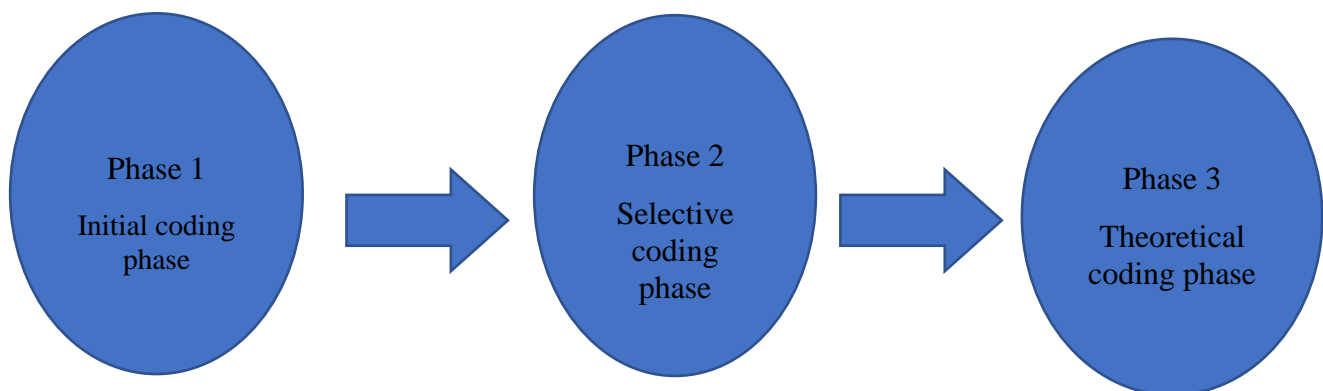
Figure 3. 1. Analytical process.

Phase 1

The initial phase involved open or essential coding, in which data is examined and codes are generated, i.e. the many words of the text are classified. Using open coding to analyse the data was aimed at identifying emerging themes on teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions (Newby, 2014). This means that themes were not imposed on the emergent data. A set of codes are established to offer insight into the data in order to be able to select, separate and sort data that are associated with particular research questions (see Table 3.2). This allowed for the development of an analytical framework from which the analysis was made (Cresswell, 2013). Coding data is a common analysis tool for qualitative research, as Lodico et al. (2010) further explain, with the process of coding enabling the categorising of unrelated parts of the information which are connected by a similar event, with the aim of allocating them to a general key group. Examples of the dominant themes as they relate to the research questions appear in tables 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5 below.

	Selective Coding	Dominant Themes	Specifically	Conceptual links
The perception and the experience of middle leaders and teachers of lesson observation and feedback within the school's CPD provision

Coding linked to RQ1:

How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision? | INSET days

Twilight evenings

Funding Inconsistency

Improving own practice | Perceptions of CPD | Participants' experience, perception and attitudes regarding CPD | CPD procedures

Evaluation

School culture

improving teaching pedagogy

Teacher satisfaction |
| | Opportunities to learn

Engaging in CPDs
Personal choice

Inconsistency | Learning through CPD | Participants' improving current skills, motivation, and relevance of CPD | Critical reflection

Involvement in CPD
improved skills
Improving student achievement |
| | School CPD policy

Inconsistency

CPD activities related to lesson observation and feedback | Lesson observation within the CPD provision | Participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the management of lesson observation within the school CPD Provision | Collaborative interactions

Impact on development of teaching

Teachers' engagement with learning.

Motivating staff |

Table 3. 2. Excerpt of dominant themes relating to RQ1 data analysis to key concepts in this study.

The perception and the experience of middle leaders and teachers of the process of lesson observation and feedback Coding linked to RQ2: *How do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?*	Selective Coding The number of lessons observed formally Choice prior to the observation Inconsistency Communication Variation Teamwork Students' learning	Dominant Themes Managing lesson observation	Specifically Participants' experience, perception and attitudes regarding lesson observation	Conceptual links Lesson observation procedures Collegiality Departmental culture Students' learning
	Quality of feedback Flexibility	Feedback after lesson observation	Participants' values, behaviour and attitudes regarding feedback	Collaboration manner Supportive culture
	Positive impact: Empowered Trust Negative impact: Feeling threatened	Impact of feedback after lesson observation	Participants' experiences, beliefs and attitudes regarding the impact of feedback	Impact on pedagogy Pupils' engagement with learning. Feedback
	Time Subject specialism of the observer	Concerns inhibiting feedback after lesson observation	Participants' perceptions and experiences of difficulties encountered	Lesson observation procedure Formal culture

Table 3. 3. Excerpt of dominant themes relating to RQ2 data analysis to key concepts in this study.

The perception and the experience of middle leaders and teachers regarding the influence the school and department cultures have on lesson observation. Coding linked to RQ3: *How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?*	Selective Coding Formal Informal Collegial Communication Inconsistently Teamwork Students' learning	Dominant Themes Perception of school culture	Specifically Participants' experience and perception regarding their school culture	Conceptual links Types of school culture Formal Collegiality students' achievement
	Collegial Collaborative Formal Dialogue Teamwork Communication	Perception of department culture	Participants' experience and perception regarding their departments culture	Collaboration manner supportive culture
	Trust Grading of lesson observation Feeling threatened	Impact on lesson observation	Participants' experiences, beliefs and attitudes regarding the impact of school and department cultures	Impact on pedagogy Pupils' engagement with learning.

Table 3. 4. Excerpt of dominant themes relating to RQ3 data analysis to key concepts in this study.

	Selective Coding	Dominant Themes	Specifically	Conceptual links
The views of middle leaders and teachers regarding the influence that professional identity has on lesson observation and feedback. Coding linked to RQ4: *How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?*	Values Role model Beliefs Teaching standards Expertise Students' progress Trust Training Relationship	Perception of professional identity	Participants' experience, perception and attitudes regarding professional identity	Professionalism School culture Department culture CPD Students' learning
	Change Connections High Expectations	Positive impact on practice of lesson observation	Participants' values, behaviour and attitudes regarding their professional approach to lesson observation	Collaboration Reflection Improving pedagogy Students' progress
	Appraisal system External factors Conform Pressure Threat Ticking boxes	Concern inhibiting positive impact on practice of lesson observation	Participants' experiences, beliefs and attitudes regarding the negative impact	Accountability Performativity Micro-Politics

Table 3. 5. Excerpt of dominant themes relating to RQ4 data analysis to key concepts in this study.

Phase 2

Themes or an overall idea from the codes that are derived were recognised in the selective coding phase, helping to select a dominant theme in order to connect categories with other categories (Newby, 2014; Creswell, 2013). Additionally, the information from this phase was organised into a chart to enable the researcher to identify and make the links between what emerged, and relate it to the dominant idea (Creswell, 2013). These themes corresponded closely with areas and issues identified earlier in the key literature (see Table

3.2). The data collected from teachers' and middle leaders' interviews were compared in order to establish variations and similarities in themes and patterns.

Phase 3

The theoretical coding phase was the final phase. This phase entails the development of ideas which bond codes with one another and the creation of a statement or model clarifying the connections between the different categories (Newby, 2014; Creswell, 2013). The analysis of these categories and their connections with one another yielded deeper insight into lesson observation and feedback of the 16 participants in relation to the study's key concepts.

Quality issues

Trustworthiness

It is imperative to have a clear interpretation of the progress of the research, recognising that bias is a significant issue and that the perception of reality is subjective in many ways (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, the researcher stance needs to be made clear, and the study should be conducted transparently. For this reason, it is paramount to address issues salient to this case study.

Quantitative research depends on validity and reliability, whereas the credibility of qualitative research relies on trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). Positivist scholars have repeatedly criticised qualitative research in terms of its lack of trustworthiness, because it is impossible to deal with validity and reliability in a similar way when investigating a real-life setting (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, qualitative researchers (for example, Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 219) suggest the use of different terms, "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability", for validity and reliability to differentiate it from quantitative research.

Credibility and transferability

Credibility in qualitative research allows the researcher to make a valid claim about the data collected regarding the reality (or construction of reality) being investigated (Plowright, 2011).

Hence, recording and transcribing the data was carried out with the aim of addressing the credibility (internal validity) issue in this study. In addition, an opportunity was offered to the participants to read a summary report to confirm the correctness of the data they had submitted, with emails sent to the participants to invite them to do so.

On the other hand, transferability (external validity) offers the opportunity for outsiders to make a link between their own practice and certain aspects in a study they are interested in reading, and therefore does not make general claims (Bryman, 2012). For example, a physics teacher in a secondary school at a KS4 level may selectively apply results from a study demonstrating that applying certain practical skills helps students at the KS5 level to his/her own classes. Transferability was improved in this study through providing comprehensive information about the research design. This will be discussed further in this section under the sub-heading generalisability.

Dependability

In quantitative research, reliability is an essential part of its quality (Creswell, 2013) and also addresses a level of consistency (Neuman, 2014). Reliability refers to studies being conducted by researchers who have not influenced the findings with their own personal views or by interfering with the data collection process (Bryman, 2012). Reliability in any qualitative research is ensured during the designing and analysing of results of the study (Patton, 2002). This is what Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe as 'dependability'.

There are various issues relevant to dependability in this case study, for example, the sampling strategies (Yin, 2013). The sample in case study research is left to the researcher's own interpretation (Robson, 2002). Additionally, Robson argues for the value of purposive sampling in these circumstances to satisfy the specific needs of a certain setting. Considering this, the researcher will aim to provide as clear a picture as possible of the setting in which he works (this will be addressed in this chapter) and also the language used in the reporting of the findings, in order to help enhance the reliability of the findings (see Chapter 8).

Finally, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that reliability can be more easily maintained through using structured interviews as opposed to unstructured interviews where the way questions are asked to individual participants can differ, especially with a challenging participant. Therefore, in order to achieve reliability, guided questions were used with all participants

in order to make sure that similar topics were covered in each interview (see Appendices, F, G and H). Therefore, while the questions were not exactly the same with each participant, the interview schedules aided the researcher in decreasing bias by ensuring that each interview explored relevant ideas and did not permit the researcher to follow up only on issues of interest, in addition to improving the level of dependability for the study.

Confirmability

Qualitative interpretivist research is more likely than positivist research to be criticised for the fact that it is not possible to attain total confirmability (see, for example, Bryman, 2012; Cohen, 2011). To safeguard the confirmability of the research, questions which may guide participants to a particular answer were avoided. Using leading questions is like directing the participants towards certain responses, for example: 'The school has this vision; do you hold this vision?' (Cohen et al., 2011). The researcher endeavoured to avoid using leading questions, thus attempting to reduce bias, for example by not suggesting any particular colleague's approach to lesson observation and feedback. Adequate time was given to teachers during the interviews to think about and respond to the questions.

The researcher ensured that he was not involved in the interviewee input and avoided any prior opinions about interviewees to achieve greater objectivity (Bryman, 2012). An element of bias can arise if the researcher is deeply involved in the subject investigated, as Cohen et al. (2011) warn. There was potential for bias in this study because most of the participants are known to the researcher as his colleagues. However, Cohen et al (2011) also acknowledge that it might be helpful to know, and have a relationship with, the interviewees. Thus, the participants were encouraged to speak freely during the interviews about the matter under investigation, with the interviews also being conducted in a way that allowed for objectivity. Furthermore, the position and interest of the researcher in the process of lesson observation and feedback was minimised by adhering to all suggested techniques to ensure that they did not have any impact on the interviewees, which would have in turn affected the study and rendered the findings biased and possibly void. For further discussion of this issue, see the section 'Insider research below.

Finally, to increase openness and honesty (Newby, 2014), the researcher endeavoured to find adequate opportunities to make contact with the participants before conducting the interviews, which in turn established further confirmability to this qualitative case study.

Generalisability

In qualitative research, generalisability refers to whether findings are transferable across similar settings (Yin, 2013; Bryman, 2012). Since the time and context is limited in a case study, with few staff taking part, findings are rarely representative of the sample, or even generalisable (transferable) to external settings (Yin, 2013; Cohen et al., 2011).

Providing results which are fully generalisable to all teachers and middle leaders is not the aim of this study which is intended to provide in-depth insights into the views of the participants on the process of lesson observation and feedback which enable maximum benefits to be achieved. However, the researcher hopes that the study's insights and findings will be useful to a wider number of practitioners, and that they might be applied, cautiously, to a wider population

For this to be the case, the researcher must provide adequate, rich, accurate and detailed information about how the data was collected, as well as in-depth analyses of data, to allow other researchers to see the relevance of this study to be explored in other settings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher has endeavoured to make this possible in this study by providing rich, accurate, detailed and complete descriptions of data collection, analysis and interpretations, and by using direct quotations in the findings.

Ethical issues

Ethical principles need to be adhered to. It is imperative as a researcher to be honest and transparent, and to show responsibility for any decisions made, the position of participants in your research, and the way you share your findings (Newby, 2014).

Ethical issues are very important in educational research where people are being studied; they need to be maintained throughout the research undertaken (Wellington, 2015; Newby, 2014; Plowright, 2011), since any investigation might affect the lives of others (Newby, 2014; Creswell, 2013; Plowright, 2011). The responsibility for ethical research ultimately falls upon the researcher (Newby, 2014). The researcher's own position and point of view must be made clear in the different situations during the research (Plowright, 2011). Plowright further adds that the researcher must deliberate whether or not to inform participants, and in what way and to whom the findings are reported. For Cohen et al. (2011), there are three main areas related to ethical issues that must be addressed in all

investigations: obtaining consent, confidentiality, and consequences. In order for the researcher and the participants to be safeguarded against the consequences of any latent problems, a number of issues needed to be considered as a result of the type of research questions in this study, and because it involves teachers' views.

Prior to contacting the head teacher or the participant about this study, an application was made for ethical clearance through the Open University and, once approved; the researcher proceeded to contact gatekeepers and potential participants (see Appendix E). Participants were presented with formal letters inviting them to take part in the research and the school generously acknowledged them (see Appendices A and D). Participants were clearly informed and had to give consent in order to be part of the study, which indicated clearly the ability of the participants to exit from the research whenever they wished (see Appendices A and B). Researchers are increasingly turning to consent forms as a means of obtaining permission to conduct the research (Bryman, 2012). Therefore, a consent form was given to participants (see Appendices A and B) and participants were allowed time at the beginning of the interview to seek clarifications regarding the procedure and consequences of taking part in this study.

Participants were also informed that their names and their school's name were not to be disclosed in any shape or form during or after the research with the purpose of protecting their identity. Data were released anonymously so that specific teachers were unable to be linked to certain answers and presented data (Neuman, 2014). This aligns with the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) procedures, as they state that "the confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research" (BERA, 2004, p. 8).

Similarly, when the interviews were concluded, time was given for participants to raise any concerns. Alternatively, they could communicate their concerns later with the researcher if they wanted. After individual reports had been written, participants were sent a summary of the account to validate. This method ensured that the data collected was reliable in the sense that it had been validated by the participants.

Insider Researcher

When considering the advantages and disadvantages of being an insider researcher, Mercer (2007, p. 12) claims that "conducting insider research is like wielding a double-edged sword". Researchers conducting investigations in their places of work, therefore, encounter pros and cons in their role as insider researchers (Mercer, 2007; Floyd and Arthur, 2012; Newby, 2014).

Having a better knowledge of the setting where the research is taking place can be considered an advantage of insider researcher (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Hockey (1993, p. 199) summarises the strengths of the insider researcher position working in familiar settings as "the relative lack of culture shock or disorientation, the possibility of enhanced rapport and communication, the ability to gauge the honesty and accuracy of responses, and the likelihood that respondents reveal more intimate details of their lives to someone considered empathetic". The researcher in the study reported here did not have any sense of confusion, uncertainty and ambiguity during the interviews with the teaching and learning coordinator, which might have been felt by someone who had not been exposed to the culture of the school. This was because the researcher had worked in the environment for ten years. For example, when participants talked about the schools' expectations regarding lesson observation and feedback, the researcher could easily understand that the procedures described referred to wider practices amongst all school members. There are disadvantages of such familiarity, however, including "over-familiarity and taken for granted assumptions" (ibid).

Access to the sample population as an insider researcher can also be viewed as an advantage. It may, for instance, facilitate access to specific data, and participants may be more prepared to open up to him or her, because the insider researcher can be aware of the cultural settings in which he or she is working (Floyd and Arthur, 2012). Therefore, an insider researcher enjoys the advantages of "freer access, stronger rapport and a deeper, more readily available frame or shared reference with which to interpret the data they collect" (Mercer, 2007, p. 13). A good working relationship was already well established at the school because the researcher (insider researcher) had been working there for ten years. This study was supported by all senior teachers in the school; this was evident at a later stage in the research when the researcher was invited to present findings during a whole school INSET day.

On the other hand, the insider researcher connection may result in preconceived ideas concerning the interpretation of the data (Newby, 2014; Mercer, 2007), which can be viewed as a disadvantage of being an insider researcher. As the researcher here was the only instrument for data collection and analysis which depended on the researcher's interpretation, there was clearly room for researcher bias at all stages.

Another disadvantage concerning the trustworthiness of research with an insider researcher, is that participants may also be more inclined to say what they think is expected of them (Cohen et al., 2011). Furthermore, for the insider researcher there may be a conflict of "interest between their role as a practitioner and a researcher, as there is a threat that his/her assumptions can be misleading" (Floyd and Arthur, 2012, p. 6).

There may potentially also be an issue of power in the case of insider research where the researcher has a position of responsibility in the research environment. The integrity of insider research is further threatened by informant bias as (Mercer, 2007), "people's willingness to talk to you, what people say to you, is influenced by who they think you are" (Drever, 1995, p. 31). As a staff member belonging to the same school, the relationship of the researcher with other participants in the study may have placed a constraint on their revealing their true opinions and feelings. If the participants think that the insider researcher can or cannot be trusted, then they might tell the truth or not (Mercer, 2007). For example, participants might think that their perceptions would be made available to the school leadership to gauge their own opinions regarding the process of lesson observation and feedback. As Mercer (2007, p. 8) puts it, in contrast to the outsider researcher, "the insider cannot escape his or her past".

Bearing all this in mind, to enhance trustworthiness, two measures were taken to counteract the negative effects of being an insider researcher. Firstly, a guarantee was given of absolute anonymity (Cohen et al., 2011) and a promise was made that the findings would not be given to the school senior leadership team or any other group of people without their permission. This served to limit any possible negative effects. Secondly, as an insider researcher, the researcher tried his best not to publicise his own opinions about research topics and thus avoided as much as possible influencing the views of the research participants.

Three other approaches to address the above issues were adopted: firstly, avoiding leading questions and using guided questions (Cohen, 2011); secondly, conducting interviews in a

manner that allowed for objectivity that encouraged teachers to speak their minds about the issue investigated (Bryman, 2012); and thirdly, having the researcher constantly monitor his reaction after each interview and when interpreting the data collected, described as reflexivity (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, during the analysis phase, interpretations of the data were shared and checked with the participants, to ensure that they were representative of their views (Patton, 2002). All these strategies were thoroughly adhered to.

Finally, as an insider researcher as opposed to an outsider researcher, it should be acknowledged that the aims of the research are as much focused on increasing one's own understanding of the researched topic as they are to expanding knowledge in the field of education. Even with the best efforts to achieve trustworthiness, there are no acceptable "checklists or boxes to tick" to check "internal ethical" participation (Floyd and Arthur, 2012, p. 8). Thus, the researcher understands that the results may contain an element of subjectivity, as maintaining objectivity was difficult given the researcher's previous and close contact with the institution (Hockey, 1993). None the less, recognising the potential for bias in this type of research, rather than attempting to ignore it, is one way to protect against that bias. In conclusion, it will be for the reader to judge the degree to which the researcher has been honest in relation to the research data analysis. Floyd and Arthur (2012) further suggest that the researcher should always maintain personal integrity during the research process. This guideline was adhered to throughout the research undertaken by the researcher.

Summary

This chapter provided a discussion on how this study was planned and undertaken. A case study methodology using a qualitative interpretive paradigm was employed and a semi-structured interview method was applied. Certain factors to assure validity in the study needed to be addressed (Bryman, 2012), such as the digital recording of the data and the awareness of the purpose of the study. Additionally, the benefits and limitations as an insider researcher were addressed. As examples of process, Table 3.1 presented a view of how the themes relating to research question 2 developed from the coding process, and the model in Figure 3. 1 relates each of the dominant themes to ideas included within the three key concepts (organisational culture, CPD and professional identity) influencing this study. A discussion and analysis of the themes and patterns which were generated form the data will be presented in chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION I: How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

Preview

The four data analysis and discussion chapters (4, 5, 6 and 7) use the data analysis method described in chapter 3 to analyse and discuss the data collected in this study. The main purpose of this study is to explore and deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

The previous chapter included a discussion of the method employed for analysing the collected data in this study. Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7 offer the analysis and discuss the effects of the findings in the context of theory and practice, according to the reviewed literature and the study's conceptual framework.

In these four chapters, separate interview data are analysed below each sub-research question to which the emerging data corresponded. Findings are thematically derived and arranged respectively in response to specific sub-research questions and are supported by data extracts.

Three stages were performed to analyse the data. The first stage started with a rigorous studying of the data to further familiarise myself with it, especially since it was the first time I had looked at the data from all the interviews together. In the second stage, a constant comparative (Glaser and Strauss, 2012) approach was employed to be able to compare and contrast relevant data while starting to group these bits together under preliminary codes. The codes, as discussed in the previous chapter, were attached to the main ideas – these are the main themes that were striking and apparent in the data. The final stage was consolidating the codes and grouping the relevant bits of data under each theme, which later facilitated a closer examination of the codes and the overall data. Throughout the whole process, the research questions were useful in guiding my thinking about the data and looking for answers and intricacies within the data. Using research questions and relevant policy documents and paperwork to analyse the collected data will take the reader back to the main issue the research is trying to investigate and give a rich description of the phenomenon as suggested by Cohen et al. (2011).

The research sub-questions will be used to structure these chapters.

Introduction

This chapter (4) is the first of the four analysis chapters that explore and deepen the understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

This first chapter focuses on the first of the study's sub-research questions: How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision? This sub-research question concerns establishing teachers' and middle leaders' views regarding the influence of CPD on lesson observation. During the interviews, teachers, middle leaders and the coordinator of teaching and learning in the school discussed and reflected upon their experiences of continuing professional development (CPD) and how lesson observation and feedback is positioned and managed within the school's CPD provision.

Within the context of the above, the analysis yielded three main themes. These are: perceptions of CPD; learning through CPD; and lesson observation within the CPD provision. Additional sub-themes linked individually to the three key ones were identified: improving current skills, motivation, and relevance of CPD. They will all be discussed in the sections which follow.

Perceptions of CPD

A responsibility falls upon the shoulders of teachers to enhance their work through their own CPD, with CPD encompassing different types of activities (O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). Varied views emerged following the analysis of the data, showing that participants thought of CPD in terms of activities such as courses, INSET days and the so-called school twilight evenings. This included the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) who organises and coordinates the majority of CPD-related activities in the school where the research took place:

> *I think we've had a lot of investment within CPD…mostly school-based INSET days, such as AFL [assessment for learning], lesson observation sessions.* (SC)

All the middle leaders were clear about this connection of activities to CPD, as illustrated by the following two participants:

For example, we had […] AFL, twilight training this year. (SL1)

And that:

I've highlighted some courses for you to go on to help you do that. So I'd like to think that my department would see it as CPD-based. (SL4)

Similarly, the majority of the participating teachers, seven out of ten, also made the connection clear, for example:

You're […] to go out on INSETs. (ST10)

We should have sessions where we spend some of our INSET time meeting up and just discussing how to improve the effectiveness of teaching. (ST9)

On a personal level, I've done quite a lot of CPD courses this year. (ST3)

From the interviews, it appears that the participants have what can be termed 'simplistic' and unquestioning views of CPD. They have clearly practised one form or another of CPD. This may be because each teacher's experience varies, and this may possibly have influenced their grasp of the concept of CPD. The variation in understanding of CPD is apparent as the descriptions that participants attached to CPD ranged from simple 'INSET days' to support for classroom practice to a greater recognition of the concept, such as reflection on their teaching which may affect their identity – if teachers keep up their learning through CPD activities, teachers' identity will be enhanced (O' Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009). Moreover, two factors may help us understand this variation. First, participants' experiences vary (see chapter 7), which can be a major reason for the different depths of understanding of CPD. For example, SL2 has been teaching for 29 years and this experience will have undeniably informed his understanding of CPD. The second factor is training. In this sense, SL1 is a good example, stating that that she had done a lot of training. Reflection with other teachers and attendance at successful CPD activities to enhance classroom practice are said to be vital in developing teachers' identity (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009; Raymond, 2006). This approach in turn will improve the students' learning (Hattie, 2012).

Although the school had funded teachers for a lengthy period to participate in external CPD, current policy is increasingly changing and funding for external activities is being reduced. The school policy states the following:

The CPD opportunities available will only be offered if they: provide value for money. (School policy)

An adverse opinion was voiced by most teachers and middle leaders regarding how they observe the management of their CPD, especially when they were not allowed to choose the CPD they perceived as fulfilling their professional development due to various constraints, such as money:

> *Well, last year our previous head teacher said that there was a ban on all CPD training courses that were going out because of the budget. I think that has quite a big strain on CPD actually because of the financial situation of the school. CPD is a dodgy one for me.* (ST9)

This is also echoed by participant (ST8):

> *The cuts and budgets mean that we can't go on as many courses.*

In contrast, participant (ST3), who is a newly qualified teacher (NQT) had no problem attending external CPD *"on a personal level, I've done quite a lot of CPD courses this year"*. This is perhaps due to the fact that all the NQT training is organised and funded by the local authority.

Nevertheless, the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) expressed his and the school's reasons and views for the lack of funding to external CPD thus:

> *I think there's a lot of people paying a lot of money within education and I think if you line manage a department properly, you shouldn't need all that external support.* (SC)

It can be inferred from the above quote that because external CPD can be expensive, schools may well see using their internal resources for CPD wherever possible as a sensible saving strategy. This school, according to the SC's statement, provides in-house training run by other colleagues. This they see as sufficient for providing CPD and saving money. The data shows that are greater efforts to balance using external experts with using colleagues in school (Fleming, 2014). However, this may cause unease amongst staff, as expressed by participant (SL4):

I have to keep asking [...] many times to attend CPDs [...] that I believe are relevant to my teaching and learning.

This perception that needs are not being met may contribute to a reduced feeling of job satisfaction and may even result in teachers leaving the profession. Ofsted (2006, p24) states that the DfES defines CPD as "any activity that increases a teacher's knowledge and understanding and their effectiveness in schools and can help raise [students'] standards and improve teachers' job satisfaction". Therefore, perhaps if teachers are able to take part

in policy-making regarding CPD planning in a supportive, collegial culture may lead them and middle leaders to understand that it does not have to cost a lot of money to feel that they have fulfilled their personal CPD needs. Including teachers in planning and decision-making is a good thing, as long as it is done in a context that fosters support and collaboration (Fleming, 2014). It is also important for teachers to network and maintain external contacts as this can lead to improving teachers' reflection on their own teaching experiences (Steward, 2009; Fleming, 2014). This reflection can help staff become more aware of what they are doing well and what they need to change, and to avoid becoming professionally stagnant (Harvey and Struzziero, 2008)

Learning through CPD

The different views of the teachers and middle leaders of CPD that emerged from the interviews are all related to learning. To teach differently, teachers need extensive knowledge and the ability to change their teaching habits (Snow-Renner et al., 2005). Therefore, to make this change effectively, perhaps teachers need opportunities for deep learning of new knowledge related to teaching and learning (training). Moreover, it is important for them to have a chance to implement newly acquired techniques, to practise using them in their lessons, and finally to observe their effects on students' learning. This theme will be discussed under the following sub-themes: Improving current skills, Motivation, and Relevance of CPD.

Improving current skills

All five middle leaders and the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) understood CPD as an approach with the potential to improve their quality of teaching in a certain subject or curriculum within their school. This type of CPD allows for professional development, which leads to improved skills that are crucially needed to engage in healthy team performance and to further develop their teaching (DfE, 2014; Cordingley et al., 2005).

> *I think that a lot of courses that are externally run, staff really benefit from those, especially with all the recent changes to curriculum and specification, I think we do that quite well.* (SC)

The opportunities for learning occur regularly, as illustrated by participant (SL5):

> *I find it [CPD] to be very helpful, allowing me to update myself regularly about novel approaches to teaching and learning.*

In addition to having regular opportunities to learn, eight out of ten teachers feel their existing skills are polished and developed further:

> *I guess some of the INSET days are designed to polish the skills that we might have already.* (ST8)

> *I'm always looking to develop. I want to be as good as possible.* (ST10)

Furthermore, participant (SL1) used the word "successful" to describe her way of seeing how CPD has improved her skills over the period of her teaching career:

> *I think when I first began teaching I was set on this model of 'starter – main body of the learning – plenary', and I sort of saw that as being very fixed. I now feel like, and this is partly through successful CPD that I've done, I now feel much more aware of assessment for learning.* (SL1)

The above comment highlights the need for CPD to address individual requirements for improving skills. In order to achieve this, it can be assumed that leaders and middle leaders should provide opportunities for training for all their team members. These opportunities for training and reflection are widely regarded as being important for the future of teaching (Fleming, 2014; Steward, 2009). This type of opportunity may allow teachers to remain motivated and enthusiastic about teaching, and also to benefit from the networking opportunities provided by CPD training. Additionally, CPD allows experienced teachers to keep themselves informed about new developments (Steward, 2009). However, to achieve all of this, it is suggested that the culture concerning CPD should be collegial in order to allow teachers to discuss their CPD needs and obtain support for them without perhaps any fear of their leaders' judgement. This is because "teachers crave for collegial support and professional collaboration" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 155).

Motivation

Another secondary theme to emerge from the data analysis was linked to motivation. Motivation evidently had an influence on what is viewed to be CPD – in other words, when participants were motivated and engaged by an activity, they were more likely to classify it as CPD than when they did not find the activity motivating. Engaging in CPD gives teachers the chance to step back from their daily routine to reflect, increase awareness of new teaching strategies, and raise levels of motivation in pedagogy (Palmer, 2006). There were numerous comments about this:

> *Here's something that can really help motivate you to the next level, this is what you want to be doing.* (SL4)

> *I think for me personally the ones [CPD] that motivated me most were the ones that were straightforward about my subject.* (ST1)

> *I've been on a couple of courses to do with lesson observation and they have been beneficial in motivating me to learn new ideas.* (ST9)

The perception arising from the above quotes was that through CPD, teachers are feeling encouraged and motivated. Therefore, the position of CPD within the school system can be described as being positive in the perceptions of most of the interviewed staff.

In contrast, participant (ST3) highlighted the following, and how it affects motivation:

> *I think if it's not seen the same by everyone in the school then it doesn't work. If there's no buy-in to a CPD project or something, then it can create negativity … because even if you weren't negative about something, as soon as you hear other people being negative it's very easy to then think about that and be influenced by others. I think in school when there's no cohesion from the top, it doesn't work. So, when you've got CPD projects but no one from the senior leadership team (SLT) attends them, then what's the point if they think they're above that? Why do they not get to do it?*

The above comment about negative attitude from teacher ST3 suggests that the school leaders have an influence on creating a positive or a negative approach towards CPD. This is because for CPD to be considered as an effective practice, it needs to be seen as a continuous and sustained practice, valued and participated in by all, and managed effectively by the leaders in schools (Fleming, 2014; Bolam, 2007).

Participant (ST1) also voiced another concern and unease about the approach within her department towards CPD *"I think it lacks the personal choice"*. This was also echoed by participant (SL2):

> *I am forced to do [CPD] and that's what I find annoying and irritating. For instance, I am very good with discipline and often we will have an INSET programme looking at discipline. No, I shouldn't attend that programme unless I'm going to be delivering it.*

He further argues that:

> *I should be attending a programme looking at my lack of IT skills.*

In summary, it can be perceived that while it is current practice to have teachers attending CPD, for it to be effective, teachers must be given the responsibility and the time to focus on tasks of their own choosing to address their personally recognised CPD needs. Even when CPD is effectively positioned, staff that are not motivated may not produce the desired results (Bush and Middlewood, 2013). Therefore, a balance between individual and

institutional goals may need to be addressed by the school to achieve more individualised programmes for staff, rather than blanket 'all must attend' courses.

Relevance of CPD

Most teachers and middle leaders perceived that when CPD was conducted without relevance to their context, it was adversely received. Many teachers see CPD as a management tool that is often inappropriate and/or unrelated to their needs as it is largely offered as 'one-size-fits-all' (O'Leary, 2014). For instance, at the school being researched in this study, the school policy states that:

> *The observer goes through their summary of the strengths and areas for development, suggesting and addressing teacher needs for CPD training.*

In contrast, the analysis of the data from the interviews displayed that most middle leaders and teachers believed that their CPD entitlements are not met in the school, especially training provided for lesson observation, as illustrated by participants (SL1) and (ST9):

> *At times the school CPD fitted in [...] quite nicely, but at other times I've felt like it's not necessarily meeting my needs.* (SL1)

> *I've been on a couple of courses to do with lesson observation and they have been beneficial, but I don't think the CPD programme at this school is very effective.* (ST9)

Furthermore, most teachers – seven out of ten – also felt that too many INSET days in the school were designed to fulfil the national agenda, as expressed by participant (ST1):

> *INSET days are not the same for me, it is all about [national] policies, not me.*

Participant (ST5) added that *"the school runs CPD just to tick the box".*

The above quotes suggest that the school is torn between fulfilling its duty towards its teaching staff as stated in its policy, and acknowledging new national policies on education, such as performance management and accountability (see chapter 7). Without special training, even teachers that fulfil their specific CPD needs may be unable to achieve the policy changes required (Fleming, 2014). On the other hand, effective CPD may help improve teaching and learning, enable the workforce to continually improve their job skills, and foster effective professional change as required by external policy.

Additionally, participant (ST7) indicated that lack of *"stimulation"* and *"no progression"* and *"no scope for CPD"* were high on the list of reasons *"for thinking of leaving the*

school". If schools do not acknowledge their members' CPD needs, they tend to lose the best teachers (Bubb and Earley, 2007). Some teachers voiced their concerns and felt that circulation of information about CPD availability was limited; participant (ST1) indicated her very limited knowledge of any CPD activities available on lesson observation: *"I haven't seen them, so I'm not aware of them".* It has been argued that individuals contribute their time and own resources, because they think it will enhance their career prospects, make them better leaders (Bush, 2008) and help them decide upon and implement valued changes in their teaching (Bush and Bell, 2002). This suggests that where there are criticisms and concerns about teachers not being engaged in present-day training, it is important that the school should clearly take them on board and develop more stimulating, relevant courses tailored to individual needs within a supportive culture.

In summary, then, the data showed that teachers and middle leaders recognised the importance of CPD and its position in the school in improving their teaching and learning, with lesson observation at its core. The analysis of this theme found that the majority of teachers viewed CPD traditionally, as twilight sessions, going on courses and INSET days. In contrast, the teaching and learning coordinator thought only of INSET days as worthwhile CPD. Overall, teachers and middle leaders gave a similar response. The purpose of CPD is perceived as developing or improving the professional skills already acquired, and motivating teachers to perform better in their classrooms in order to enhance student learning. It is also argued that middle leaders must be seen as committed to the ongoing learning and development of their staff. School leaders are of significant importance. They influence teachers. They manage their support, they manage their professional development, and consequently affect the learning experiences of students, all of which generates development in the school (Cardno, 2005).

Additionally, both teachers' and middle leaders' responses indicate that they are more likely to believe that their own CPD needs are not met and that training related to national policies has priority. By contrast, the views of the teaching and learning coordinator conflicted with this belief of the teachers and middle leaders. It is suggested, therefore, that to minimise conflict and maintain joint understanding, systematic, regular, structured and collaborative interactions should take place before and during the CPD process, with managed follow-up activities (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Steward, 2009).

Lesson observation within the CPD provision

The teaching and learning coordinator, (SC), is understood to be the key-holder to any CPD training in the school, as is stated in the school policy:

> *The CPD Leader will be responsible for identifying the training and development needs of the school community. All those engaged with CPD will be encouraged to reflect on their development* (school policy)

The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) felt content with the lesson observation training provision in the school:

> *I think we've had a lot of investment within CPD, over the years, we've had some good points of focus within CPD and I think staff have really engaged in it [...] colleagues are helping deliver CPD on lesson observation as well.*

This quote does indicate that using the expertise available within the school to help deliver certain CPD sessions on lesson observation to less experienced teachers is an inclusive way to deliver CPD within the school. This can be interpreted to be a vital practice in helping teachers to develop their skills in lesson observation, which in turn effectively contributes to improving teaching and learning. One-day training sessions on lesson observation are examples of the one-off workshops provided to teachers in the school. A considerable number of CPD sessions are arranged during the year (Stannard and Matharu, 2014). For example, master classes (where teachers choose to attend at least three different sessions in the year, each one lasting one hour) are delivered by other colleagues in the school who have expressed interest in particular areas such as lesson observation, behaviour and ICT training.

The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) highlights the value of staff conducting CPD themselves:

> *The idea is to empower a member of staff to pursue their own interest and career goals and that's something that I've always tried to do.*

Furthermore, the school policy states the following:

> *The school has an expectation that all members of the learning community will take an active role in their own professional development.* (School policy)

Three out of five middle leaders spoke positively about the school policy regarding their CPD, as illustrated by participant (SL5):

> *The CPD policy is there to allow me and others to attend courses in order to enhance my career further and improve my ability to do lesson observation.*

Similarly, five out of ten teachers spoke positively about the school policy, for example participant (ST8):

> *I think to teach effectively though, you do [...] need to have CPD in terms of refreshing your ideas and keeping them creative to be able to do good lesson observation.*

In many schools, CPD is now more creatively and effectively managed (Fleming, 2014), and the above quotes may indicate that lesson observation is managed effectively through this particular school's CPD policy. However, do the procedures stated in the school policy reflect what is actually practised in the school? There were some contrasting comments from teachers concerning the fact that they felt the school policy needs to empower teachers to improve their experience of teaching and learning, as illustrated by participant (ST6):

> *I think it needs to be a lot higher on the list. I think CPD and lesson observation used to be something that was a lot higher on the list in terms of professional development and actually empowering teachers to do their job better.*

The above quote suggests that there is an element of contradiction between what is stated in the school policy and what is practised in the school. These shortfalls in practice are common in schools, where they seem to be very good at devising such policies but when it comes to implementation, the reality is different, creating a sense of ambiguity (Martin and Meyerson, 1988). It has been suggested that successful implementation of policy must be supported by school leaders if they wish to stop staff losing enthusiasm towards their job due to the pressure of everyday teaching (Fleming, 2014; Marriott, 2009). Therefore, collaborative ownership of the policy with key tasks shared between teachers and their leaders is important for effective implementation (Fleming, 2014).

Peer observation was found to take place across all participants (teachers, middle leaders and teaching and learning coordinator) and is considered a laudable CPD practice. Classroom observation has played a major part in CPD, where it has usually been used as a significant means for developing teachers' pedagogy and learning (O'Leary, 2014). These activities included peer observation and open-door practice, for example:

> *I think it's an important part of our role and I personally have nothing against things like spot checks and learning walks, I've got an open-door policy that I always have had that anyone is welcome to come into my room anytime and I personally think that rather than having so much formal lesson observation, we should have just much more of an open-door policy and we should always be encouraged to go around and see each other.* (SL3)

Teamwork is also important, as illustrated by participant (ST3):

> *You're all part of the same team and group, and the point is you should work together rather than be on your own, because you get more done then.*

The above quotes may suggest that teachers should be involved and should work together collaboratively. A collaborative CPD programme can be seen as something to be engaged in throughout a teacher's professional life from the beginning to the end of their careers, and lesson observation is a very good example of that collaborative work (O'Leary, 2014). Therefore, collaboration in lesson observation can be seen to have a direct link with the opportunities for effective CPD.

This collaboration in work even led participant (SL4) to suggest the following:

> *I'm actually going to use all the stuff that I learnt from the learning walks and lesson observations to suggest some CPD that people go on specifically next year.*

Here, it is suggested that the observation, whether it is of a formal or informal nature, should be used as a means to support the teachers to choose the appropriate CPD training programme in order to enhance their teaching and learning.

The school policy at first thought, seems to support this:

> *Informal observations need to happen on a regular basis, including learning walks and book looks.* (School policy)

However, learning walks can be seen as a way of holding teachers accountable through monitoring students' progress through an informal way of observing teachers and as a means of gathering data (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014). In addition, participant (ST8) states that:

> *In our departments when we're looking at CPD as a team, we know it's directly to prepare ourselves for what we're teaching next.*

The above quotes suggest that observations associated with learning walks and book looks may, therefore, influence teachers to be passively involved and to play safe, rather than trying out new ideas in order to improve students' learning. None the less, over time, this method is intended to develop continuity of current practice as well as new ways of practice (Backhouse, 2006). In order to do this, the structure of CPD activities needs to reinforce support for classroom teaching practice, as this is crucial to supporting teachers' identity progress (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012).

Moreover, participant (SL2) advocates that:

> *I think lesson observation is about experience. You can go on all these courses and some of them are brilliant [but] a lot of it is about emotional intelligence […] can you be trained to be emotionally intelligent? And I don't really think so.*

This suggests that while an element of training (CPD) for lesson observation is possible, there is wide acceptance by participants of the benefits of learning on the job. This might be because of the training middle leaders are receiving regarding lesson observation and the unwritten open-door policy which allows teachers to share good practice. Supporting less experienced staff to progress is seen to be the concern of their leaders. While this will foster a supportive and collaborative culture (Fleming, 2014). This does make it appear that the CPD needs of teachers are heavily dependent on their length of experience in the teaching profession.

However, most participants acknowledged that the school development plan (SDP) must also be given a priority, as it is the main driver for all other CPD. Participant (SL2) suggested that lesson observation should be part of the (SDP): *"Lesson observation [CPD] has to fit in with what the school's main aims and objectives are"*. Hence, it is of paramount importance that teachers should also be included in the wider objectives of the school goal.

In summary then, teachers and middle leaders all agreed that lesson observation plays an important role in improving their teaching and learning within the overall SDP and CPD policy.

Lesson observation skills were learnt on the job with some formal CPD input, as pointed out by the teachers interviewed. However, the issue of the schools' vision as a driving force behind it was clearly high on most of the participants' agendas, whether CPD was included in the school's development plans or not. They also acknowledged that aspects of training that go beyond the classroom need to be included in order for teachers to enhance their identity further. Activities recognised as contributing to CPD are clearly delivered, but it is worth mentioning that other valuable activities are not recognised as CPD provision, such as 'lesson study'. "Lesson study is where a group of teachers work collaboratively to study specific features of their subject curriculum and pedagogy, with particular emphasis on improving students' learning" (O'Leary, 2014, p. 8).

Summary

The first sub-research question with further links to the literature reviewed guided the data analysis throughout this chapter: how is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

The key themes to arise were in the context of how CPD was understood and experienced by the participants, and the position of lesson observation within the CPD provision in the school.

All participants interviewed in this study expressed the view that CPD was the key to achieving success in their continuing development and improving their existing skills and enhancing student learning.

The results also showed that, overall, middle leaders' and teachers' opinions of CPD are best described as traditional. Generally, they associated CPD with going on courses, and attending conferences and training. The majority of participants indicated that the provision of CPD was, somehow, a series of repetitions and that there were insufficient courses suitable for their specific individual needs.

The individual statements also indicated that many teachers are feeling that training related to national policy implementation and sessions run by their peers is taking priority over their own CPD needs.

While teachers and middle leaders believed that the CPD entitlements highlighted in their annual review, based on lesson observation, had largely been met through in-house training CPD, they expressed some concerns. In particular, the focus on performance management was sometimes described as intimidating and onerous, specifically when associated with accountability (see chapter 7). None the less, most teachers and middle leaders understood the importance of lesson observations and learning walks *if undertaken in a collaborative way*. A discussion concerning whether staff think this happens or not will take place in section 7.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION II: How do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

Introduction

This chapter is the second of the four analysis chapters that explore and deepen the understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

This chapter focuses on the study's second research question: How do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

This chapter discusses the perceptions of the teaching and learning coordinator, middle leaders and teachers in the school about their experiences, weaknesses and strengths regarding lesson observation. While analysing the data related to this question, several themes emerged. These themes were grouped under two titles: process and practice. The process theme deals with managing lesson observation, while the practice theme includes teamwork, student learning, feedback after lesson observation, impact of feedback after lesson observation, and concerns inhibiting feedback after lesson observation.

Process: Managing lesson observation

Some intriguing differences emerged between teachers' and middle leaders' views of the management procedure of lesson observation and how it is put into practice in their departments. First, the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) clearly stated the school procedure on lesson observation:

> *The expectations are that every member of staff is observed formally three times a year [...] this should be done through your line manager [...] The observation should last at least half an hour, ideally a whole lesson to see it from start to finish so you can actually measure progress.*

The school policy on lesson observation states the following:

> *The expectation is that teachers are observed formally up to three times per year… teachers should be given at least five working days' notice of an observation and told the focus or purpose.* (School policy)

The above quotes indicate how the school policy has a clear set of procedures and rules on how lesson observation should be conducted across all the different departments within the school. These procedures are in accordance with the guidelines set by the various professional bodies that support the implementation of lesson observation in schools (DfE, 2012; NASUWT, 2011). Policies ensure consistency of practice across a school and ensure that all stakeholders involved in the school follow similar guidelines and have similar expectations (Marriott, 2001). In this school, therefore, it is evident that there is a clear lesson observation policy, and the school has set aims and objectives to promote high standards of educational achievement. However, to promote high-quality lessons, clear progress and improved outcomes for the teachers, the policy should have made more explicit links with a number of other school policies, such as the CPD policy.

Four out of the five middle leaders interviewed had a different opinion on enacting the school procedures, the choices given to the observed teachers prior to the observation, and/or the number of lessons formally observed each year, for example:

> *I looked at a few areas that I wanted to observe so I didn't give people a choice or what they were going to be observed for.* (SL4)

> *Sometimes I don't give them [teachers] enough notice. (SL5)*

> *Hard to remember when it [observation] is happening, too much is asked, I need to be reminded. (SL2)*

> *Twice a year! (SL1)*

Participant (SL3) also mentioned the dilemma she is faced with when it comes to lesson observation, as the principal of the school is a department member:

> *Who am I to tell the head teacher I should be observing her three times a year? It's really difficult [...] she was only observed once.*

The above quotes suggest that there is inconsistency in applying and communicating the school policy on lesson observation and feedback. This inconsistency observed may lead to controversy in the practice of lesson observation and the feedback process in the school. Moreover, the uncertainty has the potential to create distrust among teachers with regard to the value and benefit of the process. Middle leaders must, therefore, be clear about the management and communication structures in operation in their school to avoid inconsistency, and they also need to familiarise themselves with all school policies (Fleming, 2014). They need to establish stability and consistency in order to mobilise and

energise the teachers' performance of their vital responsibilities related to teaching and learning (Fleming, 2014).

Interestingly, despite the inconsistency evident in the middle leaders' comments, seven out of the ten teachers spoke positively about the communication preceding the lesson observation with their middle leaders. This communication may include the choice of the number of times the teacher is observed each year, and the group, period and day observed. As noted by Marriott (2001), it is good practice for observers to discuss the class to be observed as it allows the teacher some choice. This choice was illustrated by participant (ST3):

> *Normally I'm given a choice about what it is or what lesson I want it to be, what year group, [and] things like that.*

On the other hand, participant (ST5) stated that:

> *Lesson observations in the past couple of years only tend to have happened when they've needed to happen.*

Participant (ST3) did, however, voice her concern as an NQT over the lack of communication *"sometimes"* when coordinating the NQT observation in her department:

> *The only thing would be the coordination of the NQT programme because there are four of us I think, they are supposed to see us individually or at the same time, but they're not very good at communicating when that will be. So, I had a lesson all planned, and it got cancelled two minutes before, things like that. That's the problem.*

Moreover, very little is clear about the choice of the area to be observed, for example:

> *Sometimes, I don't get asked what I want to be observed on.* (ST1)

> *No targets set before my observations.* (ST9)

Despite what the teaching and learning coordinator claims*:*

> *Certain things should be the point of focus during the observation […] certain targets should be set before the observation.* (SC)

What is noticeable from the above quotes is the erratic application of the lesson observation process within the school procedure despite the formal lesson observation policy and the statements of the learning coordinator. It is difficult in these circumstances for teachers to feel that they are all treated equally, which detracts from maintaining a collegial setting which allows teachers to feel supported. If the current practices are sustained, they run the risk of undermining the team as well as the individual, and therefore preventing the

development of a collaborative culture (Fleming, 2014). Where teachers can exchange ideas and share good practice with one another with some occasional direction (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012), and when schools support teachers, the schools themselves will thrive and a collegial setting will emerge (Fleming, 2014).

Clearly, from the data there is some variation amongst the participants in their approach to the process. Some participants, such as (SL3), advocate an 'open-door policy' which facilitates informal observation, and others do not. Variations in approach like this have the potential to create a judgemental environment where some teachers or leaders are considered more open to lesson observation than others and which might have an impact on the teachers' annual appraisal.

In summary, the perceptions communicated in the interviews show differences in the approach to lesson observation policy by different middle leaders in the school. Two factors may be the key to understanding this variation. First, there is the difference between the desire for middle leaders to use lessons observation as CPD to encourage innovative and student-focused teaching (as outlined in Chapter 4), which needs to be balanced against the need to fulfil the formal school policies and procedures discussed above. The second factor may be training. For example, the researcher was made aware that SL1, SL3 and SL4 were on a lesson observation CPD training session not long before the interviews. Those middle leaders who are aware of the theory behind the process of lesson observation may have a different view on the process and the way it should be carried out from others who have not had similar training.

As Fleming (2014) points out, it is the responsibility of a leader to ensure that suitable systems are developed. In the case of the school being researched for this study, these systems should ensure that there are no contradictions between fulfilling the task as prescribed by the school and making sure that the teachers are feeling empowered to experiment with different teaching styles. Therefore, the leaders of the school may wish to consider addressing this concern in their training programmes for middle leaders. Despite the issues noted in the management of the lesson observation process, however, many of the participants acknowledged that the joint (collaborative) practice of observation among staff was a valuable improvement process, which may be labelled as 'hands-on' CPD.

Practice: Teamwork

In addition to the different views the participants voiced about how the lesson observation procedure is managed, some 'secondary' themes emerged which are worthy of further exploration. A major challenge for middle leaders is to transform a group of people they have responsibility for into a successful team (Fleming, 2014). Participants included teamwork in their answers during the interviews:

> *Definitely…I think the best observation programmes within the school that teachers consider are 'working together'. (SC)*

Participant (SL1) explained how lesson observation is conducted in her department:

> *I tend to, within my department; I will involve them [teachers] quite significantly. I think that if they don't have a buy-in, they will feel as if they are being done to and it will not work in my interests or the students' interests.*

She further explained the importance of teamwork and cooperation from her point of view:

> *The most important thing is that you feel as if you are supported […] have a shared common goal to move forward and that it is not a competition, everybody working for the same higher prize. (SL1)*

Similarly, participant (SL5) described her collaborative work within her team:

> *They have to be involved […] we have to liaise quite closely.*

These data suggest that when people feel involved and their voice is heard, they sense that they are supported and can be motivated by the process. There is a strong emphasis on teamwork within collegial contexts (Jarvis, 2012), and this can be perceived as an effective way of creating responsible teachers within the school community. Fostering teamwork is a good trait of leadership, as it encourages organisations to share leadership activities (Harris, 2013). Good leadership and teamwork may in turn be an effective way of facilitating students' success, which may not be possible to achieve if the teacher is working in isolation from the rest of their team, whether within or outside a department in the school setting.

In this study, the entire participating group of teachers expressed the feeling that teamwork was a key aspect to the lesson observation planning in their departments, as the following three teachers explained:

> *[In] my department, it has really been sort of collaborative planning. (ST1)*

We do quite a lot of collaborative planning and a lot of joint planning. We would sit down and come up with resources and put the lesson together; that way we both take a bit away and do that activity. (ST2)

Exchanging lesson plans, discussing seating plans and classroom management, observations. (ST4)

Despite this, participant (ST2) pointed out that while collegiality is observed in her department, it is done in a formal way

"It does exist, however as I say, it is a more formalised process like a weekly meeting, rather than a less formal one [where] we support each other as and when it is relevant".

This is also echoed by participant (ST1), who stated his unease over the formal approach within his department towards collegiality: *"I think it lacks the personal touch".*

These comments suggest that the middle leaders in their departments have some progress to make in their leadership practice to facilitate collegiality.

In summary, however, participants did show that they practise a form of collegial leadership with respect to those in their teams through their collaborative approach to lesson observation. They are taking on board various suggestions to come up with ideas and initiatives. This may play a vital role in helping teachers develop their teaching skills, which contributes to the organisation's success. This is particularly true when people in departments remember that the collaboration process is only a tool used to achieve a successful collaborative workplace and not the end in itself (Harris, 2013). Therefore, it is important for school leaders and teachers to keep in mind that the end goal is facilitating students' success, and that this is not easy to achieve if the teacher is working in isolation.

Practice: Students' learning

The idea behind the lesson observation process is to improve teaching and thus outcomes for students' learning (Fleming, 2014). It was found from the interviews that four of the middle leaders, seven of the teachers and the teaching and learning coordinator, have linked their experiences of lesson observation and feedback to the students' learning. They see that it benefits the students and improves their progress as well as improving teachers' progress (O'Leary, 2014). This can be observed, for example, in the comments made by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *It obviously impacted on the learning and the progress of the students in our care. (SC)*

His statement echoes some of the sentiments expressed by the other middle leaders, who also stated that lesson observation entails sharing ideas and creating the sense of a constructive approach in shaping the learning experience of the students in the school, as illustrated by the following participants:

> *I mean in the bigger sense, shaping young minds, helping people to make a journey in life to get them to challenge narrow thinking, all of that bigger picture stuff I think is what appealed most. (SL1)*

> *Ensure that students get the best possible [learning] experiences*. (SL3)

The following quotations from two teachers capture the perceptions of teachers of the link between lesson observation and students' learning. The teachers in the study showed that not only does lesson observation have a clear impact on the students' learning, but it also results in improvement in their own teaching:

> *Making sure they [students] move forward and they are achieving their potential. (ST1)*

> *I'm using [different] ideas in all my lessons and have improved my teaching, so I think it has been helpful to them [students]. (ST4)*

The above quotes show that both teachers and middle leaders display a great deal of enthusiasm towards facilitating their pupils' learning. They also indicate that teachers feel they are pledged to and confident in encouraging students to fulfil their potential. None the less, enthusiasm is insufficient to ensure pupils' learning; it is the duty of each teacher to provide the right learning culture for their students at all times too. As Bush (2003) points out, the teacher as a professional practitioner is responsible for everything in the classroom, including pedagogical matters. To allow them to fulfil this responsibility effectively, developing a supportive, collegial culture that enables effective learning to take place is of paramount importance for middle leaders. This will mean that students gain from the evaluation of teachers (Fleming, 2014).

The participants also mentioned the role of certain classroom teaching practices such as facilitating learning, behaviour management, and implementing the use of new technology in their teaching and learning. This experience was not always seen as positive. For instance, participant (SL2) disagreed completely with the idea that the new style of teaching and learning in the classroom was *"more skills-based"*. This participant (SL2) felt that *"we have become entertainers"*. He blamed this on the excessive use of technology. *"...the*

interactive whiteboard has an enormous use, but the initial side is to entertain". However, (SL2) acknowledged that:

> *There is a place for that particular aspect within the classroom and variety should be applauded because when they sit their exam, they sit their exam on their own",* but in his opinion *"the entertainment value is over-riding the educational value",*

However, many teachers did recognise the value of these practices:

> *So I think my own pedagogy has developed. (SL1)*

As demonstrated above, the participating teachers revealed during interviews that they are prepared to reform the way they approach their lessons after lesson observation in order to improve their students' learning.

In summary then, the above quotes lead to the understanding that lesson observation has resulted in constructive changes, such as an increase in commitment towards developing pedagogy, driven by desire to improve the students' learning. This aligns with the Department for Education view that lesson observation should demonstrate the capacity to bring about more development to teaching and learning (DfE, 2012)**.**

Practice: Feedback after lesson observation

During the interviews, all teachers and middle leaders displayed a clear understanding of feedback after lesson observation. Participants were asked if they were more influenced by feedback when it was conducted in a formal manner or when it was conducted in a collegial style. The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) in the school highlighted several major expectations which need to be taken into account when providing feedback after lesson observation:

> *Feedback as soon as possible, if the opportunity was there, it would be on the same day or the evening[…] you need to set aside an hour at least so the end of the day is a good opportunity for that so you're not going to get interrupted […] there needs to be a dialogue there […] a lot of it is about coaching […] get them to reflect that's what helps achieve improvements […] but also allow a dialogue between the observer and the observed. (SC)*

Furthermore, the school policy on lesson observation states, for example, the following:

1. *Coach the colleague through the feedback (20% observer talks, 80% teacher talks).*

2. *Make sure strengths are celebrated and areas for development are documented (School policy).*

The above quotes suggest that the school has a clear procedure and expectations on how a model feedback session after lesson observation should be conducted. It has been found that if the feedback provided is perceived by teachers to be of high quality, it is more likely that they will use the feedback to improve their teaching standards (O'Leary, 2014). Consequently, teachers' delivery of lessons may be improved as they develop their sense of identity, and this can make them approach their work differently and support students' learning more effectively.

The essence of the lesson observation procedure on feedback as discussed above was noted and recognised by participants in this study and practised by the majority of the middle leaders interviewed. As an example, the quote below shows how feedback after lesson observation can build a positive experience:

> *It is not judgmental, it is relaxed and informal, it is improving practice and I try to verbally reinforce that a lot. I also try to reinforce that with my actions and the openness that we have as well and try to make sure everyone knows it is not about hiding things, it is about being open and honest and the only way you can really improve is if you're open and honest, it is a true reflection.* (SL4)

Participant (SL1) gave a description of how important it is to give the observed colleague a platform to speak first:

> *A good lesson feedback is where the person you are observing always has a chance to say how it went first, to give their own judgment about areas you would have changed.*

Participant (SL2) further expressed a similar understanding of how feedback after lesson observation should be viewed as a mutual exercise:

> *If you're not going to have a debate and a conversation and involve them, then there's no point because they need to tell you what they want. You need to tell them what you want, and you need to come to a middle ground so that it is supportive and collaborative, rather than just going in and seeing a set of boxes and saying I tick that, I tick that, that and that, especially beyond the second year of teaching.*

On the other hand, this view was not shared by all middle leaders, and participant (SL3) gave a different insight into the way she conducts her feedback sessions after lesson observation:

> *Feedback is an interesting one because you always get that question, 'how do you feel the lesson has gone?', and I'm not really sure that's always the best way to open a feedback session because I think that, and myself included, you always focus on the negative, 'Oh well I could've done this better and I could've done that better', I think I'm much more of a formal mentor than a coach though as well. I like being*

coached; I like being told what was good, what [was] bad and what I could do to improve rather than probably trying to get it all out of me at one time.

What is noticeable from the quote made by participant (SL3) is that she has what might be termed a 'confused' approach to the feedback process. This is evident in the way she resorts to the concepts of coach and mentor in order to explain it. In addition, she not only lacks reflection on the effect of her own formal approach on the process but also does not see the value of allowing the teacher being observed to reflect.

The need for a formal approach is clearly contested by participant (ST3):

I don't think [the] formal [approach] works; I think when you just sit there and get spoken to, that doesn't really work. You have to be part of it because it's your observation. You're the only one that can take that further and if you're not part of the discussion, most of the time you're just switching off.

Typically, allowing observed teachers to communicate their feelings about their lessons, whether negatively or positively, is considered to be part and parcel of the whole process. In addition, collegial practice requires two-way communication at all levels (Bush and Coleman, 2001). Thus, middle leaders must provide adequate guidance to encourage an inclusive approach which will ensure team members' experiences are valued and their views not neglected.

Participant (SL2) claims that:

It's great when the person giving the feedback does not feel obliged to feel the dictates of the document in their hand. When they have the ability and the experience to know what is important beyond the requirements of the observation.

What is suggested from the above quote is that flexibility can lead to a more all-inclusive approach to the whole lesson observation procedure. This might be because the observer is a well-established middle leader: *"I have been teaching for 29 years!"*

Seven of the teachers interviewed spoke positively about their experience of feedback sessions after lesson observations. Participant (ST2) gave a comprehensive account of a recent lesson observation feedback he had had, and argued:

In the conversation that I have had, which is to my mind how a feedback should be: a two-way process […] the feedback was given informally, almost in a coaching style. It gave me quite a few clear things to work on, which is what's really important.

And:

> *Feedback is always brilliant [...] we do it together, so he says do you understand, or do you think I'm being fair, what would you say? We do it like that really. (ST3)*

The following quote is from one of the teachers who praised the collegial approach in her department:

> *Within our department it's a little bit more informal. In that kind of respect, it's good because the agenda is clear, it's there to see what's going on, what could be done better and so the barriers are dropped a little bit in terms of me thinking that I need to watch what I'm doing, I could be very natural and the person who's observing truly sees what a normal lesson would look like and then based on that, real feedback can be given, which is a really good thing, then a conversation happening afterwards as to how things went, what could've been done better. (ST8)*

These quotes suggest that there is a deep-rooted collaboration in the process of feedback after lesson observation. Two of the respondents went further and explained that:

> *I am very lucky in my department because [...] what I do find great about the feedback is that they agree with me, so if I say let's do this, and they've already thought of that, so it's not me sitting and listening, it's more of a discussion and coming to a conclusion that way. (ST10)*

> *Fairly flexibly, whenever works for us and it's quite an informal chat and we usually get a copy of the observation itself, so yeah, fairly happy with that. (ST7)*

The above quotes show that the teachers interviewed felt appreciated as they were participating in a collegial feedback process. An open and supportive culture in which colleagues feel valued and secure is likely to promote professional learning (Fleming, 2014). However, the question arises to whether teachers in the school participating in this research feel supported at all times. Participant (ST6) has had a mixed experience with her feedback after lesson observation:

> *I've had different experiences, some of my experiences of lesson observations have been very thorough, very supportive, very constructive, and other observations have been not necessarily as professional as I thought they should have been, in terms of 'in for a couple of minutes, out again', not a lot of feedback and suddenly I hear feedback from someone else about what they saw. (ST6)*

Participant (ST9) argued for the necessity that all parties taking part in the lesson observation process work professionally *"I think [...] working with the people you work with must be professional"*. Participant (ST2) stresses that the feedback after lesson observation has *"got to be a discussion"* and warns of a negative experience he had: *"In my last school it got to a point where we were told it was not a negotiation"*.

This is also echoed by participant (SL2):

> *I have had lesson observation feedback where people have said "You could have done this, you could have done that, etc." [...] well, yes, but within that context it was not appropriate.*

Participant (ST9) moreover, felt that:

> *If you don't necessarily have a good working relationship with the person who's observing, you or if you're intimidated by them [...] I think that can have a negative impact as well.*

Clearly, acting professionally is an important way to avoid clashes in personality. The above quotes highlight the importance of a 'professional' approach to lesson observation feedback as an important and sometimes contentious process between the observers and those being observed. Fleming (2014) and O'Leary (2014) suggest that one reason for this might be that observers are afraid to lose control in the lesson observation process because of the school's expectations as well as because lesson observation is linked to performance and pay.

In summary, there was an overall agreement among teachers and middle leaders that feedback was taking place after their lesson observation, providing a form of collaboration in their departments. While feedback conducted in a collegial style was preferred for development, feedback organised in a more formal style was applauded too. This may indicate that participants also like to be valued in a formal setting. Moreover, there is an understanding of the multiple practices relating to feedback after lesson observation, and participants are sensitive to the manner in which teachers conduct themselves in terms of ethics, behaviour and communication. Participants also see the links with enhancing students' progress. Thus, participants fully understand their position and the role they have to play.

Practice: Impact of feedback after lesson observation

The purpose of feedback is to enhance awareness and increase the efficiency of teachers (O'Leary, 2014). Participants in the study implied that the feedback session after lesson observation had influenced them significantly. This influence was clear in the various quotes made by all participants, when asked whether they were influenced by the comments given after lesson observation. Secondary common themes emerged, for example,

'empowered', 'trust' and 'supportive' are indicators of positive impact whereas 'feeling threatened' is an indicator of negative impact.

As well as contributing to the pedagogy of teaching, it was perceived that collegial feedback had also enhanced students' learning. This is in line with O'Leary's (2014) observation that feedback can influence the subject curriculum and pedagogy for teachers, and hence the students' learning is also enhanced. This observation is illustrated by, for example, the following quote from the school coordinator who recognised the impact of teachers acting upon prior feedback recommendations in a collegial environment:

> *The best way of improving the teaching is giving people feedback, empowering them to reflect, and if you are doing that as a school and everyone is doing it, it will have a massive impact, you can really add value to what happens in each classroom by providing good feedback for lesson observations. (SC).*

Participant (SL5) felt the impact was positive *"we are in this together"*, citing the reason as *"because the trust is there"*. Participant (SL2) shared a similar view: *"Definitely, I feel we are being asked more for our opinion, which is great"*. He further claimed: *"I think it has got better so, I think it is having more of a positive impact"*. Moreover, participant (SL3) spoke of *"an incredibly positive"* impact of feedback on a lesson she informally observed. She further claimed that *"he [teacher] got an outstanding [grade] in his formal observation the following week"* and *"it was just so good"* and she *"felt like I was a part of that successful process"*. Participant (SL2) explains why he believes the impact has improved:

> *I think because [...] one of the things that I learnt very early is that lesson observation should be collaborative, and it should be supportive, rather than feeling threatening.*

While the above participants focused on the collegial environment, participant (SL4) relates the impact of feedback after lesson observation to the type of relationship between the observed and the observer:

> *I think contextually a lot of it comes down to personal relationships with people, about how things are or how they're going to go. I think that has a massive impact on it. I think in this place again it comes down to personal relationships, and personal roles of staff are stronger than our systems, so therefore a lot of it depends on what individuals you've got doing certain things.*

The feedback after lesson observation process, if it is conducted in a collegial manner, will stimulate critical reflection on teacher's practice (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Raymond, 2006). This may suggest that if teachers have been given a feeling of trust, they

will grow professionally. Teachers are welcoming of their leaders in their rooms if they can feel that a level of trust and respect has been established between colleagues (Fleming, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Raymond, 2006). What emerges from the above discussion and quotes is that middle leaders need to maintain an inclusive and collegial approach in order to ensure that team members' feel valued and supported. When this is done, as voiced by (ST3):

> *The impact was massive.*

Participant (ST8) also felt he was *"supported"* during his last lesson observation feedback compared to the way *"it used to be in the past",* where he used to feel *"threatened".* This is clearly illustrated by a quote from participant (ST5) *"I feel comfortable and supported, no, never threatened".* While participant (ST6) agrees that there is *"an impact, yes",* he qualifies this by saying that this happens:

> *When it's [lesson observation and feedback] done thoroughly and when it is done objectively as well.*

In contrast, when interviewed about the whole process in her department, participant (ST7) spoke of a different experience from the other teachers, *"I don't feel they are supportive to any of us",* and she claims that this lack of support may *"disempower a member of staff, rather than supporting them".* Moreover, participant (ST1) warns that too many observations can lead to teachers being viewed as if they are not to be trusted:

> *I think it has a negative [impact] because if the children see you observed constantly in lessons I think they perhaps think that you're not quite to be trusted.*

The above quote suggests that there was an element of threat and lack of support in the experience this teacher is having. None the less, there was wide acceptance among the majority of participants that the process is less of a threat due to the way it is now conducted (i.e. in a supportive manner). This might be due to the collaborative training middle leaders are receiving regarding lesson observation and feedback (indeed, the researcher, along with other middle leaders, has attended a few workshops on lesson observation within the school in the past three years). This training and the resulting collaborative environment may enhance teachers' performance too.

Practice: Concerns inhibiting feedback after lesson observation

Two 'secondary' themes emerged here that were central to the participants' concerns during feedback after lesson observation: time, and subject specialism of the observer.

Time

It was found that participants' engagement in the lesson observation and feedback process was highly dependent on the time available. Time is one of the barriers in the teaching profession (DfES, 2006)**.** Participants, i.e. teachers and middle leaders, were unanimous that there is not enough time set aside for feedback after lesson observation to take place adequately. This contrasts with the claim made by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *Valuable time should be allocated for the feedback.* (SC)

Furthermore, the school policy on lesson observation states the following:

> *Adequate time must be agreed for the feedback – around 40-60 minutes. If it proves difficult to arrange a mutually convenient opportunity for feedback in non-contact time, then the Senior Leader i/c teaching and learning coordinator should make provision for cover.*

Despite these aspirations, the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) pointed out that teachers may not have the privilege of the same amount of *"thinking time"* as their observers because their whole day was more likely to be taken up with teaching than that of the leader-observers. Time also appeared to be a significant constraining force for middle leaders who wished to engage in giving quality feedback:

> *There is not enough time because time that was available was taken up for the dissemination of information and then we had to go away and fill in the documentation.* (SL4)

A similar concern is voiced by two other middle leaders:

> *Time, it needs to be something that is really valuable in terms of time.* (SL5)

> *Having time to give feedback, for reflection from their [teachers'] point of view, and then I also think I mentioned coming up with some sort of action in terms of development.* (SL1)

Participant (SL3) also noted problems with not being able to deliver feedback timeously:

> *Not having time. For me that's the biggest one. Not being able to meet with somebody and them actually getting frustrated because I think that's one of the most important things, meeting quite quickly.*

Participant (SL3) also spoke of a worst-case scenario in the form of emailing the teachers with their lesson observation feedback:

> *I think the worst thing you can do is email the feedback that would be just the worse. For formal things, I would never do it.*

Participant (SL2) sums up the concern:

> *Time first of all. Sometimes you don't have enough time to give the feedback. On occasion, the feedback comes far too late and it's rushed.*

Achieving the balance between allocating adequate time for the whole of the lesson observation process and running the department effectively is a fine and difficult line for middle leaders to address, as certain decisions need processing, and a certain amount of that processing requires the involvement of all members. One solution might be that the school should address this issue in its lesson observation procedure, so time for feedback is clearly seen to be a compulsory part of the lesson observation itself. As it is clear from the interviews that the provision stated in the school lesson observation policy is not being fully implemented, it is suggested that school observation policies need to be kept under review in order to meet not only all the statutory requirements but also the school's needs (Marriott, 2001),

Interestingly, the concern expressed by middle leaders over the lack of time being the biggest obstacle encountered during the feedback after lesson observation is also shared by the teachers that participated in this study, for example:

> *Time, which is how it used to be…* (ST2)
>
> *At the end of the lesson, depending on time available…* (ST3)
>
> *Not rushing the process because you all need time to just take a breather.* (ST10)
>
> *I think booking in a time, making it slightly more formal where you're going to have no interruptions.* (ST5)
>
> *Lack of an arranged time for the feedback to happen [as] it might have a negative impact on the actual evaluation of your observation.* (ST9)

Time was an obstacle when it came to conduct constructive feedback because teachers and middle leaders have a hectic school day full of other responsibilities, leaving very little time

to conduct other activities, such as feedback after lesson observation. What emerges from the above quotes is that middle leaders must show effective leadership and provide an inclusive approach to negotiating time management in order to ensure that team members feel that lesson observation and feedback are important activities, and that their contribution and participation is valued. Collegiality has been found to maximise teacher effectiveness, promote collaboration and encourage development of the lesson observation process which in turn enhances pupils' achievements (MacDonald and Tyler, 2010). An important factor in contributing to a collegial approach to the process and achieving the benefits noted by MacDonald and Tyler (2010) is having enough time to do justice to discussing the lesson observed.

Subject specialism of the observer

Subject specialism of the observer was another secondary theme to evolve after analysing the data. It is important that the observer is a specialist in the subject they are observing (O'Leary, 2014). In the case of the school participating in this research, the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) stated that a new system had been implemented in the school, as opposed to the old system where teachers used to be observed by subject specialist inspectors:

> *The old system was that, as you probably well remember, you had an observation week and you had a subject specialist in your department and you would be observed two or three times.*

Three middle leaders voiced their concern over the new practice, which allows a non-specialist to conduct lesson observation:

> *I also feel that it's helpful if you can observe people who are teaching your subject.* (SL1)

And that:

> *I think they [teachers] sometimes get more annoyed, almost like you're stepping on their toes because you're not a Spanish specialist or a science specialist and you're telling them how they should be in their departments.* (SL4)

Participant (SL3) underlined the issue with the grading of lessons observed by a non-specialist:

> *Obviously, observing people outside of your subject area is really tough and I know of people in this school who have felt really hard done by when a non-subject*

specialist has observed them and given them a lower grade than they felt they deserved because they perhaps don't understand their craft.

The above quotes clearly show how difficult it is for the middle leaders to be observed by non-subject specialists, especially when the lesson observed is one of the three formal observations per year. These participants made clear their preferences for the old system. The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) also acknowledges the benefits to his teaching career of the old practice:

I made so much progress in my teaching based on the feedback […] that was given me.

The concern regarding difficulties arising from lack of experience in the subject by an observer which the middle leaders voiced above, was echoed by the majority of the teachers (eight out of ten) interviewed, for example:

I think it's difficult sometimes when you have a non-specialist observing you because they don't necessarily know […] why it's relevant to the lesson. (ST5)

And:

Theoretically, it should be the teacher of your subject, that's something that is pretty important, so for the observer to genuinely have an appreciation of what that class is like and what it's like to teach that subject I would say is a massive advantage as well. (ST8)

Another teacher added another dimension to subject specialism: engagement in the lesson. This is shown in the following statement:

Subject matter, I think it needs to be done in departments to truly make an impact. It's good to get a taster of other things as well. I remember when I saw a history teacher I couldn't quite engage because it was a subject I'd never taught, that I'm not massively familiar with. So I think if it's in departments it's really relevant. (ST7)

Clearly, in order to engage in the lesson, and therefore in lesson observation, the observer at least needs to have some understanding of the subject area.

The above quotes indicate that as well as making them feel uncomfortable, the participants were concerned that the new system might reflect negatively on their work with their classes. Perhaps in order to overcome this particular concern, the school could invest in training a dedicated team of observers who observe across all subject areas, as is practised in some other schools (O'Leary, 2014). However, despite this barrier to lesson observation, there was overwhelming consensus among all participants that the benefits of lesson observation to their teaching career potentially outweigh any concern.

Summary

This chapter offered an analysis of the teachers' and middle leaders' perception and experience of lesson observation, thereby addressing the second supporting research question: How do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback? The chapter also offers a foundation for the remaining two analysis chapters.

The fundamental themes evolved out of the context of the way participants understood and experienced the process of lesson observation in their departments in the wider school context (especially when the process is conducted in a collegial style), the accepted qualities of the process, and the acknowledgement of the process as a constructive practice.

Nevertheless, there are still certain aspects of the feedback given after lesson observation which give rise to concerns for teachers, such as the time allocated, and the subject specialism of the observer. Additionally, middle leaders recognised that they, too, had concerns with the limited time given to deliver constructive feedback after lesson observation.

Both teachers and middle leaders acknowledged the impact of lesson observation on teaching and learning, recognising that it enhanced pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning, and thereby also student engagement.

Three characteristics were recognised that aided successful achievement at the school of the lesson observation process: to listen with attention to teachers with the intention of formulating an honest discussion, to allow enough time to thoroughly deliver feedback after lesson observation, and to feel supported by colleagues in a collegial manner.

Finally, if rather than simply a cordial relationship, genuine collegiality with the aim of establishing a constructive experience for both the observed and the observer is to take place during the process, the aspects of the lesson observation and feedback process outlined above will need to be addressed purposefully.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION III: How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and departmental culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

Introduction

This chapter is the third of the four analysis chapters that explore and deepen the understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

This chapter focusses on the study's third research question: How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and departmental culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

This sub-research question is about establishing teachers' and middle leaders' views regarding the influence the school and departmental cultures have on lesson observation. After analysing the data related to this sub-question, several themes emerged. These themes – perception of school culture, perception of departmental culture, and impact on lesson observation – are described below.

Perception of school culture

Perceptions of teachers, middle leaders and the teaching and learning coordinator about the school culture vary — from formal, which is assumed to be negative and considered as uncooperative and unsupportive, to informal, which is perceived to be positive, and collegial or even inconsistent, which falls in between the formal and the informal. This perception of inconsistency is clear in the comment made by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *I think the school culture is inconsistent I would say [...] I think the school culture is very hard-working... I think there are some people that are very formal...I think there are some people that are very informal...I think there are certain silos within the school that are very collegial. But I don't necessarily think that everybody is working together as much as they could be, and I think that's a detriment.* (SC)

He further explains that the school culture, because of this inconsistency in the way the senior leadership team (SLT) is managing the school affairs, can be described as 'negative':

> *I think [the school culture] often can be quite negative because of the way it isn't acknowledged from a leadership [SLT] point of view.*

Interestingly, the understanding arising from the above quotations is that the school does not have a clear culture from which the interactions among its all stakeholders can be viewed. This may be because the current school culture is going through a phase of change with the appointment of a new head teacher. Leaders are progressively being seen as the main force behind any reform and facilitators of a culture that caters for all, with the core role of making relevant decisions (Harris, 2013). This may point towards the important role leaders have to play in facilitating a culture that allows for a devolved type of culture to take place in order to bring the whole school together. This will be discussed further later in this chapter.

The differences among all participating middle leaders regarding their perceptions of the school culture are significant too.

Four of the ten teachers interviewed clearly stated that the school culture is best described as 'formal':

> *Formal, yeah. I think the school culture as a whole is quite hard-working and I think that the school culture seems to be very dedicated.* (ST8)

And strongly voiced by participant (ST1):

> *I think it's quite formal and it's led from the top, so senior staff make most of the decisions. It's very much the case of cowboys and Indians I think within the school culture.*

One middle leader identified the school culture as:

> *Staff were closer and worked together more than now [...] it's [school] moving towards a formal one.* (SL4)

Similarly, participant (SL3) agrees that the school culture is *"quite formal"*. However, in contrast to participant (SL4)'s perception, she believes that the school culture is becoming *"less formal than I think it used to be"*.

Another middle leader (SL1) reinforced the sense of inconsistency in the overall school culture:

> *Our school culture is not very clearly defined.*

More specifically, she expanded on the reason for her claim by explaining that the school is trying to accommodate many aspects of both the formal and collegial cultures:

> *We are trying to create a formal culture that is one of aspiration and academic and a school of choice of 'formal', but I think we also have a 'collegial' culture of inclusion at all costs.*

Moreover, she (SL1) warns that *"sometimes those two things [cultures] don't quite fit".* She further claims that *"the school identity is compromised".* In thinking about the combination of these two different cultures, it is important to recognise their strengths. As Leithwood et al. (2004) argue, collegiality has the potential to improve the performance and outcomes of a school by allowing teachers to become leaders. On the other hand, the formal culture has the advantage of ensuring there still remains a clear head at the top.

Reflecting the collegial culture, middle leader (SL2) states clearly:

> *I would say from my perspective it's collegial, it's friendly.*

The above perception of participant (SL2) arises from the experience he is encountering at the moment with the new current head teacher:

> *At the moment, there is a head teacher that I'm working with where I quite happily have conversations, raise issues and concerns, and I am able, if I wish to, to sit down and have a dialogue. [...] I am in a good place [...] we have a clear understanding, we agree and we're able to discuss things.*

These quotes suggest that feelings of having an open dialogue are related specifically to the collegial culture with its expectation that teachers are able to share their opinions and therefore will enjoy friendly and supportive relations with each other. This is more likely to happen when leaders have positive, collegial relationships with the rest of the staff (Hoy and Tarter, 2008).

As noted previously, the answers teachers gave when asked about their perception of their school culture yielded views ranging from formal through collegial to informal. However, the most interesting common perception among seven of the ten participating teachers was that change has taken place in the school culture:

> *I think it's changed since I started here. I think it has got more formal over the last couple of years.* (ST10)

Change was also acknowledged by participant (ST7), who expressed the opinion that staff used to feel more part of the school culture as they were 'working together'. She further criticises the abolition of the staffroom:

> *I think it has changed massively in the period of time that I have worked in this school. In the last 10 years, the culture of the school has changed. I think the sense of staff working together has always been there. The culture of the staffroom where*

people meet and talk, it's no longer there as a work base, which I think is lovely when that happens. (ST7)

Having teachers communicating regularly such as in the staffroom can lead to learning relevant information about their students, such as social background or any other information which may be helpful to others when planning and delivering lessons with the aim of constructively involving students with their learning.

The quotes above highlight a reform that has happened in the past few years, predominantly because the school moved from being a secondary comprehensive, State-run school to becoming an academy in the past six years and appointing a new head teacher. Three or four members of the group, those who have been working in the school long enough, spoke at length about the controversy associated with these recent changes. They pointed out that the culture of the school before these changes was less formal and more collegial. Bush (2011) voices a concern that when change is imposed upon teachers, they are unlikely to feel part of the required change if they have not had the chance to make their own choices. For example, participant (ST10) highlighted the opinion about these recent changes:

> *I think it's quite a reactive culture. We are doing everything at 100 miles per hour, rather than standing back and thinking what's best. It's very much reactive to something that's happened in the news or we've had feedback from somewhere that were like, 'right we need to change this', and I'm not sure that's the best.*

Despite the fact that there was overall agreement among all participants that students' achievement has become more prominent alongside these changes in the school culture, some teachers did not agree with all aspects of the culture change; for example, not all would come to Saturday school (an initiative introduced to trouble-shoot the lack of academic progress for selected pupils in years 9 and11).

> *I can't do Saturdays!* (ST1)

These comments can be linked to a discussion by participant (SL4) on the 'split' that is happening among all stakeholders in the school as a result of culture change in the school:

> *The school culture is difficult to [describe] because it's becoming a bit more split than what it once was…I also think that there seems be a kind of split developed between SLT and middle leaders, and then middle leaders between staff as well. Unfortunately, there's a bit of a division. (SL4)*

The formal culture of the school as has been mentioned in the interviews above, led in some cases to teachers feeling that they were unable to voice an opinion. One teacher felt that since she had been at the school for only two years, who to talk to was still 'vague' to her:

> *I think it is becoming far more formal. I don't think there is a great deal of connection amongst staff. When there is, it's formalised, to a very business-like approach and people are not saying things because they aren't sure what to say to whom.* (ST7)

Collegiality as a practice, however, requires two-way communication at all levels (Bush and Coleman, 2001), and so for a true collegial culture to be implemented, everyone should be included, with the ability to be able to share her/his views and staff ought to work as a team.

Another teacher had a different perception, however. She felt that the reality at the moment in the school was that there were 'mini cultures' within the overarching school culture. Although there may be some issues with this perception, overall this might be viewed as a positive factor within the culture of the school because it shows that departments within the school can work with a great deal of autonomy from the main overarching school culture (Hoerr, 2005).

> *There's pockets of cultures that go on and at the moment it feels as though one school culture has broken down and there are elements of mini cultures that are working very well.* (ST5)

A newly qualified teacher perceived the school culture differently from the above teachers:

> *I wouldn't say it's formal. I wouldn't say that it's really informal either […] I would say that it's probably somewhere in the middle.* (ST4)

Participant (ST9) who has been working in the school for three years after completing his newly qualified teacher status (also at the school) elaborated on his perception of the school culture, using the word 'supportive' to describe it:

> *So, if we're talking about the culture […] I would not regard this institution as corporate or having a corporate identity at all [...] people are quite supportive.* (ST9)

This sentiment was reinforced by a well-qualified teacher who joined the school recently, participant (ST2), who sees the school culture best described as 'informal' and 'collegial':

> *I would say it [is] sort of informal and it was just from observing as a new teacher [...] I'd say …… it's [school culture] collegial.* (ST2)

Participant (ST3) mentioned the issue of lack of clarity in her opinion over the school culture and blames the senior leadership team (SLT) team for this:

> *I think one minute they [SLT] want to be formal and draconian and say this is what everyone has to do by this specific date, and then the next thing they want to be all nice and 'oh come into my office, have a little chat', is that chat an informal chat,*

or is it you're being nice but actually it's formal? I feel like SLT or people from the top don't know what they want.

Furthermore, it was very clear that the two cultures – formal and collegial – have overlapped each other, as discussed clearly by participant (ST5), concerning the collecting of students' 'data':

> *There are formal elements to it in terms of boxes that we have to tick, and you've got to go through the process of the reports and the data and everything like that, [...] a lot of formalities that take place but there seems to be a lot of very different groups that work together well as opposed to everyone working together or everyone being led effectively to work together.*

In summary then, the results reveal that the participating teachers' and middle leaders' views on the culture in the school are diverse and their perceptions and that of the teaching and learning coordinator, do not always concur. The meanings and understandings that participants attached to school culture ranged from formal to collegial, reflecting the descriptions and characteristics described in the literature discussed in chapter 2). A number of factors help us understand the variable views of staff. First, participants' experiences vary, for example, (SL2) has been teaching for 29 years and this experience might have informed his description of the school culture to be of a collegial nature. Secondly, the participants' encounters, whether positive or negative, with their senior leadership team (SLT) may have affected their perceptions. The third factor is that the two cultures – the formal and collegial – sometimes appear to overlap each other and it is hard to separate them, especially in complex organisations such as schools (see literature in chapter 2). The final factor may be the state of change the school is going through at the moment, especially with the appointment of a new head teacher. Nevertheless, a more robust collegial relationship between all members of schools would be beneficial for the purposes of implementing reform (Harris, 2013). It is claimed by Harris and Spillane (2008) that allowing leadership to be shared improves the outcomes of the school. This in turn influences teachers, giving them ownership of their day-to-day practices. It also gives teachers the sense that they are part of a team, and more importantly, part of the school's goal. Therefore, a culture that creates the feeling of working together rather than working for a leader will benefit the school's overall goal, which is to educate its pupils.

Perception of departmental culture

During the interviews, middle leaders and teachers in the school responded to the question on their understanding of their departmental culture and described it as being 'collegial', using words such as 'collaborative', 'supportive', as well as 'formal' and 'informal'.

Although there were variations in the answers given by teachers and middle leaders, a number of secondary themes surfaced that deserve to be investigated:

- Communication
- Working together as a staff (teamwork)

The majority of the middle leaders (four out of the five that participated in this study) described their department's culture as 'collaborative' or 'collegial', and agreed that the teachers within their departments are encouraged and supported:

> *I'm quite proud of fostering a culture of 'collegial' support and communication so I think we work quite well together [....] It's definitely not a 'me at the top and them underneath', but if someone is not doing something they should, I would try to have a frank conversation with them about it.* (SL1)

Through collegiality, the teachers increase their self-confidence and expertise to participate and take on different responsibilities in the department:

> *Massively supportive, 'collegial', will do anything for each other within reason. Everyone is really selfless [...] they're amazing at supporting each other and taking on responsibilities.* (SL4)

The opportunities for collaborative lesson observation occur regularly:

> *We get on really well in working 'collaboratively' together, [conducting] lesson observation, and we communicate and listen to one another.* (SL2)

This information suggests that four middle leaders were engaging in dialogue to encourage and reinforce support for improvement within their department's culture, because leaders are not always able to resolve the challenges arising unaided, encouraging teamwork is strongly recommended (Jones and Rudd, 2007). The kind of collegial practice being described by these participants may help teachers improve their teamwork input and thus progress professionally.

On the other hand, it was an interesting discovery that middle leaders' views in the school vary. For example, participant (SL3) gave a totally different answer to the third research question, compared with all other middle leaders participating in this study:

My department is definitely quite formal I think. I've been told it's quite formal. I mean, yes, I like things to be done a certain way but as I've previously said that's because I have really high expectations and so therefore I expect my staff to uphold those expectations as well. Do things in your own way, but make sure that the kids are behaving, and they are progressing. That's kind of the main thing for me.

This example may signify a tension around how to involve and empower teachers to take part fully in the department's teaching and learning aspects with lesson observation and feedback at the heart of it all, if they do not have the opportunity to feel engaged in a dialogue and feel supported by their middle leader. Mulford (2003) points out that middle leaders can not only protect teachers from pressures within the school and outside it, but also promote greater teacher satisfaction. He further adds that teacher satisfaction leads to improved teacher classroom performance. Hence, while the teachers are at the forefront of facilitating students' progress, the middle leader, who has the most contact with teachers, can have a significant impact on promoting effective teaching and students' learning (Fleming, 2014). This means that motivating staff is likely to be a key role the middle leader plays within the department.

Eight of the ten teachers participating describe their department's culture as 'supportive' and 'informal' and used the expression 'we' extensively in their interviews. They conveyed that they feel positive about the culture in their departments, as there are elements of involvement and collaboration:

I'd say it's quite informal…. I think within the department there is a really diverse range of experiences and backgrounds. We could possibly learn more from each other, but I think we are all […] going in the right direction together. (ST2)

As well as being able to share their opinions frequently, teachers felt that they are not 'judged' when they do so:

It's supportive, always wanting you to develop professionally. No judgement as well, that would be the way that I would sum it up. (ST10)

Furthermore, teachers value the support in a collegial culture and react positively to recommendations, which consolidate their practice and, consequently, keep them motivated and feeling valued:

It's [culture] very positive and collegial. We all work together. We know who we need to go to. (ST3)

And:

Our departmental culture is, I would say, very motivated, very supportive. (ST5)

The culture in the department is very supportive of one another. (ST6)

The department has [a] really fantastic culture [and] is really supportive. (ST8)

The sense of a bond and teamwork among departmental staff within an informal departmental culture was also reinforced:

> *It is informal. We all work really well together, I think there is such a strong team bond and I think you can see that we do really well [...] for example, if somebody is off ill, we would cover their lessons.* (ST4)

Many of the teachers expressed professional admiration for their middle leaders and while acknowledging that they are in charge, talked about their good working relationship, as exemplified by participant (ST9) here:

> *It's very informal. It's obvious that the line manager is in charge. I'm kind of second to him, but there's only two of us, we work very well together [...] we have a good working relationship, very professional.* (ST9)

The understanding which emerges from the comments made by the eight teachers above is that collaborative work among the teachers integrated several aspects of collegiality, such as the ability to exchange thoughts and seek guidance without the fear of prior judgement. Hence, while there is an understanding that middle leaders are formally in charge of their departments, it is apparent that this type of working together is collegial rather than formal.

However, not all teachers agreed with the above viewpoint, with participant (ST1) having different perceptions of her departmental culture. She voiced a degree of concern and described the departmental culture as formal. She felt that she did not have any input and there was limited dialogue related to the lesson observed, especially during the feedback session:

> *It's formal, I don't think there's enough time, enough opportunities to actually sit down with colleagues and just discuss good practice in lesson observation.* (ST1)

Furthermore, while teachers showed that they clearly have a high regard for each other and are extremely polite with one another, it seems that there is evidence that a lack of dialogue is a problem in some departments. This might stop them from working effectively together, as participant (ST7) illustrates below:

> *It doesn't feel that it gels particularly well, with no communication, but I think other people would like to think otherwise, but that's my perception of it.*

In summary then, findings of the staff perceptions indicate that, while there were some differences in actual practice, there was an agreement among both teachers and middle leaders that departmental teamwork was very important. The language used incorporates

strong indications of team identity; the word 'we' appeared frequently during the interviews with the participants about their departmental culture. As NCSL (2003) claim, middle leaders speak affectionately of the culture of collegiality in their departments and the way they go about carrying out their duties and the way they interact with their colleagues. An important role of middle leaders, therefore, is not just to help, support and give direction to teachers, but also to create a comfortable culture in their working areas (Fleming, 2014). This may allow teachers to move forward with their experience during lesson observation and feedback and flourish. In this mutual relationship, middle leaders and teachers can collaborate to achieve shared goals.

Impact on lesson observation and feedback

It is claimed by Bush (2011) that school and departmental cultures should reflect the type of environment that facilitates teachers to have a dialogue and converse over academic issues. When considering the impact of departmental environment on lesson observation and feedback, a number of secondary themes emerged, some of which fit into Bush's ideal, and some of which do not. These secondary themes were: trust, supportiveness, successful experience, decision-making and feeling threatened. A number of these were expressed by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *I think they need to feel comfortable, supported. Also, I think there needs to be a culture within that area, so we do certain things in it, this is our identity as a department or faculty, [and] so you don't want to let anyone down in that respect as well. And I think being supported and being heard and listened to is really crucial; the best way of improving the teaching is giving people feedback, empowering them to reflect, and if you are doing that as a school and everyone is doing it, it will have a massive impact.*

The understanding emerging from the above quote is that the hoped-for culture of the school on lesson observation and feedback is likely to evolve when teachers are sharing resources, engaging in a dialogue and creating a sense of shared goals, as well as through the empowering of teachers to reflect effectively on their experience of lesson observation without the fear of being penalised. The role of the coordinator and middle leaders is important here, as the literature acknowledges that leaders are able to build a stable foundation of collegial leadership when they recognise the capabilities and contributions of their colleagues (Jones and Rudd, 2007).

Despite the clear differences regarding the way middle leaders perceived their school and departmental cultures as discussed in the previous two sections, they did recognise and discuss the impacts and influence cultures may have on lesson observation and feedback. A positive impact was felt by participant (SL1): *"Absolutely [in] terms of lesson observation, in my department"*. She further gave an example of a teacher she manages: *"She has led a session on lesson observation"*. This is an example of the important role leaders have to play in facilitating an environment that allows for devolved leadership to take place.

Developments in the delivery of lessons were attributed to collaborative observation, according to participant (SL5), who felt the experience of his lesson observation in the school to be positive: *"we are in this together"*; he then gave a reason for his comment: *"because the trust is there"*:

> *I learnt very early on that lesson observation should be collaborative and it should be supportive, rather than feeling threatening.* (SL5)

The understanding from the above quotations is that the school has a culture that includes trust and a common goal. This culture of trust creates an environment for teachers in which they feel part of a team and feel they will not be unfairly criticised. In this environment, teachers will innovate and not be afraid of making mistakes because they know that their leaders and colleagues will support them (Bush, 2011).

Participant (SL3) acknowledged this element of trust; she gives the sense that even high expectations can be beneficial in this environment:

> *There is a certain element of trust in this school towards lesson observation, which is good and [...] when you've proven yourself I think that people expect a lot of you and I think that can be a good thing.*

She did, however, also express concerns. Here she explains the reason for feeling less positive:

> *But it can also be a negative thing because I think that, as I say, I think you do feel alone sometimes and you feel like you're having to deal with problems arising after lesson observation which actually are school problems, they're not just in your department.*

An experienced middle leader (SL1) who has been teaching for 15 years and has worked at the school for the past eight years pointed out that trust in the system of lesson observation had been quite different in the past and, in recognising the issue expressed above by SL3, felt that the observed should trust the observer:

I think that we have a school now where that's less the case towards it [lesson observation], but you have to put trust in the person observing you that they'll be able to see that some of those things are not within your control and some of them are.

The quotations above highlight an important concern but do not make it clear whether middle leaders are willing to talk to the teachers if they have such difficulties during or after lesson observation and feedback. It seems that it is left to each middle leader to formulate her/his own policy and procedures. Silins and Mulford (2002) draw a parallel between the experience of teachers and pupils and suggest that teachers will find it difficult to create conditions that support student learning if they themselves do not have a similar supportive setting supporting their learning. In the light of this, it is suggested that it may be beneficial to put a more structured method in place for teachers to seek support and discuss their concerns about issues related to their lesson observation and feedback.

Three teachers participating in this study spoke positively about the impact that culture has on their lesson observation in terms of trust. Participant (ST2) agreed with some of the middle leaders that the impact on lesson observation was *"massive"*. Additionally, participant (ST8) shared a similar view about trust and:

Having a head of department who trusts you and is confident in your abilities is hugely helpful and for ensuring that any consequence that you give to a member of the lesson observation is followed up.

Once the teachers have been given a feeling of trust, they are left to grow professionally. This suggests that there is a constant collegial approach at departmental level to lesson observation. This is voiced by (ST3):

So I think that there's loads of feedback always given, there's always communication between us with trust.

The above quotes indicate that teachers (ST8) and (ST3) perceived appreciation as they were engaged in a collegial dialogue. Participant (ST6) also felt he was *"supported"* during his last lesson observation compared to the way *"it used to be in the past"*, where he used to feel *"threatened"*. This is also clearly illustrated by a quote from participant (ST10): *"I feel comfortable and supported, no never threatened".*

Clearly, feeling trusted and not threatened reflects constructive thoughts which may be related to a culture that promotes collegiality for teachers and middle leaders who are well-supported, but what about those teachers who are not well-supported? Participant (ST7),

for instance, felt the impact was unclear: *"I think it's massively unclear"*. She then justifies her perception:

> *Maybe a different approach is taken with teachers who have been teaching for less time or teachers that have been teaching longer.*

One unexpected angle emerged in relation to the question about the impact the school culture and departmental culture may have on lesson observation. Participant (SL2) gave a totally different answer compared with all other middle leaders in the school: *"No, unfortunately not until we challenge overall government philosophy. I can't see it being improved because it is all about grades"*. He then explained that:

> *They [teachers] act on the advice but I think the actions are worryingly limited. It is as much as Ofsted [inspectors] coming in, and all of a sudden, the teachers are like little kids running around, and screaming scared as if the bogeyman is coming by. If that's how people feel about Ofsted, then Ofsted is doing the wrong job and we are responding inappropriately to Ofsted and that's what I mean by the childish behaviour.* (SL2)

The above comments give voice to a general feeling of apprehension among some teachers and some middle leaders regarding the issue of 'grading' of lesson observations and how this results in chaos within the school when the time for Ofsted inspection arrives. This feeling of apprehension was also voiced by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *I think it is the desire for statistics from our academy sponsor, to know what percentage of staff is good or outstanding, what percentage of staff requires improvement or are inadequate. The culture of Ofsted has [...] a lot to answer for in that respect because again,* [however] *there's a lot of good and outstanding teaching and learning in this school.*

Participant (ST10) acknowledges that other colleagues felt 'threatened' and 'under pressure':

> *I know that there are incidences where teachers have felt under pressure because of teachers being constantly in there or observing, and I don't think that's fair.*

The above quotes highlighted that while lesson observation is an important process, it is also contested. This might be due to lesson observation being linked to accountability (this will be discussed further in the next chapter). It has been argued that grading of observed lessons may have an adverse effect on teachers' identity (O'Leary, 2014). Therefore, what might be suggested here is a carefully negotiated strategy that addresses the need for data in order to satisfy national plans, while maintaining the ability to allow practitioners more flexibility in delivering their lessons without undermining the students' learning.

Despite some of the issues noted above, there is wide acceptance of the lesson observation process among all participants, and it is clearly less of a threat than previously due to it being conducted generally in a supportive manner in the school. A positive factor here may be the training middle leaders receive regarding lesson observation. Lambert (2003) asserts that creating and working together collaboratively are all attributes associated with leadership which can mobilise and energise the teachers' performance of their vital responsibilities related to teaching and learning.

It was acknowledged by several teachers that a positive approach in the school culture to collaborative working had had a constructive influence on working collegially in their departments, especially prior to or during lesson observation:

> *We talk about the kinds of [lesson observation] plans that we need to do or discuss as a department, then we'll go through them. So, for example, dodgeball criteria and levelling them and doing peer assessment work we'll do in our departmental meeting.* (ST4)

The shared approach in a collegial culture, with its less conventional and less formal structure, allows teachers to be ready, involved more with their colleagues in their planning of their lesson observation, and also to work hard in developing the students' learning beyond the classroom, as acknowledged by the following statements:

> *But much more of this kind of community and very trusting, I know that if I had a problem with something like lesson observation, I can go to anyone in my department and there would be no judgments on it [lesson observation], there would just be support there and when I have had problems, second in charge or head of department have absolutely had my back on every matter possible.* (ST8)

And:

> *It's a great thing that all teachers support each other with regard to lesson observation when they have a challenge… everyone is working with each other and for each other as well…we're very relational with the kids in terms of being very supportive, we are happy to put ourselves out there, whatever the kids need and whenever they ask, our response is usually yes, it's never a case of sorry that's out of my hours or it's never a case of I'm busy.* (ST6)

Furthermore, the positive impacts of school culture focusing on lesson observation reached as far as assessment. This is illustrated by participant (ST2), who is in charge of implementing an assessment for a learning initiative currently in place:

> *Focusing on one particular aspect […] assessment and learning together gradually, month by month, in order to improve performance [and] to be given the time and resources to see things through.*

While agreeing in principle with the benefits implementation of new initiatives brings, participant (SL2) warns that they need to be critically viewed and not adopted without first being critically analysed; this would lead to a better use of the time and resources available:

> *I may question an awful lot of new initiatives, that's not to say I dismiss them. I think questioning is healthy, but you shouldn't take things on board blindly. You take things on board with a critical analysis and know how and where and why to apply them.*

In summary then, it was obvious from the interviews that all the participants, i.e. teachers and middle leaders, felt differently about the impact that the school culture had on lesson observation and feedback. However, they were in general more positive about the impact that their departmental culture had on lesson observation and feedback. Some participating teachers pointed out that despite the fact that their leaders were mindful of their full potential and the importance of trusting staff, they were still reluctant to start allowing teachers to fully engage in the process of innovation in lessons and hence teachers could not always undertake lesson observation without feeling threatened or under pressure. Aside from this highlighted concern, the majority of participants stated that they were working collegially towards their lesson observation and it was taking place regularly in their departments. Teachers and middle leaders were already working closely together to improve their students' learning, as revealed in the preceding chapter, and in many ways, this is because of the impact of the school and departmental cultures.

Summary

It was clear from the analysis that the participants' perceptions of their school culture and departmental culture were different and that the departmental culture had more of a positive and collegial impact on the way their teaching and learning was happening, and at the heart of it all is lesson observation and feedback.

The school departments encouraged their teachers not only to work in a culture built on trust, sharing and support, but also to collaborate to teach students effectively. The teacher collaboration at departmental level was not merely superficially friendly performances towards one another, but true shared work that had an impact on lesson observation.

Two substantial conclusions evolved after analysing the data. Firstly, a collegial culture provides an environment which empowers teachers to recognise the influence of collaborative lesson observation and feedback on their own teaching and consequently their

students' learning too. Secondly, all lesson observation should be conducted through a consultation process with the aim of fully engaging the teachers observed in their departments and ensuring that they do not feel threatened or fearful.

Additionally, it would be beneficial for the issue of the overlapping of the two cultures in the school – the formal and the collegial – to be addressed so that a more coherent culture can be built which stimulates all school stakeholders to work effectively and collaboratively on having a clearer approach to lesson observation within the school. With regard to this understanding, it is suggested that a working party which includes all stakeholders within the school be established to put together proposals to try to produce a more coherent overarching culture. This will in turn result in everyone being more focused on the primary goal of improving the students' learning.

Finally, this thesis advocates that middle leaders should approach lesson observation and the feedback process within the supportive, consultation and trust characteristics of the collegial culture. This approach enables middle leaders to recognise the contribution that collegial lesson observation provides to teaching and learning and approaching the process with a constructive attitude regarding teachers and their engagement will result in both teachers and middle leaders learning from one another.

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION IV: How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

Introduction

This chapter is the last of the four analysis chapters that explore and deepen the understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

The chapter focuses on the fourth supporting research question in this study: How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

This sub-research question is concerned with establishing teachers' and middle leaders' views regarding the influence that professional identity has on lesson observation and feedback. After analysing the data related to this sub-question, a number of themes emerged: perception of professional identity, positive impact on practice of lesson observation, and concerns inhibiting positive impact on practice of lesson observation. These themes will now be explored in more detail.

Perception of professional identity

In a school setting, professional identity is mostly connected to teachers' perceptions of themselves within the context of their understandings of their day-to-day work (Murray and Kosnik, 2014; Wilkins et al., 2011). Analysing the data revealed that the participants – teachers, middle leaders and the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) – held different views about their professional identity. They had several ways of defining their understandings of professional identity and what helps teachers to become professionals in their approach to lesson observation. Words and expressions such as: 'values', 'role model', 'beliefs', 'teaching standards', 'expertise', 'students' progress', 'trust', 'training', and 'relationship between the teachers and their students' were used.

The impact of various internal and external qualities determines and individual teacher's ability to perceive her- or himself (Olsen, 2008). He further explains that external qualities

include, for example, the teaching experience, while inner qualities represent what inspires the teacher from within in an ethical manner. Participants in this study perceived their professional identity equally through external and inner qualities.

This is voiced below by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *So it's your own moral code of conduct, and what you actually invest so much of your life into as a professional…so from my identity I think I would always want to put the children first, that's my main learning decision…that one has to be pupil-focused, it has to have the pupil's best interests at heart…what I would love to see in the school is…those values being   [upheld] by every member of staff or the majority of staff, that would be the way I would choose [my] professional identity.*

Participant (SL2) further outlined that:

> *As teachers, we have to be professionals, so that should mean that we conduct ourselves in a particular way. I say to the pupils I will teach. That's my professional duty as what I'm paid for, but you have to learn […] that's what I believe in. That's what I value.*

These findings suggest a belief that teaching should not be about fulfilling teaching duties only. In some cases, teachers have been said to be focused on teaching for exam purposes only (Longo, 2010). This may occur, for instance where schools are driven by results. This view does not, however, do justice to the complex nature of the concept of professional identity when viewed in actual practice, as illustrated by the quotes above. In the light of the complex nature of the teaching role, it is suggested that policy-driven guidelines need to take into account other aspects associated with academic prowess, such as moral and ethical values (Beijaard et al., 2000).

The view of the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) is also supported by the participating middle leaders, who identified values as an aspect that touched on their inner understanding of their professional identity within a working 'professional body', as illustrated by participant (SL1):

> *I think professional identity is your sense of yourself as an individual within the profession, as a teacher, so the extent to which you feel like a leader or a teacher and the factors that feed into that […] but I think to be a teacher in the first place there are some core values that perhaps we all share that we almost don't say…I think it means for us to see ourselves as academic. To see ourselves as part of a body of other professional teachers.*

Similarly, eight out of ten teachers participating in this study identified their own morals as an aspect of their professional identity within a professional community or professional setting, as illustrated by the following two quotes:

Well, I guess what [identity] says to me is how recognised as a good established member of the community you are [...] I think it stems [...] from my personal values, my understanding of communication with people, and that is not just about what appears to be the case, but about what truly is the case[...] I think it means somebody that truly wants students to progress and succeed, that truly has them at heart, that has a good balance between the whole behaviour and academics, and the planning and moving forward with your own practice. So a mixture of all of that. (ST7)

And:

So, I would assume it means how I view myself in a professional setting with others. Yes. So, my moral purpose for my professional identity [is] *how I conduct myself in lessons and out of lessons.* (ST4)

It is noticeable from the above quotes that middle leaders and teachers recognise and value the relationships they have developed within a professional entity such as the school. This provides an important range of support, encouragement and inspiration for teachers, especially during lesson observation. Indeed, it is claimed by Cooper and Olson (1996) that the interaction between people with one another over time has a great influence on shaping and changing their identity. While these relationships help to provide a supportive environment, which mobilises and energises teachers in their vital responsibilities related to students' learning, they may also create confusion in the lesson observation process where colleagues are required to make judgements and receive feedback.

The other trait that four out of the five middle leaders participating in the study recognised as part of their professional identity was being a positive role model to the students and 'doing the right things', as highlighted by participant (SL4):

You're always performing and acting for their [students'] *benefit because you know they pick up…certain values you've got to be a role model and show how things should be done…you're that consistent figure that they're always going to see doing the right things.*

Seven teachers out of ten also saw being a role model as part of their professional identity:

I do try and be a role model [...] so I am always trying to be as professional as I possibly can and sharing my own beliefs and my own values and my own experiences that I've enjoyed, I want to pass onto others. I try and create an ethos within my classroom where students are happy enough to, not just learn, but also to contribute…so that they are willing to have a go and make mistakes and learn from them. (ST2)

And:

For me personally, working in education with young people, especially in this age, they need some positive examples…they [students] need to have someone who does

have something about them they can identify with that they see has a personality because if you're not professional and you don't have that certain identity, they aren't going to respond to you. (ST10)

And:

I think that the identity that I have as a teacher, I want to rub off on the kids, your professional identity in terms of you as a teacher in the school and the role that you fulfil [...]it means that you have those high standards. It means that you do your job well and you do that consistently. It means that you fulfil the role that you've been employed to fulfil, and it means that you do everything in your power to make sure that the people in your care during the day are progressing as they should progress. I think ultimately that is what I would say being a professional teacher is about. (ST5)

These quotes suggest that participants recognise the necessity for their students to be exposed to a constructive style of role modelling which can lead to improving and shaping their future experiences as well as their academic achievements. Being a positive role model has been acknowledged as one of the perceptions that teachers might have of their own role (Sonntag, 2010).

Three other participating middle leaders out of five also identified 'experience' as a significant quality in refining their own identity, as illustrated by participant (SL2):

A professional teacher is like the journey you take with the students. A professional teacher is not necessarily about making sure a particular document is done in a particular way and that you have mapped out on a graph the data showing pupil progress. The professional teacher is all about relationships. There's an amazing documentary that was made, as far back as 20 years ago now, called "To Be and To Have or Être et Avoir", a French film and I feel that anyone who goes into teaching, that's what they should watch, and I believe that's why they go into teaching.

And:

I would say absolutely so. I think the more experienced you are at watching lessons and knowing what good teaching looks like, the more effective you can be. (SL1)

The above two statements are also supported by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

Still even though I'm 15-16 years into my career, I think you can't ever think that you're a teacher and you've cracked it. I think that's a real benefit. (SC)

These quotes reflect a perceived importance of the length of teaching experience on facilitating teaching and learning, which may have an influence on the conducting of lesson observations and feedback. Teachers are still developing their professional identity on a regular basis through acquired experience, acknowledging both constructive collaboration and less constructive collaboration with colleagues as learning experiences which can

further improve their contribution (Beijaard et al., 2004). Murray and Kosnik (2014) assert that based on the teachers' experiences from the past and those newly acquired, their identity is continually changing as they grow in the role.

A focus on 'student progress', 'support' and 'getting students to achieve their full potential' was also seen by seven of the ten participating teachers as a major facet of their professional identity, as illustrated by the following two statements:

> *It…is ultimately to have the student's progress and learning at the forefront of everything, and so ultimately if what we're doing as teachers does not encourage student progress or student value, then it has to be looked at. Because ultimately [...] there's a lot of things teachers do and [...] things which don't necessarily add to the focus of what teachers are employed to do [to] teach students, get them to learn and to progress them as well.* (ST6)

And:

> *I think my professional identity [...] really comes from the fact that I believe that everyone has the potential to actually achieve if they want to and that's what I try and convey. One thing I always try to say to the students is that it's not the exam results that are important, it's actually coming to school and enjoying yourself and actually wanting to learn. If you do all of those things, then the exam results will just fall into place anyway.* (ST9)

These two quotes indicate that teachers wish to inspire continual improvements in students' learning through their lessons as professionals. This also suggests that teachers have an understanding that every student must be stretched to fulfil her/his potential and that, as teachers, they are obligated to facilitate this. Bush (2003) asserts that academic issues and others are the main responsibility of the classroom teacher as a competent practitioner. Therefore, in order for teachers to engage fully in successful lesson observation, they need to be supported to teach with a focus on what "they know … each student needs to learn" (DuFour 2002, p. 13), rather than simply to fulfil lesson observation targets. Achieving this, and hence the ultimate aim which is the success of the pupils, places a strong expectation on the school to develop a non-threatening and student-centred focus for lesson observation.

In summary, there is an overwhelming understanding among the middle leaders and teachers participating in this study of the various definitions relating to their professional identity, whether to do with the manner in which teachers conduct themselves in terms of ethics, morals and values (inner qualities), or the teaching experience (external qualities). Moreover, all participants have identified their professional identity as being related to

enhancing students' learning. While they have their own beliefs and values within their inner qualities, it is clear that the setting (culture) they find themselves in and their interactions with other teachers in the school, for example during lesson observation, have significant influence on their perceived identity too. The complexity revealed in this study as lesson observation policy and practice interact with the school culture, individual teacher identity and other variables, shows how important it is for teachers to understand fully their position and the role they have to play within their school culture and during their lesson observation.

Positive impact on practice of lesson observation

When teachers have developed a rounded professional identity, this supports them in being more aware of their own teaching, which in turn supports their students' learning more efficiently (Hattie, 2012). It follows that teacher identity may affect the teaching and learning in the school. During the interviews, participants indicated differing viewpoints concerning the positive impact that their professional identity might have in the development of their lesson observation delivery techniques. Sense of value, sense of connections, ability to reflect and high expectations of student learning emerged as common secondary themes.

The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) spoke passionately about the impact of teacher identity and how it will ultimately lead to improving students' learning:

> *The bottom line is you've got kids that need to be educated and you've got that hour or two hours a week to really inspire them and switch them onto education and I think that's such an opportunity to influence somebody in the way they are, in the way that they carry themselves, but also the subject that you love. I just think that's such a unique opportunity within a career, to be able to do that.*

What emerges from the above quote is that teachers must think beyond basic teaching to keep their students engaged and learning. There are likely to be significant gains for students' learning if teachers possess an enhanced and 'extended' professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004). Enhancing the facets of their professional identity is, therefore, an important learning and development opportunity for each teacher which impacts on delivery of not only their own daily lessons but also lesson observation.

Four out of the five middle leaders participating in the study further described a sense of change in their values that was likely to improve the delivery of lessons during lesson observation and feedback, as illustrated by participant (SL4):

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Having been [observed] many times over the years has made me look differently at the way I view my values regarding my teaching. I always say to the kids, you know what, you can come back and tell me you got this many A*s or that grade, it's more about how they carry themselves, are they trusting, are they consistent, do they turn up and attend? You can try and improve it. How can you improve it? Who can you improve it with for the next generation? So, if they grow up as better, more understanding individuals.

Participant (SL5) agrees:

The impact is good, I can admit that I have taught a lot of bad lessons in the past, and I think it was because of my lack of understanding of why I am doing this job, but I've come out [After lesson observations] *knowing and thinking: this can't happen again as my values are much clearer about my teaching.*

Similarly, seven out of the ten participating teachers also highlighted the positive change in their values through their lesson observation, which has influenced their students' learning:

Yes, definitely. It reaffirms what I'm doing and why I'm doing it and that actually you are doing something good and you are doing something well [...] to improve learning. (ST3)

And:

It's probably impacted the way that I teach and the expectations that I have of the kids in my lessons. (ST5)

The quotes above indicate that as a consequence of their self-review, a transformation has occurred in the participants' inner understanding of their values and hence their approach towards lessons. Through critical reflection, an individual's identity is reinforced (O'Leary, 2014). Therefore, those teachers with a broad and strong identity and who undertake critical reflection, may inherently have the skills to scrutinise the quality of their delivered day-to-day lessons, and to take further steps to improve it for their next lesson observation and feedback. However, it is not clear whether these self-review skills can be sustained with the greater demand being put on teachers to conform.

Moreover, three middle leaders perceived that high expectations in their lesson observation were the result of improvement in their professional identity. As illustrated by participant (SL3):

Now that I have such high expectations in lesson observation, that's what I expect of all my students and I think in terms of my professionalism that's one of the biggest things that has come through. I'm not happy for anything to be sub-standard. My room, my marking, my planning, the kids' work, the kids' behaviour, I won't accept

anything less. Yeah so, I think definitely it's definitely the kind of person that I am, the complete opposite of lazy.

Similarly, highlighted by participant (ST4):

I guess so, I think that lesson observations either confirm my expectations of myself or what I would like to do and help me work out what I need to do to improve within my own teaching.

The above quotations suggest that the high expectations created by effective lesson observation and feedback encourages individual teachers to be more confident, energetic, reliable and constructive during lessons, possibly maximising and inspiring students' progress. Each teacher has her/his own style of lesson delivery which is influenced by their own identity, resulting in each teaching experience being a distinctive one (Walkington, 2005). Wishing to inspire students' achievement may mean that teachers take increased responsibility not only for their students' progress, but also for their own professional identity. Thus, high expectation is not just a middle leader's or the school's concern but a core responsibility of all teachers (Bush, 2003).

Developing a sense of 'connection' can be explained as an active process on which lesson observation has an impact, as illustrated by participant (ST7):

The way my connection to the class has changed? So, for example [...] I've got more of a connection to the class rather than just a drive to get through the material and for them to get something out of that material, so I feel that has changed in terms of a better relationship with the children that I teach and a [better] understanding of the children I teach and of their varying levels and their varying needs. So that's a big positive.

The above quote suggests that being able to engage pupils' learning through varying classroom practices instead of being target-driven, provides a positive way of improving lesson delivery. The nature of the classroom setting has a strong influence on how well students achieve a variety of learning results (Coe, et al., 2014). It follows from this discussion that teachers should be empowered in their lesson observation to go beyond conforming and achieving certain grades to improving the overall pupil learning experience.

Teachers further highlighted their ability to 'reflect' on their lesson observation as having an impact on improving their students' learning, as illustrated by participant (ST9):

It's reflection. I think sometimes it's hard to spot some of the mistakes you might make fairly regularly but when someone comes in and observes and they can tell that's something you pick up as a habit and you don't really notice it then that kind

of critical reflection is really important for being a better practitioner. So, I think as long as the observers do a good job then it can be a valuable experience.

The above quote shows how teachers are committed to reflection as a way of allowing them to improve and thus approach future observations without feeling threatened or intimidated by the process. However, there is a danger that the term reflection is used as a meaningless buzzword, stripped of its real meaning (Rodgers, 2002). Mechanical responses to lesson observation, such as a teacher producing a seating plan with pupils' names on it to conform to the school policy, rather than deeply considering points made after a lesson observation, may pay 'lip service' to reflection, rather than show educational growth.

Finally, while all participants acknowledged that their professional identity has an impact on lesson observation, the teaching and learning coordinator (SC) advised that this positive impact, as perceived by him, will take place only if the teachers can 'ignore distractions' that may occur within the school because of its 'politics':

> *Absolutely it will [impact], I think when you've come away from all the politics that the school's getting embroiled in.* (SC)

Similarly, participant (ST7) considered that developing of a broader sense of identity and ignoring any other less positive aspects will have an impact:

> *Then that ultimately impacts [on] everything else. I think it's also about knowing what greater good you're doing that for, even if you are dissatisfied with whatever other aspect of your workplace, it's knowing that you're keeping going for a greater reason [students' learning] than that.*

Interestingly, the above quotes imply that teachers are sometimes affected by negative practices around them, which can have an adverse effect on their work morale and sense of values. School micropolitics can cause and intensify feelings of dissatisfaction, loss of self-esteem and damage to their sense of personal identity considerably (Ball, 2012). Therefore, while teachers may well desire to be empowered to fulfil their professional duties, the leader still needs to remember that each person also needs assurance and support (Hargreaves and Fink, 2012). What might be suggested here is a carefully tailored approach which acknowledges the school's commitment to its wider stakeholders and also acknowledges its workforce's needs. It appears that distancing themselves from unnecessary politics within the school culture, will enable teachers to make positive changes to their delivery of lessons and, as a consequence, to students' learning.

To summarise, it was obvious from the interviews that the teaching and learning coordinator, middle leaders and teachers in the school felt positively about the impact that

their professional identity had on developing their approach to lesson observation. This is to do with the values, experience, passion, reflection and connection with others that they have developed (Raymond, 2006) in order to further their primary profession aim of enhancing students' achievements.

Concerns inhibiting positive impact on practice of lesson observation

An effective performance management system provides a systematic approach that links individual teachers' performance to schools' overall aspirations (Walker et al., 2010), and thus performance management has the capacity to shape and reshape schools and individuals (O'Leary, 2014). In this study, the school's performance management system was acknowledged by the majority of teachers and middle leaders as a means to provide accountability for their work. It uses lesson observation as the main means for measuring whether teachers achieve their negotiated target, especially in the teaching and learning part of the performance and management. Despite this recognition of the importance of the performance management system, accountability appears to be the main concern impacting on the participating teachers' and middle leaders' professional identity. The way teachers view perceive their identity is affected by their own performance along with their students' performance in a complicated interrelationship (Wilkins et al., 2012, p. 67). Hence, their perception of their professional identity becomes directly associated with their annual appraisal. As discussed by the teaching and learning coordinator (SC):

> *Yes, so I think accountability really changed. I think, obviously ICT and the way lessons are monitored and observed, and I think everything is scrutinised much more and I think your performance is based on data and there is a lot more to the job and that as well, which goes unseen. I think those are the values that we had when I first started the profession; they aren't necessarily where they are today, I think it is more data-driven, I think you are judged more on progress. It's difficult to quantify social development and that's a massively important aspect of teaching.*

The above quote suggests that performance management should cover a broad range of skills, rules and expectations with the main purpose of allowing staff to deliver quality lessons which will fulfil students' fullest potential. Ideally, performance management is aimed at improving teachers' performance overall, and leaders are expected to play an active role in supporting their teachers to achieve their potential (Harris, 2013). However, when leaders focus on data and/or are not willing to promote an inclusive culture, these ideals may not be apparent.

The teaching and learning coordinator (SC) further recognises the threat associated with the new appraisal system using lesson observation as a prominent tool, which may impact negatively on teachers' professional identity:

> *I think the appraisal system is quite coincidental that it started two years ago. But I think it has made people feel a little bit more threatened and I think if you suddenly wrote down professional development is this, this and this, you feel, on your performance management and appraisal […] I've got to do it to meet my appraisal; not maybe to develop professionally and I think you do lose your moral guidance of things as soon as you make things a little bit more formal and it's affecting your pay and people feel quite threatened by that.*

Middle leaders echoed this concern, and its impact on lesson observation. Participant (SL1) warned that the professional identity of teachers is being eroded because of external factors:

> *Well now I think actually also by politics, you know, Michael Gove's government and the way they seem to feel that, you know, our time is of no consequence or that our judgements about what we think the curriculum ought to look like is a consequence. I feel like this is being done to erode our sense of professional identity in a way, or actually it can, in some ways, make me feel more driven to maintain my professional identity at the cost of someone who is attacking it.*

This comment above indicates a sense of apprehension among the participants towards recent government policies in education. In fact, according to Fleming (2014), teaching professionals have been subject to government intervention for some time now. This is justified as a move to "improve organisational as well as individual effectiveness, with an emphasis on standards of education and care, coupled strongly with means of accountability, and deep economic concerns about needs for justification of resources" (Floyd and Morrison, 2014, p. 13). One example of a government policy which has a bearing on lesson observation, is the academisation of schools in England. As part of this policy, lesson observation is viewed as a tool for performance management which may have an impact on professional identity in the ways outlined above.

Additionally, the pressure to conform in lessons seems to be mounting. As highlighted by McNally et al. (2008), there is a great demand on teachers by the education department to adhere to certain professional models, while the growth of measures associated with accountability has put significant pressure on teachers. Three out of the five participating middle leaders revealed that they were conscious of the burden put on individuals to conform as a compulsory form of accountability. This pressure was articulated by participant (SL2) thus:

A lot of criticism if you don't conform. My defence is conformity creates a certain stereotypical lesson. I feel that when the pupils come to my class, they experience something different which they aren't experiencing in those other classes and although a lot of what I do is granted old-fashioned, it's tried and tested. I know it works. I feel that an awful lot of education is coming around and sort of saying, "Yeah, this clip off of YouTube". This interactive activity has a place, I recognise that, but it should not take over from all the other bits in the educational building.

Similarly, seven out of the ten teachers participating in this study felt pressurised due to the expectation to conform in delivering their lessons and to achieve certain grades in their lesson observation, which would determine their pay rise. As explained by participant (ST7):

That [accountability] disempowers a member of staff, rather than supporting them.

This is also echoed by participant (ST1):

So that puts added pressure onto people as well.

And is further explained by participant (ST10):

I was putting pressure on the kids because I was worried about a percentage which I knew they weren't going to get.

Despite understanding the accountability process and the need for management to take certain decisions, staff appeared to experience general dissatisfaction relating to accountability. One interviewee (participant (ST1)) sums up her thoughts on how the teaching profession is singled out by lack of trust:

I don't think so, because look at other professions, for example if you were a solicitor, nobody would come and test you and check if you're doing the correct thing every term.

This quote suggests that participants perceive the way accountability is implemented as a form of lack of trust. For example, if a teacher is offering up explanations during his or her lesson observation that are not possible to be judged using traditional standards, then he or she may be held accountable as not conforming to the values of the school. This in turn may lead to the loss of confidence among the members in the organisation, which inhibits their chances of improving their own practice. In contrast, when teachers are treated as professionals, they may feel secure and confident to know that they are trusted to carry out their role. As Harris suggests (2013), teachers as professionals are entitled to deliver their lessons and other education-related duties in an autonomous fashion because they have the accumulated knowledge and expertise to do so (Harris, 2013).

Despite the fact that the current reform towards greater accountability was seen to be constructive, participant (SL3) argues that this is not evenly applied:

> *...because I think [...] there are people who perhaps aren't accountable, and they can do whatever they like, and I think that's not the correct way for anyone to be acting in any profession.*

She then adds:

> *But equally I think that it's very difficult in a career such as teaching, where it's not just down to you and what you are doing all of the time.*

This is also echoed by participant (SL4):

> *I think we've got to a very dangerous situation where the teacher is responsible for absolutely everything but no one else is.*

This issue is problematic, however, as there is often a discrepancy between what the school requires and how teachers go about their teaching. When teachers feel accountable to themselves in the first instance, they may be more engaged in their profession and therefore have higher expectations of themselves during their lesson observations and in discussion with the observers. This approach to accountability may offer another way in which both new and experienced professionals might reflect on the "inter-professional expertise as part of a range of systematic dispositions, training, working and CPD" (Floyd and Morrison, 2014, p. 23).

It was acknowledged by participant (SL2) that *"the appraisal as it exists is going through the motions, we tick boxes"*. This is also highlighted by participant (ST5): *"I think more recently, because they've almost been a box-ticking exercise"* and also by participant (ST1): *"I don't know if just one lesson observation would make me feel more accountable for my teaching"*.

The points put forward by the participants above appear to raise a major concern over the negative impact on teachers and the students' learning of accountability which results in going through the motions of 'ticking boxes'. For example, if the school policy states that performance management is about teacher development, then the process should be focused on teachers' professional progress, rather than on accountability which is currently based only on three lesson observations per year. This may affect the interaction between the teachers and their observers. On the other hand, the importance of upholding professional standards is highlighted as part of their identity by three middle leaders, as illustrated by participant (SL3):

First and foremost, I guess it's upholding the teaching standards…ensuring that students get the best possible experience from school…it's part of my professional duty to make sure that they're doing the best that they can do, and they can make the most progress that they can and that's not always easy, but it gets easier as you become more experienced.

What is noticeable from the above quote is that participants have understood that they have the ultimate responsibility for their students' learning through fulfilling and adhering to their professional standards at all times and not just when they are observed. In the light of the discussion above, it is suggested that for performance management, including lesson observation, to be effective, it should serve the two purposes of accountability and staff development – it should include a focus on accountability for the school and teachers, and a focus on providing means for the school and teachers to grow and improve. Sustaining the students' progress should be part of the teachers' duty (Bush, 2003). Yet, professional growth and sustaining students' progress may occasionally appear to conflict with one another in the lesson observation environment. For instance, observation associated with learning walks and book looks may influence teachers to be passively involved and play safe, rather than trying out new ideas. This may, as claimed by participant (ST10), *"take the passion away from teachers"*.

In summary then, all participants interviewed suggest that accountability has a major negative impact on their perceptions of lesson observation, as it has influenced their own inner and external qualities of their identity as they feel the pressure to conform and comply with what is expected to be taught and how it is expected to be taught in their lessons. On the other hand, they have also shown an understanding of why accountability needed to be implemented. Tension exists, therefore, concerning how to enable all teachers to be empowered in the delivery of their lessons without the fear of being penalised for not conforming to standard practice in the delivery of their lessons during lesson observation.

Summary

This chapter analysed the data relating to the teachers' and middle leaders' perception and sense of professional identity and its impact on lesson observation, thus addressing the fourth supporting research question: Does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity impact on lesson observation?

The findings indicate that the participants interviewed are highly committed to their profession, with a desire to progress further in their teaching practice to become skilled

professionals. This commitment is very strong. They are caring teachers who, as well as developing individually as professionals, are committed to developing their students' learning.

On the whole, all teachers and middle leaders interviewed maintained their sense of professional identity while fulfilling their professional responsibilities in relation to their students' learning. Moreover, it was clear that participants had the ability to relate their perceptions of their own identity to inner qualities, such as the ethical drive that directs them in their commitment to teaching and following established professional standards and also being a role model to their students. The participants further said that professional identity was formed by their own experience and working within a professional setting interacting with different colleagues, such as during lesson observation.

The findings include a positive connection with interaction and participation between teachers and their students in the classroom. This type of connection found between teachers' beliefs and their classroom practice plays a significant role in forming, sustaining or transforming teachers' professional identities, which has a role in improving lesson observation and hence enhancing their students' learning. Reflection on professional identity also appeared to have an important role to play with a positive impact on the delivery of lessons.

It was recognised that reforms in professional identity are linked to current controversial areas such as accountability, which had an adverse effect on the process of lesson observation and feedback. Nevertheless, on the whole, participants fully understood the need for an external system such as the teacher's standards (2012) to enrich the value of their teaching.

The worries of participants were mostly associated with the way that accountability was deployed at the school, especially with the use of lesson observation as almost the single focus for determining the standard of their teaching and learning in the performance system.

In recognising the concerns of the participants, this study advocates that there is a need for a well-adjusted approach here. This approach should take into account the need to improve the quality of teaching using lesson observation as a quantification tool, as well as sharing a common understanding of the characteristics of professional teaching. Moreover, this approach ought to be established in a way which allows teachers to be empowered to draw from their own beliefs and experience and interact collegially with one another in order to

enhance their own lesson observation without having to feel that they have to conform. Finally, the school culture needs to promote such positive practice.

The next chapter summarises the findings and presents conclusions.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The key findings of this study investigating staff's perceptions and experience of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the whole school context, are presented in this chapter. The first section will assess the usefulness of the methodology of the research, including the instruments applied for data-gathering. Section two contains summaries of the major discoveries of this study in the context of the original research questions. Section three addresses the contribution to and impact on theory and practice. The final section will explore some recommendations for future research.

Study aims and research questions

This study aimed to explore and to deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within a whole school context.

The main research question was:

> What are teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback at a UK secondary school?

The research sub-questions raised by the literature review were as follows:

1) How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

2) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

3) How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

4) How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

Review of methodology

Sixteen semi-structured, flexibly guided interviews with participating staff in this study working in a secondary school in England were used to gather the qualitative data. The interviews took place during the summer of 2016 and all interviews were logged using a

Dictaphone and typed. A qualitative analysis method was applied to understand the data using NVivo 10, a qualitative data analysis package to classify and code the data prior to interpretation.

The sample comprised sixteen participants from the school selected for this study: ten teachers, five middle leaders and the teaching and learning coordinator. In addition to the interviews, the data collection included two documents (the school lesson observation policy and CPD policy).

My reasons for choosing a qualitative approach stem from the wish to explore and to deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perception and experience of the process of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the whole school context. The reason for choosing this method was that the issue being discussed in this study demands a more interpretative style of research (McNeil and Chapman, 2005). This approach has been demonstrated to be appropriate in generating data appropriate for providing answers to the specified aim of this study.

Finally, with the aim of investigating participants' perceptions and experiences of the lesson observation and feedback process, a case study method was used. One drawback of confining the study to one school is that the generalisability of the results may be affected. Nevertheless, small-scale research has been acknowledged recently as playing a significant part in the field of education (Punch, 2009).

Summary of the main findings

The summary of the findings will be presented under each supporting research question.

Sub-research question 1

How is lesson observation and feedback positioned and managed within the school's overall CPD provision?

This study reveals that all participants have what can be termed 'simplistic' and unquestioned views of CPD. They have clearly practised one form or another of CPD: courses, INSET days and school twilight evenings. The reason for this limited view of what can be considered CPD may be that teachers' own comprehension of CPD's meaning varies according to their individual experience, as Steward (2009) explains.

Most middle leaders and teachers had an obvious and different view of the perceived management of their CPD from the school policy, especially when they were not allowed to choose the CPD they perceived as fulfilling their professional development due to various constraints, such as money. As discussed in chapter 4, only one of the teachers (NQT) was found to have no problems in being able to access external CPD. This would seem to indicate that teachers in their induction year are afforded more opportunities to do this than other staff. This perceived disparity could be addressed if the school were to involve teachers in decision-making regarding CPD planning, and if the participants could expand their thinking about CPD to acknowledge that it does not necessarily have to cost money to fulfil personal CPD needs.

Teachers' and middle leaders' view of CPD emerged as being related to learning in the form of improving skills, motivation and relevance of CPD. All participants recognised CPD as obtaining certain skills with a focus on being ready to deliver a particular subject or curriculum effectively within the school.

All participants also recognised the importance of CPD for their career in order to become professionals and leaders. However, there was very little consensus among the participants as to whether CPD was included in their school's development plan or whether what was on offer took place merely to tick boxes. A number of teachers felt that there was no scope for progression and development, and CPD and communication were identified as areas of support that teachers would like leaders to address. Furthermore, motivation and relevance evidently had an influence on what is assumed to be CPD learning by all participants. There was a clear divide in opinion: a few participants felt encouraged or motivated, whereas the others voiced concerns over the lack of ability to choose their own CPD activities above the school-directed ones, resulting in their feeling less motivated. Additionally, both teachers and middle leaders indicated that they feel that training related to national policy implementations may be taking priority over their own needs. This was in contrast to the teaching and learning coordinator, whose perception was that the CPD needs of teachers and even middle leaders were given high priority on the school agenda.

The interview data revealed that there was an element of contradiction between what is stated in the school policy regarding certain aspects of lesson observation within the CPD provision and what is actually practised in the school. Participants felt that the position of lesson observation and feedback was no longer high on the list in terms of professional development.

Teachers and middle leaders in this study all acknowledged the significance of lesson observation within the overall school CPD provision in improving their teaching and learning. Nearly all the teachers interviewed in this study pointed out that the skills that they brought to bear during lesson observation were learnt on the job, with some formal CPD input. However, putting aside whether CPD was included in their schools' development plans or not, the issue of the schools' vision as a driving force behind lesson observation was clearly high on most of the participants' agendas. Participants also acknowledged that CPD (and lesson observation as part of CPD) should include aspects of training that go beyond the remit of their class teaching, because this approach will enhance their identity further.

Overall, most teachers and middle leaders felt uncomfortable with the way lesson observation was managed in the school CPD provision, with the exception of the teaching and learning coordinator, who was satisfied with the provision. Teachers and middle leaders acknowledged that the yearly targets highlighted in their performance appraisals which are based on lesson observation had been met through in-house training CPD. However, they expressed concerns about the impact of this, as performance management of this kind may feel intimidating and onerous, particularly when it is associated with accountability (see chapter 7).

Sub-research question 2

How do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation and feedback?

Some intriguing differences emerged between teachers' and middle leaders' experiences of the management procedure of lesson observation and how it is put into practice in their departments. Firstly, the middle leaders interviewed showed inconsistency in following the school policy on the number of formal lesson observations observed per year. However, teachers spoke positively about the communication preceding lesson observation with their middle leaders. This communication may involve discussions about the number of times observed each year, the group to be observed, period and day.

In spite of variation within and across middle leaders and teachers in their responses to how lesson observation procedures were managed, all participants showed through their collaborative approach to lesson observation and feedback in their teamwork that they were practising a collegial form of leadership at this level with respect to those in their teams.

One of the unexpected findings was the overwhelming understanding that all participants related the experience of lesson observation and feedback to their students' learning. The teachers in the study indicated their willingness to reform the way they deliver their lessons as a result of lesson observation, with the aim of developing the learning of the students in their care and felt that collegial feedback gave them encouragement and ideas to improve pupils' engagement with learning.

All participants showed good understanding and recognition of the process of feedback after lesson observation following the procedures stated in the school policy. These relate largely to the manner in which teachers conduct themselves during lesson observation and feedback in terms of ethics, behaviour and communication. One exception to this was a middle leader (SL3) who, as discussed in chapter 4, had a confused approach to the process of feedback after lesson observation and, in addition, was unquestioning and not reflective about her approach.

The majority of participants specified that they were influenced by comments given during feedback sessions. Some mentioned, for instance, that it had a constructive effect on their pedagogical approach in delivering their lessons. The majority of teachers also pointed out that they were supported and trusted in their departments. Moreover, the majority of participants acknowledged the need for lesson observation and feedback as an aid to improving their teaching and thus improve their students' learning. However, there was very little agreement among the participants as to whether a collegial approach to the process of lesson observation was included in their school's policy or whether it took place merely by chance.

Furthermore, an aspect of threat was mentioned by one teacher (ST7), who felt that the way lesson observation and feedback was being practised was having a negative impact on her experience of the process. Perhaps echoing this observation, one of the middle leaders (SL2), raised the issue that the grading of lessons may have a negative impact on teachers' identity. Generally, however, there was recognition among the majority of the participants that lesson observation and feedback was less of a threat than it might have been because the feedback after lesson observation was conducted in a supportive manner.

An unexpected finding was that some teachers felt that their opinions were not viewed seriously or valued; they criticised their middle leaders for showing a lack of interest. Teachers voicing their opinions during lesson observation and feedback was identified as

an area of support that they would like the leaders to address. Another unexpected finding was that there appeared to be no agreed formal system for supporting less secure teachers in their teaching and learning in the school. Each middle leader is left to formulate their own policy and practice in this area. It is also worth acknowledging that one middle leader viewed the recent change to the teaching and learning approach to be flawed, creating a paper-filling exercise.

Prior to the interviews, it was assumed that the participants would voice some concerns about certain aspects of the feedback given after lesson observation, but it was not possible to predict what the concerns were going to be about. All participants expressed concerns regarding the lack of time allocated and the subject specialism of the observer, both of which were seen as a barrier to delivering constructive feedback after lesson observation. However, despite these concerns there was overwhelming consensus among all participants that the potential benefits of lesson observation to their teaching career outweighed any concern.

Sub-research question 3

How do teachers and middle leaders perceive and experience their school and department culture in relation to lesson observation and feedback?

This study reveals that participants' perceptions of their school and departmental culture differed, and that the departmental culture had more of a positive and collegial contribution towards the way their teaching and learning takes place, with lesson observation and feedback at its core.

The study also reveals that participants' perception of their school culture varied, ranging from perceiving it to be formal and characterised by a lack of support and cooperation, to seeing it as informal, supportive and collegial. This inconsistency may indicate that the school does not have a clear, overarching culture. Participants pointed out that the school was going through a stage of change, especially with the appointment of a new head teacher, which may have contributed to the feeling of inconsistency in the school culture.

Most teachers and middle leaders felt that their departmental culture was best described as collegial and being engaged in dialogue and being supported were clearly discussed as attributes of this culture. However, a few teachers and middle leaders raised a concern in relation to decision-making and the absence of any circulation of information, especially during the process of lesson observation and feedback.

The study found that all of the teachers and middle leaders felt that teamwork was very important, both at a collegial level and in terms of their students' learning. The findings also point out that when taking part in collegial tasks, teachers were positive towards their work. Yet the impact of the school's culture in terms of developing teachers to work collegially was noted and recognised by only one participant (the teaching and learning coordinator (SC)). None the less, the language used by participants incorporates strong indications of team identity, with the term 'we' being constantly used throughout the interviews concerning their departmental culture.

All participants had different views about the impact that the school culture had on lesson observation and feedback. However, they were in general more positive about the impact that their departmental culture had on the process. Teachers spoke positively about the impact of the culture in terms of trust. However, some teachers raised a concern regarding the fact that although their middle leaders were aware of their full potential, they were still reluctant to start allowing them to be fully included in the lesson observation and feedback process. On the other hand, aside from this highlighted concern, the majority of participants stated that they were working collegially towards their lesson observation and feedback.

Sub-research question 4

How does teachers' and middle leaders' sense of their professional identity relate to lesson observation and feedback?

There was an overwhelming understanding amongst teachers and middle leaders of the various definitions relating to their professional identity, whether to do with the manner in which teachers conduct themselves in terms of ethics, morals and values (inner qualities), or the way in which they approach the teaching experience (external qualities) with the goal of raising students' learning. Participants frequently used expressions such as: 'values', 'role model', 'beliefs', 'teaching standards', 'expertise', 'trust', 'training', and 'the student-teacher relationship' to define their understandings of their professional identity and what helps teachers to become professionals in their approach to lesson observation and feedback.

Additionally, it was found that the setting (culture and context) teachers and middle leaders found themselves in and its influence on interactions with other teachers during lesson observation and feedback, also had a significant influence on their perceived identity.

All participants identified their professional identity to be related to students' learning and it appears that the length of teaching experience has a dynamic part to play in facilitating teaching and learning when delivering and conducting lesson observations and feedback.

Participants felt positively about the impact that their professional identity had in developing their professional approach to lesson observation and feedback. This is to do with the values, reflection and connection they have developed in order to enhance students' achievements.

Accountability was found to be the main concern impacting negatively on the participants' professional identity. The majority of teachers and middle leaders expressed worries about how the performance management system was being employed at the school as a focus for accountability, especially with the use of lesson observation as almost the single aspect determining their quality of teaching.

It was found that the participants had a sense of apprehension towards recent governmental policies in education, and the pressure put upon teachers to conform in lessons in order to achieve certain grades in their lesson observation, which would determine their pay rise, seems to be mounting. Some participants also associated the focus on accountability with a lack of trust. It is also important to note that a middle leader (SL2) and one teacher (ST5) viewed the recent political change to education to be a mistake: going through the motions does not address the main issue, which is the teachers leaving the profession due to the increase in workload and accountability.

On the other hand, most teachers and middle leaders also showed an understanding of why accountability is required. Tension exists, therefore, between achieving a level of accountability and enabling all teachers to be empowered in the delivery of their lessons without a fear of being penalised because they have not conformed in the delivery of their lessons during lesson observation.

Contribution to, and impact on, theory and practice

This study claims to make an original contribution to theory and practice in the field of lesson observation and feedback process in two main ways: (i) extending knowledge and deepening understanding of the process and its practice in secondary schools, and of teachers' and middle and senior leaders' perceptions and experiences of lesson observation and feedback; and (ii) informing policy-makers and teacher-training programmes.

The four subsections which follow will discuss the contribution to, and impact on, theory and practice in each of the core concepts underpinning this study.

School culture

The teachers and middle leaders in this study had varied views on the school culture within which the interactions among all the school staff take place. Descriptions of this culture ranged from formal to collegial. Therefore, the issue of the overlapping of both cultures, the formal and the collegial, must be addressed as a priority in the school in order to build a more coherent culture encompassing all school staff, so that they work effectively and collaboratively on achieving a clearer approach to lesson observation within the school. With this understanding, it is suggested that a working party to include all stakeholders within the school should be established to put together proposals to try to achieve a more coherent school culture. It is hoped that this in turn will allow teachers and middle leaders to become even more focused on improving students' learning.

Participating teachers acknowledged that collaboration, trust and consultation were imperative aspects of teamwork, especially within their department's culture, and these traits assisted them in dealing with the interference that change sometimes causes. An important role of middle leaders, therefore, may be not just to help, support and give direction to teachers, but also to create the collegial environment and culture in their working areas which allows teachers to flourish and move forward with their experience during lesson observation and feedback. As Harris (2013) points out, the collaborative teams approach has become central in organisational decision-making and in driving organisational transformation. Hence, a strengthened mutual relationship between middle leaders and teachers is likely to result in further collaboration to achieve shared goals and results during the process of lesson observation and feedback. Additionally, this culture of collegiality can be the driving force for a constructive approach that allows teachers to identify the advantages to their teaching of practising observation collaboratively.

CPD

The teachers and middle leaders in this study comprehended that CPD, with lesson observation and feedback at its core, has a vital part to play in the expansion of their career. However, they believed that the school needs were given priority over their individual needs. Therefore, it is suggested that what is required here is a bespoke, sensible approach

which acknowledges the school's commitment to its wider stakeholders and also its valuable workforce's needs. In the complex organisation of a school, it is suggested that this sensible approach can most successfully be brought about through the primary focus of facilitating the professional development of teachers. It follows that teachers should be assisted and directed to improve professionally by fulfilling their CPD needs, which will in turn further enhance their professional identity and their teaching and learning. Additionally, lesson observation within the CPD provision should be managed within the supportive, consultative and trust-building characteristics of a collegial culture. This style of sharing decision-making related to CPD planning enables teachers to improve their existing skills and feel the relevance of CPD to their needs, which has a constructive influence on lesson observation and, consequently, on students' learning.

Professional identity

The teachers and middle leaders in this study all recognised that lesson observation and feedback was closely linked to their students' learning, improvement of pedagogy, and their desire to develop their own teaching practice to become skilled professionals (see chapter 7). The participants demonstrated that they are caring teachers who, as well as developing individually as professionals, are committed to developing their students' learning. These were goals that they wished to have the opportunity to display in all their activities and interrelations with others.

Teachers and middle leaders in this study were found to believe that educational reforms are affecting their professional identity; this was linked to being faced with uncomfortable challenges such as accountability, which in turn had had a negative impact on lesson observation and feedback. Their worries focused on how accountability was being enacted at the school, especially with the use of lesson observation as almost the single aspect in the performance system which determines the quality of the lessons deliverer. This issue is problematic as it appears there is often a discrepancy between what the school expects and how teachers go about their teaching. This study revealed that the current approach to lesson observation and feedback, linking it mainly to performance and accountability, is damaging to teachers' sense of professional identity. Teachers need to feel accountable to themselves in the first instance, and this may lead them to engage in their professional development further. This in turn encourages them to have higher expectations of the way in which they wish to perform during their lesson observations with the observers.

Therefore, it is suggested that for performance management to be effective, it must serve the dual purposes of accountability and improving the quality of teaching and learning through lesson observation and feedback. This would indicate that there is a need for a more finely tuned approach. This approach should take into account the need to improve the quality of teaching based on using lesson observation as a quantification tool, and the need to create and share a common understanding of professional teaching based on empowering teachers to draw from their own beliefs and experiences. It should also allow teachers to interact collegially with one another with the aim of enhancing their lesson observation without having to feel that they have to conform. Finally, the school culture should promote this positive ethos.

Conducting lesson observation and feedback

The findings indicate that the teachers and middle leaders in this study believed that when the process of lesson observation and feedback is conducted in a collegial manner, they benefited through an enhancement in their aptitude to influence students' learning. However, teachers and middle leaders felt concerned about certain aspects of the feedback given after lesson observation, such as the time allocated to deliver constructive feedback, and the subject specialism of the observer. Three distinctive characteristics that contribute to a constructive lesson observation and feedback process were recognised: (i) to listen with attention to teachers with the intention of formulating an honest discussion; (ii) to allow enough time to deliver thorough feedback after lesson observation; and (iii) to feel supported by colleagues in a collegial manner. These aspects will need to be addressed diligently if genuine collegiality is to take place during the process with the aim of establishing a constructive experience for both the observed and the observer, as this will not take place accidentally. Therefore, this study advocates that these aspects originate from and are embedded in the organisational culture, which promotes collegiality and the wide use of collaborative work in relation to lesson observation among all its stakeholders.

This study has found that middle leaders are reluctant to invest their full trust in staff. Some participating teachers believed that despite the fact that their leaders were aware of their full potential and the importance of trusting staff, they were still reluctant to start allowing the teachers to fully engage in the process of lesson observation without feeling threatened or under pressure. This, in some participants' view, was short-sighted, as the nature of the lesson observation and feedback process concerned influence on others, and they felt that

without collaboration, trust and support being invested in the process, it will falter. In the light of these results, therefore, it is suggested that all lesson observation and feedback activities would be better conducted through a consultation process in order to fully engage the teachers observed in their departments and thus reduce the fear of feeling threatened by the process. Finally, this study advocates that for lesson observation and feedback to be effective, the school should focus on facilitating a collegial, supportive and trustful consultative-style approach to the process of lesson observation and feedback. This will enable middle leaders to recognise the contribution that collegial lesson observation and feedback makes to teaching and learning, rather than simply to accountability requirements. Moreover, it is expected that a more collegial approach will help to develop a more constructive attitude to teachers' participation in the process, raising the profile of lesson observation within the school CPD provision, and finally eliminating the negativity associated with accountability on the teachers' professional identity. In the process, it is hoped that both teachers and middle leaders will embrace opportunities to learn. This implies that if teaching and learning is to be improved, the focus should be on training teachers collegially to receive quality lesson observation and feedback. It is suggested and hoped that the involvement of all parties in the lesson observation and feedback process through collegial consultation will empower them, thereby creating a reciprocal acceptance of the expectations and outcomes of the process. Despite the difficulties discussed above in terms of the pressures of external accountability (such as fulfilling State requirements) and internal accountability (such as conforming to school policy) which are being brought to bear in the school environment, this study, therefore, recommends the use of the known term – 'collegial consultation'– (see for example, Imants, 2002; Herwig-Lempp, 2013) to frame the process of lesson observation and feedback.

Limitations

The fact that the researcher is a middle leader working in the school in which the study was conducted can be regarded as a limiting aspect for this research. Some participants may have been hesitant to give truthful answers through fear of revealing potentially unfavourable views about the school culture and policy to an insider researcher. To ameliorate the effect of this limitation, a purposeful sampling method (Lodico et al., 2010) was used to identify appropriate participants from the pilot study who appeared confident in expressing diverse views. Consequently, the researcher is confident that the selection

process produced data that was demonstrative of participants' honest views. Additionally, the small sample size can be viewed to be an element of limitation in this study as it restricts the scope in generalising results (Yin, 2013). However, rather than focusing on generalisability, the value in the data is in its rich, in-depth detail about the participants' true perceptions of the lesson observation and feedback process.

Knowing the participants for many years gave the researcher the belief that their considerable experience with lesson observation and feedback was likely to provide insightful opinions. The participants had been at the school for many years (ranging from five to twenty-nine years) and had thorough knowledge of the lesson observation and feedback process. It is believed that the participants were confident that their responses to the researcher would be used only for degree fulfilment and for the improvement of the experience.

Recommendations for further research

This research could be replicated using a greater sample with the purpose of generalising the findings to a larger number of staff and schools. It could be extended by involving a larger number of secondary schools covering State-run and private schools, with the aim of providing a more representative evaluation. Moreover, as this study was conducted in a secondary school, it would be intriguing to explore lesson observation and feedback in a primary school setting.

A further study could be to investigate the development of newly qualified teachers (NQT), following their career through a lengthier period of time to see how a performance management system with the use of lesson observation might be influencing whether or not they stay in the profession.

Another additional study could aim to observe the actual lesson observation process to gain further insight into the practice and discourse of feedback provided, and to look at the language used, and the implementation of any recommended targets set by the observer(s).

Dissemination of the research

It is hoped that this study on lesson observation and feedback may have an important effect on theory and practice and several aspects of the work have already been disseminated. A 30-minute presentation of the findings was delivered by the researcher to staff at a local

primary school followed by a question and answer session with a very active level of engagement. The researcher is also discussing with this primary school the possible implementation of some of the recommendations stated in this study in their school policy.

The researcher presented the findings of the study to the staff of the participating school during an INSET day. This resulted in the school implementing some of the recommendations of the study in its planned review of its policies. For instance, the school is to promote a flexible approach to encourage teachers to feel empowered during lesson observation and feedback to make them feel less threatened, and to this end, a working party has already been established.

Additionally, the pre-existing term 'collegial consultation' that surfaced in this study is of relevance to all staff at the school, irrespective of their existing career framework. It further offers an original approach that the school perhaps can utilise to provide support to everyone, including the members who may be disengaged within their establishment.

The researcher is attending an international conference on education to present a paper on this study's findings and recommendations this coming winter 2018. It is hoped that the study will accomplish its goal by encouraging renewed interest in and a new grasp of the issues regarding lesson observation and feedback from the teachers' and middle leaders' perspective, both in practice and in policy terms.

Reflection

Engaging in this particular research journey has led to a number of positive and increasingly focused points that have really opened my eyes to various insights in educational research.

Conducting my pilot study led to some great reflection upon my research, helping me to engage more in critical thinking, connect with research topic arguments, and better understand diverse approaches to methodology. Moreover, after feedback and reflection, a new research title was formulated (Staff Perceptions of Lesson Observation and Feedback in a UK Secondary School: CPD, Identity, and Organisational Culture) and a more detailed review was conducted on my research questions. This kept my view critical and more concise when embarking upon my research arguments, as it made them more targeted to my aim and my study.

The research carried out through my EdD journey has allowed me to undertake insightful self-examination and self-reflection. This has allowed me to be self-critical towards my own professional values and also to make beneficial changes to my ongoing practice within education. In addition to this, my own prior assumptions were frequently challenged and modified, making this research highly beneficial to me as an insider researcher and educational professional.

An additional consequence of the personal journey described above, is that the way in which I approach my colleagues has transformed appropriately and I have been helped to position myself explicitly. It also resulted in the realisation that in my research I needed to develop further understanding of the role as a middle leader and observer of lessons. There are many areas which I now cautiously reflect upon. These consist of things such as: the process of lesson observation and feedback within my middle leader colleagues, teachers' various perceptions on teaching and the attention dedicated towards this, the value that we might give to the background and ideas that teachers bring to the classroom, and how affective factors may contribute to experiences of participants in lesson observation and feedback.

Finally, my view of my own leadership context within the wider educational field has been influenced by the research process as it has provided me with a wealth of resources from which I can learn in order to improve the quality of the lesson observation and feedback process.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Khaled Alshawabka
Deputy Head of Science Faculty
Xxx Academy
Date 16/04/2016

**Staff Perceptions of Lesson Observation and Feedback in a UK Secondary School:
CPD, Identity, and Organisational Culture**

Dear Colleague,

I am undertaking research for a doctorate in education (Ed) at The Open University. My thesis will be about the process of lesson observation and feedback.

I would be very grateful if you are able to find the time to read the following information regarding the undertaken research.

The main purpose of this study is to explore and to deepen understanding of teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions of lesson observation and feedback in their departments, within the context of the whole school.

The information you provide on in the interview will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only I and the project supervisors will have access to the records. Any quoted data will be anonymously used for the purpose of this research only.

No information leading to the identification of you or the school will be included in any publication or communication of the results. Your involvement is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time during the project. You don't have to provide any reason for your withdrawal and the information you have provided will be destroyed.

Upon completion, your interview will be given a unique reference number and your name and address will be kept separately from it.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Open University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, please contact the lead supervisor, Dr Alan Floyd, Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET), The Open University, Stuart Hall Building, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes MK7 6AA.

With thanks.

Yours sincerely

Mr Khaled Alshawabka   Khaled.alshawabka@open.ac.uk

APPENDIX B

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM: (*INTERVIEWS)*

NAME:

SCHOOL:

I **agree** to be a participant in this study to be undertaken by Mr Khaled Alshawabka and I understand that the purpose of the research is to explore teachers' and middle leaders' perceptions of lesson observation feedback practices in their departments, within the context of the whole school.
I understand that

1.   The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2.   I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.

3.   I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

4.   Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.

5.   I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature: Date:

The contact details of the researcher are: Khaled.alshawabka@open.ac.uk

The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are j.s.wardale@open.ac.uk

Should you wish to contact my supervisor regarding this research, his details are as follows: Supervisor – Dr Alan Floyd – The Open University. alan.floyd@open.ac.uk

Appendix C and Appendix D

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

Request for permission to conduct research in schools

Date: 24.06.2014

Dear

My name is Khaled E. Alshawabka, and I am a doctorate student at The Open University. The research project I wish to conduct for my Doctoral thesis involves the exploration of teachers' perceptions on the contribution of collegiality on teaching and learning. The literature on leadership in schools shows there have been huge changes in the last thirty years. Leadership in schools has moved from the hierarchical type leadership to a more sharing of the leadership responsibilities and a change in the professional role of the teacher. The significance of the research project will provide schools and teachers with greater understanding about the influence of collegiality on teaching and learning. This project will be conducted under the main supervision of Dr David Plowright-The Open University.

I am hereby seeking your consent to approach a number of teachers in different departments in your school to provide participants for this project.

If you are happy for your school to participate in the study I hope to carry out a series of interviews and questionnaires with teachers. These interviews would be audio taped and transcribed, and the interview should be no longer than 30 minutes. Once I have received your consent (attached) to approach teachers to participate in the study, I will obtain informed consent from each participant (a copy is available for your attention).

Information collected from all participants will be kept anonymous and stored securely. Only myself and the project supervisor will have access to the data and, in accordance with the requirements of some scientific journals and organisations, the coded data may be shared with other competent researchers. If there is a withdrawal of consent before the point of data collation, the data will be destroyed. No information leading to the identification of your school or the individual teachers will be included in any publication or distribution of the results. Your school's involvement is voluntary and you may withdraw permission at any time during the project.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Khaled E. Alshawabka

Should you wish to contact my supervisor regarding this research, his details are as follows: Supervisor – Dr David Plowright – The Open University. wood.farm@btopenworld.com

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THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

School Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Human Research Ethics Committee at the Open University;

I,]   Hereby give permission for **Mr Khaled E. Alshawabka** to conduct the research titled the contribution of collegiality on teaching and learning and that involvement for the institution means the following:-

I understand that

1.   The aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.

2.   I voluntarily and freely give my consent for the institution/organisation to participate in the above research study.

5.   I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained through this institution/organisation will not be used if I so request.

3.   I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.

I agree that

4.   The institution/organisation MAY / ~~MAY NOT~~ be named in research publications or other publicity without prior agreement.

5.   I / We DO / ~~DO NOT~~ require an opportunity to check the factual accuracy of the research findings related to the institution/organisation.

6.   I / We EXPECT / ~~DO NOT EXPECT~~ to receive a copy of the research findings or publications.

Signature: Date: 26/6/14

Should you wish to contact my supervisor regarding this research, his details are as follows:

Supervisor – Dr David Plowright – The Open University. wood.farm@btopenworld.com

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Appendix E

For office use only:

HREC Reference number:	

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
Project Registration and Risk Checklist

If you are planning a research project that involves human participants (data and/or biological samples), you should complete and submit this checklist so that the HREC Chair can decide the level of ethics review that is required. If you have not already done so, refer to the *OU Ethics Principles for Research involving Human Participants*.

Once you have completed the checklist, save it for your records and email a copy to Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk, with any relevant documents e.g. a questionnaire, consent form, publicity leaflet and/or a draft bid. You will then be contacted as to whether or not your research will need full HREC review (please indicate if you require a decision very urgently). No potential participants should be approached to take part in any research until you have submitted your checklist and, where required, gained HREC approval (http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human.shtml#approval).

Section I: Project Details

Project title	The contribution of collegiality on teaching and learning in secondary schools.
Brief description (100 words maximum)	The research project I wish to conduct for my Doctoral thesis involves the exploration of teachers' perceptions on the contribution of collegiality on teaching and learning. The literature on leadership in schools shows there have been huge changes in the last thirty years. Leadership in schools has moved from the hierarchical type leadership to a more sharing of the leadership responsibilities and a change in the professional role of the teacher. The significance of the research project will provide schools and teachers with greater understanding about the influence of collegiality on teaching and learning.
Is your research part of an application for external funding?	
If so, please provide the name of the funding body and your Grants and Contracts RED form reference number	Funding body: Red form ref:
Will your research proceed if external funding is not awarded?	
Is your research being assessed by the Student Research Project Panel?	

Section II: Applicant Details

Name of Primary Investigator (or research student) Other researcher(s)	KHALED E. ALSHAWABKA
Status	
Email address	kalshawabka@open.ac.uk
Academic unit	EdD
Telephone number	07764191943
Date	25.06.2014

Section III: For students only:

EdD/MA/MPhil/MRes/PhD	EdD
Supervisor's name	DR DAVID PLOWRIGHT
Supervisor's email address (Your supervisor will need to email their endorsement before or at the same time this checklist is submitted)	wood.farm@btopenworld.com

Section IV: Risk Checklist

Please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so the Chair can assess the proposed research.

		Yes	No
1	Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. children, people with learning disabilities)		
2	Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students at school, members of a self-help group, residents of nursing home)		
3	Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)		
4	Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use)?		
5	Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedure of any kinds?		
6	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?		
7	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		
8	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		
9	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		

10	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		
11	Will the study involve the collection of human tissue or other human biological samples?		

If you answered 'yes' to questions **10** or **11**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (http://www.nres.npsa.nhs.uk/).

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University's ***Code Of Practice for Research and Those Conducting Research*** and the ***Ethics Principles for Research involving Human Participants***, and any relevant academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing appropriate information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring security in the storage and use of data. The Research Ethics website provides further information and guidance.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHERS

Research Framework	Interview Themes/Questions
Introduction	Study background and aims Participant Entitlements
Professional Identity	1. **Could you give me an insight into your career history?** Why did you go into teaching? How did you become a teacher? (Can you tell me why have you joined the teaching profession? When did you join this particular school and why?) How long have you been teaching for? What made you choose teaching? Has anything changed since you started teaching? What? How? 2. **What is your role in the school?** (Can you tell me about a time you have ever helped and/ or have been supporting other members of your department?) What do you do in your department meeting? What role do you have? Do you have a share in the decisions that are made? Is your opinion valued or acknowledged? 3. **Can you tell me about your experiences with lesson observation/feedback?** (What strikes you in the process of lesson observation/feedback? How do you feel about it, is it a valuable activity, why not? Etc. [If the interviewee doesn't tell me much, I will be prepared to ask them: who does the observation, how long it takes, how the feedback is communicated, how effective is all of this?]

	What are in it for you within your department? Is it something you dread or something you look forward to? Why?
	- Are there any problems you experience in/disadvantages of lesson observations? (choice of time, groups or observer)
	-What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback? For your own practice? (How do you feel about it?... etc.)
	4. **How have your own teaching and learning changed since you joined the profession in relation to lesson observation?** (Why? /Why not?) Empowerments of teachers, CPD; Can you give me an example of this from your own experience as a classroom teacher? Probes - Knowledge, inside the classroom, team work and responsibility, accountability, performativity. Can you give me an example of this in action in a department context as a middle leader? Formal, collegial, support for mission and vision, support of staff in your department, (CPD)…etc.
	5. What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher? (What does it mean to you to become a teacher? Do you see being observed as contributing to your professional identity?) What's in it for you? Can you explain?) Do you understand the meaning of the concept professional identity? Probe (attributes beliefs, values, motives, and experiences). - Do you think it has impact on your professional identity as a teacher? Why not? or How? (job satisfaction, attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences), professionalism, accountability.
School Culture	**6. How could you describe your school culture and department in terms of?** (Formal/ collegial…. etc.) …. And CPD culture

	7. Could you please walk me through how the process of lesson observation/feedback carried out within your department?
	- How does lesson observation and feedback fit within your school /department?
	(Is there something else with regard to lesson observation and feedback within your department I should know?)
	What is in it for you within your department? Is it something you dread or something you look forward to? Why?
	8. To what extent are you involved prior to lesson observation and then feedback within the department? Are there any examples of good outcomes to your teaching that you would attribute to this involvement approach during lesson observation and feedback (collegial or not)?
	9. Can you tell me about the position of lesson observation/ feedback within the department/school? (Make sure to pick up on certain interesting points emerging here and ask more about them).
	10. How is lesson observation monitored/managed/evaluated in the school/department?
CPD	**11. How is CPD seen within the school? Is it perceived as CPD or performance management of staff?**
	12. What are the contextual factors do you believe that help teachers to work efficiently?
	(Can you tell me about a recent observation experience you conducted (was it a professional discussion with a colleague rather than a troubleshooting exercise)? What happened? How did you communicate your views about the class to the teacher? Did you want to listen to what they had to say about what they did? Etc.
	13. In your opinion what are the factors that lead to an effective lesson observation/feedback? Probe collegiality, etc. **AND what are the factors that lead to a limited lesson observation feedback?**
	14. Could you please tell me about a good lesson observation/feedback you have received and a less positive one? (Examples, why?) What happened in the good lesson observation to make it good? What did you

	learn? What happened in the less effective one? Etc.) Tell me about a lesson that you have enjoyed teaching (good lesson). Planning, organisation, knowledge, collegiality, support for mission and vision.
	Are you encouraged to share your thoughts of the lesson observed? (How? Examples.)**. Pick up on any interesting points they have to say here.** Are you influenced….
	15. What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback training/CPD if any in your school/ department? For your own practice?
	16. Do you vary your style of teaching in your lessons in response to feedback from lesson observation/CPD? Can you give me an example of this from your own experience? Inside the classroom and beyond; team work, responsibility, groups, differentiation, age, ability. Or in other words, have you ever incorporated some lesson observation/ feedback into your teaching?
	How do you respond in terms of **professional practice** as a result of the feedback given after lesson observation? Please explain.
	17. How would you describe the values/position of lesson observation and feedback? In relation to other tasks (professional development tasks? or performance management tasks?) – Maybe give an example of these tasks so interviewee can compare - and policies?
	18. What are the challenges of lesson observation/feedback training or CPD from THE SCHOOL and your perspective? Give examples.
Conclusion	Any other comments?
	What will happen to data?
	Follow up meeting/respondent validation.

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR MIDDLE LEADERS

Research Framework	Interview Themes/Questions
Introduction	Study background and aims
	Participant Entitlements
Professional Identity	**1. Could you give me an insight into your career history?** **Why did you go into teaching? How did you become a teacher (training/on-going training)?** (Can you tell me why have you joined the teaching profession? When did you join this particular School and why?) Has anything changed since you started teaching? What? How? **2. What is your role in the school?** (What aspects of your role (middle leader) do you find difficult? Can you give me an example? Probes: delegation, being a sandwich between SLT and classroom teachers, school support, trust, and empowerment; Do you have any concerns in playing the two roles of classroom teacher and middle leader simultaneously? **3. Can you tell me about your experiences with lesson observation/feedback?** (What does strike you in the process of lesson observation/feedback? How do you feel about it, is it a valuable activity, why not? Etc. [If the interviewee doesn't tell me much, I will be prepared to ask them: who does the observation, how long it takes, how the feedback is communicated, how effective is all of this?] What is in it for you within your department? Is it something you dread or something you look forward to? Why? - Are there any problems you experience in/disadvantages of carrying out lesson observations?

	-What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback? For your own practice? (How do you feel about it, etc.?) **4. How have your own teaching and learning changed since you joined the profession in relation to lesson observation?** (Why? /Why not?) Empowerment of teachers, CPD; Can you give me an example of this from your own experience as a classroom teacher? Probes- Knowledge, inside the classroom, team work and responsibility, accountability, performativity; Can you give me an example of this in action in a department context as a middle leader? Formal, collegial, support for mission and vision, support of staff in your department, (CPD)…etc. **5. What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher?** What does it mean to you to become a teacher? Do you see being observed as contributing to your professional identity? What's in it for you? (Can you explain?) Do you understand the meaning of the concept professional identity? Probe (attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences). - Do you think it has impact on your professional identity as a teacher? Why not? Or How? (Job satisfaction, attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences). Professionalism……. accountability.
School Culture	**6. How could you describe your school culture and department in terms of?** (Formal/ collegial…. etc.) …. And CPD culture **7. Could you please walk me through how the process of lesson observation/feedback is carried out within your department?** - How does lesson observation and feedback fit within your school/department? Is there something else with regard to lesson observation and feedback within your department I should know? What is in it for you within your department? Is it something you dread or something you look

		forward to? Why? - Is there something else with regard to lesson observation and feedback within your department I should know
		8. To what extent do you involve teachers prior to lesson observation and then feedback within the departments/ school? Are there any examples of good outcomes to the teaching and learning in departments/school that you would attribute to this involvement approach during lesson observation feedback (collegial or not)?
		9. Can you tell me about the position of lesson observation/feedback within the school/department? (Make sure to pick up on certain interesting points emerging here and ask more about them.)
		10. How is lesson observation monitored/managed/evaluated in the school/department?
CPD		**11. How is CPD seen within the school? Is lesson observation perceived as a CPD or a performance management practice?**
		12. What are the contextual factors that you believe help teachers to work efficiently?
		(Can you tell me about a recent observation experience you conducted (was it a professional discussion with a colleague rather than a troubleshooting exercise))? What happened? How did you communicate your views about the class to the teacher? Did you want to listen to what they had to say about what they did? etc.
		13. In your opinion, what are the factors that lead to effective lesson observation/feedback? Probe collegiality, etc. **AND what are the factors that lead to limited lesson observation/feedback?**
		14. Could you please tell me about a good lesson observation/feedback you have conducted and a less positive one? (Examples, why?) What happened in the good lesson observation to make it good? What did you learn? What happened in the less effective one? Etc.
		Do you encourage the observed teachers to share their thoughts of the lesson observed? (How? Examples.) **Pick up on any interesting points they have to say here.**

	15. What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback training/CPD if any in your school/ department? For your own practice and the teachers, you observe?
	16. Do you think teachers vary their style of teaching after lesson observation training/CPD? Can you give me an example of this from your own experience? Inside the classroom and beyond; team work, responsibility, groups, differentiation, age, ability. Or in other words, have you ever incorporated some lesson observation/ feedback into teaching and learning?
	17. How would you describe the values/position of lesson observation and feedback? In relation to other tasks (professional development tasks? or performance management tasks?) – Maybe give an example of these tasks so interviewee can compare - and policies?
	18. What are the challenges of lesson observation/feedback training or CPD from THE SCHOOL and your perspective? Give examples: the leading and managing of CPD in general and lesson observations in particular. I suggest also looking at how lesson observations feed into the appraisal process, etc.
Conclusion	Any other comments? What will happen to data? Follow up meeting/respondent validation.

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING COORDINATOR

Research Framework	Interview Themes/Questions
Introduction	Study background and aims
	Participant Entitlements
Professional Identity	**1. Could you give me an insight into your career history?** **Why did you go into teaching? How did you become a teacher (training/on-going training)?** (Can you tell me why have you joined the teaching profession? When did you join this particular school and why?) Has anything changed since you started teaching? What? How? **2. What is your role in the school?** What aspects of your role (teaching and learning coordinator) do you find difficult? Can you give me an example? Probes: delegation, being a sandwich between SLT and classroom teachers, school support, trust, and empowerment. Do you have any concerns in playing the two roles of classroom teacher and middle leader simultaneously? **3. Can you tell me about your experiences with lesson observation/feedback?** (What does strike you in the process of lesson observation/feedback? How do you feel about it, is it a valuable activity, why not? Etc.) [If the interviewee doesn't tell me much, I will be prepared to ask them: who does the observation, how long it takes, how the feedback is communicated, how effective is all of this?] What is in it for you within your department? Is it something you dread or something you look forward to? Why?

	- Are there any problems you experience/disadvantages of carrying out lesson observations? -What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback? For your own practice? (How do you feel about it, ... etc.). **4. How have your own teaching and learning changed since you joined the profession in relation to lesson observation?** (Why? / Why not?) Empowerments of teachers, CPD. Can you give me an example of this from your own experience as a classroom teacher? Probes - Knowledge, inside the classroom, team work and responsibility, accountability, performativity. Can you give me an example of this in action in a department context as a middle leader? Formal, collegial, support for mission and vision, support of staff in your department, (CPD)…etc. **5. What does it mean to you to be a professional teacher?** What does it mean to you to become a teacher? Do you see being observed as contributing to your professional identity? What's in it for you? (Can you explain?) Do you understand the meaning of the concept professional identity? Probe (attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences). - Do you think it has impact on your professional identity as a teacher? Why not? or How? (job satisfaction, ... attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences). Professionalism……. accountability
School Culture	**6. How could you describe your school culture and department in terms of…?** (Formal/ collegial…? etc.) …. and CPD culture? **7. Could you please walk me through how the process of lesson observation/feedback is carried out within your school?** - How does lesson observation and feedback fit within your school/departments?

	What is in it for you within your school? Is it something you dread or something you look forward to? Why? - Is there something else with regard to lesson observation and feedback within your department I should know?

8. Can you tell me about the position of lesson observation/feedback within the school? (Make sure to pick up on certain interesting points emerging here and ask more about them.)

9. How is lesson observation monitored/managed/evaluated in the school? Can you give me an example of this from your own experience? Inside the classroom and beyond; team work, responsibility, groups, differentiation, age, ability. Or in other words, have you ever incorporated some lesson observation/ feedback into your teaching?

10. Can you tell me what you know about the way middle leaders approach/carry out lesson observation and feedback in their departments? (This is in order to know whether school coordinator and middle leaders have the same understanding or there are any differences). |
| CPD | **11. How is CPD seen within the school? Is it perceived as CPD or performance management of staff?**

12. What are the contextual factors you believe help teachers to work efficiently?

 Can you tell me about a recent observation experience you conducted (was it a professional discussion with a colleague rather than a troubleshooting exercise)? What happened? How did you communicate your views about the class to the teacher? Did you want to listen to what they had to say about what they did? Etc.

13. In your opinion, what are the factors that lead to effective lesson observation/feedback? Probe collegiality, etc. **AND what are the factors that lead to limited lesson observation/feedback?**

14. Could you please tell me about good lesson observation/feedback you have conducted and a less positive one? (Examples, why?) What happened in the good lesson observation to make it good? What did |

	you learn? What happened in the less effective one? Etc.

Do you encourage the observed teachers to share their thoughts of the lesson observed? (How? Examples.) **Pick up on any interesting points they have to say here.**

15. What would you say are the benefits of lesson observation/feedback training/CPD if any in your school/ department? For your own practice and the teachers, you observe?

16. How would you describe the values/position of lesson observation and feedback? in relation to other tasks (professional development tasks? or performance management tasks?) - Maybe give an example of these tasks so interviewee can compare - and policies?

17. What are the challenges of lesson observation/feedback training or CPD from THE SCHOOL and your perspective? Give examples.

18. The Leading and Managing of CPD in general and lesson observations in particular. I suggest also looking at how lesson observations feed into the appraisal process, etc. |
| Conclusion | Any other comments?

What will happen to data?

Follow up meeting/respondent validation. |

APPENDIX I

Lesson Observation Policy and Protocols

Accountability and evaluation of provision

The Head Teacher is accountable for the quality of learning and teaching, and must be able to provide the Governors and external bodies such as Ofsted with a detailed analysis, including

• overall percentages of satisfactory or better, good or better, and inadequate teaching • a best-fit overall grade for each member of teaching staff (Ofsted only) • evidence of lesson observations and judgements • evidence of the verification of these judgements • analysis of the quality of teaching at each key stage • analysis of the quality of teaching by department • analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement by aspects of teaching e.g. AFL, differentiation • observation-based evidence of key areas of the school's work e.g.. how well students behave

Professional Development

Teachers have a right to high-quality, professional developmental and evaluative feedback on their classroom practice. We need this feedback to help us reflect on what we do, to keep our practice fresh and to learn from others.

Observations provide opportunities to discuss what we do, grounded in the daily realities of our real context. Feedback is professional, sensitive, rigorous and robust. By talking through a lesson, we have taught, often in great detail, we can evaluate how effective our repertoire is. We can reflect on what we do well and how we might improve. We can consider other possibilities, other approaches. We explore theoretical perspectives and practical solutions.

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Issued: September 2014 Last Updated: July 2015 Co-ordinator: Deputy Head teacher CPD Governors:

This policy is communicated to: • Governors via the Personalised Learning and Curriculum Committee and Governors' policy folder in the Staff Library. • Staff through INSET, policy folders in the Staff Library and Departments/Faculties and the policy noticeboard in the Staffroom • Parents/persons with parental responsibility via the MLE

The xxxx Lesson Observation Proforma, Judgement Grid and these Protocols aim to provide a framework for this process. We should be observed, and observe others, using this framework as a guide, but not being limited by it. Observers and observed teachers should use the Judgement Grid as a tool to aid reflection and evaluation. It should be the common currency we use to think and talk about our classrooms.

Verification

All teachers who make judgements on the quality of learning and teaching need to go through a verification process. This entails:

• familiarity with the xxxx Judgement Grid • being observed and debriefed by a verified observer, using the judgement grid • carrying out a paired observation with a verified observer, using the judgement grid. The observers should withdraw after 20 minutes or so, discuss what they have seen, and decide what further evidence they need to finalize their judgement before re-entering the lesson. They should agree the judgement, strengths and areas for development before feeding back to the teacher • leading or contributing to the feedback, using the methodology outlined in this document • both the verifier and the trainee observer need to be confident in the trainee's accuracy of judgement and effectiveness of feedback before the trainee is considered to be verified. This process can be repeated as many times as required.

It is expected that the majority of formal observations are carried out by two observers, and the Senior Leader i/c Teaching and Learning should endeavour to ensure this whenever possible.

How often do observations take place?

Note: NQTs follow their own programme of observations.

The expectation is that teachers are observed formally up to three times per year. If there are particular issues that entail closer monitoring of the performance of a teacher, then the number of observations may increase.

Teachers should be given at least five working days' notice of an observation and told the focus or purpose e.g. Performance Management.

Once an observation has been arranged, the school should endeavour to make sure it takes place. Staff involved should not be taken for cover unless there are no other reasonable alternatives. If a member of staff due to observe is called away, then a substitute should be found.

All formal observations that are part of the Performance Management process must adhere to these protocols and must be arranged by or agreed with the Senior Leader i/c teaching and learning. Teachers may request formal observations in addition to their three per year. These must also be carried out in line with these Protocols and in liaison with the Senior Leader i/c teaching and learning.

Teachers may request informal or developmental observations. These can be carried out by members of staff by mutual agreement and the school will try to accommodate requests for such observations whenever possible. Judgements should neither be given nor recorded in these cases. The school has a coaching programme: these observations are by nature informal and should be arranged by mutual agreement between coach and coaches (see separate coaching policy).

The school may periodically conduct formal Reviews of subjects or aspects of its work that will require formal observations to take place. Some observations in the Reviews may be carried out by a single observer and may not be for a full lesson. The objective of Review observations is to gather information about the qualities of teaching across a department, not to contribute to the Performance Management process. However, teachers may choose to "count" a Review observation as one of their three per year, in which case the judgements made will be recorded on the database.

The school may carry out Learning Walks to review aspects of its work. For example, senior and/or middle leaders may arrange a Learning Walk to evaluate the quality of

plenaries. Teachers should be given five working days' notice that a Learning Walk is taking place and should be informed of its focus. These do not constitute formal observations but are part of action research and ongoing evaluation. Any documentation or report that is produced as a result of a Learning Walk will be generic i.e. individual teachers will not be named. Formal lesson plans (other than the teacher's daily planning records) and other documentation are not required, judgements will not be made, or recorded and individual feedback will not be given, unless requested. The only circumstances in which further action will be triggered by a Learning Walk would be if there were any Health and Safety or Safeguarding issues.

The Judgement Grid and Observation Form

When Ofsted inspectors observe lessons, they adapt what they look for according to the school's circumstances. In some cases they record judgements on behaviour for every lesson. In some cases they just use the grades for Teaching, which incorporate our Teaching, Resources, Assessment and Differentiation strands (see below). It is clear though that, regardless of context or individual inspector, the strands are interrelated. Progress or impact on learning is implied in many of the strands: behaviour, for example, can only be judged good or better if it leads to good or better learning and progress. Inspectors tend to give a single grade for most lessons and sometimes indicate if it is near a borderline by saying, for example, "good with outstanding features."

At xxxx we want to give more detailed and focused feedback than this in order to identify the strengths and areas for development in our practice in helpful and professional ways. We are not Ofsted and do not want the observation process to be the blunt measuring instrument that Ofsted observations can so often feel like.

With this in mind, we have divided the Judgement Grid and the Observation Form into sections so that:

• observers and teachers reflect on and analyse teaching in great detail by focusing on specific areas. This enables key strengths and areas for development to be pinpointed. We all learn better from feedback that focuses on specifics, as APP shows

• we can avoid the deterministic language around observations by which teachers are labelled "satisfactory", for example (see below)

• we are able to concentrate on key issues for the school and track how we are improving.

Observers use the xxxx Judgement Grid and Lesson Observation Form. The Judgement Grid is derived from different sections of the Evaluation Schedule and was worked on by Ofsted inspectors. It takes the different sections of the Evaluation Schedule that apply directly to teaching and learning and divides them into these areas:

Evaluation Schedule section

Xxxx Judgement Grid

xxxx Observation Form

Quality of learning and progress

Progress Independent Learning

Learning and progress

Quality of teaching and the use of assessment to support learning

Assessment Differentiation Teaching Resources

Use of assessment Teaching and resources Differentiation

Behaviour

The way in which the two documents are divided may change over time to reflect the school's priorities. At the moment AFL, Independent Learning and Differentiation are key for the school, so the two documents have been adapted accordingly.

Observers will record comments and make judgements on each of the strands on the Observation Form, which are currently:

• Learning and Progress • Use of assessment • Differentiation • Teaching and use of resources • Behaviour

Some teachers may wish not to discuss or be told the judgements on their lesson. They should inform the observer of this at the start of the feedback meeting. The observer will then discuss strengths and areas for development without reference to the Judgement Grid.

How are judgements used? Analysing and improving practice

The grades given will be recorded on the central database and used to produce the analyses shown above in the Accountability and Evaluation of Provision section above. We can then take steps to build on strengths and tackle weaknesses. For example, let's say that Autumn term observations indicate that AFL is good or better in only 30% of lessons seen. We can identify individuals and departments that have strengths in AFL and those that need support. We can then take steps to make the necessary improvements. This could take the shape of individual CPD, subject leaders working with their teams on specific areas, or groups of teachers being supported through coaching or mentoring. If we have been effective, then the Summer term observations should show an increase in the percentage of lessons seen with good or better AFL.

How are judgements used? Performance Management

Outcomes of observations should be used to inform Performance Management (see separate Policy). Having separate judgements for each strand helps reviewer and reviewee identify strengths, progress and targets for development.

Observation records are required for movement towards upper pay scales, as evidence of the "substantial and sustained progress" that is dependent upon effective teaching.

How are judgements used? Overall judgements on the quality of teaching

There is a danger in using deterministic language around observations. It is too easy for teachers to feel as if they are being labelled with a particular grade. For example, some teachers say, "I was told I was satisfactory". The reality is more complex. It is much more realistic for us to recognize that:

• observations are a snapshot of performance on a particular day • observers can only evaluate what they see • for most teachers some aspects of their practice are stronger than others

We need to be mindful of this when carrying out observations and giving or receiving feedback. It is realistic and helpful for someone's development to be told, for example, that

in the lesson observed there was evidence of good AFL and good teaching, but that satisfactory differentiation led to satisfactory learning and progress for all students, although some made good progress. It would be neither realistic nor helpful for the same teacher to be told "you're satisfactory with some good features."

Therefore, for performance management the full range of judgements across all the observations that have taken place in the current PM cycle should be taken into consideration.

The only time when a best-fit single grade is given for a teacher should be for the completion of summary reports for Governors or Ofsted inspectors. The Senior Leader i/c Teaching and Learning allocates a best-fit overall grade that reflects the full range of judgements across all of the recent observations that have taken place, with weighting given to Teaching and Learning and Progress.

If the observed teacher wishes to challenge the outcome of an observation, then the observer should contact the Senior Leader i/c Learning and Teaching, who will arrange a repeat observation.

Inadequate lessons

If a lesson is judged to be inadequate for Teaching and/or for Learning and Progress, then the following steps need to be followed:

• the observer(s) should establish with the teacher and head of department/line manager whether this lesson was characteristic of their practice or not. In many cases inadequate aspects of lessons are the products of a set of local and temporary circumstances that can be fixed quickly

• the agreed targets for improvement need to be carefully selected to ensure the correct aspects are sharply focused on

• if the teacher feels they need a further discussion with the observer(s) to clarify issues or suggest strategies, then one should be arranged as soon as possible

• a follow-up observation should be arranged for two weeks after the original observation

• if the follow-up lesson is inadequate in Teaching and/or Learning and Progress, then a Teacher Support Plan should be drawn up and implemented as soon as possible.

If a lesson is judged to be inadequate for differentiation, assessment or behaviour, it is likely to be judged inadequate for Teaching and/or Learning and Progress too. If, however, there are exceptional circumstances in which one or more aspects are judged inadequate but Teaching and Learning and Progress are satisfactory or better, then the following steps need to be followed:

• the observer should establish with the teacher whether this lesson was characteristic of their practice or not. In many cases inadequate aspects of lessons are the products of a set of local and temporary circumstances that can be fixed quickly

• the agreed targets for improvement need to be carefully selected to ensure the correct aspects are sharply focused on

• if the teacher feels they need a further discussion with the observer(s) to clarify issues or suggest strategies, then one should be arranged as soon as possible

• the teacher's head of department or line manager should be informed and should provide or arrange support and monitor the situation. If the teacher or head of department feel that this aspect of the teacher's work is not improving, then further support should be arranged in liaison with the Senior Leader i/c Teaching and Learning.

Documentation for observations

Observers use

• xxxx Judgement Grid • xxxx Observation Form • Copies of completed Observation Form should be given to the teacher and the Senior Leader i/c learning and teaching within 7 days of the observation

Teacher observed provides

• lesson plan (School Proforma) • context sheet (School Proforma) • seating plan (annotated with levels/grades, SEN etc. if possible) • printout from SIMS showing contextual data (SEN etc.), prior attainment, latest assessment data (RAG)

• access to daily planning and assessment records

The teacher may choose to provide

• relevant section of Scheme of Learning • copies of IEPs or PONs for statemented students • any Raising Attainment Plans or other relevant information

Observers need to be able to understand the class they are observing and the decisions the teacher has made. For example, any information teachers can provide about rationales for grouping or behaviour concerns will help the observer.

In the differentiation section on the plan, it would help to name key students, so the observer can understand how questioning or differentiated tasks are deployed.

Any additional materials that might demonstrate progress – sketchbooks, portfolios, assessment folders etc – may also be provided.

Conducting the observation - observers should:

• Sit unobtrusively to the side or at a table – not at the front or in a position that might make unclear whose classroom this is • Not interfere with the lesson, unless there is a Health and Safety issue or the teacher is in clear need of support • Avoid talking to students while the teacher is addressing the whole class • Check that books have been marked in line with policy eg are there specific targets for improvement as well as marks • Use the assessment data provided to identify particular students to monitor: most able, least able, SEN, underachieving etc. • Once activities are underway, move around and monitor progress and productivity of these identified students and any others • Try to get close enough (without interfering) to hear what the teacher says to individuals or groups while they are working • Near or at the end of the lesson, ask a range of students what they have learned today that was new for them (key measure of progress) • Find opportunities to talk to students about their work. Keep these key questions in mind:

1. How does this lesson fit in with recent lessons? Do they know where today's work is going? What do they hope to have learned or achieved by the end of the lesson? 2. What are they learning today? 3. Do students know their current levels or grades? 4. Do students know their target levels or grades? 5. Do students know what they need to do to progress to next level or grade? 6. How does teacher give them feedback? How often do they get

feedback? 7. Would they say that the work today is too easy, too hard, just right? 8. Is today's lesson typical of the kind of lesson they have in this subject? 9. Do they enjoy this subject?

Feedback

Adequate time must be agreed for the feedback – around 40-60 mins. If it proves difficult to arrange a mutually convenient opportunity for feedback in non-contact

time, then the Senior Leader i/c teaching and learning should make provision for cover.

The observer(s) should ask the teacher if they wish to discuss or receive judgements. If they say no, then the observer should respect this wish and make no reference to the Grid but limit the dialogue to a discussion of strengths and areas for development.

The teacher observed leads the feedback: the observer facilitates. Feedback sessions should be detailed conversations about the lesson. The rule of thumb is simple: the observer asks, the teacher reflects and answers. See the grid below for more ideas.

Feedback should start with the teacher observed being asked an open question about the lesson: what went well?

The teacher should be encouraged to pinpoint successful aspects of or episodes in the lesson, and to reflect on what it was that they did that enabled this to be successful.

The teacher should then be asked: even better if?

Again, the teacher should be encouraged to identify specific aspects of or episodes in the lesson they felt could be improved.

Often these initial questions elicit key strengths and areas for development and the observer should listen carefully to what is said and encourage the teacher to expand on or develop key points.

The observer then invites the teacher to pick a strand as a starting point. It is often useful to start at the bottom (behaviour) and work upwards. The observer asks: "how would you evaluate the behaviour in the lesson?" The teacher leads the discussion. The observer can ask the teacher to focus in on key moments: "tell me more about the moment when…." If the teacher identifies an area for development, the observer can ask how that might be improved: "so, what might a more effective instruction at that point have sounded like?"

The teacher proposes a grade for the strand. If the observer doesn't agree, they can ask for clarification. For example, if the teacher thinks their AfL is a 3 and the observer thinks it is a 2, the observer asks: "why is it not a 2?"

If the observer agrees and wants to help identify how to improve, they can ask, for example: "I think you've accurately evaluated your resources as a 3. So, what would you change to make them a 2?"

Together, work your way through the strands, ending with the judgement on Learning and Progress.

The observer goes through their summary of the strengths and areas for development, adding in any new ideas that have come up during the feedback.

Together, the observer and teacher agree 2 or 3 clearly-worded agreed targets.

Purpose Question to ask (examples in italics) Opening the feedback Tell me about the lesson. What went well? Guiding towards areas for development What, with the benefit of hindsight, might you do differently? Zooming in on detail Tell me more about that/the moment when… Zooming in on detail Choose a moment in the lesson you thought was particularly effective/you thought wasn't working so well. Describe that moment for me. Offering a moment for shared reflection and analysis One moment that I thought was important was when…. Talk me through that section of the lesson. Helping to clarify how specific aspects could be improved. You've said that you thought that perhaps the main activity could have been differentiated more. What might that look like? How do you think that could be improved? Helping to clarify how specific aspects could be improved. You've said that you think all the students made very good progress. What evidence can you point me towards of this/ How did you know this?

<div align="center">The process of observing lessons….</div>

'THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF A MIDDLE LEADERS JOB', JC Nov 2015 1. Pre-observation meeting 2. Receiving the necessary paperwork (if the observation is formal) 3. The observation 4. Immediate aftermath 5. Feeding back, you have to allocate time when observing lessons.

Formal vs Informal

Formal observations have to take place, necessary for appraisal etc.…

Informal observations need to happen on a regular basis. These are much more useful for the colleague being observed. Why do NQTs, ITT's make so much progress? Why do colleagues 5 years into the professional feel like they plateau?

Do's and Don'ts

Focus on what the teacher is doing Judge a teacher based solely on the observation Concentrate on teaching and its impact on learning and progress Look at progress over time Analyse the learning and progress of specific groups (HAP, MAP, AEN, LAP, EAL)

Documentation

Lesson plans

No requirement to do these, BUT….

LP's - Important to understand 'planning for learning' e.g. challenge, differentiation, development of learning during the lesson.

Also crucial in establishing the 'context' of the class.

More for the observers benefit when observing the lesson. Really useful in giving feedback too.

Data sheet

No requirement to hand these into the observer, BUT….

Demonstrates the level of progress over time

Expectations for formal observations

The colleague being observed should be in control of who, where and when A focus for the observation should be established before the observation (a 15-minute pre-observation meeting). Necessary paperwork is outlined.

The observations

How should you record notes?

What the teacher does its impact on learning, progress and behaviour

My personal preference is the tick positive interventions the teacher makes and underline areas for development. This makes feeding back much more focused.

Make sure the wording of your evidence matches your judgement: e.g. The teacher provides a word mat for EAL pupils this allows these pupils to make good progress.

Tips for feeding back

1. Don't provide 'instant feedback', a period of reflection is advised.

2. The 'feedback' time should be arranged so both parties will not be rushed, interrupted.
3. Coach the colleague through the feedback (20% observer talks, 80% teacher talks)

4. Agreement should always be reached. Sometimes your mind may change based on the conversation you have during feedback. 'I'd be interested in understanding more about….'

5. Make sure strengths are celebrated and areas for development are documented. AFD need to be concise, manageable and developmental for the teacher. Important to link to appraisal if necessary. 6. You may wish to arrange a follow up observation.

Appendix J (Example):

Sub-research question two: how do middle leaders and teachers perceive and experience the process of lesson observation?		
Managing lesson observation	teamwork	students' learning
The expectations are that every member of staff is observed formally three times a year [....] this should be done through your line manager […] The observation should last at least half an hour, ideally a whole lesson to see it from start to finish so you can actually measure progress. (SC)	*Definitely […] I think the best observation programmes within the school teachers feel are working together.* (SC)	*It obviously has an impact on the learning and the progress of the students in our care. (SC)*
Twice a year! (SL1)	*I tend to, within my department; I will involve them [teachers] quite significantly. I think that if they don't have a buy-in, they will feel as if they are being done to and it will not work in my interests or the students' interests. (SL1)*	*So, I think my own pedagogy has developed. (SL1)*
Normally, I'm given a choice about what it is or what lesson I want it to be, what year group, things like that. (ST3)	*Exchanging lesson plans, discussing seating plans and classroom management, observations.* (ST4)	*I'm using [different] ideas in all my lessons and have improved my teaching, so I think it has been helpful to them [students]. (ST4)*
Lesson observations in the past couple of years only tend to have hap-pened when they've needed to happen. (ST5)	*We do quite a lot of collaborative planning and a lot of joint planning. We would sit down and come up with resources and put the lesson together; that way we will both take a bit away and do that activity.* (ST2)	*Making sure they [students] move forward and they are achieving their potential. (ST1)*

Red indicates a theme of managing lesson observation.

Green indicates a theme of teamwork.

Blue indicates a theme of students' learning.