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# An investigation into the perceptions and use of peer observation of teaching in an HE in FE environment: an exploratory case study

Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Chester for the degree of Master of Arts

## Caroline Kay Dutton

## 30th April 2013

## Acknowledgements

# Abstract

Over the last decade peer observation of teaching (POT) has become established practice in HE, and is undertaken with the aim of enhancing teaching quality through reflective practice. Although teaching observations also take place for staff delivering HE provision in FE colleges, there is limited literature evaluating the nature or purpose of this. Anecdotal evidence, and the literature that is available, suggests that FE colleges do not differentiate between the purpose and practice of HE and FE teaching observations. In the few studies reported, teaching observations undertaken for taught HE sessions tend to be for evaluative and judgmental purposes, rather than for the development and enhancement of teaching and learning.

The overall aim of the study was to investigate and gain insight into the perceptions and use of POT within an 'HE in FE' context. The research strategy for this work consisted of an exploratory case study of four FE colleges' approach to teaching observations in their HE work which was largely qualitative in nature. Data was collected from the colleges through an initial questionnaire to HE teaching staff and HE managers, which was then followed by a second phase of data collection consisting of semi-structured interviews.

Initial results from the questionnaires supported existing thinking that observation processes used are generally the same for HE as for FE, with many HE teaching observations being graded using Ofsted criteria. However, data collected from the semi-structured interviews found that the FE colleges in this study are utilising a two-tier approach to teaching observations for both their FE and HE provision. Findings indicate the general acknowledgement that there is the need for a discrete but distinct approach towards HE teaching observations due to the expectations and different approaches required for HE teaching and its associated quality assurance processes.

Recommendations are made in light of the implications for academic development requirements for staff delivering and managing college based HE.

# Declaration

This work is original and has not been previously submitted in support of a Degree, qualification or other course.

Signed ...........................................................

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# CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Over the last decade peer observation of teaching (POT) has become established practice in Higher Education (HE). Several reasons are given for engaging with POT, however, Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker (2006) suggest two main purposes: firstly, to evaluate the quality of teaching; secondly, as a means of developing and enhancing practice. Within a university environment the principal purpose of POT is generally considered to be the latter of these, where peers observe each other's teaching with the aim of enhancing teaching quality through reflective practice thus supporting professional development (Shortland, 2004). Although POT also takes place for staff delivering HE provision in Further Education (FE) colleges, there is limited literature evaluating the nature or purpose of it in this sector.

The researcher's interest in this area has developed due to involvement in POT from a number of perspectives, both in her current and previous positions. The researcher was a member of a working group at the site of study (referred to from here on as "The University") whose remit it was to review and revise the procedure for POT at the University. New guidelines were drawn up as a result of this group's work with the continued expectation that all members of academic and academic-related staff who support student learning, carry out POT at least once a year. However, the guidelines were amended so that staff are now expected to **observe a colleague's teaching** at least once a year, differing from the previous requirement of having **one of their sessions observed by a colleague** each year. This was, in part, due to the evidence found in the literature which reports that observers gain as much, if not more, value from the observation process as those being observed (see

section 2.3.4 in Chapter Two). The guidelines may also be used in the University's partner institutions for teaching at HE level, however, this is not compulsory, as most institutions, particularly FE colleges, have their own procedures for teaching observations.

The researcher is also involved in giving advice to participants on the University's Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE (PGCertLTHE) and the "Bridging module" (refer to the Glossary) in relation to participants carrying out POT for their programme or module of study and to develop their practice. The researcher has also reflected upon her own experience of teaching observations when working in a HE in FE[1] context, as well as the experience that she has had of the POT process, both during the completion of her postgraduate teaching qualification in HE and subsequently whilst working at the University.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that FE colleges delivering HE do not differentiate between the requirements for teaching observations of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (for FE) and the recommendations of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (for HE) in relation to teaching observations (Gray, 2010). Therefore observations which are carried out for taught HE sessions in a FE college tend to be for evaluative and judgmental purposes (Gray, 2010), rather than for the development and enhancement of teaching and learning, which is purported to be one of the benefits of POT. This issue of using an Ofsted based approach for HE in

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[1] Since the commencement of this dissertation the sector has reviewed the term 'HE in FE' and a new terminology of 'College Based HE (CBHE) is now in use. Given that this is such a recent change, and that the majority of this study was completed before the term 'CBHE' came in to use, this piece of work will continue to use the term 'HE in FE'.

FE observations has recently been raised and debated by representatives from HEIs and HE sector professional bodies (refer to Appendix 1), however, there is a paucity of research surrounding the use and function of teaching observations in an HE in FE context and this therefore provides a rationale for the study.

This section presents an overview of the history, use and purpose of teaching observations in both the FE and HE sectors, as well as a brief discussion about the HE in FE context. There is a considerable amount of literature written about the use, benefits and limitations of POT within the HE sector (e.g. Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Marshall, 2004; Shortland, 2007). However, there appears to have been very little research carried out within an HE in FE context.

### 1.2 Definitions

The term 'teaching observation' refers to the direct observation of teaching by a colleague (Fullerton, 2003). The literature refers to this process in a number of ways and it is often referred to or labelled as 'classroom observation', 'teaching evaluation', 'peer observation of teaching', or 'peer review of teaching', the term used often depending on its purpose and/or practice setting. This will be reviewed further later on in this section. However, for the purpose of this study the terms 'POT' and 'teaching observation' will be used interchangeably as appropriate.

The nature of what is meant by a 'peer' in relation to the observation of teaching also needs to be considered here. Gosling (2002, p. 2) explains that this term may encompass a number of different relationships within an institution and that "Peers can be colleagues from the same department, either of similar status or there can be

differentials of status, or the colleagues can be from another department, or from a central educational development unit".  Similarly Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) suggest that peers may vary from that of a colleague who is more senior and experienced, to that of one who is less experienced but who is able to gain value from the observation process itself.

**1.3 History of the Use of Teaching Observations**

Compared with the HE sector, it has been standard practice to carry out teaching observations for many years in schools and colleges.  Although teaching observations had been in use for some time, Moore (1998) describes how teaching observations of school teachers continued to remain an important element of a national appraisal scheme when it was introduced in 1991 by the, then, Department of Education and Science (DES).  In a similar manner, for some time now, the post compulsory sector has been subject to inspections which review the standards of teaching and learning via teaching observations.  From 2002 the focus of inspections of FE colleges, at that time carried out by Ofsted and ALI (the Adult Learning Inspectorate), was to "concentrate more on classroom teaching and learning and spend less time scrutinising some of the more administrative aspects of a teacher's role" (O' Leary, 2006, p. 192).  This change was designed to allow this inspection regime to "help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and highlighting good practice [in the classroom] (HMI/Ofsted, 2002, p. 3, as cited in O' Leary, 2006).  Although the inspection process has subsequently changed, with Ofsted taking on sole responsibility for the inspection of colleges (Ofsted, 2008), teaching observations still form an important part of the inspection method.  Colleges are now required to produce a Self Evaluation Document prior to an Ofsted

inspection, in which they must suggest grades in support of their performance, and therefore teaching observations are used to compile such information (Ollin, 2009). Training for teachers in the school and post compulsory sectors can therefore be seen to have traditionally used classroom observation as a method to assess teaching quality and consequently to promote good practice. However, within the UK HE sector, it is only more recently that POT has been adopted, and its use has now become commonplace to develop and enhance the quality of teaching and learning (Fullerton, 2003). The requirements of QAA Subject Review (2000-2001) presented HEIs with the impetus to develop the practice of implementing teaching observations as, during the review visit, observations of teaching and learning were to take place (QAA, 2000). It is also reported that if a university department was able to demonstrate that it had an effective POT system then there would be less of a requirement for QAA reviewers to observe teaching during a review of this nature (Gosling, 2000, as cited in Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004). Although this review method was superseded by the Institutional Audit method (in 2003) and now by Institutional Review (England and Northern Ireland) (IRENI) (in 2011) (QAA, 2011), this area of academic practice has continued to evolve as many HEIs have come to appreciate the merit of observing colleagues teaching. Many universities now incorporate teaching observations into their quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms (Fullerton, 2003).

## 1.4 Purpose of Teaching Observations

As outlined previously a number of terms may be used when describing or referring to the observation of teaching by a colleague. Ewens and Orr (2002, p. 1) suggest that "Peer observation is a developmental process. If colleagues are to score each

other it becomes judgemental".  Gosling (2002), however, suggests that teaching

observations may have a number of purposes.  He reviewed POT by defining the

meaning of the three key terms in the phrase 'Peer Observation of Teaching' and

proposed that there are three models which help to categorise the different terms

used and the main purpose for carrying out an observation of teaching.  The three

models proposed by Gosling are a 'management or evaluation model', a

'development model', and a 'peer review model'.

Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) have drawn together many aspects of

what peer observation is for and their views support Gosling's teaching observation

models in that they suggest that there are three elements to peer observation:

1.  Accountability;

2.  Enhancement of practice through personal reflection;

3.  Improvement of practice by promoting dialogue and dissemination of good

    practice.

In practice POT has been reported to be utilised in a number of situations

(depending on the sector being examined).  Within the HE sector these include use

in accredited academic development programmes (Bell & Madenovic, 2008;

Donnelly, 2007), probationary periods, to develop and enhance teaching and

professional practice as part of ongoing CPD, and as part of appraisal/review

schemes (Bell & Madenovic, 2008).  In the FE sector teaching observations are

more commonly linked to quality assurance of teaching than for quality enhancement

(Hardman, 2007).

A key element of the use of POT within HEIs appears to be that of developing teaching through reflection (Martin & Double, 1998). The notion of HE teachers needing to be reflective practitioners is an important element in the development of their teaching with reflective practice as a means by which the quality of the HE process and ultimately student learning can be improved (Brockbank & McGill, 2007) as well as empowering their own development.

**1.5 HE in FE**

Over the last few years the role of FE colleges in delivering HE provision has become more extensive as widening participation, raising skills levels regionally and nationally, lifelong learning and competing in the global economy have become important political issues (Greenwood, 2008). Parry and Thompson (2002, p.11) describe some of the conflicts that occur between the policy treatment of HE provision in FE colleges which includes, what these authors describe as, "asymmetries of power and interest expressed in a dual system of tertiary education" which may include irregularities within the need for or purpose of POT.

HE is often differentiated from school or FE as engaging with students who are expected to be independent learners (QAA, 2012), and Biggs (2003) describes the fundamental principle of learning in HE as the promotion of "deep" learning, focusing on underlying meaning, themes, principles and application. One of the challenges of delivering HE in an FE college is to ensure that students receive a comparable experience to their counterparts studying at a university (Phillips, Brown, Robinson & Drury, 2009). In her current role, the researcher often considers the differences between HE and FE, and as a consequence how HE in FE lecturers might consider

ways in which they could create appropriate learning environments for their HE students.  The concept of a HE culture is often mentioned in relation to the HE in FE context.  Students studying HE in HEIs are doing so in a mature learning environment, being taught by lecturers who are generally research active and who are able to work with a great deal of autonomy.  In contrast, many students studying HE at a FE college come from "non-traditional" backgrounds, most staff are not research active and there are constraints associated with the Ofsted focus of FE (Benefer, Jenkins, McFarlane & Reed, 2009; Jones, 2006).  QAA now employs a discrete method to assure the standards of HE undertaken in FE colleges (initially Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review, IQER, and from 2013, Review of College Based Higher Education, RCHE).

It is not mandatory for staff teaching HE to hold a HE teaching qualification, whilst in comparison, by law, teachers working in FE have to obtain a relevant teaching qualification (LLUK, 2007).  Many HEIs, however, do now require new teaching staff to undertake an appropriate HE teaching qualification or obtain Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) which is aligned with Descriptor 2 of the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in HE (UKPSF).  The UKPSF is applicable for all staff who are engaged with HE teaching and learning, with the sector now encouraging college based HE staff to engage with it and thus gain professional recognition for their HE work.

## 1.6 Structure of the Dissertation

Chapter Two reviews the literature relating to POT including its use in an HE in FE context where available and proposes three research questions in relation to this.

Chapter Three explains the research methodology (including the data collection

tools) used to obtain empirical data to explore the research questions.  Chapter Four

discusses and critically evaluates the data obtained and methodology employed, as

well as making recommendations for future research.  Finally Chapter Five

concludes the dissertation by reflecting on the findings and their possible impact on

future policy and practice.

# CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Introduction

This literature review seeks to provide a review and evaluation of published research relevant to this study, and is important in demonstrating that the researcher has taken a scholarly view and interpretation of the work produced by others in the same subject (Bryman, 2012).

A review of the literature was undertaken using a range of databases, most particularly Education Research Complete and Google Scholar, and the following key words and terms were used for the search: 'peer observation', 'peer observation of teaching', 'teaching observation', 'peer review', 'HE in FE'. In addition professional websites such as JISC, the HEA, and Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE) were accessed to identify relevant literature. The search was limited to literature published between 2000 and 2012, and included both UK and international studies. In addition two seminal papers from 1998 were also included in this review. The documents found as a result of the literature search were then generally categorised into discussion papers (including, for example, editorials and conference papers) and peer reviewed research studies. Guides for critiquing the research studies for both quantitative (Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007a) and qualitative (Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007b) research were utilised and adapted to provide a framework for assessing the research studies, and were used to create the template in Appendix 2. A total of 14 discussion papers and 20 research studies were reviewed and are summarised in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 respectively.

## Table 2.1: Summary of discussion papers reviewed

| Authors and Title/Article | Where (site/country/context) | Type of article/paper | Aim of article/paper and main conclusions |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Cosh (1998) **Peer observation in higher education – a reflective approach** | HE UK | Journal | Examines popular models of peer observation and suggests an alternative more reflective model<br><br>Categorises models of peer observation into:<br>-Appraisal models (suggests that these are often divisive or mutual back patting)<br>-Other models (which are usually more constructive in nature) including those for development, and those involving pairs or trios, larger groups and videoing.  Suggests that experienced teachers should be seen as professionals who need to take responsibility for and control of their own development and the employment of a more reflective model which focuses on the active self-development of the observer.<br><br>Other comments: A core paper which a number of articles/research refers to in relation to teaching observations |
| (2) Gosling (2002) **Models of peer observation of teaching** | UK | Learning and Teaching Support Network | Explores the meaning of the terms: 'peer', 'observation' and teaching and suggests three models for teaching observations:<br>-Management or evaluation model<br>-Development model<br>-Peer review model<br><br>Other comments: A key paper which many other articles/research draw upon in relation to models of peer observation of teaching |
| (3) O' Leary (2006) **Can inspectors really improve the quality of teaching in the PCE sector?** | Post-compulsory sector (FE) UK | Journal | Discusses models of observation in the classroom in post-compulsory education<br><br>Argues that current models usually involve appraisal or evaluation of teaching performance and that this is not conducive to teacher development or improvement of teaching quality.  Suggests that these models may cause negative feelings and rely on subjective judgements of observers/inspectors, rather than providing opportunities to develop reflective evaluation by the teacher.  Suggests that a move towards a more impartial model in which the teacher and their learners are more involved in the process will improve standards of teaching and learning i.e. a more teacher-centred approach where the teacher takes a more active role in their own professional development |
| (4) Fast (2009) **Classroom observations: taking a developmental approach** | Arabia Schools? | Journal? TESOL Arabia Perspectives | Discusses use of classroom observations for developmental purposes<br><br>Suggests that if observations are to be used in a developmental way that the emphasis should be on developing teachers' self-awareness and reflection on the process.  In order to do this the teacher should: initiate the observation; take responsibility for determining the focus of the observation; and reflect on the observation<br><br>Other comments: refers to classroom observations but it is not clear as the context of this (schools, colleges, HEIs?).  However this could be relevant to all sectors |

| (5) Shortland (2007) **Participation, justice and trust within developmental peer observation of teaching: a model and research agenda** | HE UK | Journal | Proposes a model to illustrate the route through the different elements of the POT process within CPD schemes. Suggests a framework for future research into POT which provides a link between management education and peer observation practice. Suggests a research agenda based upon published research but with a fresh approach drawing upon ideas of participation, justice and trust |
|---|---|---|---|
| (6) Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr (2007) **Twelve tips for peer observation of teaching** | HE Australia | Journal (Medical Teacher) | Outlines a number of suggestions for undertaking POT in medical education (although could be used in other disciplines) using Gosling's 'peer review model'. The tips are primarily aimed at the observer, but may also be helpful for the observee, as well as institutions considering the use of peer review observation. The tips may also be relevant for Gosling's 'development model'. Suggests that where POT is incorporated into HE practice and culture, and is conducted in a mutually respective and supportive way, it can help to encourage reflective change and growth for teachers. |
| (7) Eaton & Schweppe (2007) **Peer observation: reflecting on a mirror of your teaching** | HE Department of Law, University of Limerick, Ireland | Journal (European Journal of Legal Education) | Details the author's experience of peer observation and reflects on the positive and negative aspects of this experience. Goes on to compare this to that of other law teachers and provides guidelines to assist the use of peer observation as a reflective tool. Suggests that in order to be reflective the observee needs to be honest with themselves as well as with their peer observer – "where there is complete openness and honesty both with the observer and oneself, the process of peer observation is a sound investment" |
| (8) Marshall (2004) **Learning from the Academy: from peer observation of teaching to peer enhancement of learning and teaching** | HE Oxford Brookes University | Journal (of Adult Theological Education) | Discussed moving from POT to peer enhancement of learning and teaching (PELT). This builds on the benefits of POT whilst extending this to cover its limitations. The author suggests that by incorporating a number of interactions, such as distance learning, individual supervision, the creation of teaching materials, assessment design and feedback, and curriculum design, that "a peer scheme can recognise and value a much larger part of what HE teachers in fact do to develop their support for student learning". Suggests that this "richer framework" creates more opportunities for teachers to share good practice and facilitates reflection of individuals and teams. |
| (9) Ewens & Orr (2002) **Tensions between evaluation and peer review models: lessons from the HE/FE border** | HE and FE UK | LTSN Generic Centre | This short paper argues that there is a discrepancy between the type of teaching observation carried out between FE and HE due to different inspection/review schemes. It makes reference to Gosling's models and suggests that POT in FE colleges is limited to Ofsted requirements and that this is actually an evaluation model as it makes judgements on quality, thereby losing the benefits of a peer review model. |
| (10) Peel (2005) **Peer observation as a transformatory tool?** | HE UK | Journal (Teaching in Higher Education) | Draws on the author's experiences as a student teacher and argues that the emphasis of POT as a performance tool minimises the potential to reflect and therefore to facilitate development of the teacher. It goes on to question whether compulsory observations can actually support individuality and empowerment. The author herself discusses how she found POT useful to help her to develop self-awareness and to become more critical and reflective. |

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|---|---|---|---|
| (11)<br>Mento & Giampetro-Meyer (2000)<br>**Peer observation of teaching as a true developmental opportunity** | HE<br>USA | Journal? (College Teaching) | Claims that there are three reasons for peer evaluation of teaching not being supported in HE:<br>1. Questioning of context in which it takes place (i.e. attitude towards it)<br>2. Content of the observation (i.e. what peers will be observing)<br>3. Detail about the process itself (i.e. response and feedback from peers, and expectations afterwards)<br>Suggests a response to these concerns to encourage greater use of peer evaluation of teaching by making it a real development opportunity including documents to provide context and guidelines to establish trust and to prepare for the observation, and to provide details regarding feedback.<br><br>The paper then goes on to discuss the use of these documents and processes in practice. |
| (12)<br>Taylor (2009)<br>**One educational developer's role in managing and facilitating change: replacing peer observation of teaching with peer-assisted reflection** | HE<br>UK | SEDA publication | The author describes her goal to "rethink the system of POT and to introduce a new system that was more conducive to supporting a culture of embedded and sustainable reflection based on professional practice". This occurred as a result of the author's own experiences and feelings of POT (concerns – one-off, arranged in haste, friendly discussion rather than critical review). The paper includes a table comparing POT with the suggested model of Peer Assisted Reflection upon Professional Practice (PARtners). The paper discusses the planning, facilitation and evaluation (once implemented) that is required in order to introduce this new scheme . |
| (13)<br>Malderez (2003)<br>**Observation** | HE<br>UK | Journal (ELT) | Provides an overview of observation including why it is important, what is meant by it and the different types/purposes.<br><br>The author concludes that observation is complex due to differences in observers' perceptions, the historical use of observation for evaluation which leads to a reluctance to be observed, and that the same person can wear different observer 'hats' therefore requiring the purpose of each observation to be made clear. |
| (14)<br>Gray (2010)<br>**"I am not a number" – ascribing professional capability through graded observations for HE in FE staff** | HE in FE<br>UK | Conference paper (SRHE) | Discusses teaching observations on issues surrounding staff identity in a university faculty made up of 18 partner FE colleges delivering HE provision. The paper reports that teaching observations for staff delivering HE in FE are conducted using the Ofsted methodology which are normally conducted by managers or 'advanced practitioners' who observe and then grade the lesson. Many colleges use these observation grades as part of the appraisal process and are therefore a judgement of teaching competency. The paper reports how staff are unhappy with such a process as they feel that it is not relevant to their HE teaching practice. Particularly issues surrounding this are reported as the grading process and judgement by a superior/manager/non-subject specialist/non-HE member of staff. |

## Table 2.2: Summary of research articles reviewed

| Authors and Title/Article | Where (site/country/ context) | Aim of study/research focus | Type of study (eg qualitative, small scale, case study, pilot study) | Sample | Data collection method | Main findings | Comments/ Critique |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond (2004) **Evaluating our peers: is peer observation a meaningful process?** | Staffordshire University, UK (a "Post 1992" university) | **Evaluation** of two **pilot** systems of peer observation within a "post 1992" university | Evaluative Small scale Qualitative | 18 volunteers (10 observers and eight observees) – range of ages and experience, plus Deans (two) and Associate Deans (two?) | -Gathering of guidance and information documents on POT process for each school -Semi-structured interviews | -Highlighted **complexities** involved in delivering PoT -**Nature of peers** (i.e. who does the observation) **Observation is a useful tool** in itself -Concern over **negative feedback and criticism** -Process needs regularly **refreshing** -Possible to tailor PoT to **appraisal** | Data saturation not achieved. Data not themed or coded – very descriptive analysis. Difficult to see how conclusions can therefore be drawn. Linked to relevant literature |
| (2) Norbury (2001) **Peer observation of teaching: a method for improving teaching quality** | Aston University UK, (Library and Information Services) | **Evaluation** of a peer observation scheme implemented for **library staff** in a teaching with a teaching role | Evaluative Small scale Qualitative | Six (two mixed teams of three from two departments) | -Review meeting -Evaluation questionnaire | PoT is a useful tool for encouraging lecturers to **reflect** on their teaching practice and **improve teaching quality** irrespective of **subject taught** | Very 'waffly' and lots of assumptions made in relation to results. Very small sample. Very limited literature review with inappropriate references used. Sweeping statements made in relation to conclusion. Weak piece of research (carried out by a librarian and published in a library context journal) |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (3)<br>Atkinson & Bolt (2010)<br>**Using teaching observations to reflect upon and improve teaching practice in higher education** | Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Western Australia (Business School) | Evaluation of the use of peer review of teaching to **reflect** upon and **improve quality** of face to face teaching | Qualitative<br>Small scale<br>Action research intervention | Nine?<br>(Five - semester one; five – semester two) | -Written questionnaire<br>-Group debriefing session<br>-Informal interaction during observations | -Group debrief seen as an important element of process and helped to develop **collegiality**<br>-Three key elements to success of the process were identified as it being **voluntary** in nature, **collaborative** and the **feedback** provided<br>-Staff were keen for the process to be continued, that it remain voluntary, that an **external expert** should be retained, that the group process was important and that there be ongoing follow up | Interesting and clearly written paper.<br>Lack of clarity as to information used on semester 1 with 5 participants, as data collection only appeared to take place in semester 2. Not clear how group debriefing session (possibly an interview) and informal interaction were analysed. |
| (4)<br>Lygo-Baker & Hatzipanagos (2007)<br>**Beyond peer review: investigating practitioner perceptions of teaching observations undertaken by academic developers** | King's College London, UK (a research intensive university) | To consider how to **encourage critical reflection** as the focus of teaching observations | Evaluative<br>Qualitative<br>Some quantitative data (from initial work)<br>Larger scale | 105 responses to questionnaires (over 4 years) – re-examined with themes identified and used to guide 17 semi-structured interviews | Two questionnaires to capture data on i) the experience of undertaking a PG programme aimed at enhancing L & T, & ii) observe experience of teaching observation element) plus semi-structured interviews | Utilisation of **academic developers** as observers can support a developmental process which helps teachers to examine their own values and enables critical development.  For this to occur there is a need for the observees to declare their teaching philosophy and then discuss, reflect and review it | Further work on existing questionnaires (2006 work*?) was undertaken after reviewing initial findings and then developed further through semi-structured interviews. Subsequent findings not clearly identified – interwoven with review of literature, therefore difficult to interpret. |

| (5)<br>Kohut, Burnap & Yon (2007)<br>**Peer observation of teaching: perceptions of the observer and the observed** | University of North Carolina, USA | To compare the **perceptions** of peer observation of both observers and observes, the reporting of peer observations, the **usefulness** of peer observation as an evaluation tool, and whether peer observation **improves teaching effectiveness** | **Quantitative**<br>Large scale | 163 observees (observations carried out as part of promotion and contract) - 49% response rate<br>343 observers (contracted staff who may have conducted peer observations) – 42% response rate | Two surveys (one for observees and one for observers) | -Observers and observes **value** the peer observation process and find it useful and **observers value the process more** in terms of improving their own teaching skills<br>-Neither observers nor observes found the process **stressful** although **observers indicated that they experienced more stress than the observees**<br>-There was neutrality about the process of training<br>-Use of a variety of **observation instruments** with **written narrative** the most popular<br>-Peer observation instruments are an effective measure of teaching<br>-Peer **observation reports are valid and useful** | Not clear if all observers had actually carried out this role.<br>Limited recommendations detailed for further work |
| (6)<br>Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker (2006)*<br>**Teaching observations: promoting development through critical reflection** | King's College London, UK | To investigate whether teaching observations undertaken by **educational developers** are perceived as being **developmental** and help to stimulate **reflection** | Mixed method (primarily qualitative)<br>Case study<br>Small scale | Case study of new/ inexperienced teachers undertaking peer observations of teaching as part of two educational development programmes (48 participants) | -Semi-structured questionnaires with open-ended questions<br>-Data coded into categories by independent evaluators | Contrary to other studies (Cosser, 1998) teaching observations undertaken by **educational developers** (with no/limited **content knowledge**) can be developmental and encourage critical reflection in staff "**new to teaching**".  Perceptions which were most influential related to **feedback**, the **developmental** aspect, **supportive** nature of the process, **critical reflection**, **non-threatening** nature of the process and **reassurance** and **increased confidence** | Not clear how participants were asked to engage with/complete questionnaires – response rate not detailed.<br>Results analysed independently.<br>A useful article, generally clearly written with clear findings and suggestions as to how the research could be developed further. |

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| (7)<br>Bell & Mladenovic (2008)<br>**The benefits of peer observation of teaching for tutor development** | Faculty of Economic and Business, University of Sydney, Australia | -To explore the **effectiveness** of peer observation within an academic development programme<br>-Reviewed peer observations of tutorials of **part time tutors** | Qualitative<br>Small scale<br>Evaluative | 160 part time/sessional/casual tutors invited to take part with 52 voluntary participants – of these 32 (61.5%) gave permission for results to be published | -Peer observation forms (n=32)<br>-Semi structured discussion at end of development session<br>-Survey at end of developmental session (n=31)<br>-Survey at end of semester (n=23)<br>-Focus group (4) | -Common themes were identified for **developmental needs** (most frequently group interaction, collecting feedback from students, and giving feedback to students)<br>-A key benefit was cited as the **opportunity to observe a peer teaching**<br>-Very few tutors reported **anxiety** about being observed<br>-Tutors were able to **share practice** and work **collaboratively**<br>-Requests for **expert** observation as well as **peer** observation<br>-Most participants found the peer observation exercise valuable and would change their teaching as a result of it | Sought permission for results to be published but low response rate – may not be a true representation. Data from multiple sources. Some detail not clearly presented – was ambiguous in places. |
| (8)<br>Cockburn (2005)<br>**Perspective and politics of classroom observation** | Range of FE colleges? in UK (Author from Faculty of Education, Norwich City College) | To evaluate the **complexity** of the observation process and the **perceptions** of observers and observees | Evaluative<br>Qualitative | "Range of professional involved in classroom observation process" – FE college staff?<br>No detail on sample size or selection | Interviews/focus groups<br>Document analysis of feedback sheets<br>Review of college policies and literature | -Details various issues with the observation process from observer and observee perspective in relation to:<br>  -Resistance to process<br>  -Observation schedule<br>  -Value of observation<br>  -Styles of receptivity to feedback<br>-Proposes that if observation is carried out from an action research perspective (rather than a QA procedure) the process will become more developmental | No detail on sample size or participants or how data was analysed. No clear findings. Very limited amount of literature reviewed. Conclusion not linked to findings. Author seemed to express his own view/opinion with no clear link to the study or related literature. Work carried out in FE college/s rather than HEI |

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| (9)<br>Donnelly (2007)<br>**Perceived impact of peer observation of teaching in higher education** | Dublin Institute of Technology, Republic of Ireland | To evaluate the perceived impact of a peer observation scheme used within a **PGCert in HE Learning and Teaching** | Evaluative<br>Qualitative<br>Large scale | 90 participants (from over 100) from PGCert from past 5 years agreed to take part | Evaluation forms (x 90)<br>Semi-structured interviews x 3 with 6 in each group (=18)<br>Analysis of peer observation component of teaching portfolio (x 90) | -Findings categorised in relation to 4 areas of Kolb's ELC<br>-POT scheme aided **application of theory into practice**<br>-Value of **interdisciplinary** learning<br>-Increase in **confidence**<br>-Benefit to **new to HE** teachers' practice<br>-Suggests that **climate** of POT is vital to success (trust and helpfulness)<br>-POT perceived to be particularly useful for **self-assessment** and **improvement of teaching skills**<br>Both **observers and observees** benefit from process | Author works in academic development and member of programme team for PGCert L & T HE. Good response rate to take part in study. Conclusion details other research as well as possible risks of using the POT model. Details consideration of future work to include students. Study did not detail if the "peer" observers were on the PGCert programme itself or more experienced staff |
| (10)<br>Blackmore (2005)<br>**A critical evaluation of peer review via teaching observation within higher education** | Faculty of Business and Management with a UK university | To evaluate critically the **peer review process generally** and the case study **university's process in particular** | Case study and Small scale evaluative study<br>Qualitative | 40 participants from one faculty in one university. Range of roles and teaching experience | Desktop review and analysis of faculty policy and procedure for peer review<br>Semi-structured interviews | -Provides a best practice framework based on review of literature where case study faculty benchmarks well against this<br>-Details various perceptions of teaching staff of the peer review process<br>-Most staff **endured** the process and did not find it improved practice although those **newer to teaching** found it of more value to developing their teaching<br>-Purpose of peer review was felt to be for **feedback**, **continuous improvement**, **compliance** and | Range of participants (gender, level, experience and age) – does not detail how they were selected/recruited to participate in study. Limitations of study are acknowledged. Very thorough literature review with findings and conclusions clearly related back |

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| | | | | | | **student focussed**<br>-Suggests that framework should be developed which **consults** with staff and culture that accepts **constructive criticism** | to this. Details how this work may be used. A clearly presented and laid out paper – easy to read and comprehend. |
| (11)<br>Lomas & Kinchin (2006)<br>**Developing a peer observation program with university teachers** | King's College London, UK | Evaluation of a peer observation of teaching scheme after its **introduction in a HEI** | Case study<br>Evaluative study<br>Qualitative<br>Small scale | 20 (across academic disciplines and academic staff below HoD level) | Interviews<br>Coded transcripts (revealed 7 themes:<br>-Efficiency vs effectiveness<br>-Anonymity vs focus<br>-Formative vs summative<br>-Formality vs informality<br>-Frequency of observation<br>-Pairing partners<br>-Teaching vs research) | **Range** of different models adopted within the institution<br>Overall the scheme appeared to:<br>-benefit both **observer and observee**;<br>-identify general **developmental needs** and provided opportunities for **dissemination of good practice**;<br>-most staff found all aspects of the scheme to be **valuable** and helped their practice through **constructive criticism** within a **supportive** environment;<br>Small minority were openly **hostile** towards the scheme.<br>Peer observation needs to be implemented **sensitively**, taking into account **organisational culture** of different depts and being aware of **anxieties and concerns** of staff. Suggests that **careful management** of change for implementation of such a scheme is more likely to lead to **enhancement of quality of teaching** and improve SLE | Focussed on quality rather than quantity of data. Did not identify how staff were selected to be interviewed or whether interviews were carried out with individuals |
| (12)<br>O' Keefe, Lecouteur, Miller & McGowan (2009)<br>**The colleague development** | Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide, Australia | To describe the development, implementation and evaluation of a **faculty wide programme of peer** | Mixed method<br>Small scale<br>Evaluative | 42 (out of approx. 300) enrolled onto programme with 23 completing all elements and 20 | Questionnaires and focus group discussions | Four themes identified:<br>-Making **space** to discuss teaching<br>-A sense of **connectedness**<br>-Meeting **individual** teacher needs<br>-Suggestions for **improvement** | Identified limitations, in particular the small proportion of staff electing to take part in the programme, |

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| **program: a multidisciplinary program of peer observation partnerships.** | | **observation partnerships** | | completing exit questionnaire and taking part in focus groups/telephone interview. All schools represented with range of staff (PT, FT, range of experience/level) | | | and completing the programme (and factors affecting this) |
| (13) Bell (2001) **Supported reflective practice: a programme of peer observation and feedback for academic teaching development** | University of Wollongong, Australia | Exploration of the **impact** of a teaching development programme on the **perceptions** and **practices** of academic teaching staff | Case study Evaluative Small scale Qualitative | 28 (participants of the 1997 and 1998 cohorts – doesn't detail how many were in each cohort) | Analysis of written accounts (reflections and reports) from the programme | Five common themes identified: -**Effectiveness** of the programme/process in **developing ideas and skills** -Making **improvements to teaching practice** -Developing **confidence** and **congruence** -Developing **collegiality** -Ongoing **CPD** Suggests that the programme promotes the **development of skills, knowledge and ideas about teaching**, acts as a vehicle for **ongoing change** and **development** and builds **professional relationships**. Supports the development of a **collegial** approach. Effectiveness of the programme is due to the monitoring and feedback provided by the **support triad** | |
| (14) Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele (2008) **Learning from reciprocal peer** | University of Technology, Sydney, Australia | Reports **experiences** of engaging in a mutual, collaborative peer | Small scale Self study Qualitative | 2 (the authors) plus some students (numbers not detailed) | Analysis of observation notes and emails (collaborative journal) | Four areas of focus: -Pedagogy -Curriculum -Our students -Ourselves as teachers and learners | Not as relevant as some of the other papers. A lot of discussion about specific teaching |

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| observation: a collaborative self-study | | observation | | | Student questionnaires | Demonstrates that peer observation can be a valuable component of **ongoing CPD** for 'tertiary teachers' (HE lecturers) | issues/scenarios |
| (15) Chamberlain, D'Artrey & Rowe (2011) **Peer observation of teaching: a decoupled process** | University of Chester, UK | To examine the **operation** of peer observation of teaching (using a devolved developmental model) | Mixed method Small scale Evaluative | 403 sample population identified but only 84 questionnaires returned – 21% response rate. 16 focus group participants | Questionnaire Focus groups (x3) | **Practice varies** between departments Academic staff can be **wary** of POT as they feel it can be overly **bureaucratic** and has an underlying **competency-based judgemental ethos** Key finding was that the lack of formal linkages between POT outcomes and the more formal **staff review process** played an important role in influencing teaching staff **engagement** with POT | Did acknowledge some limitations of the study including low response rate. Seemed to overly focus on the background of participants. Not sure if questionnaire design was really appropriate. Appeared to focus on linkage between POT and CPD/staff appraisal – not part of stated aim of the study |
| (16) Ollin (2009) **The grading of teaching observations: implications for teacher educators in higher education partnerships** | University of Huddersfield, UK (Huddersfield Consortium of Colleges – research based in FE colleges; tutors teaching in an HE in FE context) | Exploration of what is considered "outstanding" teaching by tutors observing PGCE/Cert Ed trainees. Different expectations of tutors carrying out observations on trainees teaching HE in FE compared with solely FE | Qualitative Interpretive | In service Cert Ed/PGCE tutors with trainees teaching HE in FE | Email questionnaire (for background information and sample selection) = 30 Semi-structured interviews = 9 Observations = 9 Focus group = 44 tutors (consortium network meeting) Focus group = 9 HR managers | Themes emerged from data. Tutors showed sensitivity to the demands of **context** and discussed the features of HE teaching that would be expected when considering outstanding teaching in that context, i.e. that tutors take into account features with the **HE in FE context** when observing trainees teaching HE in FE | Main researcher was a consortium tutor carrying out observations – therefore used another researcher to carry out some co-observations and interviews. Pilot interview carried out. Quite a complex study. A lot of data from different groups therefore complex sample populations |

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| (17)<br>Lawson (2011)<br>**Sustained classroom observation: what does it reveal about changing teaching practices** | School of Education, University of Leicester and three FE colleges (16-19) | Describes an observation partnership between a School of Education in an HEI and 3 16-19 institutions, and goes on to explore a sustained approach to classroom observation in this partnership including the impact on changing behaviour of teachers | Large scale Qualitative Evaluative | Database of 924 observation reports | Content analysis of the text of the reports, with particular attention paid to teachers with multiple observations | Emergence of four areas of practice which consistently emerged:<br>-planning for learning<br>-assessment for learning<br>-questioning<br>-student involvement<br>that could either be shown to be open to changing practice.  It is suggested that the first two were easier for teachers to change routines and performance compared with the second two. | A lot of data but limited detail about how it was analysed. Other areas of practice not explored. Assumes that observations were of FE classes but not stated. |
| (18)<br>McMahon, Barrett & O' Neill (2007)<br>**Using observation of teaching to improve quality: finding your way through the muddle of competing conceptions, confusion of practice and mutually exclusive intentions** | University College Dublin, Ireland | Literature review of existing models of POT which proposes a theoretical model based on control of data flow – the study then explores the dimensions of the proposed model in practice | Small scale Evaluative Qualitative | 22 lecturers on a Graduate Diploma in University Teaching and Learning programme | Review of written reflective statements | Participants were in control of 5 of the 6 elements of the proposed model regarding control of data flow, and suggests that this is central to promoting a focus on teaching development | Limited detail regarding the status of participants or how reflective accounts were generated or analysed |
| (19)<br>Thwaites (2011)<br>**HE in FE peer review research:**<br>**to develop a lecturer-directed quality** | Published?<br>FE College, Devon, UK | Evaluation of a pilot project to implement a rigorous HE in FE peer review framework that | Pilot project Action research | 18 survey sheets were completed largely by subject teams, whilst some chose an individual | HE lecturer questionnaire of one year trial of pilot.<br>Informal feedback from workshops | Scheme positively received with modification of process reported after evaluation of initial pilot project/scheme.<br>As a result of the pilot this framework has replaced Ofsted | Not certain if this has been published or just a requirement of HELP CETL project funding. Not |

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| **enhancement framework that also meets the needs of managerial FE quality assurance** | | would satisfy both the needs of managerial FE quality assurance and that of HE lecturers for quality enhancement. | | response | and general review of the process by researcher | observations for HE in FE peer review | written in peer review journal style and rather difficult to follow. Limited detail on number of individuals/teams surveyed or response rate |
| (20) Hardman (2008) **The use of teaching observation in Higher Education: An exploration of the relationship between teacher observation for quality assurance and quality improvement in teaching in higher education, in the light of further education sector experience** | UK HE and FE Three universities (University of Cambridge, University of Warwick and University of Leicester and three FE colleges (franchise partners delivering one university's post compulsory ITT programme) | Project to support teaching quality improvement in HE by examining the use of teaching observation and comparing some aspects of this with experiences in FE | Series of case studies Qualitative | See 'Where' column – exact sample size not detailed | Desk research and semi structured interviews with personnel directly involved in the use of teaching observation in each institution, together with stakeholders from UCU and HEA | There are a wide range of institutional policies and practices. Limited use of teaching observation in HEIs compared with FE | A very large report with limited detail in relation to sample size. Appears to be based mainly on desk research |

Although the discussion papers do not provide any primary research or findings they do offer an overview of current thinking and were therefore reviewed in order to provide an overall context of the literature available in this area.

This chapter will detail the overall context of the literature found, and subsequently reviewed, as well as critically evaluating the research methodologies utilised.  Key themes emerging from the literature will provide a focus for this section whilst the quality of the articles obtained will also be evaluated.

## 2.2 Discussion Papers

### 2.2.1 Context

Most of these papers were written by authors positioned in the UK (n=10) with one each emerging from the USA, Australia, Ireland and Arabia.  The majority of these papers detail POT from an HE perspective, whilst two provide some detail in relation to FE and the post-compulsory sector (Ewens & Orr, 2002; O' Leary, 2006) and only one details HE in FE specifically (Gray, 2010).  A range of disciplines are detailed including law, language education, medical education and theology, however, the primary area of consideration was academic development in general.  The content of these papers have been categorised into themes and are discussed below.

### 2.2.2 Models of peer observation

Two key papers relating to POT are those of Cosh (1998) and Gosling (2002).  As early as 1998 Cosh's review of models of peer observation broadly differentiated schemes into those that are used for appraisal and those that are developmental, whilst Gosling, in a later paper (2002) proposed three models of peer observation (as

detailed in Chapter One).  Many of the papers detailed in this review refer to Cosh's

paper and/or cite Gosling's proposed models.  Malderez (2003) provides an

overview of observation and uses this brief paper to surmise that observation is a

complex process.


### 2.2.3 Criticism and limitations of evaluation type models

As early as 1998, Cosh suggested that appraisal-type models have limitations in that

they can potentially be divisive or can be used for "mutual back patting" (p. 172).

Three papers (Ewens & Orr, 2002; Gray, 2010; O' Leary, 2006) discuss the issues

of, what Gosling describes as, the 'evaluation model' of POT.   Each of these papers

alludes to the use of teaching observations in the FE sector which Ewens and Orr

(2002) explain use Ofsted criteria and methodology, and which O' Leary (2006)

criticises as not being conducive to teacher development or improvement of teaching

quality.  Gray (2010) discusses this further in relation to the HE in FE context and

provides evidence that some FE colleges delivering HE provision also utilise a

similar approach when carrying out teaching observations.  She goes on to suggest

that staff experiencing observations in this manner do not feel that it is appropriate to

their HE teaching practice.


### 2.2.4 POT for CPD and reflection

A number of papers refer to the use of POT in relation to CPD and to aid reflection

on practice (Cosh, 1998; Eaton & Schweppe, 2007; Fast, 2009; Peel, 2005;

Shortland, 2007; Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007).  Whilst Shortland (2007)

proposes a model to illustrate the route through the different elements of the POT

process within CPD schemes, other authors suggest that in order to become more

reflective and therefore to develop teaching practice, observees need to take responsibility for, and control over, their own development (Cosh, 1998; Fast, 2009). Eaton and Schweppe (2007) also propose that in order to be reflective the observee needs to be honest with themselves as well as with their peer/observer, and that this can help to make peer observation a worthwhile and developmental process. Peel (2005) reflects on her own experience of POT and reveals how she found the process useful to help her to develop her own self-awareness and to become more critical and reflective of her practice. It is also proposed that the way in which POT is conducted is an important element in promoting self-development and reflection (Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007). These authors promote schemes that are managed in a mutually respective and supportive way.

## 2.2.5 Practical tips for POT to be successful

Two papers present a number of practical tips to ensure that POT is successful (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007). Mento and Giampetro-Meyer (2000) make suggestions to specifically deal with issues related to what they claim are reasons for peer evaluation of teaching not being supported in HE. They advocate a number of practical ideas to "encourage greater use of peer evaluation of teaching by making it a real development opportunity" (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000, p. 2), most specifically in relation to the documentation that should be developed and used as well as guidelines to establish trust, to prepare for the observation process and to ensure an appropriate feedback process. In their paper Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer and Carr (2007) outline a number of suggestions for undertaking POT in medical education (although these could be applied to other disciplines) using Gosling's 'peer review model'. The tips are primarily aimed at the

observer, but the authors suggest that they may also be helpful for the observee, as well as institutions considering the use of peer review observation. They also suggest that these tips are relevant for Gosling's 'development model'.

### 2.2.6 Development of POT framework

Two papers detail how existing frameworks for POT might be developed (Marshall, 2004; Taylor, 2009). Marshall's work proposes a model which he refers to as peer enhancement of learning and teaching (PELT) which builds on the benefits of POT whilst extending this to cover its constraints. Marshall suggests that a number of other elements of teaching and learning (such as distance learning, individual supervision, the creation of teaching materials, assessment design and feedback, and curriculum design) should be incorporated into a peer scheme. He proposes that such a scheme can "recognise and value a much larger part of what HE teachers in fact do to develop their support for student learning" (Marshall, 2004, p. 201). Marshall also indicates that this type of framework can create more opportunities for teachers to share good practice and facilitates reflection of individuals and teams.

Taylor's (2009) work details the idea of a new framework based on her own experiences and feelings of POT. Her goal was to "rethink the system of POT and to introduce a new system that was more conducive to supporting a culture of embedded and sustainable reflection based on professional practice" (Taylor, 2009, p. 11). In her paper Taylor proposes a model of Peer Assisted Reflection upon Professional Practice (PARtners), and discusses the planning, facilitation and

evaluation (once implemented) that would be required in order to introduce this new scheme.

## 2.3 Research Studies

### 2.3.1 Context

The majority of the research reviewed was carried out in two countries, namely the UK (n=12) and Australia (n=5), with three other studies, two from Ireland and one from the USA.  All of the articles were written by authors based in HEIs except for two which were based in FE colleges (Cockburn, 2005; Thwaites, 2011).  This supports the assertion detailed in Chapter One concerning the lack of research about POT in an HE in FE context.  Only three studies (Cockburn, 2005; Lawson, 2011; Ollin, 2009) considered the teaching observation process from a FE perspective.  Ollin's research considered aspects of both FE and HE in FE teaching observations and sought the views of tutors involved in teaching observations of trainees on Certificate in Education and/or PGCE programmes.  However, it is not clear from Cockburn's study whether the participants in his research, detailed as "a range of professionals deeply involved in the classroom observation procedure" (p. 374) were involved in solely FE teaching observations or both FE and HE in FE teaching observations.  Hardman (2007) examined the use of teaching observations in HE and compared some aspects of this with experiences in FE for the purpose of supporting teaching quality improvement in HE.  Thwaites' work (2011) is the only paper reviewed that details peer observation from an HE in FE perspective.

Where the professional roles of the authors were able to be identified these roles, as well as their experience, were varied.  In the main they encompassed academic

developers and teachers, from a range of disciplines and levels (from those who were new to their role to experienced teachers, deans and professors), as well as one librarian.  In addition, some of the authors acted as participant-researchers and had a range of roles including those who acted as observers and/or observees.

Although there was no evidence of collaborative working in this area, three separate studies were carried out in one HEI (King's College London).  In 2007, Lygo-Baker and Hatzipanagos built upon their research carried out in 2006, whilst Lomas and Kinchin's study in 2006, although completed in the same institution, was performed independently.  This study evaluated the use of a POT scheme across a number of academic disciplines and departments, whilst the work of Lygo-Baker and Hatzipanagos evaluated the use of teaching observations specifically as part of an academic development programme.

### 2.3.2 Research methods

The research studies reviewed were most commonly qualitative in nature (n=15) with only one study using a quantitative approach and four utilising a mixed methods approach.  Work of this type, that is, pedagogic research, tends to be qualitative as it aims to be exploratory in its approach (Biggam, 2011).  The majority of the studies were small scale in nature with the only quantitative study being the largest scale study to be reviewed.

The majority of the articles (n=13) were evaluative studies, with two using action research approaches and five utilising case studies.  In one article a self-study method was described (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008).

Data collection methods included the use of questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and the review of existing documentation (such as POT/peer review policies and procedures, and POT reflections, reports and feedback sheets).  Ollin (2009), in particular, utilised a multitude of methods for her background and data collection from a range of participants (see Table 2.2).  In only one instance (Pressick-Kilborn & te Riele, 2008) were students' views elicited.

The preponderance of the papers evaluated the use or implementation of POT and included: exploration of the use of POT to improve teaching practice and quality (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Bell, 2001; Norbury, 2001); perceptions of its use by staff (Bell, 2001; Cockburn, 2005; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lygo-Baker & Hatzipanagos, 2007); its use to promote development of and reflection on practice (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006); its benefits and effectiveness (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008); the complexity of the process (Cockburn, 2005); and the impact of its use (Donnelly, 2007).

A number of themes emerged as a result of these studies and are detailed below. This section attempts to categorise these themes in relation to POT, although it should be noted that there is much overlap between them.

### 2.3.3 Range of schemes

The articles reviewed revealed that there are a wide range of methods adopted for POT by the HE sector and that these differ both across and within institutions. Related to this it was reported that the nature of the peers who undertake the observations is also varied and broadly speaking can be divided into the following

categories: academic developers (Donnelly, 2007; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Lygo-Baker & Hatzipanagos, 2007) including those who teach on academic development programmes for new HE lecturers; experienced teachers (Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006) including those described as "experts" from within the same institution but from a different discipline/department (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010); and peers within the same discipline/department (Bell & Mladenovic, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Norbury, 2001; O'Keefe, Lecouteur, Miller & McGowan, 2009). This final category could be split further into those peers who were often described as "buddies" or trusted colleagues, and those who were felt to be more experienced teachers. Benefits and disadvantages appear to exist in relation to each of these groups of observers and these are reviewed later on in this chapter. Despite these differences Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond's (2004) study also demonstrated some similarities between different departments in the same institution. Some observation processes required observees to self-select their observer whilst others had their observer imposed upon them. The nature of the peer was also related to the observation process adopted by the institution or department and many of the papers referred to the model used as defined by Gosling in 2002.

The literature reviewed generally found that the process of either being observed or being an observer caused little anxiety. Kohut, Burnap and Yon (2007) reported that neither observees nor observers found the process stressful, however, interestingly they did report that the observers tended to experience more anxiety than the

observees.  Similarly, very few participants in Bell and Mladenovic's (2008) study conveyed concerns about being observed.


### 2.3.4 Improvement of teaching practice and quality, and promotion of development and reflection on practice

A number of articles reported on the use of POT to improve the quality of teaching, however, there were a variety of opinions in relation to this, particularly in relation to teaching experience.  Blackmore (2005) reported that those who are new to teaching found the process adds more value to the development of their teaching compared with those who felt that they were more experienced.  In this study most of the staff who had been teaching HE for three years or more reported that they "endured the process" (p. 227) of having their teaching observed.  This rather negative view was not held by all of the staff in this category and some reported that they did find the process useful, particularly in respect of having the opportunity to reflect on their practice.  The author of this research did acknowledge the limitations of this small sample (n=40) from one faculty in one institution, and that the findings may not be a true representation of the HE sector in general.  However, in a larger study carried out by Donnelly (2007), once again, teachers newer to HE commented on the value of having their teaching observed to their practice.  These participants were engaged in an academic development programme within which a peer observation scheme was embedded, and their perceptions were that this particular part of the programme was especially valuable for self-evaluation and development of their teaching own practice.  In a small scale case study, Bell (2001) reports on the perceptions of staff who had undertaken a structured, peer-supported teaching development programme as a condition of their employment.  In this research the majority of participants reported that they made immediate changes to their teaching practice, however, in

this study there was less detail comparing the experience of teachers. It did, however, emerge that there was some evidence of more experienced teachers adopting a more reflective approach to their teaching to further improve their practice, compared with those who were less experienced where their focus appeared to be either on developing techniques to transmit information or to facilitate learning. Norbury's (2001) work reports on the use of a peer observation scheme within a library and information service setting. Although this study is somewhat limited it does suggest that the use of such a scheme helps to improve the quality of teaching irrespective of the discipline or subject being taught. McMahon, Barrett and O' Neill (2007) undertook a literature review of existing models of POT and proposed a theoretical model based on control of data flow. These authors reviewed the reflective statements of 22 lecturers on an academic development programme and found that, out of six aspects of data flow, the participants were in control of five of these. This paper includes little detail regarding the status of participants or how the reflective accounts were generated or analysed, however, the research suggests that in order for teaching quality and development to take place the participants in a POT scheme need to be in control of the flow of data in this process. Hardman's (2007) work highlighted the differences between development type observations that appear to be more prevalent within HEIs and the more performance management driven approach occurring within FE colleges.

The majority of the articles reported that participants found the process of observation valuable from both an observer's as well as observee's perspective (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Kohut, Burnap &Yon, 2007; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Norbury, 2001). In fact, in a

large scale quantitative study where the views of 163 observees and 343 observers were obtained, Kohut, Burnap and Yon (2007) found that the observers appreciated the process more in terms of developing their own teaching practice compared with the colleagues that they were observing.  Similarly, Bell and Mladenovic (2008) reported that one of the key benefits of the POT process detailed in their study was the opportunity that was created to observe a colleague teaching.  This was a smaller scale study (with a sample size of 32) which sought the views of part time tutors who had embarked on an academic development programme of which POT was one element of the programme.  Only 33% of the tutors who were invited to take part in this study volunteered as participants and, of these, just over 60% gave their permission for their results to be published.  This does therefore raise the question as to whether the sample was a true representation of this group of tutors.

Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker (2006) reported that participants in their study raised critical reflection as one of the key areas that they engaged with as part of the POT process.  In this case study the authors reviewed teaching observations as part of, what they termed, the 'educational developers as observers' model and found that the teaching observations helped the participants (inexperienced teachers) to build upon the theories covered in the educational development programme of which POT was an element.  Similarly Norbury (2001) suggests that the library staff who participated in her small scale study found that POT was useful in encouraging them to reflect on their teaching practice.

### 2.3.5 Perceptions of use, benefits and effectiveness

A number of articles (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Bell, 2001) referred to a benefit of POT as promoting and developing collegiality. Atkinson and Bolt (2010) reported that the group debrief element of the process was particularly important in this respect. In addition another benefit of the POT process was reported as the opportunity to share practice and work collaboratively (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008).

As detailed previously many of the studies reported that participants find the process of POT valuable (including as both observers and observees), however, there were some studies that reported negative attitudes to POT. There appear to be a variety of explanations for this. Chamberlain, D'Artrey and Rowe (2011) asserted that "It was apparent from the focus groups that emphasis was being placed by some members of staff on complying with institutional requirements to complete the POT process rather than on engaging with it as a continuing professional development tool" (p. 197). A key finding of this research was that a lack of engagement with POT may be due to the absence of formal connections between the outcomes of POT and the more formal process of staff appraisal. In the only article that evaluated the use of 'classroom observation' from an FE college perspective, Cockburn (2005) reported more positive than negative attitudes to teaching observations. However, 35% of the participants in this study did express negative opinions relating to teaching observations and the author suggests four reasons or "typologies of resistance" (Cockburn, 2005, p. 376) in relation to this: scrutinisation (for a bureaucratic exercise); artificiality (due to the physical presence of an observer); credibility (of the observer); and reductionism (of the teaching to a set of technical skills). This article, however, provided little detail on sample size and population, or

how the data was collected and analysed.  As previously described, Blackmore

(2005) reported that some participants tolerated the process, whilst many more

found the process to be valuable.  Lomas and Kinchin (2006) describe a small

minority of staff as being "openly hostile" (p. 212) to the implementation of a POT

scheme and suggest that even if such scheme is well managed and implemented

sensitively that there will always be some staff for whom it is not successful.  This

article did not examine why such an attitude may exist, however, Bell (2001)

suggests that participants who are less positive about POT for their own professional

development were more experienced teachers, whilst Donnelly (2007) suggests that

where trust and support is built into such a scheme this is more likely to lead to its

success.  The stimulus for Thwaites' work (2011) was the identification that current

processes for portraying HE teaching in a FE college were not effective.  Thwaites

describes the evaluation of a pilot project to implement a HE in FE peer review

framework.  An action research based approach was undertaken to implement a

scheme that would satisfy both the needs of quality assurance (for FE management

purposes) and quality enhancement (for HE lecturers).  Although limited research

data is provided or evaluated it appears that the pilot scheme was a broad success,

and with some adjustments, the framework has replaced the previous Ofsted

observations for HE in FE peer review at this college.

The use and type of feedback was reported in several studies.  Hammersley-

Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) reported concerns over negative feedback and

criticism, Blackmore (2005) suggests that too much positive feedback is not

appropriate, and Atkinson and Bolt (2010) suggest that one of the three key

elements to success is the feedback provided.  This demonstrates how the different

approaches to POT employed may affect how feedback is given and how it is viewed.  Kohut, Burnap and Yon (2007) was the only article to review the observation instruments utilised in peer observation reports and demonstrated that a range of feedback mechanisms may be employed, including, the written narrative (the most popular method in this study) as well as checklists, self-analysis and video.  The feedback provided in the peer observation reports was felt by the participants to be valid and useful, although this quantitative study did not investigate the reasoning behind this.  Blackmore (2005) found that participants believed that one of the purposes of peer review of teaching was that of feedback, and that this feedback was used reflectively and to provide reassurance.  Some interviewees, however, did feel that more supportive critical feedback and that a lack of a culture of criticism was not helpful.

## 2.4 Conclusion

It is clear from the literature that there are many POT schemes utilised within the HE sector.  In general HEIs attempt to utilise a developmental or peer review model that is primarily designed to enhance teaching and quality.  However, this is a complex area which continues to have issues in its implementation.  Successful schemes do exist and there is a wide variety of literature supporting the process as well as providing guidance for successful implementation or enhancement of the existing process of POT.  Other research goes on to suggest how POT may be further developed to create additional opportunities for development and reflective practice by reviewing the process of teaching and supporting learning as a whole rather than focusing only on the observation (teaching practice) itself.  Within the FE sector there is far less literature available and, what is available, tends to suggest that the Ofsted-

type methodology that is adopted is evaluative and judgmental in nature.  These types of observations are therefore used for quality assurance purposes rather than quality enhancement.  There is even less literature available for the HE in FE context.  The limited literature reviewed in this area as well as expert opinion tends to suggest that Ofsted criteria are also applied to this context which conflicts with that of the HE sector in general.

Possible research questions that have therefore emerged are:

- What is current practice in FE colleges in terms of the use of teaching observations employed for HE provision?

- How are teaching observations perceived by teachers delivering HE in FE?

- How are teaching observations perceived by managers in FE colleges?

The overall aim of this research was to explore the type of HE teaching observations that are in place in FE colleges delivering HE, and how such processes are perceived by college staff.

# CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Introduction

Following on from the critical review of literature as detailed in Chapter Two, this chapter outlines and justifies the research approach and methodology used for this study.

As previously detailed the main aim of the empirical research was to explore and investigate the perception and use of POT within an HE in FE context, and the research questions were:

- What is current practice in FE colleges in terms of the use of teaching observations employed for HE provision?

- How are teaching observations perceived by teachers delivering HE in FE?

- How are teaching observations perceived by managers in FE colleges?

The need for research in this area is in part due to the identification of a gap in research in this area.  Empirical research can provide new data and observations to examine assertions with the potential benefits of this research being to offer more information in this area of work.  This chapter provides details on the research strategy adopted to address the research questions and aims, as well as detailing data collection methods, how the data was analysed  and the limitations and potential problems of the research in practice.

## 3.2 Research strategy

There are generally two types of research strategy that are used in social research, that is, quantitative and qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).  The research in this

study sought to investigate the perceptions of POT for academic practice and therefore utilised a primarily qualitative research strategy with the research being situated in an interpretavist paradigm.  This epistemological approach tends to be qualitative as it seeks to examine, understand and interpret the social world through the eyes of its participants (Bryman, 2012).  There is therefore an emphasis on human analyses which leads to interpretative research being associated with qualitative research (Biggam, 2011).  This is in contrast to that of positivism which is considered to have an epistemological position that advocates the application of methods of the natural sciences to the study of social experiences (Bryman, 2012).  This approach to research is concerned with quantifiable data where the behaviour of humans does not influence the research (Biggam, 2011).  As such positivism often takes a more quantitative approach to social research, one which is generally not appropriate to this study.

Bryman (2008) describes that there are a number of stimuli which may lead to research being conducted and often are due to a "burning social problem or, more usually, a theory (p. 4).  This research has arisen out of the researcher's personal experiences of POT in an HE in FE context.

In this study, the overall research strategy used for the empirical research, was an exploratory case study of four FE colleges' approach to POT in their HE work.  Hart (2005, p. 327) describes the case study as a type of research which focuses on "a single case (person, group, setting etc) that allows for the investigation of the details, including contextual matters, of a phenomenon".  The 'case' within this case study is concerned with the community of FE colleges who deliver HE provision.  This

research strategy has been chosen as there is limited research available and a gap has been identified in the literature within this subject. Exploratory case studies are often pilot studies and can provide a pre-cursor to future larger scale research (Biggam, 2011), and within the time constraints of this study allowed for this topic to be studied in reasonable depth with ideas for subsequent research emerging from it. It is acknowledged that there are limitations to case studies, in particular that generalisations are difficult, and that therefore there may be limited validity or usefulness to findings. However, since each case study is unique, it is the conclusions that can be obtained from the data that make the findings valid and useful (Simons, 2009). Biggam (2011) suggests that the concept of relatability can be applied to case studies, and the researcher, therefore, hopes to obtain preliminary results that could be specifically relevant to other HE in FE providers as well as to inform future studies. Findings may also be of interest to the wider UK "HE in FE" community.

## 3.3 Sample population and sample size

The population to be researched in this study was UK FE colleges delivering HE provision. Two groups were identified within this population for the purpose of this study: firstly, HE teachers in FE colleges (from here on in referred to as 'HE teachers') and secondly, managers responsible for HE in FE colleges (from here on in referred to as 'HE managers').

The sample group was predetermined and made use of the researcher's relationship with the four Associate Colleges of the University which all deliver some HE provision. It is acknowledged that this sample group is biased as it does not

represent all UK colleges involved in HE delivery.  However, Schofield (2006, p. 29) explains that "sampling will often be the only feasible method of obtaining data quite apart from questions of time and cost" and Bryman (2012) suggests that sample size should be as large as possible to deal with these constraints, as well non-response or non-participation issues.  Using the sample group detailed allowed access to as many participants as possible whilst dealing with these constraints.  The sample size (n=115) was determined by the number of Associate College staff who were already known to the researcher through her current role at the University (having compiled a database of staff in these colleges who teach and/or manage HE provision).  This therefore represents a form of convenience sampling.  This form of non-probability sampling is described by Bryman (2008, p. 183) as one that is "simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility".  However, as with a case study approach, it is acknowledged that this sample may not be representative of the "HE in FE" population as this sampling strategy does not provide findings that can be generalised (Bryman, 2008).  Despite this it is anticipated that this preliminary analysis will be useful in providing an initial representation of views of the use of teaching observations in an HE in FE context.

**3.4 Data Collection**

Data collection consisted of a mixed method approach which was largely qualitative in nature with some descriptive quantitative statistics.  The research methods used were an initial questionnaire followed by a number of semi-structured interviews, the structure and format of which were informed by the initial analysis of the completed questionnaires.  The questionnaires were designed to provide initial descriptive information from closed questions with the use of a number of open-ended questions

to allow for further information to be gleaned. Questionnaires alone can only provide limited qualitative information and therefore semi-structured interviews were also used to provide additional qualitative information. A variety of data collection methods also allows for some triangulation (Bryman, 2012). It was anticipated that the inclusion of both HE managers and HE teachers in the study would allow for a comparison of responses.

Self-administered questionnaires were utilised as an initial data collection method in order to reach as many participants as possible within a short period of time. Wilson and Sapsford (2006, p. 102) suggest that "it is far quicker to conduct an investigation by questionnaire than by any other structured data-collection method". Other advantages of using questionnaires over that of interviews or focus groups include the absence of interviewer effects and variability, and convenience to respondents (Bryman, 2008). However, a number of disadvantages arise when using this data collection method which, amongst many others, include lower response rates (Bryman, 2008; Wilson & Sapsford, 2006), lack of prompting or probing, reduced capacity for asking more complex or additional questions, and greater risk of missing data (Bryman, 2008). Semi-structured interviews were therefore undertaken to supplement the initial questionnaires and to reduce these limitations, as well as providing a more in depth exploration of the use of POT in an HE in FE context.

### 3.4.1 *Questionnaires*

The initial part of the research strategy consisted of the administration of a questionnaire to each of the participants. Two questionnaires were devised, one for HE teachers and one for HE managers, with each being distinct, but containing

similar questions.  The questionnaires (Appendices 3 and 4), along with a participant

information sheet (PIS) (Appendix 5), were administered, via email and by post, to

each of the two groups.  It was anticipated that by using two forms of communication

recipients would be more likely to successfully receive the information and, in turn,

respond to the invitation to participate in the research.  The intention was to obtain

as much initial information from as many participants as possible through the use of

questionnaires and was also necessary given the geographical spread of the

participants.


### 3.4.2  Semi-structured interviews

The second stage of the study employed the use of a series of semi-structured

interviews to provide more detailed responses from a smaller number of participants.

The initial data obtained from questionnaires was used to plan and design the semi-

structured interviews (see Appendices 6 and 7).  Participants for this second stage

were selected following the initial questionnaire after which they indicated verbally or

via email that they would be prepared to take part in the second phase of the study.

Following completion of the initial questionnaire phase, the sample group was also

contacted by the researcher to ask for volunteers for the semi-structured interviews.

Each of the participants was emailed a PIS and consent form for this stage of data

collection (Appendices 8 and 9). The researcher had deliberated over whether to

utilise semi-structured interviews or focus groups for this second stage of data

collection.  The possible benefits and limitations of each of these methods was

reviewed as part of this consideration (as detailed in Appendix 10), and semi-

structured interviews were chosen in favour of focus groups for a number of reasons.

Primarily it was felt that these would be more suitable and easier to implement

considering the location and distance between the four colleges.  In addition only a small number of participants volunteered to take part in the interview stage of the research as a result of the questionnaire and email invite.

### 3.4.3  Sponsors

The use of a sponsor (that is someone who can vouch for the researcher and explain the work to the participants) is often used to gain access in some research studies (Foster, 2006).  The researcher felt that it was appropriate to identify and utilise a sponsor for each college in order to obtain as great a response rate for the initial questionnaire as possible.  These sponsors were identified from contacts that the researcher had already established in her professional role at each of the colleges and each sponsor was asked to help with the distribution of questionnaires and gathering of completed questionnaires at each college site.  It was anticipated that this would not only help in obtaining as great a response as possible but also to reduce the costs associated with posting individual questionnaires.

### 3.4.4  Pilot methods

Piloting of a study prior to the main investigation can be considered as a small-scale trial which considers the appropriateness of the design of the study and the data collection instruments to be used (Wilson & Sapsford, 2006).  It is considered essential to pilot draft questionnaires with a representative target population in order to ensure that the questions are fully understood by respondents and to determine how long it takes to for the questionnaire to be completed (Wilson & Sapsford, 2006).  It is also necessary to pilot semi-structured interviews, once again in terms of time scales and appropriateness of question design and schedules.  Although it was not

possible to pilot the questionnaires nor the semi-structured interview schedule with an equivalent/similar sample to that of the study (that is staff from an HE in FE context), the researcher asked colleagues and contacts, who have previously delivered or are currently delivering HE in an FE context, to complete and review the data collection tools in order to replicate a pilot study as far as possible within the limitations identified.  This process was beneficial in clarifying a number of issues and resulted in a number of amendments to the data collection methods to make them more robust.

## 3.5 Framework for Data Analysis

### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

Data obtained from the closed questions of the questionnaires was analysed using descriptive statistics including summary statistics, tabulation and graphics.  The data was coded and entered into SPSS, version 19 (a statistical package for the social sciences).  The questionnaire was not designed for analysis using SPSS and it was intended that descriptive statistics would be obtained through the use of Excel.  However, advice from a statistician following the implementation of the questionnaire phase suggested that SPSS would provide relevant descriptive statistics in a manner that would be easier to deal with than Excel.  Relevant tests were carried out in order to obtain descriptive statistics which included frequencies and comparisons of responses between colleges and teachers/managers.

The responses obtained from the open-ended questions of the questionnaire were analysed using thematic analysis, in order to observe and identify trends and/or differences between groups.  Thematic analysis is one of the most common methods

used to analyse qualitative data (Bryman, 2012), however, despite the work of Miles and Huberman (1994), and more recently that of Braun and Clarke (2006) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), it is not always clear from the literature as to what actually constitutes a "theme".  Bryman (2012, p. 580) provides a helpful summary of what a theme may therefore be:

> A category identified by the analyst through his/her data, that relates to his/her research focus (and quite possibly the research questions), that builds on codes identified in transcripts and/or field notes, and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that there are five phases to thematic analysis, that is, data familiarisation, initial coding, searching for themes, thematic review, and definition and theme naming.  The researcher took a broadly similar approach by firstly transcribing the responses obtained from the open ended questions into a word document which enabled her to become familiar with the raw data.  Based on the questions included in the questionnaire, this document was then reviewed for initial categories and from this, emerging themes were identified and named.  These themes were then reviewed along with the descriptive statistics and used to inform the questions for the semi-structured interviews.  The whole process is detailed in Figure 3.1.

```
→                              ↓

                    Collect data from questionnaires[1] and
                     interviews[2] (digitally record)
                               ↓
                  Prepare data for analysis by transcribing data
                               ↓
↑                 Read through transcriptions to obtain a general
                            sense of the material
                               ↓
                  Code data according to themes by locating
                    text segments and assigning codes
                               ↓
                        Group themes and issues
                               ↓
←                          Perform analysis,
Results from           i.e. interpret what is happening
questionnaires[1]

                               ↓
                        Compare findings:
                        o   Results from questionnaires and
                            interviews:
                              •  HE Teachers
                              •  HE Managers
                              •  Colleges
                        o   Lit review findings against case study
                            findings above
```

**Figure 3.1: Framework for the analysis of qualitative data obtained from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (adapted from Creswell, 2008, p. 244 and Biggam, 2011, p. 164)**

### 3.5.2 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were carried out and digitally recorded.  Each interview was subsequently transcribed into individual word documents and thematic analysis was carried out as detailed for the open ended questions of the questionnaires (as detailed in Figure 3.1).

**3.6 Ethical Issues**

A number of ethical issues were considered in relation to this research and appropriate steps were taken to ensure that the study was carried out ethically. Within many discipline areas, such as medicine, ethical considerations have been relevant and well documented for many years. However, in educational research this has more recently been acknowledged and, as Dockrell (1988, p. 67) states, "As educational research has become less an academic pursuit and more directly a guide to educational practice, ethical issues have become more prominent and concern with them a topic of discussion among researchers". Simons (2009) describes how in the process of research it is important to create a "relationship with participants that respects human integrity and in which people can trust" (p. 96).

Beauchamp and Childress (2001) suggest four principles which are key to ethical research:

1. Respect for autonomy (making decisions about oneself);

2. Beneficence (to good or benefit);

3. Non-maleficence (to avoid harm);

4. Justice (to treat people fairly).

These principles were used as a guide to ensure that the appropriate steps were taken in order to ensure that this study was carried out in an ethical manner and that the researcher as well as the participants and their respective institutions were protected.

### 3.6.1 Respect for autonomy

This involved ensuring informed consent and conveying that participation was entirely voluntary to potential participants. Initially Principals at each of the colleges were contacted in order to gain consent for their staff to be approached to take part in the study. A participant information sheet (PIS) was administered for each stage of data collection to ensure that potential participants were aware of the purpose of the research and their role in this. The PIS not only provided details regarding the purpose of the study, but also information concerning anonymity, confidentiality, recording of interviews, storage of data and consent requirement to participating in the study.

### 3.6.2 Beneficence

It is unclear as to whether the research will benefit the participants. However, it is anticipated that participants will benefit by seeing themselves as contributing to knowledge which may help to develop their practice particularly in an HE in FE setting. Participants may also have become more familiar with some elements of the processes in relation to pedagogic research which may help to develop a more scholarly approach to their teaching and supporting of learning.

### 3.6.3 Non-maleficence

In case study research, Simons (2009) suggests that this fundamental ethical principle to 'do no harm' should consider what this means to individual participants, to review this when collecting data and to be aware of this when writing. The researcher is known by many of the sample population and may potentially have been viewed as someone who was scrutinising or judging their practice and/or their

institution. This risk was reduced by the information provided in the PIS which attempted to reassure them that this was not the case as well as detailing that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. For those who took part in the questionnaire phase, they completed the questionnaires anonymously with only the department/curriculum area being identified for HE teachers, and no personal data being requested.

A research intervention was not proposed, and therefore it was not anticipated that one college or group of staff could potentially be disadvantaged over another. However, all four Associate Colleges of the University that the researcher works closely with in her professional role and their HE staff had the opportunity to participate in the first stage of the data collection, and subsequently had the opportunity to volunteer to take part in the second stage of this process.

### 3.6.4 Justice

Equality of opportunity was provided by affording all of the HE staff in the sample group the option to take part in the study. In addition to the principles of ethical research as suggested by Beauchamp and Childress (2001), the researcher also considered the issue of trustworthiness and consistency of standards, proposed by Cousin (2009) as another feature concerning ethical research. She did this by acknowledging her position as a researcher within the research (that is, being reflexive) and identifying potential issues that could occur and/or potentially influence the research which included:

- Relationship with participants as a colleague, advisor and/or assessor;
- Historical role at one of the colleges;

- Stress to the participants which may have arisen due to the relationship and current working arrangements of the researcher with the identified participants, that is, potentially one of an authority figure;

- Anonymity/confidentiality – the identities of each of the colleges (as well as individual participants) are not identified;

- Effect on behaviour as a result of participating in the study– for example, if teaching staff have questioned the purpose and process of the teaching observations which they are subsequently required to undertake within their practice.

In addition to the steps put in place as detailed above, prior to any data collection for this study, an application was made to the University's Learning and Teaching Institute's Research Ethics Committee (LTI-REC) in order to gain ethical approval for the study.  The committee made a number of suggestions to help the researcher to improve the study to be undertaken and gave approval following a number of conditions and amendments to the documentation.

**3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented the research strategy and methods of data collection which were adopted to undertake the empirical research for this study, with the aim of investigating the research questions detailed at the start of this chapter.  Chapter Four will present the results from the mixed method approach of data collection and Chapter Five will go on to analyse and discuss the findings in more detail.

# CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the results of the two stages of data collection and will detail these in relation to the quantitative and qualitative data obtained.  Where verbatim quotations are included the identity of the college will be detailed as C-A (College A), C-B (College B), C-C (College C) or C-D (College D), and the participants from the semi-structured interviews as P1, P2, etc.

## 4.2 Response rate for questionnaire phase

Table 4.1 provides information on the response rate for the questionnaire phase of data collection.

## 4.3 Semi-structured interview participants

Initially those who expressed an interest in taking part in the second phase of data collection, as identified through the questionnaire phase, were invited to take part. However, there was a poor response to this invitation and therefore the invitation was broadened out to all those who had been invited to complete the questionnaire. In total nine semi-structured interviews were carried out (there were another two volunteers but it was not possible to arrange interviews at a convenient time for both them and the researcher/interviewer).

Of the nine who took part, three were from College A, two were from College C and four were from College D.  There were no volunteers, and therefore no participants, from College B. The participants included both managers and teachers of HE with a range of roles including lecturers in Equine, Countryside, Food, Teacher Education,

and Work Based Integrative Studies (WBIS), as well as one Assistant Principal and one Vice Principal. Many of the participants had both HE management and HE teaching responsibilities, however, for the purpose of this study those whose main role was teaching are considered to be 'teachers' (n=7), whilst those holding more senior roles with mainly management responsibilities are considered to be 'managers' (n=2).

**Table 4.1: Number of questionnaires sent out and returned**

| Respondents | | Number of questionnaires sent out | Number of questionnaires returned | Response rate |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers | | 106 | 38 | 36% |
| Managers | | 9 | 5 | 56% |
| College A | Teachers | 40 | 9 | 23% |
| | Managers | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| | Total | 42 | 10 | 24% |
| College B | Teachers | 9 | 5 | 56% |
| | Managers | 3 | 0 | 0% |
| | Total | 12 | 5 | 42% |
| College C | Teachers | 15 | 10 | 67% |
| | Managers | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| | Total | 17 | 12 | 71% |
| College D | Teachers | 42 | 14 | 33% |
| | Managers | 2 | 2 | 100% |
| | Total | 44 | 16 | 36% |
| **TOTAL** | | **115** | **43** | **37%** |

**4.4 Quantitative Data**

Quantitative data was obtained from the questionnaires. This data was analysed thematically as detailed in Chapter Three and a number of themes emerged from this data (which are detailed in section 4.4.3). Whilst some qualitative data was obtained from the questionnaires through a number of open-ended questions, this is detailed in section 4.5.

*4.4.1 Demographics*

*4.4.1.1        Length of time working at current college*

Figure 4.1 shows the length of time that staff have worked at their institution.
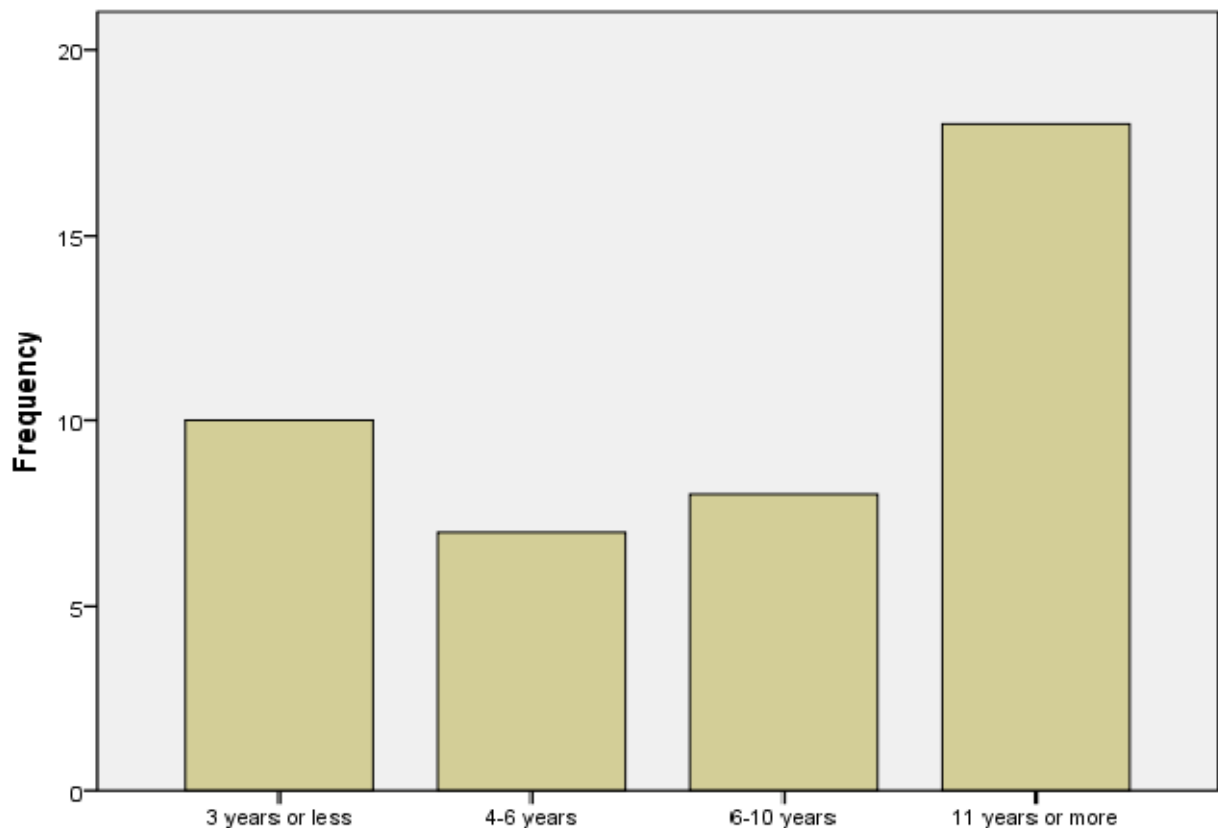


**Figure 4.1: Length of time working at current College**

*4.4.1.2        Role at college*

Figure 4.2 details the role of the teachers at the colleges.  Examples of the 'other

managers' category included curriculum area managers, managers with a HE and

FE teaching role, and middle managers.
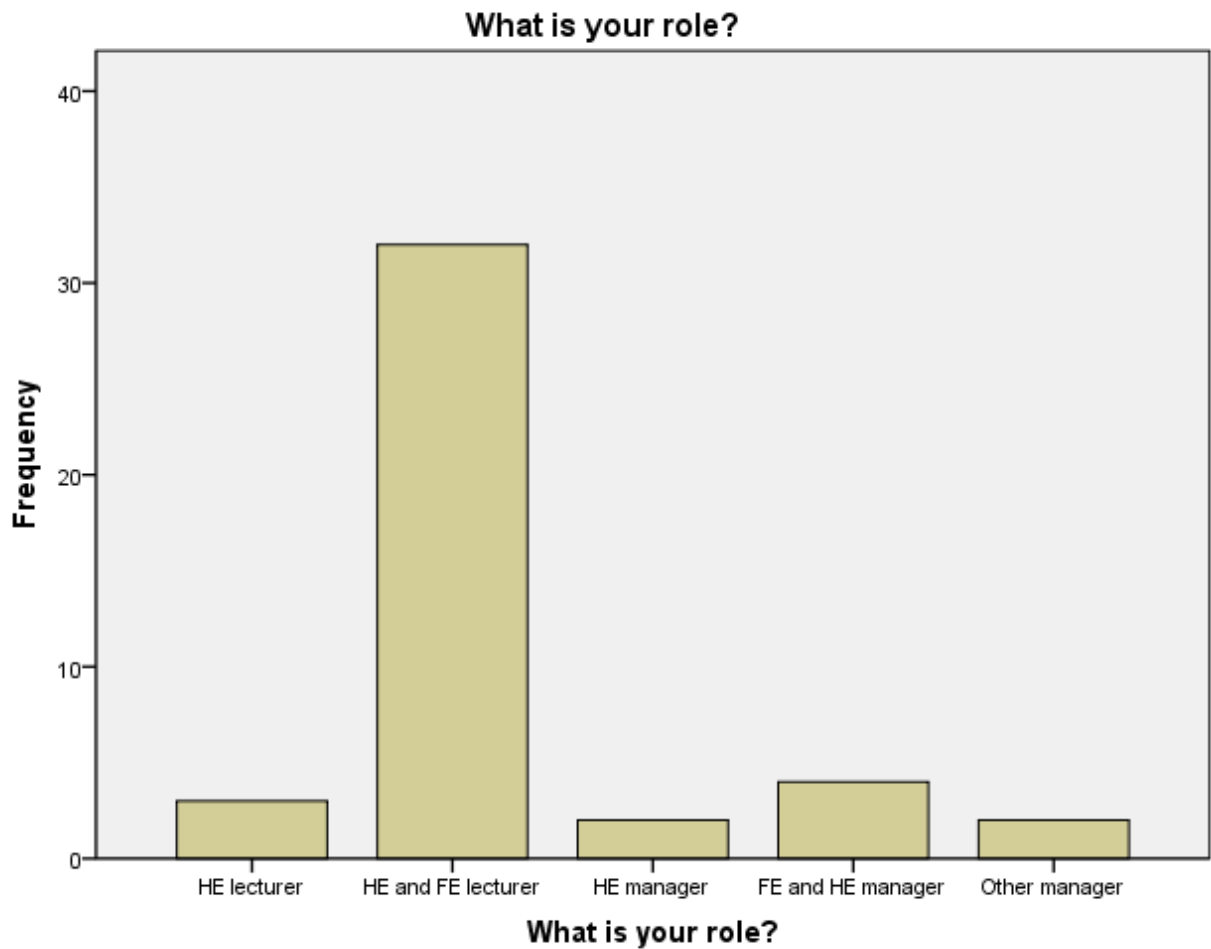


**Figure 4.2: Role of teachers**

Of the five managers who responded, two had responsibility for purely HE and no

responsibility for FE.

*4.4.1.3    Teachers*

Three of the colleges were general FE colleges, whilst the fourth is a specialist provider of land-based provision.  Respondents were from a spread of disciplines in relation to their teaching as detailed in Figure 4.3.  The greatest proportion of respondents came from within one of three areas: Business and related subjects; Education and Staff Development; and Computing and IT.
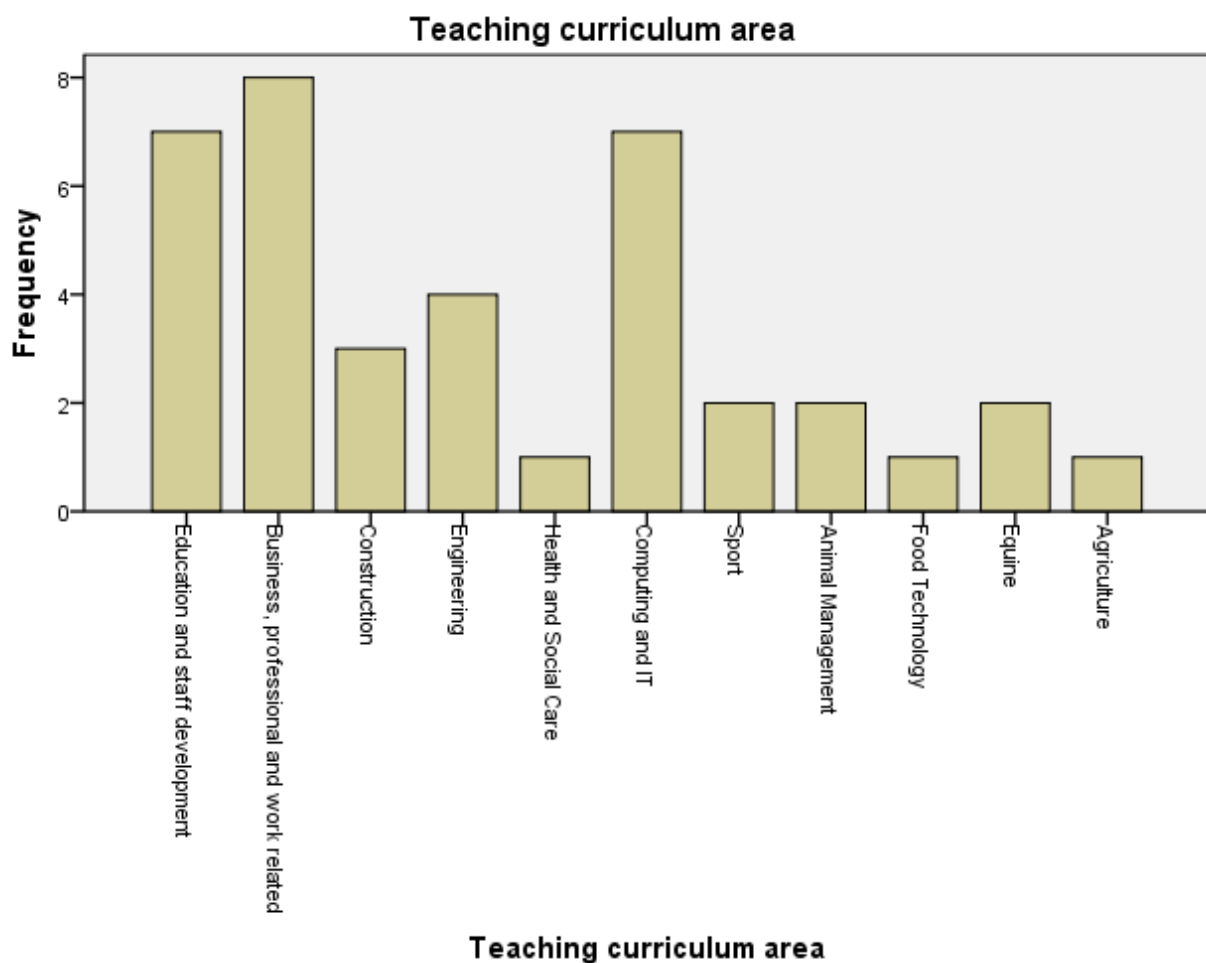


**Figure 4.3: Teaching disciplines of teachers**

There was generally a fairly even spread in relation to the amount of time that the teachers have been delivering HE in FE as shown in Figure 4.4.

**Length of time teaching HE in FE**
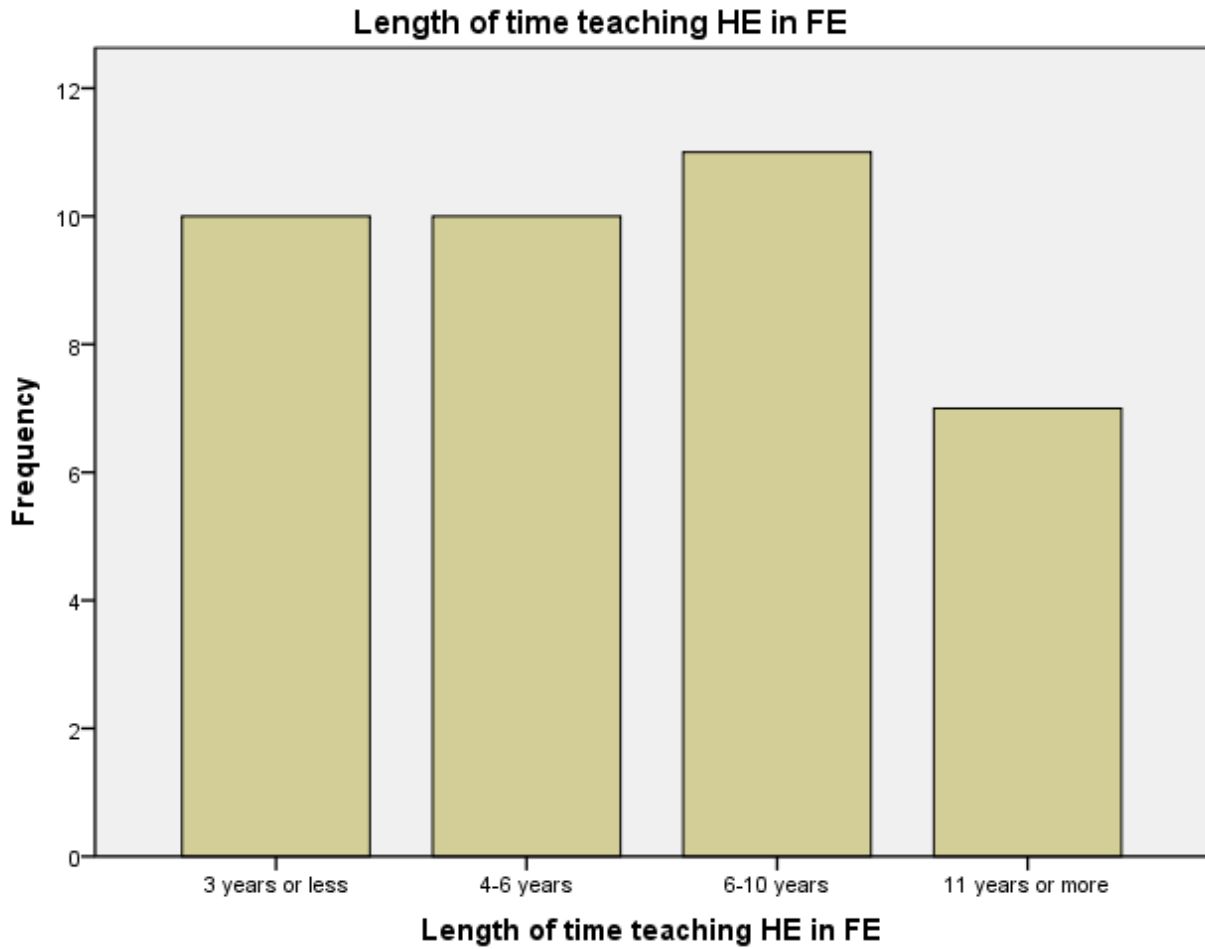
**Figure 4.4: Length of time teachers have taught HE in FE**

Only a small minority (18%) have taught HE in a HEI and, of these, 70% had taught in this context for less than four years. As shown in Figure 4.5, 42% spent 60% or more of their time teaching HE (as opposed to FE teaching), and only 26% spent the majority (more than 80%) of their time teaching HE (this links to only two lecturers stating their role as "HE lecturer").

## Approximate amount of time spent teaching HE
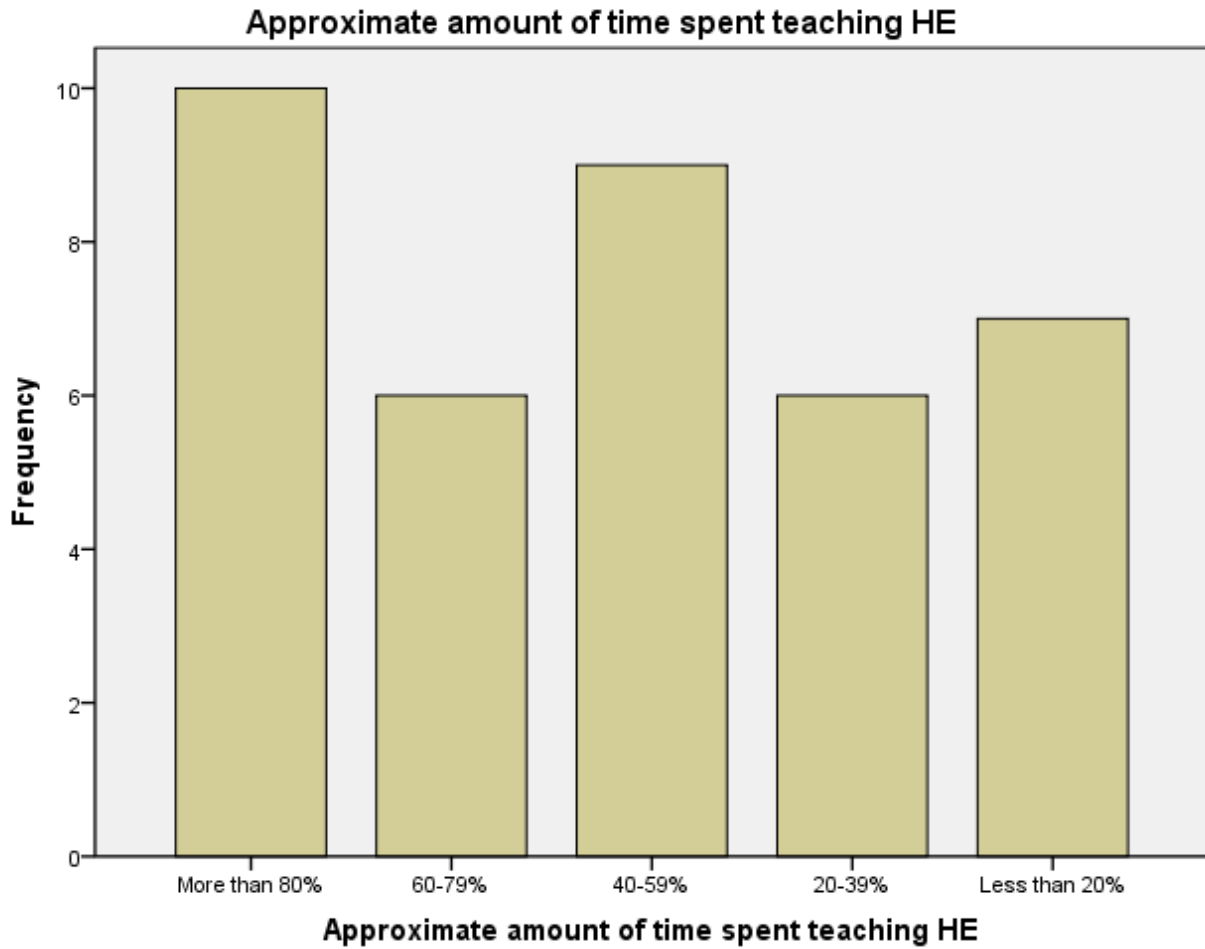


**Figure 4.5: Approximate amount of time spent teaching HE**

*4.4.1.4      Managers*

Of the five managers that responded, three of them (60%) do not do any teaching.

Of the two that do teach, both deliver HE, and all five have taught HE in the past.

One manager reported not undertaking any teaching observations, whilst the other

four carry out both FE and HE teaching observations.

### 4.4.2 Current use of teaching observations for HE in FE

#### 4.4.2.1 Requirement for HE teaching observations

Overall 65% of respondents stated that there is a requirement for them to have their HE teaching observed. However, there was a distinct difference in response between the colleges with 100% of respondents from Colleges B and C stating that there is a requirement to have their HE teaching observed, compared to only 38% from College A and 43% from College D. There were a number of participants who did not answer the question, thereby raising the query about whether they had knowledge of the requirements in relation to this. For those who are observed teaching HE, 91% are only required to be observed once a year. This is similar across all four colleges.

#### 4.4.2.2 Distinction between HE and FE observation process

Overall 33% said that there was a difference between teaching observations for HE compared with those used for FE, however, 53% said that there was no difference and another 14% did not know. Again there was disparity between colleges with respondents from College B (100%) and College D (91%) responding that there was no difference, whilst respondents from College C replied that there was a difference (83%) as demonstrated in Figure 4.6. This was generally supported by the opinions about whether respondents felt that HE teaching observations used the same process, and overall 45% felt that this was the case. Again the opinion varied between colleges with respondents from Colleges B and D generally agreeing that the observation processes were the same, whilst those from Colleges A and C disagreed with this (Figure 4.7).
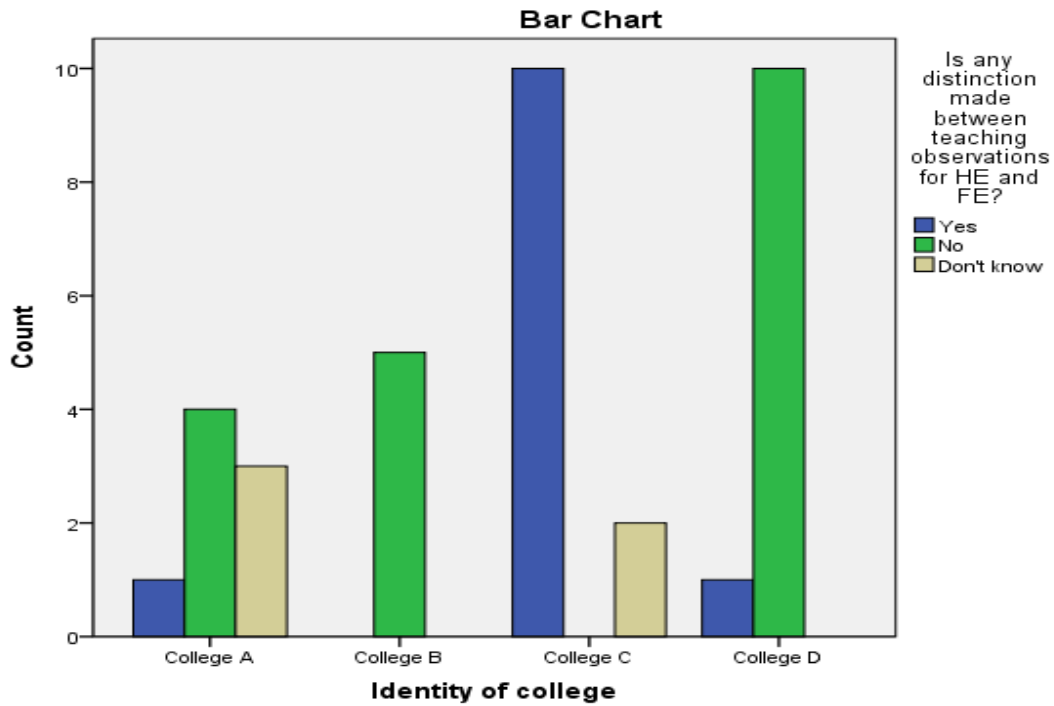
**Figure 4.6: Response by college as to whether there is a distinction between FE and HE teaching observations**
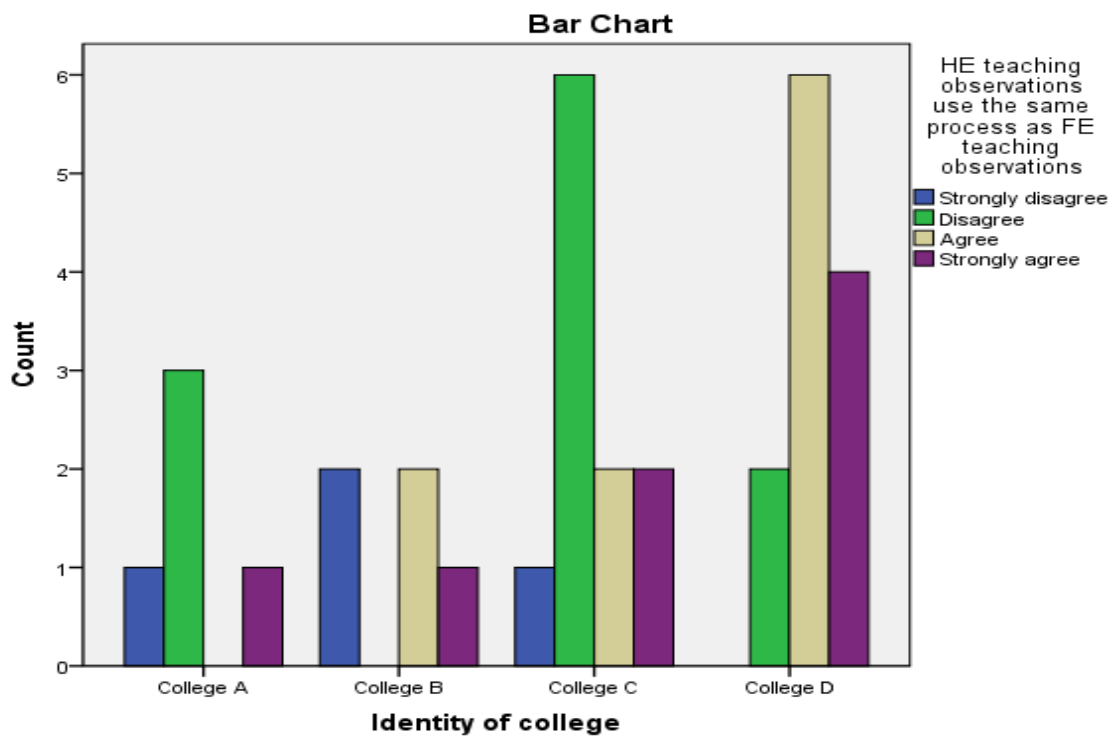


**Figure 4.7: Response by college as to whether HE teaching observations use the same process as FE teaching observations**

Overall the majority (71%) felt that HE teaching observations are graded but there was variation across the colleges as detailed in Figure 4.8.
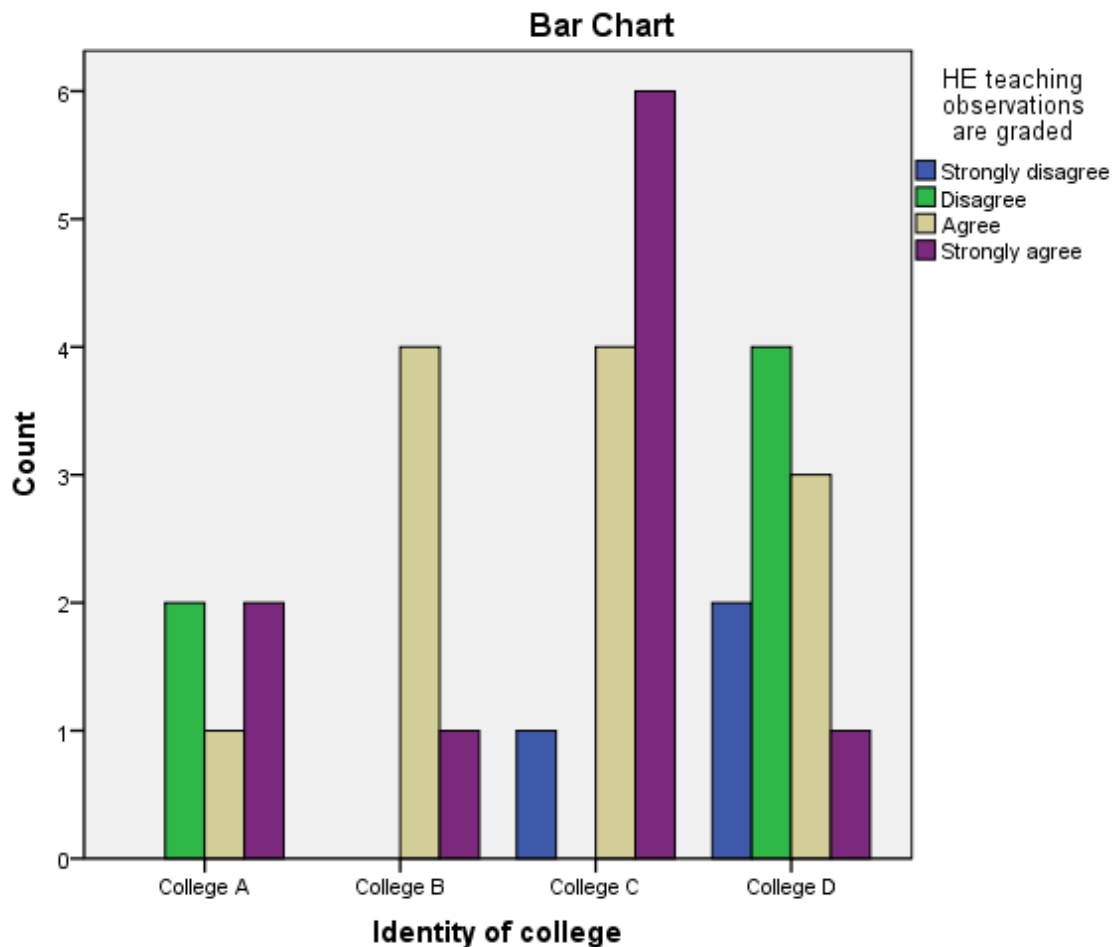


**Figure 4.8: Response by college as to whether HE teaching observations are graded**

*4.4.2.3    Who carries out teaching observations*

There was generally the same ratio (72-80%) across all four colleges with the majority (79%) agreeing that HE observations are carried out by peers or equals. However, contrary to this line managers and Heads of Department are often involved with this process as well as peers, with a range of staff being detailed as carrying out HE teaching observations.  A range of roles were noted by respondents as being undertaken by themselves as part of the HE teaching observation process, including

that of observer (n=13), observee (n=18) and mentor (n=7), with another six

respondents detailing that they had no role in teaching observations.

### 4.4.3  Purpose and function of HE observations

Overall 56% of respondents indicated that outcomes from HE teaching observations

are used for annual review.  Figure 4.9 details the variation in response across the

colleges.
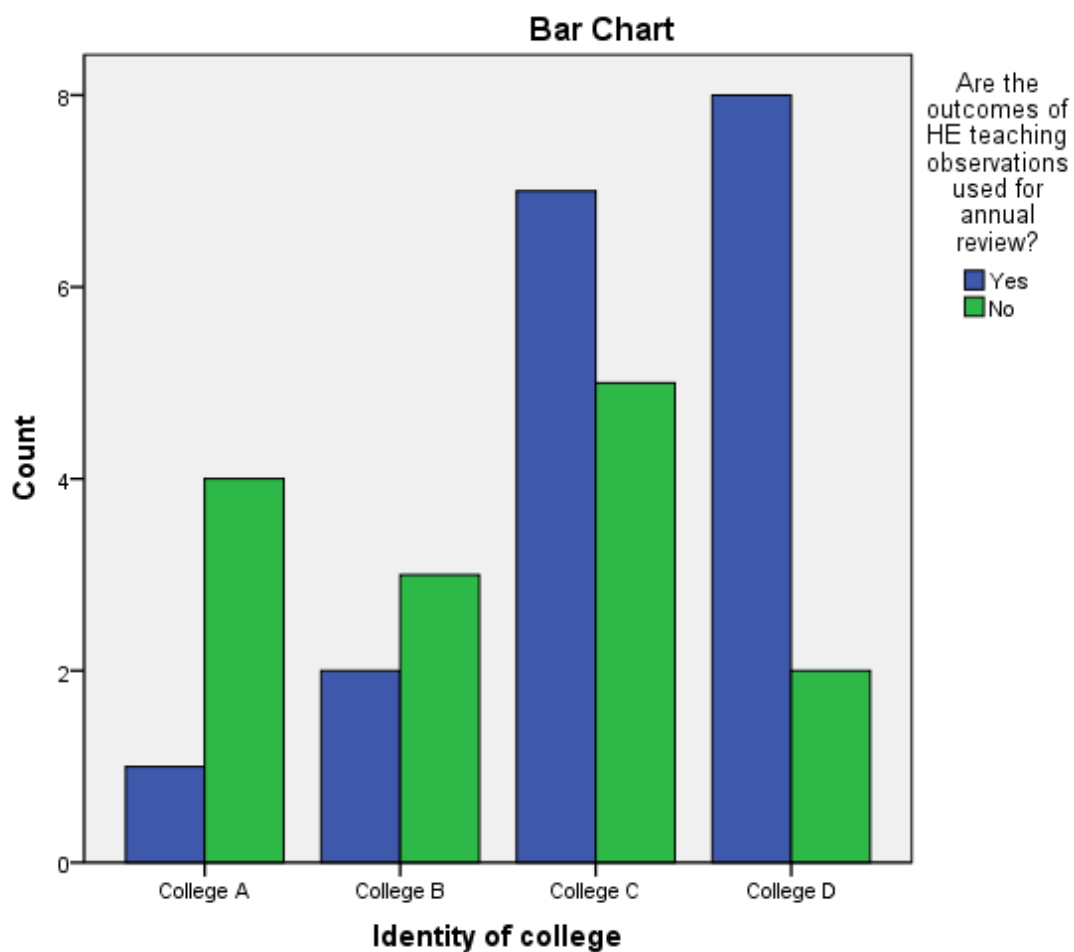


**Figure 4.9: Response by college as to whether the outcomes of teaching observations are used for annual review**

All four managers who responded detailed that they use HE teaching observations to support staff development opportunities.  Table 4.2 provides information about the respondents' opinions on the use of teaching observations.

**Table 4.2: Summary of responses in relation to the opinions on the use of HE teaching observations**

|  | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| HE teaching observations provide a valuable opportunity for professional development | 91% | 9% |
| HE teaching observations are a valuable way of sharing practice | 91% | 9% |
| HE teaching observations benefit the observe | 91% | 9% |
| HE teaching observations benefit the observer | 91% | 9% |
| HE teaching observations provide an enhancement mechanism for my teaching practice | 91% | 9% |
| HE teaching observations are used for quality assurance purposes | 81% | 19% |

## 4.5 Qualitative Data

Results from open ended questions of the questionnaire phase and data collected from the semi-structured interviews are detailed in this section.  There was limited qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires, however, this was used to inform the design of the semi-structured interviews. Themes were determined as described in Chapter Three (refer to Appendix 11 for an example of thematic analysis) with four main themes emerging from the data.

### 4.5.1  Processes

It was evident from the data collected from both the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews that different approaches to teaching observations are used in

each of the colleges. However, it appears that each college has generally similar arrangements with two main types of teaching observation in existence. Firstly, there are those which are compulsory and are carried out by managers and/or an observation team. These observations tend to be hierarchical in nature and form part of a quality and performance management process. Secondly, there is a largely less formalised peer observation process that tends to be department or programme led and focussed. In addition some participants detailed teaching observations that take place as part of a teaching qualification or as part of a mentoring scheme for new or newly qualified teaching staff. Appendix 12 provides further details about these processes for each individual college.

Participants were asked about the use of POT mainly in relation to their HE practice, however, it was evident that these processes are also applied to FE in each of the colleges. It emerged from the semi-structured interviews that the process of POT is implemented in a number of ways across the individual colleges and that individual curriculum areas/programmes tend to have local arrangements for this. In the main arrangements are flexible, particularly in terms of timing and negotiation of who is to observe who, with there often being choice of who, what and when to observe, or be observed. Participants from only one college detailed how there was an expectation that POT must take place, with a tendency for the process to be voluntary in the two other colleges. In these two colleges the nature of the departments appears to have an impact on this, with it largely being encouraged in most, but compulsory in others. It was also apparent that the observations were mainly contained within departments and programme teams although cross college observations were reported as taking place occasionally.

Only one participant detailed forward planning for teaching observations as taking place in her curriculum area with peer observations being prearranged - "*it is in the calendar*" (P2, C-A). Only one college has a standard approach to POT having recently implemented a Peer Learning Scheme which utilises teaching squares. Responsibility for this scheme is designated to individual curriculum areas. The scheme is still in its infancy and has yet to be evaluated. Another participant noted how, in her curriculum area, termly team meetings are utilised as a way to share feedback and practice from POTs.

A number of participants described how they regularly team teach and co-facilitate sessions and that, although this is not formalised as POT, they use it to reflect and consequently develop their teaching: "*because it's embedded in the model, we're observing each other as we lead…..the process is almost part of just natural reflection and debriefing the end of a workshop rather than anything else*" (P6, C-D). This participant described how written reflections are documented and are then available for use by colleagues for use in subsequent sessions, and are therefore used in an open and sharing manner. She explained that this type of reflective practice is inherent in the programmes which she delivers.

A number of participants described how POT is used to develop new and/or inexperienced staff within their colleges, including its use in teacher training, most particularly in the Certificate of Education programme. One participant particularly noted the use of POT as part of a mentoring scheme within their college including for: staff who are new to HE (as a developmental opportunity by sitting in as observers) and; staff who are new to the college or who need to improve teaching

(through a review of their teaching, that is, by being observed).  Another participant noted that "*Peer observations of partner institutions* [as part of the "Bridging module"] *has been useful for the staff….because the teaching wasn't necessarily different but the environment was different*" (P8, C-D).

The type and amount of feedback given following POTs appears to be variable and participants gave a mixed view in relation to this.  However, the majority of feedback was detailed as being verbal, with generally less use of paperwork/documentation compared with that used for more formal observations.  This, however, did seem to vary between disciplines/departments/curriculum areas.  A number of participants noted that where it was documented, the feedback could or might be used in the individual's Performance Development Review (PDR).  One participant noted how the results of a POT for which she was the observer was shared with the observee's line manager.

All the participants discussed the use of POT as a two-way observation process, that is, they are both observers and observees.  They described how they find this of benefit and value, but that they found the observer role more beneficial in helping to develop their own practice.  Those who have responsibility for programmes of study (for example, programme leaders and programme managers) tended to describe being observers within their programme teams in the POT process.  Generally in the more formal, quality-type observations each of the managers interviewed was a member of the observation team at their college and therefore had a role as an observer in this process.  In contrast the teachers were generally more likely to be observees than observers in this process.

### 4.5.2  Purpose

It was generally found that the purpose of teaching observations is the same for both FE and HE at each of the colleges.  Responses from the questionnaires provided information that observations are used for both annual review and staff development and this was supported by the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews.  The formal, quality-type observation was also termed "*inspection*" (P2, C-A) and "*mini-Ofsted*" (P3, C-A) and was noted as having the main purpose of performance management.  The observation report and/or grade feeds into an individual's appraisal or PDR and may lead to staff development (although this was usually not a formalised part of the process).

A number of participants commented that successful observations may lead to a salary increment, whilst others detailed how observation results feed into strategic planning.  Responses from the questionnaires revealed how one manager felt that the observation grade obtained was only relevant if it was inadequate and therefore led to a capability issue, whilst one teacher detailed how the objective of the appraisal was to improve or maintain the observation grade.

The purpose of POT was detailed as being mainly developmental and for sharing of good practice.  Participants described how peer observations are generally not used for performance management, although one participant discussed how, as a manager, he does use peer observations in the PDR process for his staff commenting that "*a lot of positive stuff comes out of this [POT] and if you're not careful you tend to [say] you must improve this, rather than actually thinking, you*

*know, there's ten things that you did really well and I'm battering you about one area of improvement*" (P3, C-A).

### 4.5.3 Perceptions

The majority of participants viewed POT as being a process undertaken by a colleague (rather than a manager) and as a developmental process that involved the sharing of good practice.  A number of key categories were identified in relation to POT and are shown in Table 4.3.  Only one participant talked about the use of authority and a process that applied a grade and was for checking teaching. However, this participant also referred to POT as a more developmental process and commented that "*if you were to push me for which definition would I use if I can only use one of them, it would be the developmental one*" (P5, C-C).

Participants gave their views in relation to the observation processes currently being used for HE in their colleges.  Responses relating to this tended to be specific to what individuals had experienced, and differed between the individual participants and between colleges.  For the formal observations most participants noted that whether an HE or FE session is observed is determined by an individual's timetable, with one participant noting that she had not been observed teaching HE at all as part of this process (this was despite spending approximately 40% of her time teaching HE).

**Table 4.3: Summary of categories identified for the term 'Peer Observation of Teaching'**

| Category | Number of respondents |
|---|---|
| Peer/colleague/somebody you work with/ member of programme team/teaching at same level | 8 |
| Developmental/improve professional role/developing ideas/picking up hints and tips/self-help | 6 |
| Sharing of good practice and/or knowledge | 4 |
| Constructive/useful/supportive | 3 |
| Not graded/non-judgemental/not Ofsted-type approach | 3 |
| Giving feedback | 2 |
| Sitting in/joining in | 1 |
| Less about content/carried out in a different subject area | 1 |
| Improving learner experience | 1 |
| Two way process/collaborative/benefit to both observee and observer | 1 |
| Honest | 1 |

Participants noted how Ofsted criteria do not take HE lesson expectations or HE approaches to teaching into account. Two participants compared university teaching and observation processes to those at their college, in particular detailing how they felt that college observation processes are unable to capture the specific nature and features of HE lessons. Of these two participants, one also explained how he felt that college HE classes (which he described as generally smaller compared to those in HEIs) lead to a different type of teaching style, that is, one that is more interactive, whilst the other summarised how she felt about HE teaching observations as "*HE observations within an FE setting is challenging*" (P1, C-A). This was in contrast to

the two participants from College C who described the development of an observation process that was more specific to HE which had been partly influenced by the process of the recent QAA IQER.  One respondent from the questionnaire phase also noted the different level of support offered during and after the observation process, whilst another noted that the nature of the discussion was different between the processes for HE and FE observations.

Comment was made by a number of participants that the main function and focus of colleges is still their FE work, mainly due to Ofsted requirements and demands, with Ofsted being viewed as the driving force of FE colleges. However, there was acknowledgement that there is more recognition of the need for a different approach to HE teaching observations due to the nature of HE.  Participants noted that, in part, this was due to the QAA review process for HE in FE (IQER), the new Quality Code for HE, as well as the HE CPD support provided by the main partner HEI.  One participant noted that "*In moving into HE we have developed HE standards, HE expectations and those HE programmes are still observed by our internal college inspection team/observation team even though technically there isn't a requirement. So we actually apply [our] College's observation standards to HE as well as FE but there's a distinction made*" (P4, C-C).

Perceptions which relate specifically to each of the two main types of teaching observations undertaken in each of the colleges were also obtained and are summarised in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Summary of perceptions and value of colleges' current HE observation processes**

| Responses relating to *formal quality-type observations* | Responses relating to *peer observations* |
|---|---|
| *Value of the observation:*<br>• Tendency to focus on negative aspects of teaching<br>• Good sessions may have limited feedback<br>• Box ticking exercise<br>• Lack of respect (for the process)<br>• Artificial process<br>• Perceived as 'jumping through hoops' e.g. "*From a personal viewpoint the formal appraisal observation has zero value to me*" (P7, College D)<br>• Possible to manipulate lesson planning to achieve a better grade<br>• Most beneficial when feedback is developmental and helped to improve practice | *Organisation and frequency of observations:*<br>• Time issue including timetabling constraints<br>• Sporadic and inconsistent<br>• Often a "drop in "<br>• Limited or no preparation/discussion between peers prior to the observation itself<br>• Nature of department or College affects ability to carry out POTs e.g. team teaching, teaching environment<br>• Easier to arrange in a small department |
| *Effect of observer:*<br>• Value of the process depends on the observer including their experience, qualifications, understanding and appreciation of HE teaching and level<br>• More experienced HE observers are able to adapt criteria to suit HE observations<br>• Potential conflict depending on personalities and relationship between observer and observee which may lead to a "cosy" or non-controversial grade being awarded<br>• Process of greater value when observer is from a different discipline and able to provide a different perspective<br>• Pressure due to hierarchical nature of process | *Development of practice:*<br>• Benefits of watching colleagues teach generally rather than a formal process<br>• Often more informal and natural and therefore leads to a more beneficial experience (of both observer and observee)<br>• Peers viewed as "equals", leads to a more honest and developmental process<br>• Perception of the value of peer observation as a developmental tool<br>• Use of validating HEIs peer observation of teaching documents rather than distinct college documentation/forms – useful for preparation, reflection and discussion (the process rather than the product can then be observed)<br>• HE tends to be spread across each College in different programme areas ("*people are quite isolated*" – P6, College D) – the use of peer observations can create opportunities for getting HE staff together as well as sharing practice |

A number of participants described how the personality of, experience of and

relationship with observer has an impact, including the effect on the value of

observation and how an observee acts or performs.  One participant described as, in his role as a teacher educator, how he is often asked by colleagues to carry out their annual appraisal observation rather than their manager (particularly if the line management relationship is perceived as being poor).  He described how colleagues value his experience, as well as him having no vested interest in the observation. Another participant described how the attitude of the programme area and its manager affects the type and quality of observation feedback in a positive manner, whilst another described a negative experience when observed by a manager.

### 4.5.4  Future Developments

A number of questionnaire respondents specifically detailed how they would value the development of a POT framework for HE (in FE) and this was further supported by responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews relating to the potential development of HE teaching observations.  Opinions were once again specific to each college as well as to individual participants.  One participant stated that "*The potential [of developing the HE observation process] is enormous and in my opinion that's where we should be going*" (P7, C-D).

There appear to be different needs from teachers' and managers' perspectives, with one manager in particular noting the need for performance management, but with more of an emphasis on development and noting that "*feedback is more important than grades*" (P8, C-D).  One participant commented that a new distinct framework for HE with specialist observers is already being considered in their college whilst another noted that she felt that the formation of a distinct and separate HE curriculum area and the development of her role could potentially aid the

engagement of staff with HE peer observations by helping to make it more formalised and consistent.  However, she also noted that to make it compulsory would place even greater demands on staff.  One participant noted that in her college there are now more managers specifically responsible for HE which she speculated may impact on future developments in relation to HE observations.

A number of specific ideas as to how HE teaching observations may be developed emerged and are detailed in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Summary of ideas and areas for development for HE teaching observations**

<table>
<tr><td>

*Development of criteria and documentation:*
- Specific HE criteria are needed related to level and differentiation of HE, that are distinct from FE criteria, which lead in turn to more appropriate grading for HE observations
- Observation documentation is required  that is more detailed with indicators to guide the observation process and feedback

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*Leadership from management:*
- There is the need for a steer from management as to whether the HE and FE processes should be made discrete

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*To be more developmental in nature:*
- More emphasis on POT to help develop practice, rather than a judgemental, graded observation
- Overall objective needs to be to share good practice and improve teaching, rather than it being a fearful and distrustful process
- Use observations to share good practice across college (identify talented individuals and develop skills and resources in line with this)
- *"Building a level of confidence…that's the barrier to overcome"* (P7, College D)
- Timing of formal observations - should be done earlier on in academic year to make it more useful and beneficial, so that it becomes a more developmental rather than "checking"/managerial process
- POT should be carried out across college rather than being department based to make it of more value
- More time needed and more effort required to create opportunities for POT
- More natural, not pre-arranged, and not part of formal systems

</td></tr>
<tr><td>

*To help further develop HE practice:*
- One participant commented that a separate process for HE may be required to further develop HE at the College ("*if we are going to expand HE, which presumably*

</td></tr>
</table>

*we are, that might need separating it out. They are different learners, different aspirations. A lot of them have taken out loans to be there. They should be getting the very best deal they can and therefore we should be judging everything by almost the HE standards, which are slightly different to FE standards*", P3, C-A)

- Another suggested that it could be used to help facilitate the transition from FE to HE teaching and therefore develop HE teaching practice and that this may also help to prevent elitism (which this participant described as sometimes being associated with teaching HE).
- One participant felt that *"peer observation should replace the formal managerial type appraisal observation/inspection [*for both FE and HE]" (P7, C-D)*,* whilst another detailed how he felt that the POT process should be developed for both HE and FE to avoid it being divisive (FE noted as being predominant at the College, HE must not appear to be elitist)
- Should consist of being observed and observing

*To make the POT process more formalised:*
- Need for documentation/paperwork to use as evidence for PDR and to help support subsequent CPD requirements
- To make the process more structured
- To give more time to the process
- To involve line managers
- To make it more developmental but "*more than just a chat over a cup of tea*" (P7, College D)

However, it was also noted that:
- It should not become too formal as this may create suspicion of the process if it was seen to feed into capturing data by management
- It would be another pressure/demand to be met if the process was to be made compulsory
- POT process should be grown and developed but that there was still a need for an accountability and performance management element in a FE college delivering HE

## 4.6 Summary of findings

This chapter has presented the results of the data collection and its subsequent data analysis. The study was not designed to make comparisons between the colleges, however, each of the colleges was found to be using similar approaches for their teaching observations. These consisted of a two-tier approach comprising of: 1) formal, quality-type observations (carried out by managers); and 2) POT (carried out by colleagues/co-workers). On the whole each of the colleges also used the same processes for FE and HE observations, however, at least two of the colleges differentiated between the requirements for FE and HE lesson observations. It was

found that on the whole there is a requirement for participants to have their teaching observed but that this was not necessarily teaching HE.  Nearly all of the formal, quality-type HE teaching observations are graded (most often using an Ofsted framework), and these types of observations are mainly used for staff appraisal and performance management, and occasionally to unofficially inform staff development needs and opportunities.  These formal, quality-type observations are generally perceived to of little value and are a "box-ticking" exercise, although this is affected by the effect of, and relationship with, the observer.  In comparison to this, POT is seen to be more beneficial, but can often be more difficult to organise and implement.  POT is also generally less formalised and is not compulsory apart from in one college, although it appears unlikely that this is currently being enforced.  In relation to future developments for HE teaching observations, the consensus was that these should be developed to make then more specific and to encompass the different expectations of HE teaching.  Chapter Five will discuss and evaluate these findings and their implications.

# CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

## 5.1 Introduction

Chapters One and Two detailed the paucity of research into the use of POT within a HE in FE context. This led to the research questions for this study:

- What is current practice in FE colleges in terms of the use of teaching observations employed for HE provision?

- How are teaching observations perceived by teachers delivering HE in FE?

- How are teaching observations perceived by managers in FE colleges?

The results will be discussed in relation to these questions, as well as other key findings that have emerged. This chapter will discuss the findings and implications of the research as well as analysing and reflecting on the research process itself.

## 5.2 Current Practice

The study aimed to explore current practice in FE colleges in terms of the use of teaching observations employed for HE provision. Although comparisons between the colleges were not included in the research questions, both similarities and differences emerged from the data collected.

This research has confirmed that FE colleges delivering HE use an Ofsted approach for HE teaching observations (Gray, 2010), however, at least two colleges in this study acknowledge that the expectations of HE teaching are different from that of FE. Therefore, although the formal quality-type observations follow the same Ofsted format for both HE and FE observations, small, but discrete, differences are in place. It appears that it has been acknowledged that criteria for HE teaching observations therefore need to be distinct so that, particularly in the more formal observations,

staff can be "judged" against criteria which promote an environment that meets the needs of HE learners and is able to differentiate higher level provision from FE (Jones, 2006).  The implementation of a teaching observation process that recognises these differences may help to foster a HE culture which in turn should create a better student learning experience.  The majority of HE teachers in this study teach a mixture of FE and HE, the norm for FE colleges with HE provision (King & Widdowson, 2012), with less than half spending the majority of their time delivering HE.  Teachers were therefore more likely to have their FE teaching formally observed.  Despite this, it is important that HE observations take place as they are encouraged by the QAA as a peer review, non-judgemental process, in contrast to the inspectorial model of FE observations (Weatherald & Mosely, 2003).  In this study POT appears to be a more recent and less formal addition to how teaching is observed which, in part, is linked to the impact of QAA IQER.  Simmons and Lea (2010) suggest that a key feature of HE delivered in HEIs is institutional autonomy, whilst FE colleges tend to lack this as they deliver other organisations' programmes and qualifications.  FE colleges have historically applied the inspectorial FE model to their HE teaching, however, as FE colleges have begun to take more responsibility for their HE provision, this study demonstrates a shift towards the use of peer review for HE (as well as FE) teaching.

POT was viewed as a positive process which may be due to the colleges in this study encouraging its use rather than making it obligatory.  Chamberlain, D'Artrey and Rowe (2011) suggest that a reason for POT being viewed negatively may be because it can be seen as a compliance tool if it becomes part of a formalised process.  Interestingly a number of participants in this study were keen that POT

should not become too formal in order for this process to continue to be developmental.

The study supports work of how the process of observing is seen to be of more benefit to developing practice compared with being observed (Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007), the effect of the relationship between observer and observee (Eaton & Schweppe, 2007; Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007), and, although opinions from new and/or inexperienced teachers was not specifically obtained in this study, the use of POT for this category of staff for developmental purposes (Donnelly, 2007). A number of participants in the study reported that they did not value the Ofsted approach to observations, consistent with O'Leary (2006). However, it was noted that this process could be developmental when appropriate feedback was used, supporting the suggestion that feedback should be part of a successful POT process (Mento & Giampetro-Meyer, 2000; Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007). However, feedback was an area that was mentioned by only a few participants in this study and when it was, feedback was detailed as being variable and normally only verbal in nature. Mento and Giampetro-Meyer (2000) advises that for the feedback process to be of most benefit, appropriate documentation should be in place. A number of recommendations emerged from the process of IQER which were related to the need for colleges to develop, enhance or review their observation processes for HE (QAA, 2010) and this is therefore an area that could be further developed to support the POT process for the HE in FE context.

**5.3 Comparison of perceptions between managers and teachers**

Although the study aimed to explore the perceptions of teaching observations by teachers delivering HE in FE and by managers in FE colleges, this was difficult to ascertain due to the low participation rates which was also exacerbated by the difference between the colleges.  This is an area therefore worthy of future research. However, from the limited amount of data obtained in relation to this, teachers generally appeared to be in favour of a more developmental type of process for HE observations and one that is distinct from FE, whilst managers appear to see the need for this, as well as the necessity to keep a performance management element. Generally the teacher participants felt that the use of an FE based approach to HE teaching observations was not appropriate.


**5.4 Meaning of the term 'Peer Observation of Teaching'**

It has emerged from this study that a 'peer' observation is one that is perceived as a type of observation that is carried out by a colleague for developmental or non-judgemental purposes.  This supports Gosling's work (2002) in which the relationship between the observee and observer, as well as the context within which an observation is carried out, can influence how the term 'peer' may be perceived. Gosling suggests that a true peer observation is one that is carried out by the former of these which corresponds with the opinions obtained in this study.  Unlike HEIs, which tend to use POT as the way in which teaching observations are carried out, FE colleges in this study regularly use two types of teaching observations.  There are those which use Gosling's (2002) 'evaluation' model, and are primarily used for performance management, and which is the prevalent form of teaching observation used in colleges for both HE and FE, as well as Gosling's 'development' model.

## 5.5 The development/managerial debate

Teachers should motivate students to be responsible for meeting their own learning needs (Busl, 1981), and for HE students to become independent learners. Educational development supports this by encouraging teachers to move away from a transmission approach to one that facilitates students' understanding and learning (Ramsden, 1992) with HE teachers being regarded as facilitators or managers of the learning environment (Busl,1981). However, there is also the need to consider that HE in FE students may have different needs to those studying in HEIs (Benefer, Jenkins, McFarlane & Reed, 2009). Therefore, there is a need to adapt observation criteria to take this into account whilst ensuring that students have an HE experience.

The findings suggest that in the FE colleges in this study, there are essentially two purposes to teaching observations, that is, it is used judgmentally for performance management and secondly for developmental purposes. Peel (2005) suggests that the 'development/performance' distinction is crucial and describes how this may affect how academics engage with POT. The two-tier approach that appears to be of use in FE colleges in this study seems to make this distinction quite clearly, as the purpose of each type of observation seems to be well-defined. This is in contrast to HEIs where there can be the potential for POT to be "hijacked" by managers and used as a process for staff appraisal and HR decisions about pay and promotion rather than to improve the student's learning experience (D' Andrea, 2002). As detailed previously if colleges were to make the more developmental observation process compulsory, this could be self-defeating. Gosling (2008, p. 42) discusses the arguments about the 'development' debate with the idea that it can "claim for

itself the 'moral high ground'". He describes how the "development agenda" may be seen as undertaking a management function with staff having to doing additional work when already busy with their current workload (Gosling, 2008, p. 43). One of the purported benefits of educational development is the benefit to the student, however, this link is indirect and cannot always be proven (Gosling, 2008). Despite the literature suggesting that teachers believe that POT develops their teaching, there is little research detailing the value of these processes to students' learning. Gosling (2008) also suggests that it must be the individual that wants to bring about change to their practice rather than it being required of them. Within educational development where staff have specialist knowledge, they will have "credibility among their academic peers" (Gosling, 2008, p. 58). This is also true of POT, that is, the right people need to be undertaking teaching observations in order to make the process developmental.

The process of POT can assist reflective practice with observees able to take responsibility for, and control over, their own development (Cosh, 1998; Fast, 2009), thus empowering them. Although reflective practice did not emerge as a key theme in this study, tutors did discuss how team teaching and the less formalised teaching observations enable teachers to think about their teaching in order to develop it and then to share good practice. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993, p.19) describe reflective practice as "a means by which practitioners can develop a greater self-awareness about the nature and impact of their performance, an awareness that creates opportunities for professional growth and development" (cited in Peel, 2005), whilst Brown, Fry and Marshall (2003) suggest how reaching a conclusion differentiates the process of thinking from the process of reflection. For the POT

process to become more developmental, a more structured approach, for example, using appropriate paperwork or structured dialogue between observer and observee, could aid this (Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007). The aims of the UKPSF include supporting initial and continuing professional development of HE teaching staff and fostering dynamic approaches to teaching and learning with. Unlike the FE sector where, by law, staff have to obtain an appropriate teaching qualification, this is not the case in HE. However, many universities are now requiring new lecturers to obtain a PGCert, whilst more experienced staff are encouraged to gain an appropriate level of HEA Fellowship to support their role. Engagement with the UKPSF can also aid the process of reflection with the HEA (2011) promoting this as "the opportunity to think deeply about and thereby enhance the quality and effectiveness of work in the area of teaching and supporting learning in HE". By being more conscious, reflective and critical of their teaching, teachers are able to become more empowered to develop their own professional practice (Hopkins, 2008).

## 5.6 Contribution to the creation of knowledge

This study has generated information regarding the use of teaching observations in an HE in FE context and has supported some of Gray's (2010) and Thwaite's (2011) initial work in this area. Although this was a small scale study a considerable amount of data was generated. It is acknowledged that the results are not generalizable to FE colleges delivering HE, but the research has obtained some initial results that may be applicable to other HE in FE providers and may help to inform policy and practice in this area.

## 5.7 Critical analysis of the methodology and data analysis

Whilst much of the detail obtained from the questionnaires was supported by the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews, richer data was obtained from the latter of these data collection phases. Questionnaire responses provided more general information but there was not the ability to probe many of the responses. A number of issues were encountered with each of the phases of the data collection, most specifically poor response and/or participation rates as detailed previously.

The quantitative and qualitative data afforded from the questionnaires was of use in formulating the more structured and detailed questioning for the semi-structured interviews. In this way more qualitative data was generated from the semi-structured interviews which were used to follow up answers or areas that were not clear and/or vague from the questionnaires.

## 5.8 Limitations and Rigour

Meyrick (2006) proposed a model which can be used to assess the rigour of qualitative research (Figure 5.1). The researcher has used this framework to analyse and judge the rigour of this study. This was only a small scale study but the researcher feels that she has satisfied most of the elements detailed in this framework (and detailed in each of the chapters as appropriate) in order for the research to be as rigorous as possible.

**Figure 5.1 Quality framework for qualitative research (Meyrick, 2006).**

The small sample population coupled with the low participation rate (with no

participation in the semi-structured interviews from College B at all)

was felt to be the greatest limitation of this study.  For the questionnaires the overall

response rate was 37% which is higher than the usual response rate for postal

questionnaires of 20 to 30% (Jankowicz, 2005).  There were different response rates

from each of the colleges with College C providing the highest response rate (71%).

Support from the 'sponsor' at this college, as well as support by the College's senior

managers, was a crucial element in gaining such a high response.  However, the

total number of responses from this college was only 32% of the total questionnaires

returned and is therefore considered not to have skewed the results of the questionnaire.

**5.9 Learning from the activity of research**

*5.9.1   Self Reflection*

Initially the focus of the research was the end goal, that is, the **product** of the dissertation, however, the researcher has found that she has benefitted enormously from the **process** of completing this piece of work.  Of particular value has been the development of critiquing skills of literature, undertaking qualitative research and in analysing the data obtained.  There are a number of areas where the researcher feels that she could have better approached the study.  Seeking the advice of a statistician earlier on in the process would have enabled the design of a questionnaire that was more appropriate for analysis by SPSS and that may have provided richer quantitative data.  The researcher also found difficulty in the thematic analysis approach used to analyse the qualitative data obtained and this would be an area in which to gain more knowledge and experience before undertaking a similar approach to subsequent research.

*5.9.2   Role as a practitioner researcher and Reflexivity*

Each participant was known to the researcher and the researcher has some understanding of the way each college in this study operates, their systems and culture.  It is acknowledged that this may have caused some bias, however, the researcher also made use of this knowledge to probe and 'confirm' responses, where appropriate, in some of the semi-structured interviews.  The researcher tried not to lead the questioning but at times needed to clarify responses given.  This was

in the main in relation to procedures and processes, but not so much when exploring feelings and opinions of the participants.

The researcher did experience some frustration with the low response rates from some of the colleges, particularly given the support and advice that the researcher has provided to these colleagues in her day to day role.

## 5.10 How the research could be improved on and extended

It is acknowledged that this study only had limited scope, however, with greater time and resources the research could have been improved upon and extended. The main limiting factor was the sample size and subsequent low response/participation rate. The use of focus groups coupled with a wider range and number of colleges invited to participate could have easily extended the scope of this research.

## 5.11 Conclusion

It is clear that within the colleges that took part in this study an FE culture presides and mechanisms for HE processes for the observation of teaching in these colleges tend to be determined by this, however, what was surprising was the presence of an additional process for teaching observations that is used for developmental purposes. It appears that FE college managers are now realising the need for the utilisation of a procedure that allows staff to be more in control of their own development and professionalism as well as a controlling type procedure required for some degree of performance management which is historically used as part of the Ofsted culture of FE colleges.

# CHAPTER SIX - CONCLUSION

## 6.1 Introduction

This exploratory case study has demonstrated that there may be the start of a shift away from a reliance on the Ofsted framework for HE teaching observations with the evolvement of a teaching observation process for HE in FE that is more developmental in nature.  Although there continues to be an element of performance management to the more formalised process, the development of a teaching observation process in FE colleges specifically tailored to HE appears to benefit staff and should therefore ultimately benefit learners studying in this environment.

## 6.2 Recommendations

### 6.2.1 Policy

In developing teaching observations, it is acknowledged that FE requirements are likely to continue to drive policy, however, strategies should be put in place to acknowledge that HE is unique and that HE teaching observations are fit for purpose.  It is recommended that college managers develop a two-tier observation approach - this appears to fit the FE sector for its HE (as well as FE) provision, and can provide a balance of performance management and teacher development.  As with most observation schemes there is no "one size fits all", however, college managers should consider the optimum way to evaluate the performance of staff who deliver HE provision – this study has shown that this could be achieved through the use of teaching observations that are appropriate for this purpose, that is, a process that evaluates teachers in relation to HE expectations of teaching and learning (QAA, 2012) rather than Ofsted requirements.  Policies should also be developed that not only assess the individual's performance but which also promote

development of practice.  Subsequently this may also help to promote and develop an HE culture which is so often referred to when discussing the HE in FE context (for example, HEQC, 1993; Jones, 2006; Simmons, 2003).  Managers should therefore consider the development of a policy for teaching observations that covers both FE and HE, whilst being aware of the nuances and differences between HE and FE teaching and learning and that enable staff to have opportunities to be observed delivering HE as well as FE.  Development of policy should utilise college staff who are knowledgeable and experienced in HE delivery, as well as the support that may be available from the college's validating HEI/s. The development of an appropriate scheme for HE in FE could also provide a mechanism to support engagement with the QAA's chapter on teaching and learning and the UKPSF, as well as providing appropriate evidence of fulfilment of the expectations for RCHE.

### *6.2.2 Practice*

It is likely that colleges will wish to retain the use formal, quality-type observations (this appears to suit FE college requirements and processes (Simmons & Lea, 2010)), however, these processes should be adapted to ensure that staff delivering HE in a FE context are being judged by appropriate HE "standards".  This should be underpinned by ensuring that both HE teachers and managers have an awareness of the expectations of HE teaching which may require some CPD in itself. Engagement and familiarisation with the UKPSF and UK Quality Code is one way in which this may be achieved.  The performance management observation process should be developed to provide developmental feedback as well as judging performance, and therefore avoid the "box-ticking" role of teaching observations that is often perceived.  The enhancement of documentation and instruments to make

them specific to HE is another way in which this could be achieved. Staff who are tasked with formally observing HE teaching should also be appropriately qualified to "judge" the quality of the teaching and, as detailed by Gosling (2008), will make the process more credible. By building these elements into this performance management process, it may ultimately evolve into one that can also be far more developmental in nature. The additional process of developmental POT should also be encouraged and enabled to further develop HE practice and to promote a HE culture and sense of collegiality, and where possible time should be built into existing workloads for staff to have opportunities to both observe and be observed. However, colleges need to ensure that the development aspect of observation does not in fact become a managerial process as described by D' Andrea (2002). The process needs to provide real opportunities for reflection and development of practice (Shortland, 2004) with staff able to take ownership and control of their development (Cosh, 1998; Fast, 2009) rather than satisfying the needs of management.

The researcher hopes to be able to provide influence the FE sector in relation to this within her current role in a number of ways:

- By offering guidance and support on the development of teaching observation process to partner organisations of the University;

- By disseminating the findings of the study to a wider audience including the HE sector. The researcher has already had approval to present a paper to the SEDA Spring Conference 2013 (see Appendix 13) and is currently writing a proposal for an HE in FE SEDA Special which will cover issues surrounding CPD for staff moving into HE teaching in colleges.

### *6.2.3 Future Research*

This area of research would benefit from a larger scale study to reveal what is happening across the UK in the HE in FE context and therefore to establish if the results from this study are generalizable.  Further research could also ascertain the approaches to teaching observations that are successful in the HE in FE context, and ultimately it would be interesting to evaluate the impact on the student learning experience.

### 6.4 Conclusion

What has become evident in this study is the value that POT has in relation to developing HE teachers' practice.  This process allows teachers to be more in control of their development rather than 'jumping through hoops' for a performance management process.  From a manager's perspective there still appears to be a need for the latter in order to ensure that staff are effective teachers, but that the expectations and requirements of a HE session are somewhat different to that of FE. This control requirement appears to be embedded in the FE culture which is linked to the regulatory process afforded by Ofsted.  However, college based HE is not controlled in the same way and colleges have more freedom in evaluating their HE provision.  The researcher therefore hopes that this preliminary study will enable college managers to consider how to evaluate and develop their HE observation processes as appropriate, with the new method for review of college based HE being likely to provide the continued impetus for colleges to consider a different approach to their HE observations.

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# Appendix 1- Reflection on attending the Inaugural meeting of the HE/FE SEDA/UCET group held on 28th October 2011

**Kay Dutton 15th December 2011**

This was the first meeting of an exploratory group/forum where a number of colleagues from the HE sector met to discuss matters pertaining to the context of Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE).  I was attending the meeting as a result of making contacts and networking at an HEA organised Scholarly Activity Workshop (for HE in FE) held on 15th December 2010 at Llandrillo College and subsequent email correspondence with these contacts.

The first part of the meeting comprised of a round table discussion of each member's interests and concerns. Representatives were present from a number of HEIs and professional bodies (including: Institute for Learning, IfL; University Council for the Education of Teachers, UCET; and Society for Research in Higher Education, SRHE) and their professional roles were primarily that of academic/educational developers and teacher educators.  It was interesting to note that there were no representatives from the FE sector which, on discussion, was felt and assumed to be because of lack of time, rather than a lack of interest on their part.

Although I have a lot of experience of the HE in FE sector I often lack confidence when discussing issues with staff from other HEIs, despite now being employed by a university and working more specifically in the HE sector.  I am still "finding my way" in my role as an academic development advisor and quite often feel intimidated by more experienced colleagues, particularly from other HEIs.  However, as we discussed the various issues emerging at the meeting it became clear that I had first-hand experience of the types of issues being raised and this was acknowledged by the group.

A number of issues emerged during the first part of the meeting and of particular significance to me was the discussion in relation to teaching observations carried out in HE in FE.  Even before I had my turn in this discussion a number of members had raised this as being an issue.  This focussed on the concern about the appropriateness of using an Ofsted driven approach in a developmental context, and, more generally, a perceived need to develop protocols that are more appropriate to a specific HE in FE context.  I felt really buoyed by these discussions as I am not alone in my views on this and that the research that I intend to do for my Masters dissertation is appropriate.  The networking from the meeting also gave me a number of contacts in relation to this which I have already followed up, most specifically Claire Gray from the University of Plymouth who provided me with a paper that she presented to the 2010 SRHE Conference specifically in relation to this.

**Appendix 2 – Template for critiquing research articles** (adapted from Coughlan, Cronin & Ryan, 2007a ;2007b)

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Elements influencing believability of the research** | | | | |
| **Elements** | **Questions** | | | |
| Writing style | Is the report well written – concise, grammatically correct, avoids the use of jargon? Is it well laid out and organized? | | | |
| Author | Do the researcher's qualifications/position indicate a degree of knowledge in this field? | | | |
| Report title | Is the title clear, accurate and unambiguous? | | | |
| Abstract | Does the abstract offer a clear overview of the study, including the research problem, sample, methodology, findings and recommendations? | | | |
| **Elements influencing robustness of the research** | | | | |
| **Elements** | **Questions** | | | |
| Statement of the phenomenon of interest | Is the phenomenon to be studied clearly identified? Are the phenomenon of interest and the research question consistent? | **Is it relevant to my research?** | | |
| Purpose/significance of study | Is the purpose of the study/research question clearly identified? | **Is it relevant to my research?** | | |

| Lit review | Has a literature review been undertaken? Does it meet the philosophical underpinnings of the study? Does the review of the literature fulfil its objectives? | **Is the lit review relevant to the research? Is it consistent with what they say they are doing?** | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Theoretical framework **In relation to peer observation of teaching** | Has a conceptual or theoretical framework been identified? Is the framework adequately described? Is the framework appropriate? | **Managerial or developmental?** | | |
| Method and philosophical underpinnings **e.g case study, quantitative, qualitative etc** | Has the philosophical approach been identified? Why was this approach chosen? Have the philosophical underpinnings of the approach been explained? | **Do they match?** | | |
| Sample | Is the sampling method and sample size identified? Is the sampling method appropriate? Were the participants suitable for informing research? | | | |
| Ethical considerations | Were the participants fully informed about the | **N/A unless for a managerial tool** | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | nature of the research?<br>Was the autonomy/<br>confidentiality of the<br>participants<br>guaranteed?<br>Were the participants<br>protected from harm?<br>Was ethical permission<br>granted for the study? | | |
| Data collection/data analysis | Are the data collection<br>strategies described?<br>Are the strategies used<br>to analyse the data<br>described?<br>Did the researcher<br>follow the steps of the<br>data analysis method<br>identified? | **e.g. Evaluation<br>studies/case<br>studies – what do<br>they do?<br>Self-selecting?<br>Small scale?<br>Large scale?** | |
| Rigour | Does the researcher<br>discuss how rigour was<br>assured?<br>Were credibility,<br>dependability,<br>transferability and<br>goodness discussed? | **Is sample size<br>appropriate?<br>Self selecting?<br>Etc……<br>MAIN PART OF<br>CRITIQUE** | |
| Findings/discussion | Are the findings<br>presented<br>appropriately?<br><br>Has the report been<br>placed in the context of<br>what was already<br>known of the | **Only comment if<br>findings are<br>unclear**<br><br>**Is it linked back to<br>lit review or going<br>off at a tangent?** | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | phenomenon? Has the original purpose of the study been adequately addressed? | | |
| Conclusion/implications and recommendations | Are the importance and implications of the findings identified? Are recommendations made to suggest how the research findings can be developed? | **Are conclusions justified or sweeping statements made? e.g. implications of the study are ….; on basis of this we recommend ….** | |
| References | Were all the books, journals and other media alluded to in the study accurately referenced? | | |
| Other comments | | | |

**Appendix 3 – Questionnaire for HE Teachers**

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Perceptions and use of Peer Observation of Teaching in an HE in FE Environment

*This questionnaire comprises part of a study which aims to explore how peer observation of teaching (POT) is used and perceived within a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) context.*

*Please complete the questionnaire below by ticking the appropriate box or providing information as requested. The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be completing the questionnaire anonymously.*

*Information on how to return the questionnaire is provided at the end of the questionnaire (page 5).*

**1. Which department and/or curriculum area do you work in?**

**2. What is your teaching role at the college?**

HE Lecturer                                                 [  ]
HE and FE Lecturer                                    [  ]
Other (please specify) _____    [  ]
_____

**3. For how long have you worked at your current college?**

3 years or less                                      [  ]
4-6 years                                              [  ]
6-10 years                                            [  ]
11 years or more                                   [  ]

**4. For how long have you been teaching HE in FE?**

3 years or less       [  ]
4-6 years        [  ]
6-10 years        [  ]
11 years or more      [  ]


**5. Have you taught HE in a University or other Higher Education Institution?**

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

**If yes, how long did you teach HE in this environment for?**

3 years or less       [  ]
4-6 years        [  ]
6-10 years        [  ]
11 years or more      [  ]


**6. If you currently teach both HE and FE what is the approximate amount of time spent teaching HE?**

More than 80% HE teaching   [  ]
60-79% HE teaching     [  ]
40-59% HE teaching     [  ]
20-39% HE teaching     [  ]
Less than 20% HE teaching   [  ]


**7. Does your college currently require you to have your HE teaching observed?**

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

**If yes, how many times a year are you normally observed teaching HE?**

Once     [  ]
Twice     [  ]
Three times or more [  ]

**If no, please give brief details in relation to this, and then go to question 13.**

```



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**8. If you teach HE and FE, is any distinction made between teaching observations for your HE teaching and your FE teaching?**

Yes [   ]      No [   ]      Don't know [   ]

**If yes, please give brief details of the differences between the two processes.**

```



```

**9. What is your involvement in the HE teaching observation process?** (Please tick all that apply)

Observer                                    [   ]
Observee                                    [   ]
Mentor                                      [   ]
No involvement                              [   ]
Other (please specify) _____   [   ]

10. **Who carries out your HE teaching observations?** (Please tick all that apply)

Head of Department or equivalent [  ]
Line Manager [  ]
Mentor [  ]
Peer [  ]
Member of programme team [  ]
Other (please specify) _____ [  ]

11. **Have the outcomes of your HE teaching observations been used as part of your annual review/appraisal?**

Yes [  ]   No [  ]

**If yes, please give brief details of how they have been used.**

12. **For the following statements please indicate whether you agree or disagree:**

a) *HE teaching observations provide a valuable opportunity for my professional development*
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]

b) *HE teaching observations benefit the observee*
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]

*c)* ***HE teaching observations benefit the observer***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*d)* ***HE teaching observations provide an enhancement mechanism for my teaching practice***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*e)* ***HE teaching observations are a valuable way of sharing practice***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*f)* ***HE teaching observations are used for quality assurance purposes***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*g)* ***HE teaching observations are graded/assigned a numerical grade***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*h)* ***HE teaching observations are carried out by peers or equals***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

*i)* ***HE teaching observations use the same process as FE teaching observations***
Strongly agree [   ]    Agree [   ]    Disagree [   ]    Strongly disagree [   ]

**13. Please provide any additional comments about your views of Peer Observation of Teaching in the space below:**

Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Please place your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope (marked **Questionnaire**) and leave in the collection box located in the HE Office by *Friday 11ᵗʰ May 2012*.

*If you would be prepared to participate in either a one-to-one interview or a focus group as part of this research please email Kay Dutton at kay.dutton@░░░░░░░.ac.uk*

## Appendix 4 – Questionnaire for HE Managers

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Perceptions and use of Peer Observation of Teaching in an HE in FE Environment

*This questionnaire comprises part of a study which aims to explore how peer observation of teaching (POT) is used and perceived within a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) context.*

*Please complete the questionnaire below by ticking the appropriate box or providing information as requested. The questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be completing the questionnaire anonymously.*

*Information on how to return the questionnaire is provided at the end of the questionnaire (page 4).*

**1. What are you responsible for at the college?**

| | |
|---|---|
| HE | [ ] |
| FE | [ ] |
| FE and HE | [ ] |
| Other (please specify) _____ | [ ] |

**2. For how long have you worked at your current college?**

| | |
|---|---|
| 3 years or less | [ ] |
| 4-6 years | [ ] |
| 6-10 years | [ ] |
| 11 years or more | [ ] |

**3. In your current role do you do any teaching?**

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

**If no, go to question 4.**

**If yes, do you teach any HE?**

Yes [ ]    No [ ]

**If yes, please give brief details.**

[                                                                    ]



**4. Have you previously taught any HE?**

Yes [   ]   No [   ]


**5. Do you carry out any of the following teaching observations?** (Please tick all that apply)

HE                [   ]
FE                [   ]
Neither           [   ]


**6. Is any distinction made between teaching observations for HE and FE sessions?**

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

**If yes, please give brief details of the differences between the two processes.**

[                                                                    ]


**7. Are the outcomes of HE teaching observations used as part of HE lecturers' annual review/appraisal?**

Yes [   ]   No [   ]

**If yes, please give brief details of how they have been used.**

8. **Are HE teaching observations used to support staff development opportunities?**

Yes [   ]    No [   ]

**If yes, please give brief details of how they have been used.**

9. **For the following statements please indicate whether you agree or disagree:**

a) *HE teaching observations provide a valuable opportunity for lecturers' professional development*
Strongly agree [   ]      Agree [   ]      Disagree [   ]      Strongly disagree [   ]


b) *HE teaching observations benefit the observee*
Strongly agree [   ]      Agree [   ]      Disagree [   ]      Strongly disagree [   ]

*c)* ***HE teaching observations benefit the observer***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*d)* ***HE teaching observations provide an enhancement mechanism for teaching practice***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*e)* ***HE teaching observations are a valuable way of sharing practice***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*f)* ***HE teaching observations are used for quality assurance purposes***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*g)* ***HE teaching observations are graded/assigned a numerical grade***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*h)* ***HE teaching observations are carried out by peers or equals***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


*i)* ***HE teaching observations use the same process as FE teaching observations***
Strongly agree [  ]      Agree [  ]      Disagree [  ]      Strongly disagree [  ]


**10. Please provide any additional comments about your views of Peer Observation of Teaching in the space below**
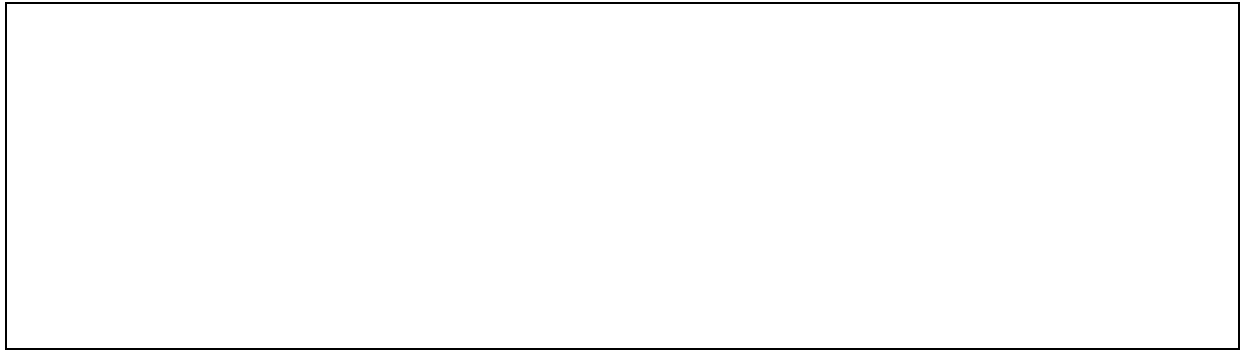
Thank you for taking time to complete this questionnaire.

Please place your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope (marked **Questionnaire**) and leave in the collection box located in the HE Office by *Friday 11th May 2012*.

*If you would be prepared to participate in either a one-to-one interview or a focus group as part of this research please email Kay Dutton at kay.dutton@*[redacted]*.ac.uk*

## Appendix 5 – Participant Information Sheet for Stage One of Data Collection

**Participant Information Sheet**

**<u>Perceptions and use of Peer Observation of Teaching in an HE in FE Environment</u>**

I am inviting you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the study?**
The purpose of this study is to explore how peer observation of teaching (POT) is used within a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) context. I also want to explore how professional tutors and managers, working in this context, perceive the role of POT.

**Why have I been chosen?**
You have been invited to participate because you are a professional tutor, and/or manager working in HE in FE.

**Do I have to take part?**
It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. A decision not to take part, will not impact on your work in any way, or my desire to support any aspect of your development.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**
You will be required to fill in a questionnaire which will take you approximately 10 minutes to complete and which will be anonymous. You can complete the questionnaire in one of three ways:
1. *Open the attachment to this email - print off and complete the questionnaire by hand*
2. *Open the attachment to this email - complete the questionnaire electronically and then print off*
3. *Complete the questionnaire, that you will receive in the post, by hand.*

You will receive an envelope in the post to place your completed questionnaire in and you should then return your completed questionnaire to me according to the instructions provided on the questionnaire itself.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**
The main disadvantage that I have identified is the time taken to complete the questionnaire.

If you are a professional tutor the questionnaire asks for details of which department or curriculum area you work in in order for me to identify any potential trends between participants.  As a result of this there is a small risk that I may be able to identify you from your questionnaire.  However, should this occur, this link will only be known to me, and you can rest assured it will not be possible to make the link between your responses and your identity once the data is written up.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
Although there are no direct benefits of taking part, it is anticipated that, as a participant, you will contribute to an increase in knowledge which will inform practice.

**What if something goes wrong?**
If you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

██████████████

Senior University Teaching Fellow
Faculty of Health and Social Care
University of ████████

████████████
████████
████████████

Dr ████████ is my research supervisor.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**
All information and data collected from you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential so that only myself and my supervisor will have access to such information.

All data will be kept securely and stored under the terms of the Data Protection Act, as well as abiding with the University of Chester Research Governance regulations.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**
The results will be analysed and subsequently included in the final dissertation for the award of an MA.  It is hoped that the findings will be used to improve understanding of the purpose and use of teaching observations in an HE in FE context.  The results will be disseminated to the organisations taking part in the study and may also be disseminated to a wider audience where appropriate through conferences and publications.

**Who is organising and funding the study?**
This research is being conducted solely by myself and I am funded from existing departmental resources.

**Can I request the questionnaire in another format?**
If you require the questionnaire in another format other than electronic or hard copy,
I would be happy to oblige.  Please contact me as detailed below.

**Who may I contact for further information?**
If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or
not you would be willing to take part, please contact me as detailed below:

Kay Dutton
Academic Development Adviser: HE in FE
Learning and Teaching Institute
████████████████
███████████
██████████

Telephone: ██████████
Email: kay.dutton@███████.ac.uk

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**

# Appendix 6 – Table to justify semi-structured interview questions

| Question number | Data – obtained from questionnaires | Literature | Justification for further investigation | Questions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | Opening question to put the interviewee at ease and to obtain background information about the interviewee and to | **First of all, would you please tell me a little about your role at the college, including your role in HE?** Prompts: <br> • Teachers - establish role and curriculum area, length of time teaching HE, ratio of HE to FE teaching <br> • Managers - establish role and responsibilities for HE |
| 2 | Not clear if HE teaching observations incorporated use of peers. Some respondents referred to HE observations using different standards and/or criteria/grading in comparison to FE, which included use of peers in some instances | • Gosling (2002) proposed three models of peer observation (management or evaluation model, development model, and peer review model) | To gauge whether HE teaching observations are peer in nature and which of Gosling's models are used | **What does "Peer Observation of Teaching" mean to you?** Leave open ended with no prompts – do not want researcher to influence the response |
| 3 | Majority responded that observation process | • Ewens and Orr (2002) describe an | Difference in responses obtained from | **You've told me about your role at the college and what Peer Observation of Teaching means to you, I'd now like to move on to ask you about your experiences of teaching observations.  Could you tell me about your experiences of the HE and FE observation processes at the** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | appears to be the same for HE as it is for FE, however there was disparity within colleges and differences between colleges. | inconsistency between the requirements of peer review between that of the FE and HE sectors.<br>• Gray (2010) provides evidence that some FE colleges delivering HE provision utilise a similar approach when carrying out teaching observations. | questionnaire and disparity between colleges. | **college and perhaps any differences between them?**<br>Prompts:<br>• Is this a formal or informal process?<br>• Do peers or managers undertake observations? |
| **4** | Positive aspects and benefits of HE teaching observations were detailed by some respondents | Benefits of POT are that it:<br>• Leads to improvement of teaching practice and quality (Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007; Norbury, 2001), and promotion of development and reflection on practice (Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Martin & Double,1998; Norbury, 2001)<br>• Promotes and develops collegiality (Bell, 2001; Atkinson & Bolt, 2010)<br>• Provides the opportunity to share practice and work collaboratively (Bell & Mladenovic, 2008) | To further investigate the experience and benefits of HE teaching observations in an FE context | **I'd now like to move on to focus on HE teaching observations. Please tell me more about your experience of the system/s that are currently in place at the college for HE teaching observations.**<br><br>Prompts: |
| | Majority responded that HE teaching observations are graded, however there was disparity within colleges and differences between colleges. | • Ofsted criteria are applied to the HE in FE context (Ewens & Orr, 2002)<br>• Observations which are carried out for taught HE sessions in an FE college ('HE in FE') tend to be for evaluative and judgmental purposes (Gray, 2010) | Difference in responses obtained from questionnaire and disparity between colleges. | • What criteria or standards are used to grade or assess teaching observations graded? |
| | A range of staff were detailed as carrying out HE | No literature available relating to this for HE in FE, however | To obtain a clearer picture of whether HE | • Who carries out HE teaching observations?  How does this |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | teaching observations including managers, peers and quality teams | • in the HE sector the nature of peers who undertake the observations is varied (Atkinson & Bolt, 2010; Bell & Mladenovic, 2007; Donnelly, 2007; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Hatzipanagos & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Kohut, Burnap & Yon, 2007; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Lygo-Baker & Hatzipanagos, 2007; Norbury, 2001; O'Keefe, Lecouteur, Miller & McGowan, 2009) | observations are peer in nature or carried out in a hierarchical manner, and the effect that this has on the process | influence the process? |
| | A range of responses were obtained on the purpose and use of HE teaching observations including those for staff review and appraisal and staff development | • In the FE sector teaching observations are commonly linked to quality assurance of teaching rather than for quality enhancement (Hardman, 2007)<br>• POT is used to evaluate the quality of teaching,and a means of developing and enhancing practice (Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2006)<br>• Models of peer observation can be categorised as those used for appraisal and those that are developmental (Cosh,1998)<br>• Gosling (2002) proposed three models of peer observation (management or evaluation model, development model, and peer review model)<br>• Stimulus for Thwaites' work (2011) was the identification that current processes for portraying HE teaching in a FE college, were not effective | To obtain a clearer picture of current processes and whether these are effective for the HE in FE context | • What would you say is the purpose of the current system? (use in annual review/appraisal, use for staff development) |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A range of roles were detailed in the involvement for HE teaching observations | • The process of observation is valuable to both observers and observee's (Norbury, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2004; Lomas & Kinchin, 2006; Donnelly, 2007; Kohut, Burnap &Yon, 2007; Bell & Mladenovic, 2008) | To obtain a clearer picture of the role of HE staff in HE teaching observations, particularly in relation to peer observations | • Do you carry out HE teaching observations yourself and, if so, in what capacity/what is your role in this? |
| | Response from some that the observation process for HE teaching observations is not appropriate or relevant to their HE practice, including the use of Ofsted criteria and the same documentation as FE | • O' Leary (2006) criticises the use of Ofsted criteria and methodology as not being conducive to teacher development or improvement of teaching quality | To explore perceptions of the appropriateness of using FE processes for HE | • How relevant do you think the current process is to your HE practice? |
| 5 | Response that there would be value in developing a framework for HE teaching observations | • The way in which POT is conducted is an important element in promoting self-development and reflection (Siddiqui, Jones-Dwyer & Carr, 2007).<br>• Use of POT to improve the quality of teaching (Bell, 2001; Blackmore, 2005; Donnelly, 2007 Norbury, 2001)<br><br>• Thwaites (2011) describes the evaluation of a pilot project to implement a HE in FE peer review framework. An action research based approach was undertaken to implement a scheme that would satisfy both the needs of quality assurance (for FE management purposes) and quality enhancement (for HE lecturers). | To explore the perceptions of the potential of developing a distinct framework for HE teaching observations for the HE in FE context | **What do you think is the potential in developing and utilising a distinct HE teaching observation framework or system?**<br><br>Prompts:<br><br>• Teachers - How would you like to see the HE teaching observation process change or develop at your college? |

| | Two managers detailed how they have or intend to develop their HE teaching observation process | • Thwaites (2011) detailed a positive response to a pilot and subsequent implementation of a new scheme which replaced Ofsted observations for HE in FE peer review | Obtain further detail about this including the reasoning behind it | • <u>Managers</u> - How do you intend to develop the HE teaching observation process? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

# Appendix 7 - Semi-structured interview plan

The purpose of each of the semi-structured interviews, which makes up the second stage of data collection for this research, is to further investigate the issues and themes that emerged from the questionnaires in the first phase of the study.

The interviews will be conducted at the participants' place of work at their convenience and the participants will have previously been sent the PIS and consent forms.

The researcher will welcome the interviewee and will reiterate the key points of the PIS.  She will ask the participant if they have any questions regarding the PIS and will then ask the participant to complete the consent form if they have not already done so.

The researcher will begin the interview by thanking the interviewee for taking the time to participate in the interview and will "set the scene" for the interview, that is:
**As you are aware, I am undertaking research to explore the use and perceptions of HE teaching observations in FE colleges.**

1. **First of all, would you please tell me a little about your role at the college, including your role in HE?**
Prompts:
•     <u>Teachers</u> - establish role and curriculum area, length of time teaching HE, ratio of HE to FE teaching
•     <u>Managers</u> - establish role and responsibilities for HE

2. **What does the term "Peer Observation of Teaching" mean to you?**

3. **You've told me about your role at the college and what Peer Observation of Teaching means to you, I'd now like to move on to ask you about your experiences of teaching observations.**

    **Could you tell me about your experiences of the HE and FE observation processes at the college?**

    **Could you tell me about any differences between the observation processes for HE and FE?**

Prompts:
•     For HE is this a formal or informal process?
•     Do peers or managers undertake observations (HE or FE)?

**4. I'd now like to move on to focus more specifically on HE teaching observations. Please tell me more about your experience of the system/s that are currently in place at the college for HE teaching observations.**

Prompts:
- For HE is this a formal or informal process?
- Do peers or managers undertake observations (HE or FE)?

- What criteria or standards are used to grade or assess teaching observations graded?
- Who carries out HE teaching observations? How does this influence the process?
- What would you say is the purpose of the current system? (use in annual review/appraisal, use for staff development)
- Do you carry out HE teaching observations yourself and, if so, in what capacity/what is your role in this?
- How relevant do you think the current process is to your HE practice?

**5. What do you think is the potential in developing and utilising a distinct HE teaching observation framework or system?**
Prompts:
- <u>Teachers</u> - How would you like to see the HE teaching observation process change or develop at your college?
- <u>Managers</u> - How do you intend to develop the HE teaching observation process?

**Finally, is there anything that you else that you would like to tell me about in relation to HE teaching observations? Are there any specific examples that you might wish to discuss further?**

The interviewee will then be thanked for their participation in the interview.

The researcher will confirm that the interviewee is happy for the data collected during the course of the interview to be used and will ask them if there is any aspect of the interview that they wish to withdraw/take out before it is transcribed.

# Appendix 8 – Participant Information Sheet for Stage Two of Data Collection

**Participant Information Sheet**

**<u>Perceptions and use of Peer Observation of Teaching in an HE in FE Environment</u>**

**(Phase Two of Data Collection)**

I am inviting you to take part in the second phase of my research study to further explore the use of teaching observations within a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) context. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

**What is the purpose of the study?**
The purpose of this study is to explore how peer observation of teaching (POT) is used within a Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) context. I also want to explore how professional tutors and managers, working in this context, perceive the role of POT.

**Why have I been chosen?**
You have been invited to participate because you are a professional tutor, and/or manager working in HE in FE. You may also have previously indicated a willingness to be interviewed for the second phase of this study.

**Do I have to take part?**
It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. A decision not to take part, will not impact on your work in any way, or my desire to support any aspect of your development. Even though you may have expressed a willingness to partipate in this stage of the research, you are not obliged to continue participation, although I hope very much that you will.

**What will happen to me if I take part?**
You will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign the consent form. You will then be asked to take part in a one-to-one semi-structured interview with me, in which you will be asked to provide opinions and comments on your experience of teaching observations. The interview which will last for 30-60 minutes, it will be digitally recorded and will be held at your convenience. Although the interview will be recorded this is for my benefit so that I may obtain a full and accurate record of the interview. However, the interview will be confidential and the data from the interview will be anonymised.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**
There are no foreseen disadvantages to taking part in this research other than the time taken to take part in the interview.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**
Although there are no direct benefits of taking part, it is anticipated that, as a participant, you will contribute to an increase in knowledge which will inform practice.

**What if something goes wrong?**
If you have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been approached or treated during the course of this study, please contact:

Dean of Academic Quality and Enhancement
University

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**
The interview will be confidential and the data from the interview will be anonymised.  All information and data collected from you during the course of the interview will be kept strictly confidential so that only myself and my supervisor will have access to such information.

All data will be kept securely and stored under the terms of the Data Protection Act, as well as abiding with the University of ▮▮▮▮ Research Governance regulations (data generated in the course of this research will be kept securely in paper or electronic format as appropriate for a minimum of ten years from the date of final publication).  Further details regarding the University of ▮▮▮▮ Research Governance regulations are available on request.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**
The results will be analysed and subsequently included in the final dissertation for the award of an MA.  It is hoped that the findings will be used to improve understanding of the purpose and use of teaching observations in an HE in FE context.  The results will be disseminated to the organisations taking part in the study and may also be disseminated to a wider audience where appropriate through conferences and publications.  Please be assured that the results will not be identifiable to individual participants or colleges.

**Who is organising and funding the study?**
This research is being conducted solely by myself and I am funded from existing departmental resources.

**Who may I contact for further information?**
If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether or not you would be willing to take part, please contact me as detailed below:

Kay Dutton
Academic Development Adviser: HE in FE
Learning and Teaching Institute

Email: kay.dutton@▮▮▮▮.ac.uk

**Thank you for your interest in this research.**

## Appendix 9 – Participant Consent Form for Stage Two of Data Collection

**Participant Consent Form**

**Title of Project:**        An investigation into the perceptions and use of peer observation of teaching in an HE in FE Environment: an exploratory case study

**Name of Researcher:**    Kay Dutton

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without my professional work or legal rights being affected.

3. I understand that the semi-structured interview that I participate in will be digitally recorded.
.

4. I understand that all data collected in the interview will be confidential and that my identity, including that of my employer/institution, will not be identified in any subsequent dissemination or publication of the study.

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____    _____    _____
Name of participant              Date            Signature

_____    _____    _____
Researcher                   Date            Signature

# Appendix 10 – Comparison of focus groups and semi-structured interview (based on Bryman, 2012)

| FOCUS GROUPS | |
|---|---|
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| Alternative to a number of individual interviews - saves time and expense | Group needs to consist of between six to ten participants |
| Specifically seek to discover how individuals discuss topics as members of a group | Less control than SSI |
| Emphasise a specific theme or topic | Data difficult to analyse |
| Allows researcher to develop an understanding about why people feel the way they do | Difficult to organise |
| Participants may challenge each other's views | Recordings more complicated and hence time-consuming to transcribe |
| Opportunity to revise views | Difficult to transcribe due to tendency for 2 or more participants to talk at the same time |
| Allows a freer rein for discussion | Problems of group effects |
| Questions can be general or more structured | Participants may be prone to expressing expected rather than individual views |
| | May cause discomfort among participants |
| | Difficult to differentiate between a focus group and group interview |
| | Needs a scribe to make notes on body language etc as well as a moderator |
| | Transcripts may have bits missing due to lack of audibility compared with conventional interviews |
| | Unlikely that one focus group will meet the needs of the researcher – should carry out enough to reach "saturation" |
| | Analysis is more complex |
| | Chance of "no-shows" |
| | Requires moderator to have some experience/needs to know when to intervene etc |
| | More difficult to pilot |
| | *Difficult to interview managers and teachers in one focus group* |
| | Lack of confidentiality |
| | *Would need more participants* |
| | *May not be able to gain views from such a wide range of participants/colleges* |
| | *Wouldn't be able to get a range of participants from each of the colleges* |
| | Less effective than individual, in-depth interviews for obtaining a range of ideas and for various individuals' viewpoints |
| | Susceptible to bias due to impression management by group members |

| SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS | |
|---|---|
| **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| Easier to pilot | Interviewees are rarely challenged |
| Possibility of telephone interviewing | Requires a list of questions/fairly specific topics to be covered – interviewer needs to follow a "script" to a certain extent |
| Easier to organise | Intrusion of own biases and expectations may occur |
| Can interview people in more than one location | Need to transcribe each interview which is time consuming (about 5 hours per hour of interview) |
| Interviewees may talk more freely than in a group | Need to do more interviews than focus groups |
| Not as complicated to transcribe compared with focus groups | *Wouldn't be able to interview as many participants* |
| *Can gain a range of views from different types of participants i.e. managers, teachers, from across colleges* | |
| Do not need to be as experienced as an interviewer | |
| Reveals individual's thinking about a topic | |
| *Would be able to get a range of participants from across the colleges* | |

# Appendix 11    Annotated section of a transcript demonstrating thematic analysis

**Interview with Participant 1, College A**

I:  Ok, so thanks for coming along today [name of participant].  As you're aware, I'm undertaking research to explore the use and perceptions of HE teaching observations in FE Colleges.  So first of all, if you could just tell me a bit about your role at the college including particularly your role in HE.

P:  OK.  So I've been at the college since 2006 and I've started in the role as a HE Course Manager looking after three cohorts of students.  As years have gone by erm…I've been promoted within the department so I'm now in the role of an advanced practitioner within the HE department at Equine and that role involves me not only leading on areas of good teaching practice but also employer engagement erm…to commission our student work placements.  So currently I'm Module Tutor and Module Leader for modules across several cohorts of students erm…so we run forty six equine modules.

I:  OK.

P:  And I lead on about a third of those.

I:  OK.  And do you do any FE teaching at all?

P:  No.

I:  OK, so you're 100%...

*Teaches only HE; experienced*

P:  A 100% HE.  I have taught FE in the past and I taught one FE project module last year but this year my HE commitments have meant that I don't do any FE.

I:  OK.  And how long have you been teaching HE both at the college here and previously?

P:  Eight years.

I:  OK.  That'll do.  Thank you very much.  Moving on, could you just tell me what peer observation of teaching means to you?

*Meaning of POT?*

P:  The way I see peer observation is that it's sharing good practice amongst members of a team of a similar teaching level.  Erm…so it's somebody who you may work with who comes to observe your teaching with the main objective, for me, being to share good practice and develop ideas and also give feedback to the individual.

I:  OK, thank you.  Sorry, this had stopped recording so…(long pause).  OK, thanks for that. So you told me about your role at the college, what peer observation teaching means to you, what I'd like to move onto now is to ask you about your experiences of teaching observations.  So first of all could you tell me about your experiences of the HE and FE observation processes at the college and perhaps any differences that you've noted between them?

<div style="border:1px solid; float:right;">*Experiences*</div>

P:  Yeah, I mean, so at the moment at college there is no distinction between FE and HE observation so HE observations are conducted against an OFSTED framework which is used in FE.  My experience is varied erm…it ranges from an experience that makes me feel very devalued, that people don't understand what I'm trying to achieve, erm…and that indeed they don't understand the level of HE and there's a lack of appreciation.  So of the specialist knowledge of the person who's delivering and it spans from that to it actually being quite a rewarding experience to share with other people what I do and how I do it erm…and as a result of some of my more successful observations I've been involved in sharing good practice across college with other team members.

<div style="border:1px solid;">

*No distinction        Ofsted criteria*

*Value → poor experience*

*Who does observation*

</div>

## Appendix 12 – Models of observation processes in three colleges

**College A**

The three participants from College A all detailed the use of the following two observation processes:

1. Formal quality review weeks take place in each curriculum area in turn, in which teaching observations are carried out as part of this process. These quality reviews are carried out by senior management and a teaching observation team whom one participant detailed as *"very diverse"* in that it consists of colleagues, curriculum area managers, Band 3 lecturers/advanced practitioners and programme leaders. These quality reviews are based on an Ofsted type inspection with limited notice (normally only two days). The same process is used for both HE and FE lesson observations with lessons being graded according to Ofsted criteria.

2. Peer observation of teaching is carried out within departments as a less formal mechanism. This is a more recent initiative which one participant describing as being instigated by the management team. The three participants interviewed were from different curriculum areas and described slightly different arrangements for implementing peer observations, however, all three portrayed these as being part of an obligatory process required by the College. However, these observations are not graded and are designed to be more developmental in nature. It appears that peer observations of teaching are used more in HE than FE, although this area was rather vague and would warrant further investigation to verify this finding.

**College C**

Similarly to College A, the two participants from College C detailed two main processes for teaching observations, along with two additional procedures:

1. Formal annual observation of all teaching staff is undertaken by a small internal observation team and/or an external Ofsted inspector. These observations tend to be hierarchical in nature and form part of the College's quality process and are used to monitor teaching quality. As with College A, lesson observations are graded using Ofsted criteria and the same process is applied to both HE and FE observations, however, there is some formalised differentiation for HE observations with specific criteria in place for HE observations. In addition HE observations are only carried out by someone who is involved in HE and/or who has a higher level qualification [to do so], and there is no utilisation of an external Ofsted inspector.

2. Peer observation of teaching comprises part of the College's formal CPD framework. However, it does not form part of the quality process and

observations are not graded, with the process being designed to be supportive and developmental for staff that teach both HE and FE. Individual curriculum areas are expected to take responsibility for these observations. This is a two way process (that is, teachers are expected to be both observers and observees). For HE peer observations the College uses documentation/processes originating from its main validating HEI. The College has recently launched a new Peer Learning scheme which implements the use of Teaching Squares as part of the peer observation process for all staff

3. A mentoring scheme for new staff or those that require additional support is in place which involves teaching observations as a review and/or development of teaching practice. This is designed to be supportive, is not graded and is available to staff teaching HE and/or FE.

4. Recent establishment of Teaching and Learning Beacons, who are teachers who have been acknowledged as exceptional in certain aspects of their work. One of the roles of these Beacons is to be available to be peer observed by a colleague who requires development in a particular aspect of their teaching.

**College D**

As with Colleges A and C, participants from College D also described two main types of teaching observation:

1. Formal annual compulsory teaching observations for all teaching staff are carried out by managers using an Ofsted based approach, as part of a quality process. However, unlike Colleges A and C these observations are not graded. As with College C there is some differentiation for HE observations but this is less formalised with different expectations but with no specific guidelines or documentation in existence

2. Informal peer observations of teaching are encouraged for development of practice. These are devolved to curriculum areas with a variety of local arrangements in place for these to occur for both HE and FE. Arrangements for peer observations are therefore more flexible and tend to occur on an ad hoc basis across the College

# Appendix 13 - Proposal accepted for Spring SEDA Conference 2013

**Spring 2013 Conference**

**Changing Values in Higher Education**

**The Marriott Hotel LEEDS**

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

## Proposal Form

Proposals should be submitted **electronically** to the SEDA office at
conferences@seda.ac.uk by **Monday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2012**.

**Name(s) of presenters:** *Kay Dutton*

**Institution(s):** *University of* █████

**Address for correspondence:**
*University of* ████████████████████████████████

***Tel:*** ████████████████████████████
**Fax:**
**E-mail:** *kay.dutton @* ████████*.ac.uk*
**Twitter**

**Title of proposal:**
*Perceptions and use of peer observation of teaching in a 'HE in FE' context*

**Format:**    *20 minute research paper*

**The themes of the conference are:**
- Curriculum design and delivery
- Educational development
- Strategy and policy
- Student learning
- Researching learning and teaching
- Role of the Academic/Professional development

Provide one sentence about how your proposal relates to one or more of themes.

*This proposal details research undertaken in my role as an Academic Development Adviser into learning and teaching, and specifically in the use of peer observation of teaching (POT) as a tool for professional and educational development within a 'HE in FE' context. Peer observation of teaching is a generally accepted and valued method used for developing teaching and learning in universities.  My research aims to understand the value of the use of peer*

*observation in a HE in FE context. Initial analysis has found that FE colleges now appear to recognise the need for and value in utilising different approaches for HE teaching observations in comparison to those used for FE.*

**SEDA Values**
Indicate which SEDA Values may be relevant to your proposal:

| An understanding of how people learn | | Scholarship, professionalism and ethical practice | √ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Working and developing learning communities | | Working effectively with diversity and promoting inclusivity | |
| Continuing reflection on professional practice | √ | Developing people and processes | √ |

**For Papers Only**
**Session Learning Outcomes**
By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- *Gain insight into the perceptions and use of peer observation of teaching within an 'HE in FE' context as reported by participants in a recent study;*
- *Consider the implications for academic development requirements for staff delivering and managing HE provision in FE colleges*

**Session Outline** (no more than 300 words)
Key issues to be addressed are:

*This paper will report on findings from a recent study which explored the perceptions and use of peer observation of teaching (POT), within a Higher Education in Further Education ('HE in FE') context. The 'research problem' arose from my experience providing advice to staff on the use of POT to develop their practice, and from reflecting on my own experience of POT whilst working in an HE in FE context.*

*Over the last decade POT has become established practice in HE, and is undertaken with the aim of enhancing teaching quality through reflective practice (Shortland, 2004). Although POT also takes place for staff delivering HE provision in FE colleges, there is limited literature evaluating the nature or purpose of this. Anecdotal evidence, and the literature that is available, suggests that FE colleges do not differentiate between the purpose and practice of POT for HE and FE teaching observations. In the few studies reported POT undertaken for taught HE sessions tend to be for evaluative and judgmental purposes, rather than for the development and enhancement of teaching and learning (Gray, 2010; Thwaites, 2011).*

*The research strategy for this work consisted of an exploratory case study of four FE colleges' approach to POT in their HE work. Data was collected from the colleges through an initial questionnaire to HE teaching staff and HE managers,*

*which was then followed by a second phase of data collection consisting of semi-structured interviews.*

*Preliminary findings from the first phase of data collection support existing thinking that observation processes used are the same for HE as for FE, with many HE teaching observations being graded using Ofsted criteria. Findings also suggest that HE teachers do not feel that this FE observation approach is relevant to their HE teaching. Where there is a distinction between the two processes, POT for HE seems to be used as a more informal process.*

*This paper will discuss the main findings of the research and the implications of this for staff development in a HE in FE context.*

**Session Activities**
Please provide a brief indication of how the session will be structured. For research and discussion papers please include a few indicative questions which will focus the discussion element. Where relevant please also indicate if any interactivitiy is planned.

*The session will consist of an overview of the research, including a presentation of the research findings and discussion of implications for practice. Delegates with experience of supporting development for HE in FE will be invited to share their experiences in the light of the findings from this study. Indicative questions include:*
*" What have you learned from your experiences of HE teaching observations in FE colleges?"*
*"Do you perceive there to be a need for a distinct framework or process for observing HE in FE colleges?"*

**References**
Key texts mentioned in the outline, please use the Harvard referencing system.

**Gray, C**. 2010. "I am not a number" - ascribing professional capability through graded observations for HE in FE staff. Paper presented to SRHE Conference, 2010.

**Shortland, S**. 2004. Peer observation: A tool for staff development or compliance? *Journal of Further and Higher Education,* **28**(2), 219-228.

**Thwaites, J.** 2011. HE in FE peer review research: to develop a lecturer-directed quality enhancement framework that also meets the needs of managerial FE quality assurance. Available from: http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/heinfe/OTL_Petroc_peer_review_HEinFE_final_oct_2011. HELP CeTL, University of Plymouth.

**IT or audio-visual requirements**
Flip charts, data-projectors, laptops and WiFi internet access will be provided as standard. Any other equipment (e.g. speakers) must be provided by the presenter.

*Laptop and projector (for PowerPoint presentation) and Internet access*

**For Posters Only**
**Aim of Poster**
Delegates will gain from your poster:

**Poster Outline** (no more than 300 words) Detail key areas of content.

*Please note:*

1. *It is normal practice at SEDA Conferences to accept only one contribution per individual so as to provide the opportunity for as many people to contribute as possible.*

2. *It is a requirement that all presenters register as conference delegates.*

3. ***Proposals will be included in the Conference Handbook therefore, please ensure all details on the proposal are completed in full, any omissions may lead to none acceptance of the proposal***

4. *Whilst SEDA does not normally produce conference proceedings due to the emphasis on interaction and participation rather than formal presentation of papers, there are opportunities to publish outcomes of conference sessions through the Routledge SEDA Series, Innovations in Education and Teaching International, Educational Developments and SEDA Papers. If you are interested in getting your ideas published through SEDA please contact the SEDA Office (office@seda.ac.uk) who will put you in touch with the appropriate person.*

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# GLOSSARY

**Associate College** - a distinctive category of partner college. The status implies a close and long term working relationship with the University in pursuit of the common aims of service to the community and commitment to lifelong learning (University of ███████ corporate website, 2011).

**"Bridging module"** - the colloquial name used to describe a module entitled 'Developing HE Teaching Practice for Tutors in the Lifelong Learning Sector'.  This module is designed to develop HE teaching practice for staff working in the Lifelong Learning Sector, including the FE sector and is also designed to support colleagues who are required to demonstrate achievement of Descriptor Two of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for teaching and supporting learning in HE.  This module is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and on successful completion of the module participants are eligible for Fellowship status of the HEA.