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**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF INITIAL AND DIAGNOSTIC
ASSESSMENT IN AN FE COLLEGE?**

DOTLIN MAY KESLER

THESIS

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

The University of Huddersfield

JULY 2019

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Abstract

The main aim of this research study was to explore the purpose of diagnostic assessment in an FE College. In order to do this, I explored and analysed the views and perceptions from tutors from an FE College in the north of England. This case study research used semi-structured, focus group interviews and Teacher Perception of Courses to obtain views about initial and diagnostic assessment from FE tutors. In particular it firstly, identified the different types of diagnostic assessment that tutors use, not only in terms of their purpose, but also in terms of the differences between tutors. Secondly it explored the ways in which tutors use initial, diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy. Thirdly, it analysed what tutors considered to be the most effective methods in ensuring that students achieve their goals or targets and also explored some of the constraints which tutors might face in implementing the strategies in the course of their duties. Fourthly, it analysed the impact that organisational cultures and policy has on the performativity and professional identity of tutors in an FE College. The findings of the study strongly suggest that more collaboration between SFL and vocational tutors is the key to ensuring that student progress is ensured as the data suggest that when an holistic approach is adopted students will make better progress.

It is well documented that good diagnostic assessment strategies will help students to achieve their goals, and this research study confirms this.

This study employed the social learning theory of community of practice (Wenger (1998) where learning is most productive when it takes place in the context and culture where it occurs as opposed to classroom instructional learning. In this way, Wenger, (1998) argue that the teacher is engaged in a 'community of practice' where learning is socially constructed. Teaching and learning communities, especially small groups, help to provide extensive support to teachers who are able to regularly meet together in order to explore their own practice. In order to gain 'deeper learning' the novice learner's aim is to move to the centre of the community where they become gradually more active and engaged as they become more knowledgeable and expert.

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List of abbreviations

BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
COLA	Core Online Learning and Assessment
FS	Functional Skills
GOLA	Global Online Assessment
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILPs	Individual Learning Plans
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAR	Present, Apply, Review
PRU	Pupil Referral Unit
PSD	Personal Social Development
SFL	Skills for Life
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound
TPOCs	Tutor Perception of Course
VLE	Virtual Learning Environmen

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Aims of thesis

Diagnostic Assessment is fast becoming a key instrument in diagnosing, identifying and providing assessment for learning strategies. A number of researchers have reported that good diagnostic assessment always leads to better results. However a major problem with this view is that this is not the case if the student does not act on the feedback given (Ecclestone et al., 2010).

Most studies in the field have focused on diagnostic assessment strategies in Secondary schools and Higher education institutions, not Further education colleges. This indicates a need to understand the various perceptions of diagnostic assessment that exist amongst other institutions such as in the FE sector. This thesis will therefore critically examine the purpose of diagnostic assessment in an FE College in the North of England.

It is important that the ways in which tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools in order to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy are examined. This research study will also explore the most effective methods which tutors consider ensuring that students achieve their goals or targets and, explore some of the constraints which tutors might face implementing these strategies.

My main reason for choosing this topic is personal and professional interest as I have found that different tutors have very differing views about what diagnostic assessment is and is not. The College's mission statement is: 'To work together to create a better future for all through education, enterprise and employment' and I have worked at this College since 2003. Presently, I am employed on a full-time basis as a maths lecturer within the newly merged English and maths department since 2015.

FE Colleges provide students with a plethora of different opportunities and experiences. These include the opportunity to do further study which might be vocational, academic or for leisure. Some FE Colleges, not unlike the one depicted in this research study also provide students the opportunity to study for degrees. Courses are available from Entry level to higher degree level including masters' degrees. However, the main focus of this study will be students who are studying on level 1 and level 2 courses only.

1.2 Structure of the Thesis

My thesis is composed of five chapters. Chapter One is the Introduction where the aims and the structure of the thesis are identified. Chapter Two is the Literature Review where gaps within the literature are identified and is where the rationale is proposed which suggests how the research study will make a contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the topic of diagnostic assessment. Chapter Three is the Methodology Chapter where the research methodology, research questions, methods, ontology and epistemology are discussed. Chapter Four is the Results and Findings Chapter where the data collected is analysed and discussed and Chapter Five is the Conclusion Chapter where the research study is identified, contributions to knowledge are made and recommendations for the future are outlined.

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions were developed as a result of the need to explore issues identified in the Literature Review and in order to illustrate what makes this research distinctive. Pring (2000) argues that:

Education is concerned with the development of the distinctively human capacities of ‘knowing’, ‘understanding’, ‘judging’; ‘behaving intellectually’. (Pring, 2000, p21).

The research questions help to give clarity and focus to the research study. It also helps to identify how the researcher identified awareness of some of the assumptions implicit in the research.

The following research questions were therefore created in order to ensure that there is a match between methodology, research paradigm and epistemology, as well as to address some of the gaps in the literature.

The first research question, which was designed to identify the different types of assessment that are used asks:

- What types of initial and diagnostic assessment used by tutors in the FE College and how do they differ?

The second research question was designed to identify how these assessments were used and asks:

- In what ways do the tutors use initial, diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

The third research question focuses on motivation and asks:

- What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessment to help students achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

The fourth research question focuses on the culture of the College and asks:

- What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performance and professional identity of students in an FE College?

1.4 Methodology and location of the study

A qualitative, interpretivist approach was used in this research study where a case study approach was adopted in order to answer the research questions. The data was collected using semi-structured and focus group interviews and surveys from a sample of tutors. Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15 point Thematic Analysis approach was used to analyse and interpret the data in the results and findings chapter (Appendix 8). The theoretical approach which underpins this research study is Wenger's, (1998) Communities of Practice Theory. The context and culture of the learning experience is paramount to enabling deeper learning and collaboration with peers is essential in order that the knowledge and ideas being constructed within these communities of practice are justifiable. New members to the group will eventually become expert members after the 'apprenticeship' period has been successfully completed. Also prevalent within this research study are some of the ideas of Vygotsky (1978) who holds that the zone of proximal development is where the skills gaps are identified and developed in order that students are able to progress further (Oancea, 2015).

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review some of the strategies that have influenced student achievement and performance. I will also discuss some of the theoretical frameworks which have shaped how we view diagnostic assessment, as distinct from summative assessment. This chapter will also discuss and critically analyse some of the research on diagnostic assessment strategies and other types of assessment, including diagnostic and summative (Whininger, 2005). Another focus of this chapter is to explore, review and discuss some of the ways in which tutors should work collaboratively in order to achieve their goals (BKSB, 2010).

Lack of basic literacy skills in most OECD countries has led to large numbers of people in society being unable to access employment and move from one socio-economic group to another (Moser, 1998; Leitch, 2006). Studies have shown that some adults, who left school with no formal qualifications, rarely get a second chance to improve their life chances in adulthood and will therefore remain in low paid work. (Department of Education and Skills, 2010; Wolf, 2011).

In schools, the compulsory system of education, the National Curriculum, (Claessen, 2005) introduced in 1998 put pressure on teachers to teach to the test or as Ecclestone (2002) argues 'to get as many' through as possible. If this attitude to assessment is prevalent in the post compulsory sector, then research suggests that learners will not be motivated to achieve (Popham, 1999; Ecclestone, 2002; Volante, 2004).

2.2 Context

2.2.1 Skills for Life in context

Skills for Life was introduced for the first time in the UK in 1999 and Adult Education, Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy became a statutory provision. As a result of this new

funding, the qualifications became part of the national framework (Ecclestone et al., 2010). This led to part-time teachers in the Adult learning sector gaining more status in terms of employment status by receiving permanent full-time contracts in order to meet the new demands of the sector. These new demands meant that the teachers had to be more productive, as the funding requirements mean that the numbers of students enrolled, retained on programmes and achieving qualifications determined how much funding was awarded (Lester, 2011).

2.2.2 Vocational Education in context

Over the past 30 years in the UK, since vocational education gained prominence, government policy has sought to ensure that vocational qualifications received as much ‘esteem’ as academic qualifications such as GCSEs. Since 2008, young people from the age of 14-16 and after leaving school could engage in vocational education as opposed to gaining academic qualifications which would prepare them for the world of work, training, apprenticeships and vocational occupations which exist. In an attempt to improve the status of vocational education, Advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (AVCEs) and Applied General Certificates of Education (GCSEs) were introduced in Diplomas in 2000 but withdrawn in 2004 by the Curriculum and Qualifications Council. The aim of these qualifications was to raise the ‘esteem’ of the vocational qualification to that of the academic route, as well as increase participation and encourage ‘all’ young people to consider a vocational option as well as an academic option (Wellings, Spours and Ireson, 2010). In the Post-16 sector, young people can choose different vocational options, after leaving school which are more focused.

2.2.3 The development of Adult, Language, Literacy and Numeracy within vocational qualifications

Now that qualifications which were part of the national framework were funded, Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy teaching received more status in 1999. The Moser Report, (1999) A Fresh Start for Improving Literacy and Numeracy, found that twenty per cent of adults lacked the ‘functional basic skills’ and the government responded by launching the Skills for Life Strategy introduced in 2001. The Skills for Life Strategy’s main aim was to improve the

skills of 2.25 million adults from 2001 to 2010 with a milestone in 2007 of 1.5 million. This public service strategy had wider implications and part of this wider objective was to improve the adult skills gap and in doing so, increase the number of adults with the skills which would enable them to become employable and progress to higher levels of training in the future. In addition to the Moser Report (1999), the Leitch Review (Prosperity for All in the Global Economy – World Class Skills , 2006) was commissioned by the government and indicated the next Skills for Life target for 2020 which was that 95% or 7.4 million adults to be functional in literacy and numeracy.

Prior to Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy becoming part of the national framework, these qualifications were free. Now that these qualifications formed part of the funding criteria these community based open-ended qualifications were an essential part of the funding regime which meant that these qualifications now had to demonstrate summative assessment and accountability and progression. As a result of this new funding methodology, anyone who was not schedule 2, was at risk of being discontinued. Schedule 2 provision was part of the national framework and non-scheduled 2 provision was provision which was not part of the framework and was provision considered to be non-vocational such as leisure pursuits (Ecclestone et al., 2010). Adult Language Literacy and Numeracy provision and availability was determined by the now ‘cash-strapped’ local authorities, voluntary organisations and on the managers’ ability to secure funding on short-term development projects. At this time, Adult Literacy and Numeracy was being transferred to Further Education Colleges where the schedule 2 provision of Adult Language, Literacy and Numeracy provision was to be carried out under contract (Ecclestone, 2002).

The political upheaval led to changes in Adult Language, literacy and Numeracy provision resulting in the need for more professionalisation of the staff due to the funding requirements. This meant that schedule 2 provision had more status. The conflict between schedule 2 provision and non-schedule 2 was determined by the professional judgements of the curriculum managers and was determined by ‘corporate, strategies and financial considerations’. As funding was now linked to performance, Colleges had to improve their management information systems in order to meet government targets. (Ecclestone, Davis, Derrick and Gavin, 2010).

2.3 Diagnostic Assessment

Diagnostic assessment, including initial assessment has been a pedagogical initiative across the world for many years which has resulted in many researchers suggesting that the key to improving instruction and student engagement lies in the tutors' ability to create an environment in the classroom which differentiates assessment for learning, assessment as learning and assessment of learning (Looney, 2005; 2007; 2008; Ecclestone et al, 2010; Torrance, 2012).

There is a plethora of documentary evidence (Black, 1998; Stiggins, 2002; 2005; Dunn and Mulvernon, 2009; Black and Wiliam, 2009) which suggests that educational performance and achievement is linked to good use of diagnostic assessments in the classroom. (Swearingen, 2002; Black, and William, 2009; Dunn, and Mulvernon, 2009). I will begin with some definitions as Black and Wiliam (1998) found that even though diagnostic assessment has been identified as essential to the improvement of student achievement and teacher performance, there is still a need to clarify and define what the term means as it is associated with many ambiguities (Popham, 2006; Ecclestone et al., 2010; Torrance, 2012).

2.3.1 Definitions of Diagnostic Assessment

Black and Wiliam (1998) define diagnostic assessment as:

Those activities undertaken by teachers, and or by their students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black and Wiliam, 1998, p. 10).

However, Looney (2005) defines diagnostic assessment as: "Diagnostic assessment refers to the frequent, interactive assessment of students' progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately" (Looney, 2005, p.21).

Black (1998) defines diagnostic assessment as:

An approach that embeds diagnostic assessment in a holistic view of effective pedagogy comes from its depiction encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers and/or by the students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (Black, 1998 p.7).

All three of the above definitions of diagnostic assessment succinctly defines it in terms of learners' needs and the requirement of the tutor to adapt his/her teaching in response to feedback given to the student, if necessary. However, Black's (1998) definition of diagnostic assessment goes one step further when he includes the terms 'embed and holistic' which gives the reader the impression that diagnostic assessment is a continuous process which begins before any teaching commences and continues until the student receives their results. Black's definition will be the definition that will be used to encapsulate the essence of what diagnostic assessment is throughout this chapter.

In addition to the definitions of diagnostic assessment previously given, Torrance (2012) however, also states that more interaction between the student and teacher is necessary in order that the feedback is not just provided but acted on by the students which is cultural, rather than just about technique.

Earl illustrates this point succinctly when she argues that:

Effective assessment empowers students to ask reflective questions and consider a range of strategies for learning and acting. Over time, students' move forward in their learning when they can use personal knowledge to construct meaning, have skills of self-monitoring to realise they don't understand something, and have ways of deciding what to do next... (Earl 2003, p. 25).

Can diagnostic assessment be negative or as Torrance (2012) argues be diagnostic? Diagnostic assessment can be diagnostic when the gap between what the student knows and what they need to know is evident (Torrance, 2012). Secondly, feedback can be demotivating, especially if the student is awarded a grade or mark which could cause the student some emotional distress, resulting in a loss of identity and low self-worth (Ecclestone et al., 2010).

Smith and Gorard (2005) disagree that diagnostic assessment always has a positive effect because their study involved giving some students 'comments' and marks. Students who received 'comments only', did not question the fact that they had not been awarded marks. However, they found that the students who received both 'comments and marks' made more improvement than those who just received comments. This was because the main purpose of the study was not to see if students made better progress but to encourage tutors to give written feedback to students instead of just giving them a score which does not indicate what progress they can make in the future (Smith and Gorard, 2005). Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall and Wiliam, et al. (2002) in response to Smith and Gorard's findings argued that they did not believe that on every occasion, every teacher and every child will make progress despite the interventions put in place to help them.

2.3.2 Different perspectives on diagnostic assessment

According to Ivanic et al. (2009) there is a dichotomy between the requirements of vocational and academic courses, especially when the academic courses are degree level. In academic courses such as A'Level or courses which are preparing students for university, students are often required to engage in literacy practices which include such things as referencing, and reading extended pieces of work. However, in Further Education Colleges, the dichotomy between vocational and non-vocational courses such as the learning of maths and English is also prevalent. Sometimes in a vocational course the educational outcome as well as the preparation for the occupation is not given the equal status it deserves by the tutors involved in the students' learning. On some vocational courses students are required to do double literacy; literacy for the purposes of their course and literacy which enables them to function at a specific level in the workplace (Smith and Mannion, 2006).

2.4 Types of Assessment

The main purpose of any type of assessment is to aid student's learning; to identify strengths and weaknesses within a subject; to assess the effectiveness of a specific teaching strategy or curriculum programme; to improve teaching, to provide data which can be used to assist

decision making and finally, to communicate with and involve parents (Kellough and Kellough, 1999).

Whether diagnostic or summative assessment is used, it is important that the following five principles are in any assessment practice: authenticity, variety, volume, validity and reliability (Kellough and Kellough, 1999). Authenticity relates to whether the test or tasks that the students are asked to perform are real life and authentic. Variety on the other hand relates to whether the student has enough choice. Volume relates to the amount of information the student is expected to produce in order to assess learning; and validity and reliability relates directly to whether the assessment accurately measures what it set out to measure. The volume of assessments that teachers give to students in order to assess learning, can affect a student's performance (Black, 1998). It is important that tutors remember to use a minimum amount as over indulgence in testing will alienate students. Tutors should ensure that any assessment given to a student assesses what it is supposed to assess. Finally, reliability is very important as it refers to whether two or more people would assess the same piece of work in the same way or award the same marks (Black, 1998).

2.4.1 Diagnostic Assessment

The purpose of a diagnostic assessment is to ascertain student's attainment or learning at a particular point in time. This could be at the beginning of a course or conducted at different points throughout their course. Teachers then use the results to plan the curriculum and teaching (Swearingen, 2002).

The main value of diagnostic assessment is that it can be used at the beginning of the year, diagnostically to discover a student's strengths and weaknesses. During the year, it could be used to measure progress made and, at the end of the year, it could be used to measure whether a student has achieved or made the required progress. The results of the diagnostic assessment can be used in a variety of ways. Upon entry, it can be used as a baseline assessment for future testing and assessment. It can also be used to track students' progress which in turn can be used to help teachers adapt or change their teaching. Also tracking student's progress can help an

institution in obtain funds from both the public and private sector and this relates to notion of accountability (Swearingen, 2002).

It is of primary importance that the tutor uses diagnostic assessments appropriately in order that they can develop appropriate differentiated activities, including feedback and remedial support for the learners (Swearingen, 2002). In addition, Ecclestone (2002) argues that in response to political initiatives that seek to raise educational achievement, most colleges, as part of their strategic planning, now use diagnostic tools, such as the BKSBS Interactive Computer-Aided Assessment in English and Mathematics as a diagnostic test before enrolling students on any programme which include reviews and tutor feedback.

Some of the advantages of diagnostic assessment include improvement in achievement, as well as students being able to correct conceptual errors through feedback. Some of the disadvantages of diagnostic assessment include the fact that designing activities can be time consuming, because of the layers of accountability necessary to ensure that students work is authentic (Greenstein, 2010). In addition tutors will need to evaluate student's learning at particular points throughout the year to ensure that students are meeting their targets and have access to the right level of support. Sometimes unwittingly, inappropriate labels can be attached to students. (Swearingen, 2002).

2.4.2 Summative Assessment

Summative assessment to use the analogy used by Black (1998) is: "when the cook tastes the soup, that's diagnostic assessment; when the customer tastes the soup, that's summative assessment". (Black, 1998 p.1). Summative assessment can be in the form of an end test or a collection of evidence over a period of time and is usually given at the end of term, semester or year in order to evaluate students' knowledge and skills. Examples of summative assessment tests in the UK are Standard Attainment tests (S.A.Ts); General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSEs); General Certificate in Education Advanced Level, (GCE A Level); BTEC vocational qualifications and Functional Skills maths and English qualifications among many others. Other types of evidence could be in the form of portfolios, modules, journals and

learning logs and coursework (Black, 1998; Tummons, 2005). For summative assessment to be effective, three criteria need to be achieved: a detailed account which includes, for example, practical work; knowledge acquisition and problem solving. Teachers should be working from the same standards and interpretation of grades must be agreed (Black, 1998).

2.4.3 Diagnostic and summative

Due to a wide range of ideas about diagnostic assessment, I find it necessary to make a distinction between the terms diagnostic and summative assessment with respect to their purposes. Generally, the term, diagnostic assessment relates to activities which are used to diagnose starting points or levels, to review progress, to set targets and goals and to guide learners about how they can improve, fill the gaps and their strengths and weaknesses.

Some authors argue that an assessment activity can be both diagnostic and summative (Black, 1998; Ecclestone, 2002). However others have argued that assessment activities for diagnostic assessment purposes serves a completely different purpose as it is given to inform practice and student progress. Summative assessment tasks are ‘assessment of learning’, not ‘assessment for learning’ (Dunn and Mulvermon, 2009).

Stiggins (2002) however, stipulates that the effect of assessment for learning in the classroom will help the students to maintain their learning, become more confident with respect to how much work is produced and persevere even when things do not go their way. When time is an issue, it has been known for tutors to use examples of summative assessment as diagnostic assessment activity which if used to guide and aid learning is instrumental (Looney, 2007). This gives the student a realistic indication about the progress made and helps to identify what areas they need to work on in preparation for the test or exam.

Torrance, (2012) argues that assessment has gone through a transformation whereby assessment is not just assessment for learning, or assessment of learning but a new category has evolved which views ‘assessment as learning’. Hargreaves emphasises this point when she states that:

“...different forms of assessment encourage different forms of learning, whether the assessment is diagnostic or summative.” (Hargreaves 2007, p. 187).

The merging of diagnostic and summative assessment practices with teaching is a ‘life skill’ argues Ecclestone et al. (2010) especially for students on Entry Level Courses (Looney, 2008). However, she does comment that this is not the case for students on Adult Language and Numeracy Courses and suggests that the reason for this may be due to the fact that students on Entry Level programmes such as Foundation Level Courses differ from those on Adult Language and Numeracy courses (Looney, 2008). This is mainly to do with the types of students these courses attract such as students who are not in education, training or employment and the approaches to pedagogy and assessment for young people who are considered to be disaffected and who respond better to a less formal style of teaching (Ivanic et al., 2009; Tett et al., 2010).

The approach used to deal with these students is a counselling based approach more associated with Youth Work. Tutors recruited will use a less traditional approach to teaching and will be more inclined to use the Rogerian counselling and transactional analysis approaches to learning (Tummons, 2005). This is clearly evident when tutors are working with NEET students which are students who are currently 'not in education or training' before entering formal education in a Further Educational setting (Gracey and Kelly, 2010). These students require reintegration approaches to learning which usually takes the form of informal learning programmes or alternative provision tailored to the needs of the individual. By adopting a flexible approach to learning, the NEET students are able to follow a range of vocational, as well as work-based, learning options. (Nelson and O'Donnell, 2012).

2.4.4 Feedback

Diagnostic assessment is at the forefront of all teacher's minds as the research suggests that good quality feedback is essential to their own teaching and learning; good quality diagnostic assessment is associated with improved performance and finally, teacher assessments can have a positive effect on the barriers associated with valid assessment for certification and accountability (Ecclestone, 2002, Ecclestone et al., 2010; Falchikov, 2005).

If the main purpose of diagnostic assessment is to identify learner needs, then the best person to do this is the teacher who can not only assess the finished product but also assess the effort involved in order to complete the task. An external verifier only sees the finished product, but the teacher will be able to verify that the assessment is 'authentic' (the student's own work) because of the relationship they have with the student (Hattie and Temperley 2007, p 81).

Black (1998) argues that when assessing it would be useful if tutors took into consideration maturity, skills and competencies and contexts of performance to measure learners' progress. If these three dimensions are used to determine students' progress, then a qualitative analysis of the piece of work will be necessary, rather than a number or grade. Even if a number or grade is given, a qualitative description is provided to explain what the grading criteria refers to. Some qualitative assessments have pass marks which are numerical. However this numerical grade is then associated with a qualitative description which then provides grade boundaries of pass, merit or distinction as is the case in BTEC vocational qualifications.

The use of qualitative descriptions to provide feedback to learners about their progress is argued by Black (1998) to be more appropriate than quantitative, objective measures which are not context bound and do not allow for teacher judgement and subjectivity. A grade or score does not inform the student how he/she can improve his/her score.

When student's understanding of facts and knowledge are tested regularly, by using such techniques as questioning, feedback and class discussion, learners conceptual comprehension and level of technical competence is enhanced (Assessment Reform Group, 2002; Black et al., 2002; Ecclestone et al., 2010). This is in stark contrast to terminal assessments such as the GCSE maths and English qualifications which test knowledge acquisition at the end of a course (Joint Council for Qualifications, 2014).

The theory of situated learning developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that students are more likely to learn if they are actively engaged in an activity where the learning experience will be of more benefit to them than abstract simulated learning situations. Some of the ways in which full-time students can do this is by going on field trips; engaging in workplace learning

on a temporary basis; participating in orchestras, or sports training events which replicated the actual music and sports training events (Hamilton, 2011).

Feedback from students can serve more than one purpose. On the one hand it can be used to determine a student's progress, alternatively, it can be used to assess a teachers own performance – whether students have developed an understanding of a task or not (Ecclestone, 2002; Falchikov, 2005). Sometimes it may be necessary for a tutor to change the way they teach to match the way the students learn because of their lack of comprehension and understanding about a topic. This might involve the provision of differentiated tasks. This change in practice is a necessary element of diagnostic assessment as the feedback from learners will have prompted the tutor to adapt their teaching to match the way the students learns (Petty, 2004). It is not the job of students to change the way they learn to match the way the teachers teach because as social constructive perspective of Vygotsky (1976) which views the teacher as a scaffolder that provides the student with opportunities to develop experiences and argues that learning takes place collaboratively between the tutors, the learner or the peer mentor (Clarke, 2008).

Diagnostic assessment seeks to identify any short comings in teaching and learning or student progress so it is important that tutors act on the data that they collect about students. It is also important that tutors recognise that good diagnostic assessment techniques and strategies will enable them to have a better understanding of how their students learn. If students are given opportunities where they can engage in discourse with their peers and the tutors about their progress, then their learning will be enhanced particularly if the group is required to conduct a peer assessment of each other's ability, such as in a group discussion activity where both the tutor and the student's marks count towards the assessment (Tummons, 2005). Scaffolding is when the tutor provides the student with collaborative experiences in order that the student can learn and acquire the skills necessary to perform a task that they would not be able to do independently (Bruner, 2009; Mueller, 2016).

There are essential principles which relate to making feedback effective in any context be it academic or vocational, written or oral: Feedback to the learner is essential in order that the

learner is motivated to make the suggested improvements and trust that the comments that the tutor has made are constructive and not de-motivating (Torrance, 2012). Feedback should be clear, specific, supportive, diagnostic and developmental, timely, understood and finally, delivered in an appropriate environment (Tummons, 2005). In addition, when the student is given the opportunity to engage in a community of practice where they can improve their practice from novice learner to more experienced learner based on the acquisition of knowledge and skills acquired from more established members of the group, they tend to be able to relate theory and practice more easily (Hamilton, 2011). This will enable the learner to act on the feedback and to see the benefit of assessment for learning. When feedback is clear and unambiguous the language used to convey meaning is understood by the learner especially if it is written or oral. The teacher should ensure that their comments are specific and guide the learner in the right direction. Comments should address the criteria which have not been met and inform the student what steps; they can take to meet the criteria (Curzon, 2003).

In order that feedback is supportive, diagnostic and developmental, an explanation should be provided which indicates why the work is considered good or in need of improvement and this relates to environmental constraints. When feedback is timely, it is more effective (Falchikov, 2005). All feedback should be understood by the student. If the feedback is oral, then the language conveys meaning to the student. Finally, feedback could take place in a mutually convenient place that both the student and the tutor agree upon and not be conducted in the place that the student is taught (Falchikov, 2005; Hattie and Temperley, 2007).

2.5 Peer and Self-Assessment

Peer assessment is described in a variety of ways. Topping (2009) defines peer assessment as a way for peers to consider the value, worth, quality and usefulness of the product of learning of others of similar status (Topping, 2009). Alternatively, Falchikov (2005) defines peer assessment as assessment where the student has some involvement in the marking of an activity or where they play an active part in a group activity. The example which I would advocate is the type of peer learning where both the tutor and student plays some role in the learning process, for example when the student is comparing the tutor's mark with their own and those

of their peers and discussing by what they need to do to improve on their work. One of the benefits of peer assessment, Falchikov (2005) argues is that it gives students the opportunity to assess each other's input into a shared activity. A further benefit is when students have some involvement in the marking of each other's work which is especially beneficial if their judgements are similar to that of the tutors. If the students have been given prior opportunity to discuss and agree the assessment criteria beforehand then the rewards far outweigh the disadvantages. However, when students completed peer assessment questionnaires with regards to how well or not their peers had done in a task, Falchikov (2005) found that students sometimes found it difficult to fail a peer.

Some of the common features of peer assessment which need to be considered when asking students to assess each other are what will you do if there is a wide variance between peer and teacher marks? How will peer assessment benefit students? Are the students familiar with the assessment criteria? And finally, is there a need to plan for the amount of preparation and training which will be involved prior to the peer assessment activity (Falchikov, 2005)? Rogers (2003) argues that students must be given opportunities to critically evaluate the work of others in order that they are able to evaluate their own work and be responsible for any actions they take to improve their work.

Self-assessment and peer assessment are essential elements of a student's learning journey and Tummons (2005) argues that this is necessary so that students see reflection diagnostic assessment is a mode of dialogical reflective learning that is an important element of their learning journey (Jones, 2005). Being able to analyse their own work and see why they need to complete assignments is a key element of understanding the place of diagnostic assessment in the learning cycle (Sherr, Close and McKnight, 2012).

“This means that: [students] are more responsible for and involved in their own learning.” (Weeden et al., 2002, p. 73).

In addition, some of the ways in which tutors can encourage student to self-assess are by using checklists, and Individual Learning Plans (Logan, 2010).

2.5.1 Group Work

Group work encourages collaboration and can help students to improve their learning as well as developing appropriate social skills. Through discussion, students can develop empathy, altruism, and gain deeper learning about a topic. In addition, some of the benefits of group work means that students' test scores and retention improve. A good way of learning complex learning strategies is by providing a culture which has a positive impact on the development of independent learning, rather than just the technical which is an essential component of lifelong learning (Bennett, 2015).

Although group work has many advantages and benefits to students, Falchikov (2005) argues that the main problems that occur in groups are when some students fail to play an active role in the group due to apprehension during and after involvement; when stronger students undermine the efforts of weaker students or do not allow them to contribute effectively and finally when peers constantly defer to their tutor (Frykedal and Chiriac, 2011).

2.5.2 Assessment for Learning

The four main *Assessment for Learning* strategies which have been proven to improve performance in the classroom are: the strategic use of questioning, peer feedback, student self-assessment and the diagnostic use of summative assessment (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Stiggins, (2002) illustrates how assessment for learning strategies can help create a culture where learning can take place and where the ultimate goal is for students to take some responsibility for their own learning:

Students benefit from *assessment for learning* in several critical ways. First, they become more confident learners because they get to watch themselves succeeding. This success permits them to take the risk of continuing to try to learn. The result is greater achievement for all students - especially low achievers, which helps reduce the achievement gap between middle-class and low-socioeconomic-status students. Furthermore, students come to understand what it means to be in charge of their own

learning - to monitor their own success and make decisions that bring greater success. This is the foundation of lifelong learning (Stiggins, 2002, p. 8).

Earl (2003) describes how students will be able to move forward when they become more adept at using personal knowledge to construct meaning, have skills of self-monitoring to realise that they do not understand something, and have ways of deciding what to do next.

2.6 Theories of Learning

2.6.1 Behaviourism and constructivism

Two distinctive theories of learning exist within the behavioural and constructive models of learning. The behaviourist model is where the student is receptive and passive whereas in the constructivist perspective the type of learning which takes place means that the student is more actively involved in their own learning (Stuart, 2002). With respect to assessment, a constructivist world view of diagnostic assessment is an essential element of classroom assessment. Constructivists believe that learners should be encouraged to fulfil their own potential and play an active role in their learning in collaboration with their peers and teachers. Constructivists do not believe that learners have an 'innate' ability but can achieve and develop an aptitude for learning if the context and cultural setting is right (Jordan, 2008). A constructivist teacher will provide students with opportunities where they can assess how an activity is helping them to gain a better understanding. This can be done by the student questioning themselves, as well as through the strategies used to complete a task. By doing this, students gain a broader understanding about a topic or concept and become more expert at learning because they are actively involved in the process.

In order to close the educational gap between what students know and what they need to learn, learners are given tasks which encourage the tutor to 'scaffold' and ask questions to bridge the gap which Vygotsky (1978) referred to as the zone of proximal development. A way of closing the gap, is to use questioning and feedback (Torrance, 2012).

2.6.2 Behaviourism

Learners and the context in which they learn are essential to understanding learning are some but behaviourist learning theories do not take into account the social and institutional structures which can affect the individual. Instead behaviourism which views the learner as a passive 'empty vessel' where learning only takes place as a result of stimuli (Watson, 2013) This view of learning is in stark contrast to the social learning theories which takes into account the institutional structures in terms of how power relationships can affect how learning is perceived. Other factors which should be taken into account are learning in terms of the practical, the embodied and the social; learning as becoming which deals with how individual learners learn through participation in a variety of situations. Hodkinson and colleagues (2007) argue that there is a need to not only take into account what the term learning culture or cultural theory of learning is but to understand each in terms of its wider social context without giving either any status over one another.

Haskell (2001) argues that:

Transfer of learning is our use of past learning when learning something new and the application of that learning to both familiar and the new situations... transfer of learning...is the very foundation of learning, thinking and problem solving. (Haskell, 2001, p. xiii).

This demonstrates that Haskell (2001) views learning in an acquisitional way. On the other hand Hodkinson et al. (2007) argue that this view is incorrect and that alternative views provided by Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003) do not go far enough in helping us to understand a situated view of learning transfer. Therefore a more precise view suggests that learning is an ongoing process and people 'becoming' does not just include the transfer of learning from one situation to another but is to do with how the individual interacts with the situation as they move from one place or situation to another (Hodkinson et al., 2007). This is the view of learning which is created in communities of practice which will be the focus of this research study.

2.7 Socio-Cultural Theories

There are many different views of learning but the most prevalent is the cognitive versus the situated learning debate (Beckett and Hager, 2002). A cognitivist view of learning would argue that learning is the acquisition of knowledge of skills which individuals need in order to perform a task. However, a community of practice view of learning would argue that learning is a social event and is not just individual, it is both individual and social involving participation with other individuals in order to construct knowledge and skills and agree what constitutes 'legitimacy' in terms of knowledge and skills (Lave and Wenger, 1998). These two very different schools of thought argue that cognitive thinkers view learning as an internal processing of information centred on the world. Whereas other thinkers such as Dewey view learning as a combination of the mental, the emotional, the physical and the practical, especially in terms of workplace practice (Beckett and Hager, 2002). While thinkers such as Vosniado (2007) argue that boundaries between the mind and external factors are blurred and needs further investigation. However, Mason (2007) argues that cognitive thinking is central to the mind; however emotions can affect how an individual learns or acquires knowledge.

Bathmaker and Avis' (2004) research found that FE trainee teachers did not view themselves as having any 'status' due to their lack of experience and knowledge. They argue that the development of identity can be enhanced through engagement or interaction with a Community of Practice. Participation in Communities of Practice by 'newcomers' enables them to learn the norms, values, practices and strategies which are necessary from more experienced practitioners so that they can learn how to do things. Similarly, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) argue that participation in Communities of Practice enables conceptualisation of learning which include collaboration and a set of relations which will change over time. The assumption is that the trainee lecturers' wanted to reject the notion of school identity, because they saw 'school' as being controlling and disciplining which the students they were teaching rejected. They also found that their role in FE was much more focussed on managing behaviour, than on developing subject and vocational knowledge (Bathmaker and Avis, 2004).

Social constructivist concepts apply very strongly to this research, especially with respect to the idea that different social groups have their own language, jargon, tools and ways of knowing. Knowledge building is constructed in different ways by individuals and within social groups therefore ideas and thought processes will vary (Faraday, Overton and Cooper, 2011). Vygotsky believed that all children have a potential to learn but that this potential would vary from individual to individual, dependent upon how the child constructs knowledge and from whom.

According to Lave and Wenger (1991) scaffolding in the community of practice is a form of enculturation where the attitudes, values, feelings and emotions of knowledge of the community are shared and allowed to develop. Knowledge is relevant as it resides in the practice and not in the master or tutor. In other words, knowledge is constructed in how the community of practice is organised in which the master or tutor, as well as the apprentice is a part of. Also, complex and ambiguous knowledge is prevalent in community of practice which can only be decoded over a period of time.

It is a widely held view that socio cultural theory therefore considers learning to be a semiotic process whereby meaning is constructed through participation in socially mediated activities. New elaborate, advanced psychological processes will not be available to individuals who work in isolation as social instruction enables the learner to construct new meaning and knowledge in different settings or social groups (Lave and Wenger, 1998). Vygotsky argued that social interaction permeates our understanding of human social and psychological processes, especially in terms of how we use them. Recent research has suggested that we use subject specific language which we need to learn in this context in order to perform tasks and the computer is the tool which we use to perform these tasks more easily (Hua Liu and Matthews, 2005). Vygotsky, (1978) also believed that language and thought developed from social interaction for communication purposes and then language becomes internalised as thought and inner speech. There is some evidence to suggest that thought is therefore a direct result of language and social interaction determines language use (Vygotsky, 1978). It is believed that talk is a very important aspect of any social situation and usually takes place in groups. The importance of social interaction in the form of collaboration with others will be explored further

in this research study. According to many in the field, the four elements of cognitive human development and these are: The first relates to the mind where our mental habits and functioning are dependent upon our communication and cognitive functions in moving from the social to the psychological plane. It is also commonly assumed that the second phase, the psychological plane relates to how an adult becomes to consciously recognise, understand and articulate what they have learnt. According to Vygotsky (1998 the third, relates to the zone of proximal development is:

The distance between the actual development level as determined by dependent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky, 1978, p.85)

There is some evidence to suggest that the fourth aspect of cognitive development relates to the process of becoming a member of a community of practice (Mason, 2007, p2).

Instructional models based on Vygotsky and social constructivism include the Apprenticeship model that includes reciprocal teaching and the immersion approach in foreign language. Student learning would include communities of practice where learners are engaged in joint problem-solving, student directed inquiry, engaged in discussion and dialogue, and where everyone is not learning the same things. The implications for my research are two fold; students need to see the relevance of the subject they are studying and they also need to be able to apply what they have learnt in real life contexts (Fuller and Unwin, 2011). In communities of practice, knowledge is situated in practice and prevails within the community when they work together. Learners learn how to function in a community, rather than constructing abstract 'objective' individual knowledge. The apprentice will eventually become enculturated, instead of educated which means that they have moved from enjoying a peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998) towards a status of full membership where they have been both absorbing and being absorbed in the culture of praxis (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p. 95).

Finally, the social dimension of learning is an essential element in the idea of situated learning and communities of practice, although the interactionist element is less evident than in other constructivist themes, such as in the social learning of Lev Vygotsky. A community of practice exists in every Programme Area in the College. A community of practice can be described as a group of people who share the same concern and who regularly interact together to better understand how to learn how to improve their practice (Wenger, 1998). Tutors from every vocational and academic should be willing to collaborate with each other in order to standardise assessments. However, the main issue here is that these separate communities of practice sometimes exist in isolation (Mansell et al., (2002); Assessment Learning Reform Group, 2002).

2.8 Motivation and Autonomy

In order that students become autonomous, and further develop procedural, personal and critical autonomy, Ecclestone, (2002) argues that teachers need help to develop strategies which will enable students to re-conceptualise, practice and use diagnostic assessment in context of real life every day activities. She (2002) suggests that to improve students' autonomy and motivation is to remove some of the barriers which may be preventing change. These barriers include the belief by behaviourists' that extrinsic rewards are linked to motivation. Whereas humanists believe that motivation is linked to intrinsic rewards such as self-esteem, self-confidence and fulfilment as in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs model. Also at policy and political level, it may be necessary to develop other epistemological models of learning in FE which would enable a transformation to take place.

This study therefore builds on Ecclestone's (2002; Ecclestone et al., 2010) findings by attempting to locate other models of learning, such as Vygotsky's zone of proximal development and the philosophical assumptions associated with social constructivism in an attempt to transform learning, especially in terms of how diagnostic assessment is viewed in FE, as an alternative model to behaviourism and humanism which dominate how children learn in schools. Both behaviourists' and humanistic models argue that the individual is solely responsible for how motivated or not they become. However an alternative, more trans diagnostic view such as constructionism argues that other factors can determine motivation

(Ecclestone et al., 2010). These factors include peer feedback, parents and teachers and the whole ethos of the institution that the individual interacts with which can further be defined as culture.

2.9 Learning Cultures

James and Biesta (2007) have provided a useful definition of learning cultures as:

...a particular way to understand a learning site as a practice constituted by actions, dispositions and interpretations of the participants. This is not a one way process. Cultures are (re) produced by individuals, just as much as individuals are (re) produced by cultures, though individuals are differently positioned with regard to shaping and changing a culture – in other words, differences in power are always of issue too. Cultures, then are both structured and structuring, and individuals' actions are neither totally determined by the confines of a learning culture, nor are they totally free. (James and Biesta, 2007, p.18).

This definition about learning culture supports Lave and Wenger's (1991) view of situated learning and communities of practice and will be used to explore how tutors construct knowledge and how individual and group behaviour affects how this knowledge is shared between tutor and student and vice versa and also between tutor and tutor. Also, under scrutiny will be the power relations that exist within the programme areas, whether this has an impact on how knowledge is constructed and shared individually and within groups. Different communities of practice construct knowledge in different ways and these cultures which exist in institutions will have their own way of viewing what knowledge is or is not relevant at an individual level and also as a group (James and Biesta, 2007).

In this research study, there has been depicted different 'learning cultures' which exist in the college. For example, the Skills for Life, the GCSE maths and English and the vocational programme areas which include the Business and Computing Programme Area, the Travel and Tourism Programme Area, as well as the Hair dressing Programme Area.

According to Ecclestone (2002) it is important to understand the place of learning from a macro, meso and micro level. It is argued that at macro level, the recognition of the importance of

political-economic contexts and institutional arrangements and the interactions which exist between state markets and society with respect to decision making as well as the range of stakeholders involved (Jessop, 2002; Murphy and Levidow, 2006) is important. Whereas at meso level, sociologists tend to study the experiences, relationship and interactions which exist between and within groups (Jessop, 2002), and at micro level, behaviour is examined in terms of the social practices, values and norms which exist in the workplace and the strategies which can be used to modify, enable target setting and goal setting which may include feedback that can be used to manipulate social norms at meso level (Jordan, 2008). The implications for my research will begin at the meso level as social practices will be explored in each of the vocational areas, not just in terms of identifying similarities and differences but also shared practices within and between groups. At micro level, it is hoped that the government initiatives and policies which determine what institutions do at macro level, can be 'transformed' through academic research and the strategies and practices developed can be shared and transformed at macro level via change in political policy.

For this study I will build on some of the ideas which Ecclestone's (2002; 2010) discusses such as communities of practice, the skills gap and the need for further research in identifying better diagnostic assessment practices and activities which influence student performance in a positive way.

2.10 Conclusion

In this section some of the key research on diagnostic assessment and assessment for learning has been identified. The suggestion by Black and Wiliam, (1998) and Torrance, (2012) that there is a need to clarify and provide a definition of diagnostic assessment will be explored further in this research study. In addition, some of the diagnostic assessment tools which are used to identify learner needs and assessment for learning strategies which include peer assessment, self-assessment, group work and feedback will be discussed. Finally, the socio-cultural theoretical framework of Lave and Wenger (1998) will be used to situate my research because their theory relates directly to the research to be conducted which has implications about the decisions to be made in this research study as well as the research questions (Appendix

10). In addition, James et al. (2011), Ecclestone, (2010), Hodkinson and Hodkinson, (2004) all argue that Lave and Wenger's theoretical ideas and analysis of the individuals in relation to their social interaction with others and the situation is paramount to helping in the understanding of how individuals and groups learn.

To summarise the main purposes of diagnostic assessment are to aid learning and inform practice. In terms of summative assessment, it is for review, transfer, certification and finally for accountability to the public.

2.11 What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performativity and professional identity of FE tutors in Colleges?

In this section, I will illustrate, through a review of literature, how the performativity, the professional identity, policy and the organisational culture of Colleges has been shaped.

2.11.1 Performativity

According to Smith (2007) the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 paved the way for colleges to make their own decisions whereas previously the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) had made them. Central government had decided that a quasi-market structure, which involved colleges competing with other local colleges for business was more beneficial, as it would promote the essential link between education and the needs of business and industry, making them more financially independent and accountable. The term quasi-market refers to an environment being created where a business, in this case FE Colleges, have control over their finances and is where central government in theory has no monopoly over how the 'business' is governed (Smith, 2007).

Orr (2009) argues that since the FEHE Act (1992) was introduced, many educational policies have been systematically introduced in order to improve the 'performativity' of the sector. Smith (2007) also suggests that FE Colleges have adopted managerial ideas and methodologies

which were prevalent in the private sector where the emphasis was on input versus output and stressed efficiency methods and targets. It has been argued that the impact of marketization on FE Colleges has resulted in promoting of the self-interests of the institution rather than the quality of the student experience (e.g. Orr, 2009; Smith 2007) but there is still a gap between ‘policy’ and practice because the quasi-market, instead of promoting economic growth and social justice, had the opposite effect in terms of some colleges seeking students who were more likely to succeed as funding was now linked to success, qualifications and achievements and colleges were penalised if students did not progress or left their course early (FEFC, 1997).

Ball (2003) argues that this education reform has three elements which he describes as policy technologies. There is some evidence to suggest that the first element relates to the market, the second relates to managerialism and the third to performativity but these are all inter-related and inter-dependent. These new policy technologies, replace the old policy technologies of bureaucracy and professionalism. Ball defines performativity as: ‘a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive, control, attrition and change - based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic)’ (2003, p. 216). Thus, the impact of performativity is to re-work and create new roles whereby ‘authentic social relations are replaced by judgemental relations wherein persons are valued for their productivity alone’ (ibid: 224). It is a widely held view that in order to meet the new targets a culture is created in which managerialism and performativity are prioritised over caring? This can result in Colleges becoming more opaque, rather than more transparent, because of the need to create statistics that conform to the government’s targets.

One aspect of performativity that has been explored by O’Leary (2013) is its impact on teaching and learning. He analysed the concept of Observation and Teaching and Learning (OTL) in a number of colleges and found that in most colleges quality assurance took precedence over quality improvement. This suggests that the Internal Quality Assurance mirrored the four-point grading of OFSTED in most of the colleges. However, a likely explanation is that the expectation from the Internal Quality Assurance ‘model’ was that the observer would give diagnostic feedback which would allow the observed person to improve their practice. This

increased surveillance by OFSTED and central government may have become normalised in many Further Education Colleges in an attempt to drive up the standards and Quality of Teaching in FE. However, O’Leary, (2013) points out that it would have more benefit to tutors if the focus was more on their professional needs, rather than on the managerialist, performance management system. He argues that ‘policy makers need to devolve a greater degree of autonomy and trust to FE teaching staff’ (ibid: p. 711) in order to prioritise the professional needs of tutors over managerialist systems.

2.11.2 Professional Identity

Gleeson, Davis and Wheeler, (2005) have argued that, because policy initiatives in FE have focussed on organisational, administrative and policy issues, pedagogy and professionalism has remained under developed. Recent research has suggest that the constantly changing policy initiatives in FE of market and audit may have helped to shape professional practice. The practitioners in their research project found that their ability to be ‘flexible’ by responding to management demands to undertake new work, sometimes determines their status in FE. Traditionally, FE provides learners with the opportunity to engage in work based learning cultures which serve industry. The provision of diverse academic and vocational qualifications gives the impression that the focus is more on the preparation for work, to enable the learner to gain the skills necessary to function in society. This concept of ‘professionalism’ in an FE context differs from practitioners who work in schools because many FE lecturers begin their careers by transitioning from industry or a vocational work-based occupation into FE as a lecturer, tutor or instructor.

According to Sachs (2001) the concept of professionalism in FE is shaped by two discourses which are managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism (Sachs, 2001). The managerialist discourse, she argues, ‘gives rise to an entrepreneurial identity in which the market and issues of accountability, economy, efficiency and effectiveness shape how teachers individually and collectively construct their professional identities’ (ibid: p. 159). There is some evidence to suggest that the democratic professionalism relates to how students, parents and

others attempt to understand their place in the community of education. It also illustrates how teachers are accountable both individually and collectively for their actions. Democratic professionalism suggests that collaboration and cooperation between teachers and educational stakeholders will promote better skill development and organisational work. In this discourse, tutors are not only responsible for promoting learning opportunities for students in the classroom but for adopting good work practices within the profession by sharing good practice and for catering for the educational needs of the wider community (Sachs, 2001).

Shain and Gleeson's (1999) study showed that, despite the managerialist pressures on lecturers, there were core values that guided them. These included:

the commitment to student learning agendas with an emphasis on a particular model of quality that is defined through process rather than outcome, and a genuine commitment to widening participation that also recognizes the need for collaborative modes of work trust and sharing of strategies can flourish' (Shain and Gleeson, 1999, p. 460)

So, as Gleeson and James (2007) argue, understanding professionalism in FE needs an approach that goes beyond the 'prevailing market and managerialist perspective [that] allows only a restricted concept of professionalism that is commodified and lacks human agency' (ibid: p. 464). Instead their analysis shows the importance of an expanded concept of FE professionalism that understands the influences on the learning culture and recognises 'the tensions, contradictions and paradoxes that surround FE practitioners' work' (ibid, p. 465)

2.11.3 Policy since Incorporation

Lucas and Crowther (2016) developed the term 'logic of incorporation' where they used a theory of social change to analyse the concept of incorporation in the FE sector. It is believed that with Incorporation came marketization and change and instability. The 'change' relates to a more business-like model of leadership borrowed from the private sector and instability arose from the policy initiatives which sought to 'marketise' the sector in order to raise standards and achievement. It is possible that incorporation left other areas underdeveloped such as teaching and learning, professionalism and the curriculum. It is almost certain that these areas lack

innovation and educational change so ‘The logic of Incorporation’ solved some issues which needed addressing in FE but neglected others (Lucas and Crowther, 2016).

It has been reported that the political context in which Incorporation came into being was initially under the Thatcher government in the 1980s. Thatcher’s aim was to privatise as much of the public sector as possible as she believed that this would be more economically viable, bring about ‘individual responsibility’ and competition. Instead of transforming education, neo-liberal governance has led to endangering the practices of accountability. It is a widely held view that accountability refers to the public accountability to its customers and in the case of FE, this is the students, employers, stakeholders and ‘the government’ who regulate and create the criteria in which targets should be met (Ranson, 2003). Foucault (1991) argues that in terms of accountability, different ‘fabrications’ of accountability will be created because communities of practice will strive to meet the targets of accountability but neglect other areas which are not measured.

Lucas and Crowther, 2016 and Ranson, 2003 argue that the neo-liberal marketisation of the 1980s led to the government using a model of management derived from the private sector to implement its policies. This ‘New Public Management’ prioritised strategic planning, the targeting of resources and contracts over consumer needs. It is also believed that since the 1990s, neo-liberalism, privatisation and the strengthening of corporate power has been prominent. In addition, the government marketised control of contracts and inspections has seen an increase in evaluating and accounting for educational practice. There are some contradictions in the regulatory regime in terms of accountability. The historical and political imposition of regulatory policy of accountability from the outside has resulted in a neo-liberal restructuring where contract law, state audit and corporate power take precedence over democratic participation through negotiation. During the neo-liberal age, accountability is externally provided by central bureaucratic control but if accountability is to become effective, it has to be transparent, provide clarity of roles and be able to adapt to the needs of the community through responsibility and responsiveness. Ranson (2005) argues that the answer may be that this hybrid model of accountability between public and private bodies where democratic and market spheres come into play is the model of effectiveness which, Ranson (2003) argues, may

be the answer. A probable explanation could be that this means that improvement comes from within and communities should not allow an external authority to impose their neo-liberal corporate regulations on them as this creates a framework where community governance and discourse is undermined (Deem, Brehony and Heath, 1995).

It has commonly been assumed that due to the low status of FE compared to schools and universities, there have been many government interventions. It is believed that these interventions have happened because FE is seen as providing opportunities for students to train for a career so that they can actively participate in the labour market and not be a burden on the state by receiving benefits. Hodgson and Spours (2015) argues that some of the problems they have faced are not being able to offer the vocational and technical qualifications which lead to employment or more importantly what the employers want. This suggests that streamlining the number of qualifications on offer would help solve part of the problem. However, it is believed that the issue of transparency and credibility of qualifications still needs to be addressed by giving employers and education providers the opportunity to co-deliver and co-design the qualification. According to McLoughlin (2014) employers would be in a better position to suggest what skills the learner needs to know and develop in the workplace and the education provider could help with quality assurance.

Research by Coffield et al (2007) found that the wider social, economic, historic, geographical, institutional and labour market factors, as well as external factors which stem from the awarding bodies and employers, impinged on learning and inclusion. This suggests that in some cases, especially at Adult Centres and Work-based learning Centres, learners identified that the relationship that they had with the tutor was paramount in terms of whether the student would continue with the course as a result of the repeated failure which they had faced at school which was negative. Other factors which may impact on learning and inclusion is 'tutor professionalism' (Coffield et al., 2007, p. 732). Hodgkinson, et al. (2008) argue that many tutors worked beyond their contracted hours in order to maintain a professional standard. Also, it is believed that some tutors preferred to work in teams in order to meet targets, however, in some cases there were tutors who were working in isolation, especially if agency staff or part-time staff were employed who would not be employed to attend meetings. This may suggest that the

professional identity of some Basic Skills teams were stronger than in others and this was mainly due to ‘managers’ who had previous experience of literacy teaching.

Research by Coffield et al., (2007) suggest that policy in many cases resulted in an increase in staff workload, a lot of more paper work and bureaucracy which limited the amount of time teachers had left to plan and prepare. It is believed that in some cases, senior management teams were able to implement policies easily and in some cases the policies were not easily transmitted as the pattern of provision, style and management of and professional judgement were not accounted for (Coffield, et al., 2007). They argued that there is a need a more equitable and effective learning systems. Rather than the Learning and Skills sector transmitting ‘policy’ from above, ensuring that a professional development ensuring that a productive relationship which involves local learning systems from new partner should be a better idea. For example, if Further Education Colleges, the Adult Community Learning Centre and Work-based Learning Providers formed new relationships, especially with regards to funding, then they would not be competing for the same funding stream. In addition, it could be that one positive outcome of their study found that the student-tutor relationship across the three sites was important, especially in terms of how the policy affected the amount the tutors had to deliver courses. They also found that some tutors were able to adapt their practice to meet the needs of the students. However, those who were not able to do so, tended to take early retirement or leave. A probable explanation is that by imposing policy levers on the workforce, without any consultation with them about what their needs are will result in resistance. This suggests that the tutor-student relationship is at the heart of all the sites depicted in their study and without the support from tutors who do not treat them like school children, learners reported that they would not have achieve (Coffield et al. 2007).

Randle and Brady (1997), in their in-depth study of a large FE college, found that implementing a management style adopted from the private sector that focused on three Es of ‘economy, efficiency and effectiveness’ had a negative impact on lecturing staff. A possible explanation is that this was because ensuring that the funding targets were met resulted in practitioners being professionalism many lecturers seeing management as being obsessed with budgets and business plans as against their own concerns for the client’ (ibid, p.129). It is thought that

senior managers were using market ideology concerned with budgets and business plans whereas the tutors had an ethos towards student centred pedagogy which was under threat due to excessive bureaucracy and workload. Due to the focus on an increase in student numbers, lecturers in this case study argued that the educational quality provided on courses was seriously below standard. It is also probable that funding streams were now dependent upon whether students remained on a course for its entirety and some lecturers argued that some students were kept on courses regardless of whether they had the ability to complete it or not. In addition, it is possible that Senior Management wanted to reduce the amount of student contact hours by introducing a range of multi-media activities which would require a large amount of independent study. This over reliance on pre-packaged materials took up a lot of tutor time and resulted in teachers being asked to teach more hours elsewhere. It is likely that this new mode of teaching where the student will do part of their course on a distance learning or multi-media basis instead of cooperation and dialogue between student and teacher meant that the process of learning had changed. It could be that whilst flexible learning environments have many benefits they rely heavily on the impartation of knowledge and not on the style, pace or student-teacher relationship which occurs as a result of face-to-face interaction.

Some of the disadvantages of managerialism revealed by Randle and Brady's (1997) study were that teachers were constantly under surveillance, not just from management but by students when completing questionnaires influenced by the notion of the student as a 'customer' (ibid, p.132). It is reported that in some cases, students assessed tutors' competence as unsatisfactory solely based on their own perception of what constitutes classroom practice and had not taken into account the modes of teaching associated with the intensification of work. Lecturers argued that this constant monitoring of staff led to a lack of trust occurring between management and themselves leading them to feel deprofessionalised. However, the lecturers were continuing 'to fight to maintain control over their labour process, to counter both deskilling and the degradation of work and a radical deterioration in their conditions of employment' (ibid, p. 137).

2.11.4 Organisational Culture

Fuller and Munro (2004), Fuller and Unwin (2004) illustrate through six case studies how the expansive – restrictive debate how the continuum operates. The main aim of their research was to ascertain the following:

1. Opportunities for engaging in multiple (and overlapping) communities of practice at and beyond the workplace
2. Access to a multi-dimensional approach to the acquisition of work and job decision
3. The opportunity to pursue knowledge-based courses and qualifications relating to work. (Fuller and Unwin (2004, p. 126).

They found that the opportunities that employees had to learn varied greatly in the four different private sector organisations in the steel industry where they conducted six case studies. They also argue that the learning territory which they describe in terms of prior educational experiences and background of the individual which may have some influence about the choices which individuals make about whether or not to engage in learning opportunities through work.

The term expansive learning is a term coined by Engeström (1994; 2001) who argues that expansive learning is a theory where the aim is to bring about a considerable amount of change in an organisation, in terms of the learning activity used. However, Fuller and Unwin (2004) use the term expansive learning in a different way as they argue that their aim is not to bring about organisation change by introducing a new learning activity in to an organisation but instead to identify and analyse the barriers to learning on an expansive – restrictive continuum.

Within the expansive – restrictive framework, Fuller and Unwin (2004) argue that they are able to identify some of the features which are prevalent between the different learning environments. The two expansive and restrictive features which will be discussed will be firstly, the types which emerge from our own understanding of the organisational context and culture and secondly, our understanding about how employees learn in terms of the different forms of participation that they engage in. Different people will engage in learning in the workplace differently based on the dispositions that they possess about workplace learning. Also, some employees will respond to learning more positively than others (Billett, 2004; Hodkinson and Hodkinson). However, Eraut et al. (2000) offers a different explanation by differentiating

between personal and public knowledge. The former, they describe as the knowledge that people bring with them which enables them to think and perform their duties and the latter, they describe as knowledge which is constructed from both their personal experience, and reflection (Eraut et al., 2000, p.233).

Across the different sites in their research study, Fuller and Unwin (2004) argue that the employees had access to a variety of opportunities where they could engage in formal and informal learning. However, they conclude that how the individual responds to the opportunities to engage in learning at work is dependent upon their learning territory, especially in relation to how they may or may not perceive learning.

According to Lave and Wenger (1998), the communities of practice which allows students to both disengage and engage with a range of communities are the most useful as they enable the student to move between the situated and the context boundary opportunities for participation. Fuller and Unwin (2004) argue that opportunities where students are able to participate in multiple communities of practice both inside and outside of the workplace is conducive to the expansive view of learning. Company A provides an example of where expansive learning opportunities are prevalent in the company. Whereas Company B illustrates that employees have limited access to other learning environment other than in the workplace.

However, where knowledge is not situated across boundaries (Boreham, 2002) this illustrates that the knowledge production is limited only allows the higher grade employees to access greater expansive learning opportunities which would greatly influence their individual and organisation learning and workforce development.

2.12 What is an organisational culture?

Cameron and Quinn (2011) argue that there are four different types of organisational culture which exist and these are the clan, adhocracy, market and hierarchical. The clan is where the culture within the group is about collaboration and that leadership is on a membership basis. The main values which are inherent within this type of culture are teamwork, communication

and consensus, although the organisation is bound by commitments and traditions. An example of a clan culture in an organisation is a family type organisation like corner shops and takeaways. However, the main disadvantage of this culture is that innovation may not be possible due to lack of group dynamics. An Adhocracy culture, relies on the creativity and energy of employees to take risks and is more entrepreneurial and innovative in nature. Employees are given the freedom to experiment with their ideas where the emphasis is on ingenuity. The core values of this type of organisation are change and agility. The main disadvantage of this type of culture is that the organisation may not plan ahead for risk management issues and relies heavily on technology.

However, enabling employees to be able to work from home instead of occupying a traditional office space might be considered to be an advantage. The market culture relies upon the dynamics of competition where the focus is goal orientated and can be quite tough, as well as demanding. The main value with this type of organisation is market share and profitability. Most Banks and large supermarkets are examples of this type of culture. However, the main disadvantage of this type of culture could be that the products they are marketing may be very similar in nature to their competitors. The hierarchy culture relies primarily on a culture of structure and control. Within this culture, the environment is formal with some strict institutional procedures where efficiency and predictability, as well as coordination and monitoring are paramount. In addition, the values prevalent within this type of culture are consistency and uniformity. Large government organisations, universities and colleges are examples of hierarchy culture. The main disadvantages associated with the hierarchy culture are firstly, that there is poor flexibility which means that the organisation is very slow in adapting to change. Also, communication between members of the same department may suffer and communication is shared vertically in hierarchy culture. Finally, in some cases the goals of the department supersedes the goals of the organisation as a whole (Cameron and Quinn, 1999; 2006). However, Tharp, (2009) expands on Cameron and Quinn (2011) model by describing the market as compete; the clan as collaborative; the hierarchy as control and adhocracy as create.

2.13 Summary and conclusion

In this section, I have illustrated how the organisational culture and policy initiatives prevalent as a result of the marketisation of FE has impacted upon the performativity and professional identity of FE tutors. Instead of reforming FE, these new policy initiatives such as the FENTO level qualifications have resulted in English and maths introduced in 2004 and graded observations in an attempt to improve the status of FE tutors in FE comparable to school teachers, this has not been the case. FE Colleges are still being subjected to constant top down policy initiatives and reforms 20 years on from Post Incorporation in order to raise standards, productivity and the status of tutors in FE. This has resulted in a culture in FE of constant change, redundancies bullying and high turn-over of staff who are unwilling or not able to adapt to the constant upheaval.

2.14 Social Learning Theory

According to Wenger (1998) learning is a social process of active participation in social communities and the constructing of identities in terms of these communities. This suggests that learning therefore is interrelated and interconnected with meaning, community, practice and identity. With respect to meaning, learning is viewed in terms of how we experience life and the work, including our way of talking about it, individually and collectively. It is also argued that learning as practice, relates to actively talking about the shared historical, as well as social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that will enable prolonged engagement in action. This suggests that communities is identified as a means of belonging to a group and is where decisions are made about what is worth undertaking and is also where participation is a 'recognisable competence'. In terms of identity, Wenger, (1998) argues that learning is viewed in terms of our ability to talk about how learning changes who we are as human beings and will enable personal histories to be created in the context of our communities.

In terms of individuals learning, it is active engagement of individuals to a community of practice and is viewed as the constant reshaping and improving practice, as well as the recruiting of new members. For the organisation, these interconnected communities of practice exist and

is where knowledge is created, resulting in the effectiveness of the organisation. For an organisation to be effective, Goncalves (2019) argues that the organisation should encourage Communities of Practice groups to develop where professional people also share the same interests of resolving a dilemma or issue to improve their skills and learn from each other's experience. Organisations which encourages Communities of Practice to develop will enable newly qualified or hired employees to adapt to their role more easily. This is because the Community of Practice allows the mentee to develop a sense of belonging through the help of mentors in the Community of Practice. A Community of Practice 'backs' everyone's decisions, this has more status compared to executive decisions being imposed on employees without any consultation from unions or colleagues with specialist knowledge. When a Community of Practice encourages mentors to 'think outside the box' in terms of creating alternative or extra services or products of the organisation and this can be done through brainstorming sessions. In addition, employees who belong to a Community of Practice are more productive because they are more cooperative. When objectives are shared within a Community of Practice, employees are more likely to turn their weaknesses into strengths more easily. As the growth of an organisation relies on the people working in it, it is essential that the employer nurtures this through providing training and development opportunities for their employees and also when necessary and also opportunities where they are willing to enter into discourse with representative of the employees within the organisation. Randle and Brady (2006) argues that new managerialism introduced in the public sector in the 1980s instead of improving productivity and accountability had the opposite effect instead through the introduction of market related mechanism; the implementation of flexible learning and technology which has had a negative effect on tutors professionalism as well as performativity.

Communities of practice enable us to create new knowledge and by creating new knowledge through discourse we have to engage reflexively. In terms of communities of practice, knowing involves active participation by the knower in a social community of practice where they have access to resources which will enable them to engage in discussions, contribute in a meaningful way, reflect and make some contribution to the communities that they value. This concept is especially important in organisations where community building should be valued in order that learning takes place so that decisions and actions which are created in these communities of

practice are accommodated and where individuals can share their knowledgeability (Pryko, Dorfler and Eden, 2017).

Theories of social practice are concerned with the real life, everyday social systems where groups are able to share resources, coordinate activities, engage in mutual relationships and interpret the world in which they live that do not have a name or membership. Lave (1991) argues that in terms of the theories of 'identity,' this addresses the cultural interpretation and categories of membership such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, and any other category which might be necessary in order to 'belong' to the group.

In addition, to the above theories of social structure, situated experience, practice and identity, there are theories of collectivity and subjectivity and power and meaning. It is a widely held view that the theories of collectivity relates to how groups such as families, networks and communities are formed and describe some of the mechanisms of social cohesion such as solidarity and common interests of how they are configured. It is believed that theories of subjectivity relate to how the individual experiences the world. It is probable that theories of power relates to power in terms of consensual practice and collective agreement, as well as in the traditional sense in terms of dominance and oppression. It is believed that theories of meaning relate to how people produce their own meanings and, are concerned with the philosophy of 'language' and 'logic'. The theory of meaning is closely linked to social order (Linvist, 2003).

2.14.1 Practice as a concept

According to Wenger (1998) Practice is concerned with 'doing' in both an historical and social context which is a social practice and gives both structure and meaning to what we do. Practice is also associated with the explicit and tacit assumptions. These include what people say and do, as well as what is not said and implied. This can be through the medium of language, tools, documents and images, as well as the implicit relations and subtle cues we display.

It is thought that because participation and reification coexist in politics, it is sometimes necessary to use one form to stop abuse and bias in the other. For example, providing senior management with a constructive argument as to why the lack of resources means that the student cannot complete an assignment might be more beneficial than trying to go through the proper channels, which can be bureaucratic and counter-productive as it is where documents, instruments and forms are designed to rectify the misalignments which may have occurred through participation. However, reification is necessary in terms of the impartiality which can dominate the politics of participation and counter-productive. However, reification is necessary in terms of the impartiality which can dominate the politics of participation. The managers at an FE College are expected to liaise with tutors about the policies and procedures which may affect their practice. This might be, the use of a specific lesson plan template, new internal teaching and learning inspection policy. Despite the personal relationship, that the manager may have with the team he/she has to allow the team time to adopt the policy. It could be that this reification will form a part of their contract of employment. However, it takes the participation of the manager, as well as the reification of the policies and procedures to ensure that the quality of teaching is of a good standard so there must be some form of participation where the community of practice negotiates meaning and adopts the policy.

Wenger (1998) suggests that meaning, in terms of participation relates to the social experience of being a mentor in a social community or enterprise. It involves both the personal and social and the whole person in terms of our bodies, minds, emotions, combining how we do, talk, feel and belong. Participation is an active process which involves mutual recognition and is where relations are not always equal. It is not always a harmonious experience as it can involve some conflict. However, participation in social communities can help to shape and transform communities. Although participation in a work related community of practice is time bound whilst at work, when work ends the tutor does not stop being a tutor when she/he goes home. This suggests that participation and reification are a duality and not opposites because it takes participation to construct meaning in which involves interaction and reflection. Just because something is viewed in a formal way, does not suggest that there is no implicitly meaning associated with the formal entity, it just means that the explicit has more dominance than the

informal. Participation and reification can therefore be described as the interplay which exist in society which allow people and things to become what they are.

2.14.2 Community

It is thought that a community of practice has three dimensions which are inter related. Wenger (1998) argues that these are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire. For instance, in an FE College, you might have Curriculum Team Leader, and within that team of community of practice, there might be individuals who have specific subject knowledges. However, some members of the team may also have more than one responsibility, such as coaching or mentoring which will overlap with their main roles of responsibility. This suggests that communities of practice involves some sort of shared practice which might enable synergy (Wenger, 1998). An example of synergy in an FE context, could be a subject specialist who also belongs to a community of practice with his/her peers who share good practice with each other.

A community of practice is not a homogeneous entity, it is diverse and will develop over longer contexts such as historical, social, cultural and institutional, sometimes form smaller self-contained units which will also have its own specific resources as well as limitations. Although some of the requirements, with respect to these conditions are explicitly voiced, not all are. However, members within the community of practice will attempt to work out their issues, irrespective of the lack of resources or limitations which they have no control over. Firstly, with respect to teaching, an FE tutor has a position within a broader system within a larger historical development, which the tutor has no influence on its institutional constitution. This suggests that through their practice, tutors respond to the demands of conditions which are outside the control of the organisation. Even though external forces may attempt to force institutions to adopt certain practices individuals within the organisation will only do so when they negotiate in response to these demands or requests by engaging in joint enterprise. According to Wenger (1998) external forces may have some influence about what organisations do but it cannot force individuals to do them. The responses have to be deliberated and unfolded before a consensus is reached in regards to negotiating a response to the request (Wenger, 1998).

In College Z, external forces dictate which policies are implemented at the college as there is no mechanism in the college for negotiation, deliberation, mutual engagement or negotiation of meaning.

In some cases, aspects of accountability are developed into rules, policies, standards or goals. However, Wenger (1998) argues that it is important to note that those that are not still have some value. It is believed that being able to share good practice within a community of practice enables members of the group to decide what is or is not appropriate. Having a good insight within a community of practice will enable the participants to refine their perceptions which might make an impact upon the appropriateness or not of a judgement made. This suggests that different participants within the practice will interpret reified characteristics of accountability, amalgamating them into real and lived forms of participation.

The resources of mutual engagement involves inherent ambiguity which can in some instances be in need of continual repair but on the other hand opportunities can arise to create new meanings. Ambiguity therefore is not a problem but something which needs to be overcome and this can be achieved through effective communication and design. By providing an environment which situates ambiguity in the context of the history of mutual engagement, through negotiation some issues will be resolved. In negotiating meaning in practice there must be some sort of engagement, however, there does not necessarily need to be a goal. As well as being a positive force, social energy can have a negative effect upon a community of practice which prevents them from moving on. All communities of practice have their strengths and weaknesses and can be a place of creativity, as well as a place of failure. Even though outside forces such as the control of an institution or of an individual are important, they cannot force a community of practice to adopt their ideas. These must be mediated or negotiated by the community of practice where they can discuss and understand meaning collaboratively (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

2.14.3 Learning

According to Wenger (1998) the continuity and discontinuity of a community of practice over time is determined by how much time people are prepared to invest in the activity and is a place of shared histories. Our identities are formed by what we do together and it is possible to transform one's life with the help of other group members but less likely to be transformed without the support of others. However, it is important to remember that the opposite effect can occur, if ideas are unwelcome. Joining a support group can help to transform peoples' lives, especially if the individual is depressed, bereaved or wants to learn something new (Wenger, 1998). In an FE College, a support group could be the different vocational course departments which people work in such as the Skills for Life and GCSE maths and English Programme area; the FE Business and Computing vocational area; the Hair and Beauty or the Travel and Tourism vocational areas. They all have their own individual identity, language and will continue to exist, despite the constant period of restructuring which the college has been through. Some vocational areas may split and join up with other vocational areas and some may eventually be discontinued due to lack of student numbers. However, the community of practice will continue to exist, even when people leave.

Ideas which have not been previously priority can become to the forefront and because you are in a position to make a difference people look up to you to make things happen. This is very true of leadership in an academic department. Wenger (1998) argues that the policies of participation reification can firstly, seek out or avoid relationships with some people and secondly, to promote or supply is distinct artefacts such as policies and procedures in order to negotiated meaning in certain ways. These two distinct forms of power are channels to two distinct types of policies. The first relates to policies of participation which includes influence, charisma, nepotism, discrimination and is more associated with informal leadership. The second type is the policies of reification, which as mentioned previously relates to legislation policies and contracts and is a form of formal leadership.

2.14.4 Emergent structure, Legitimate Peripheral Participation and Boundary

Wenger (1998) also argues that through practice, members negotiate meaning in an open ended way where the possibility exists for further discovery and rediscovery. For instance, new

members joining a community of practice creates an environment of mutual engagement where new interests can be developed. Depending upon the experience of the new member, new relationships can lead to new interests which can result in renegotiation of the enterprise, which could produce a generation of new sections in the repertoire. It is believed that due to the openness of the process, there can be a little bit of an atmosphere and agitation throughout the system. Among FE tutors, a rumour might spread that OFSTED is changing its grading of observations from 1-4 to no grading which will spread very fast throughout the group, especially if it is obtained from a respected source by a manager or the OFSTED website. Wenger (1998) holds the view that practice is an investment of learning due to the mutual relationships, repertoire and accepted enterprise which are interrelated. It is almost certain that the investment which the participants make will become who they are, leading the community to then rearrange around the activity which will enable the investment to become clear. It is important that the community of practice continues to negotiate meaning in order to maintain an identity individually with the group as well within the group. Through a shared respect for each other, participants will negotiate meaning. Thompson and Alsop (2003) argue that in some cases the community of practice can lack stability due to the refusal of members to negotiate or in the relative small amount of power they are able to wield within the practice.

According to Wenger (1998) the duality of boundary relations relate to how participation and reification contribute to the discontinuity of a boundary. In college Z, Skills for Life tutors must have a Level 5 diploma subject specialism in either English or maths. If they do not hold this qualification and the College wants to employ them, then the tutor has to agree to attend the course in the first year of employment. This qualification demonstrates reification as a boundary to an outsider. This demonstrates how Curriculum Team Leaders can belong to multiple communities and also how the products of reification can cross boundaries in terms of the different types of employees which are employed in a building or an organisation. In the case of College Z, the College employs technicians, trainer Assessors and part-time lecturers. In addition, products of reification can also cross boundaries and enter different boundaries. In the case of FE tutors at College Z, a Curriculum Team Leader, manages a team of tutors. This could be a Skills for Life team, a GCSE English team or a GCSE maths team. However the Curriculum Team Leader also belongs to a separate team which includes all other Curriculum

Team Leaders across the College who manage other teams of tutors and they make contributions to their own community of practice when they have their own team meetings with senior management of the Head of Department.

Wenger (1998) holds the view that the complementarity of participation and reification is best served if both artefacts and people travel together as no single member is fully representative of the practice as a whole. Our knowledge of these practices depends on the experience of a specific moment in time and is a good example of a boundary practice at College Z is OFSTED or Senior Management within a college who monitors success and failure of different teams with the college, highlight good practice which can then be shared. A second type of practice-based connection is overlap which is when a boundary practice is sustained between two practices. Two types of professionals exist at College Z. Vocational tutors who have their own community of practice and the Skills for Life tutors who also have their own community of practice but are dispersed in vocational staffrooms away from their own community of practice. In some cases, Skills for Life tutors have been able to form their own community of practice with the vocational area staffroom and in other cases, Skills for Life tutors have said that they feel isolated away from their own community of practice. The advantage of having Skills for Life tutors in the same staffroom as the vocational tutors is to give reassurance in terms of direct contact with the vocational course tutors and vice versa. Although the two communities have not merged, both communities of practice have more of an awareness of each other's practices.

2.14.5 Practice Landscape

There is some evidence to suggest that the landscape of practice involves shared practices, boundaries, peripheries, overlaps, connections, as well as encounters. With respect to practice as boundary, many are informal where members engage in mutual engagement in an organic, rather than formal way. Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) argue that institutional boundaries do not determine the boundaries which may exist in a community of practice in terms of who belongs to which community. Even when a community of practice is institutionally bound in an organisation, there are spread throughout the organisation who blur boundaries because they are constantly renegotiating different forms of participation with other

communities of practice. For example, learning assistants support students in the classroom, even though they may feel that they could teach the subject, they are on the periphery of the community of practices as reification of practice does not allow them to be held responsible for a whole class of students with tutor support.

2.14.6 Locality

It is believed that in addition to the shared histories, routines and artefacts, close friendships may be formed where members engage in conversations outside of normal working hours. This might take place over lunch. Wenger (1998) believed that there are different ways of determining how the world explains what is continuity and discontinuity. Secondly, the community of practice rules and procedures specific to their own community of practice which they must adhere to, and some members of the group will work in different departments within the college, transferring their skills in a different community of practice. Thirdly, as a profession, hairdressing tutors will be engaged in a practice similar to other hairdressing departments at other colleges. The above examples demonstrate how through participation; the lunch time discussions, social events like a Christmas party or in the staffroom, the hairdressing tutors are able to develop professional identities, however, in some cases, there are circumstances where this does not happen. College Z has communities which have a multiplicity and connectedness of perspectives. Some of the practices are disconnected but all communities are connected in some way in terms of the support systems they access in order that their community of practice continues to operate. The support systems include, Senior Management, Programme Managers Curriculum Team Leaders; Learning Assistants, Administrative Support and Progress Coaches. Wenger (1998) also believed that identities are formed when members are engaged in enterprises, not in passing conversations in a moment of time. By consolidating and integrating learning events, practices and identities are formed. Learning and negotiation of meaning are crucial to the localities of engagement in terms of the locally shared histories it creates. However, if there is a conflict between localities, then negotiation of meaning may be discontinued.

2.14.7 Constellations

According to Wenger, (1998) the constellation or in this case the College has a particular way of determining how the different communities of practice are viewed by the members of a community or by an observer. During the course of this study, College Z has undergone some restructuring of the different vocational and academic programme areas and the following table depicts this change (Gheradi and Nicoli, 2002).

Table 2.1

Old Programme Area	New Programme Area
Skills for Life (Functional Skills maths and English tutors	English and Maths Department
FE Business	FE Business and Computing
FE Computing and IT	FE Business, Computing and IT
Travel and Tourism	Service Industries
Hair and Beauty	
Centre for academic Students (includes GCSE English	Sixth Form Centre
Science (includes Maths GCSE	Science

College Z has grouped departments together to make a new constellation which the college views as having some relationship. However this is dependent upon the perspective of a relationship that the College has. This could include the following:

- 1 Sharing historical roots
- 2 Having related enterprises
- 3 Serving a course or belong to an institution
- 4 Facing similar conditions
- 5 Having members in common
- 6 Sharing artefacts
- 7 Having geographical relationships of proximity of interaction

- 8 Having overlapping styles of discourses
- 9 Competing for the same resources (Wenger, 1998, p.127).

Wenger (1998) argues that in some cases, a constellation might be short term, such as a group within the College set up to develop strategies for dealing with OFSTED exists at the College. Also, in some cases communities of practices are connected intentionally and have inter-connected boundaries which are straddled by a Curriculum Team Leader who liaises with the maths and English tutors who are from different programme areas. The different kinds of boundaries and communities which are associated with diversity are firstly, the kind of diversity which is internal to practice and associated with mutual engagement. Secondly, in some cases diversity can result when people do not engage with each other. This may happen when a constellation is viewed as a social configuration instead of a community of practice, it is essential that the constellation is perceived of as interactions among practices. These include boundary objects and brokering; the boundary practices such as overlaps and peripheries; the ways in which identity is constructed and some of the elements associated with styles that people borrow or copy. In addition, discourses transcend boundaries and enable people to coordinate their enterprises with a wide range of people, build relationships and differences. For example, the Skills for Life tutors try to engage students in English and maths but face some opposition from students because their students feel that they come to college to do the vocational course and not maths and English. However, with the support of the vocational tutors, in encouraging them to view maths and English skills as necessary and important life skills, the Skills for Life tutors received a more positive response from the students about maths and English. It is believed that by embedding maths and English in their practice, the vocational tutors have adopted elements from the Skills for Life tutors about maths and English which they can use in their own practice and this is the case for Skills for Life tutors when the attempt to context the activities they give to their students in terms of the vocational area which they work in. Styles and resources are essentially resources which when used in context in order to negotiate meaning help in the formation of identities which can be shared by numerous practices. According to Gheradi and Nicolini (2002) adopting in no way means that these styles and resources are integrated, but helps to produce histories and interconnections; styles and discourses, which help to form other constellations.

2.14.8 Practice and knowing

Wenger (1998) holds the view that competency is experienced through negotiation of meaning with other members. For example, the mutuality of engagement is paramount in order that members are able to form relationships with each other, where their identity of participation is acknowledged. It is argued that the accountability to the enterprise refers to how well the members understand what the 'practice' is about in order that they can take some responsibility for their actions and make relevant contributions to it. To illustrate how competence may drive experience, new members to a community of practice will modify their experience until they reach full competency. However established members will also need to adapt their experience as the practice develops. Alternatively experience may drive competence, especially when there might be some conflict within the practice or when someone wants to make changes to the existing regime. In order to justify these changes, they may have to invite prospective members to the community; change the way in which they engage with people and develop new forms of reification. Wenger (1998) also believed that new knowledge will be created if members are successful in legitimising the group. When we cross boundaries between practices we become exposed to different types of engagement, enterprises and repertoires which belong to different histories which can impact on our experiences allowing us to make our own minds up about what matters (Wenger, 1998).

As tutors do not always have the time to research new ways of working, apart from when they attend Teaching Excellence Training events, an outsider might have more of an insight into new developments in teaching and learning when they are willing to share with tutors at continuing professional development events. Also in some communities of practice, the institutional curriculum determines how competence is organised. It is important to take into account the historical, social and institutional discourses when we attempt to consider what knowledge is, as it is dependent upon our own regimes of competence. Wenger (1998) believed that knowledge should not just be viewed in terms of local regimes of competence but in how we organise our practices within broader conversations. Knowing must involve interaction between the local and global where members can negotiate meaning, share understanding; engage in joint enterprise and repertoire.

2.14.9 Conclusion

This section involved a discussion about the dominant theory which will be used to analyse the data in this research study, and in addition, a discussion which centres on developing an understanding of community of practice in relation to the Social Learning Theory. Wenger (1998) argued that practice as a concept has been discussed in relation to community of practice, including aspects of social justice, practice as meaning, and community and learning. He also believed that boundaries that practice creates including the different types of connections that exists a cross boundaries which may or may not link communities of practice with the world has been discussed. The boundaries generated help to not only form the social landscape of boundaries and peripheries but illustrate how the boundaries blur between the inside and outside of a community of practice. I have also discussed the locality of practice and practice as knowing. The former refers to the range and limitations of the community of practice and whether a community of practice should be viewed as a social configuration or as a constellation. The latter relates to the experience of meaning; some of the regimes associated with competence, how learning is viewed in terms of experience and competence and finally, how practice is viewed in terms of the local and global landscape.

Now that I have reviewed the literature I can identify the research questions that I will address as follows:

The following research questions were therefore created in order to ensure that there is a match between methodology, research paradigm and epistemology, as well as to address some of the gaps in the literature.

The first research question, which was designed to identify the different types of assessment that are used asks:

- What types of initial and diagnostic assessment are used by tutors in the FE College and how do they differ?

The second research question was designed to identify how these assessments were used and asks:

- In what ways do the tutors use initial diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

The third research question focuses on motivation and asks:

- What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessment to help students achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

The fourth research question focuses on the culture of the College and asks:

- What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performance and professional identity of students in an FE College?

In the next chapter I will identify the methodology and methods used in terms of the philosophical assumptions underpinning qualitative interpretive research methods.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be identifying which research philosophy will be used in terms of both the ontological and epistemological assumptions; discussing which paradigm I will adopt; outlining my research instruments and my strategy for data analysis.

3.2 Paradigms

Guba (1990) proposes that to decide upon a paradigmatic position, a researcher must first answer three fundamental questions concerning their ontological, epistemological and methodological positions. Ontology is the philosophical study of existence, being or reality which asks the question, what is reality? Whereas, epistemology or the theory of knowledge is concerned with how we come to know reality and asks the following questions: what is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? How do people know? Lincoln and Guba (2013) argue that there are philosophical and methodological differences between paradigms. The two paradigms which Lincoln and Guba (1990) contrasted were positivistic and constructivist paradigms.

In terms of the ontological argument, positivists believe that there is only one single reality or only one version of the truth. Constructivists however believe that there are multiple realities and that there is no one absolute truth. Positivists also believe that there is the possibility of causal linkages and that everything is linked to a cause or effect. Constructivists, however argue that it is impossible to differentiate between causes and effects as they are interchangeable (Bryman, 2012).

Generalisability is believed to provide nomothetic statements which are time and context-free by positivists. However, constructivists argue that only ideographic statements which are considered to be time and context-bound are valid (Denscombe, 2002). In essence, nomothetic statements, can be described as having a tendency to generalise or describe the study of classes

or cohorts of individuals whereas ideographic statements can be described as having a tendency to specify.

Within constructivism, discourse communities exist which 'communities of practice' belong to (O'Donovan, Rust, Price and Carroll, 2006). A discourse community could be a group of mathematicians, plumbers, doctors or lecturers who have their own language and common knowledge. For example, a lecturer whose subject specialism is English or mathematics will speak the same language and use terminology specific to their own subject specialism with others in his/her own group. Whereas a plumber will have a common language and knowledge about events, artefacts and technology which are common to his/her group (Bryman, 2012).

3.3 Research Paradigms

3.3.1 Scientific Model and Positivism

Positivism is associated with the quantitative paradigm and generates deductive theory as opposed to the inductive theory which is associated with the qualitative paradigm. Positivism is traditionally associated with the objective reality as opposed to the subjective reality of the qualitative paradigms argues, that the research is independent of the phenomena being studied (Shanks, 2002). Positivist social scientists such as Comte (1976) and Durkheim and Lukes (2014) believed that only the phenomena which can be observed through experience and observation are reliable and appropriate forms of knowledge. Any other subjective experience, Durkheim considers to be unreliable (Ambercombe, Hill and Turner, 2000).

The theoretical ideas and concepts that have become embedded within the quantitative methods of analysing data are notions of objectivity, scientific and naturalistic methods of research, positivism and truth. Within quantitative data, categories are given numerical values and the data is analysed numerically. However, this cannot be applied to qualitative data as the variables within this research method are nominal. Quantitative methods tend to be used when large sample sizes are necessary. Also quantitative research is judged on its reliability and validity. The role that theory plays in quantitative research design is deductive, testing of theory. In

addition, the ontological position with respect to knowledge is realism which views reality as external to the object and its epistemological position with respect to knowledge is the natural science model of positivism (Bryman, 2012).

The notion of positivism is interpreted by different disciplines, however, most social science positivists believe that ontology is where the phenomena exists in the world that we have not discovered yet as an objective reality (Denscombe, 2002). Also epistemological knowledge in positivism relates primarily to empirical observations of data which relies on evidence which is objective. A positivist social scientist would be detached from the data being analysed and Denscombe's (2002) useful analogy compares this to that of a scientist who uses a microscope to record the data he/she is observing. Similarly, positivist researchers tend to use objective language whereas qualitative researchers tend to be more subjective and use a subjective voice. This research study will use a qualitative interpretive and subject voice and this will enable me to use interviews to gather the perceptions of from tutors about their work practices.

3.3.2 Interpretivism

Some of the approaches that are associated with the qualitative paradigms are the interpretive methods such as phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and ethnography. Qualitative research is judged on its dependability, conformability, credibility and transferability as well as its trustworthiness. The role that theory plays in qualitative research is to promote inductive rather than deductive reasoning, which seeks to generate theory.

An interpretivist position is reliant upon the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and constantly developing and changing. This is because knowledge is always negotiated within cultures, social settings and in relationships and as a result of interaction with other people. This means that diagnostic and summative assessment may not have fixed meanings but mean different things for different people or groups. The basic tenets of interpretivism are that people cannot be separated from their knowledge, acknowledging that there is a clear link between the researcher and the respondent. The main goal of interpretivist research is that understanding about a phenomenon is gained and that the prediction is weak. The focus of

interest with interpretivism is specific, and knowledge is generated as meanings are relative, time, context, culture and value bound. Other features of interpretivism include the relationship between the subject and the researcher which is interactive, co-operative and participative (Myers, 2008). In addition, the desired information which interpretivist approaches generate, tend to be about what people think, and do, about some of the problems they face or are confronted with and how they find solutions in order to deal with them. The most popular type of primary data collection methods used in interpretivism are interviews and observations. The main advantages of interpretivism are that this type of approach can generate data which has a high level of validity which is emphatic in nature, trustworthy and honest. The main disadvantages of interpretivism are that the data cannot be generalised, is not reliable or representative as the sample size tends to be small (Angen, 2000).

3.4 Rationale for choice of approach

I will be using a qualitative, interpretive approach because I consider that knowledge is socially constructed and value laden and will only come to light through individual interpretation. The ontological position of this research study is therefore social constructivist and the epistemological position is interpretivist (Torfing, 1999). The reason I chose a qualitative paradigm, is because I wanted to capture data about the views and perceptions of individuals that lends itself to using qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and focus groups.

My interpretive methodological position means that I will be using naturalistic methods of interviewing. I will therefore be collecting data using semi structured interviews and focus group sessions. The semi structured interviews and focus group sessions will enable me to interact and collaborate with respondents in order to construct a meaningful reality through dialogue. I will be able to do this by engaging in discussion with colleagues whilst interviewing them in order to put them at ease, clarify any misunderstandings and confirm understanding of concepts discussed. I will also be analysing data from the Teacher Perception of Courses which I designed.

In addition to selecting the most appropriate research strategy and method of inquiry, the researcher should ensure that the research design, plan, methodology and methods are complementary (Howe, 2003). Hakim, (2000) uses the metaphor where she describes the researcher's role in terms of an 'architect' who oversees, plans, designs, uses his/her intellectual capacity and strategy to design the research study. Whereas the 'builder' is described as the person who actually does all the ground work within this research study. The two roles should be entwined as the researcher will take on both roles of architect and builder, before, during and later during the data collection process in order that reliability and validity is ensured. In order to ensure complementarity throughout this research study, I will be adopting both roles of 'architect' and 'builder'. In my role as 'architect', I will be overseeing the research study as a whole and in my role as 'builder', I will be working in the field. It is paramount that I ensure that the research design, plan, methodology and methods are compatible with the philosophical assumptions made are in line with an interpretive research study (Howe, 2003).

3.5 Positionality

As a Skills for Life tutor, who teaches both Functional Skills maths and English, I have an insider positionality to some of the experiences approaches used by Skills for Life tutors in College Z. My previous experience of working in primary schools gives also me further insight into some of the theories and approaches to teaching and learning which some of my colleagues do not possess as most of them have come into teaching from working in industry and have had no or very little experience of working with students pre sixteen or post-sixteen prior to working in FE as a tutor. In addition, my Christian background drives me to continually want to strive for social justice in terms of fairness and equality of opportunity for all.

I will conduct this research in a reflexive manner because reflexivity entails me being aware of any effect I may cause on the process and outcomes of this research. Therefore responding systematically and constructively to what I hear and learn and how the data is analysed is of vital importance. Bonner and Tolhurst, (2002) state that any relationships between respondents must be reflexive so as not to be inherently biased. In terms of researcher positionality, I will have an insider perspective because I will be carrying out research in the institution in which I

work. This gives me three advantages: that I will have a greater understanding of the group or culture; ability to act naturally with the group and a better relationship with the group (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002). These advantages also have associated disadvantages, because a researcher can lose their objectivity if they are too close to the participants and ethical codes may become compromised. Also researchers sometimes have difficulty balancing their positionality and reflexivity in terms of these positions as both tutor and research investigator (Kanuha, 2002). I will deal with this issue by ensuring that the research is conducted ethically. All interviews will be conducted in a formal setting and recorded. Only Skills for Life tutors were interviewed during the semi-structured interviews. The focus group sessions included the Skills for Life Curriculum Team leaders, as well as some Skills for Life tutors. This will ensure that the interviews are conducted professionally and that the transcripts can be checked for authenticity and accuracy. The Hawthorne and Heisenberg principles show that researchers need to be constantly aware of how their presence in the 'field' can affect how the respondent behaves and the researcher should ensure that they take into account their own position in terms of whether they will be adopting an insider or outsider role (Knight, 2002). In this research, I will be adopting an insider approach as I will be presenting viewpoints from the 'actors' perspective, rather than my own in the organisation where I work (Innes, 2009).

3.6 Research Strategy and justification for the study

The qualitative strategy of inquiry which was chosen for this research study is a case study design where the Skills for Life tutors represent the case and College Z represents the context as this enables the researcher to explore:

...the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. (Creswell, 2009 p. 13)

This strategy was chosen because it will allow me to investigate contemporary phenomena within a real-life context and also enable me to use a variety of methods to collect data from tutors and students, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are

not very clear (Yin, 2003). The use of qualitative case studies is a well-established approach in Educational Research and Yin (1984) argues that there are three different types of case study and these are defined as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. In addition to Yin's three different types of case study, Stake (1995; 2005) has developed three more categories. These are described as intrinsic, instrumental and collective. Intrinsic case studies are carried out by researchers who have a particular interest in a case; instrumental case studies relate to when researchers are trying to understand concepts and ideas which may not be explicit or evident, initially to the researcher. Finally, a collective case study is where the researcher is studying a group of cases (Tellis, 1997).

This case study, College Z will be the context and the case will be the Skills for Life tutors that will enable me to investigate a bounded system, over time via in depth data collection methods involving multiple sources of information. I aim to provide an in depth understanding of comparisons of several cases that have clearly identifiable boundaries. In this research study, the cases are the individuals who belong to five Programme Areas. These are firstly, the Skills for Life Programme Area which I belong to and the other five Programme Areas: the Centre for Academic Studies which includes the English Department; FE Business and Computing; Hairdressing and Beauty and Hospitality, Travel and Catering and the GCSE Maths department which is part of the Science and Maths Programme Area.

These cases were selected not just because they are interesting but also because they represent a cross section of the cohort of students at the FE institution. FE Computing is a Programme Area which delivers courses which are considered new technologies like gaming, whereas, Hospitality, Travel and Catering and Hair and Beauty offer a range of the more traditional vocational courses which have existed since the 1980s when NVQs and GNVQs (1990s) qualifications were introduced. These two courses provide income for the college because students are encouraged to practice their skills in the college kitchens which provide food, not just for staff but also the public. Also, the salon is a working salon where hairdressers can practice their skills. The Centre for Academic Studies offers traditional subjects, such as GCSEs, AS and A Level courses. However in this research study the focus will be only students

and tutors who work on level 1 and 2 courses as the variables involved in higher level courses would be too wide ranging.

The Skills for Life Department was developed as a department in September 2004 and included the Train2Gain provision and Additional Learning Support in the form of small group and one to one teaching discrete and in group settings by English and maths specialists and Learning Mentors. Tutors from a wide range of backgrounds were employed to teach Key Skills levels 1, 2 and 3 Application of Number, Communication Skills and Information Technology to full-time 16-18 students and some 19+, work based learners and apprentices studying on vocational courses. The funding methodology allowed for between one to one and a half hours per week per key skills teaching. However, Basic Skills literacy and numeracy had a time allocation of three hours per subject per week and was many the domain of the GCSE English and maths department but some SFL tutors did teach Basic Skills literacy and numeracy. As a condition of service, all SFL tutors were expected to obtain the FENTO level 4 qualification in Literacy and or numeracy with a specific time frame, if not already obtained before commencing employment at the college. Skills for Life tutors work on a cross college basis, travelling to and from different venues around the campus to ensure that English and maths is taught to all students who need it in the many vocational areas across the campus. However, whereas vocational traditionally have base rooms and opportunities to collaborate with their own colleagues, this is not the case for SFL tutors. This lack of collaboration leads to misconceptions, misunderstandings and mistrust amongst SFL tutors, as well as the vocational tutors. This research study seeks to identify how some of these misconceptions occur and identify some of the similarities and differences which all tutors possess.

3.7 Research Instruments

The research instruments which I will be using to collect data from the sample will be firstly, semi-structured interviews, focus group sessions (Appendix 4), and the Teacher Perception of Courses (Appendix 9). By using these interpretive methods, I will be able to ensure that adequate dialogue between the researcher and participants have taken place. This will enable us to interact and collaborate in order to construct a meaningful reality.

3.8 Semi-structured and focus group interviews

The main reason why I chose semi structured interviews as a research instrument is that there is more flexibility about asking supplementary questions to elicit responses than there is with structured interviews. Within semi-structured interviews, the researcher can adapt the interview guide and questions to include more questions he/she may feel is relevant to the topic under discussion (Appendix 4). Structured interviews have advantages which include being able to reach a larger sample and that questions are structured, the main disadvantages are that the interviewer has to stick to agreed questions and it can be difficult to obtain reliable data on attitudes, opinions and values (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

In order that the semi structured interviews and focus group sessions had some focus, I designed an interview guide which has eleven open ended questions which was sent to each respondent prior to the interview sessions so that they had prior knowledge of the types of questions I would be asking them and the topic under discussion (Appendix 4).

3.9 Teacher Perception of Courses Survey

In order to reach a wider range of tutors, I decided to re-work the FE Student of Perception Courses Survey questions in order to design a Likert scale survey that the Skills for Life tutors who had not taken part in the semi structured interviews or focus group sessions could complete (Bryman, 2012). I used the survey to capture data from Skills for Life tutors who were not able to attend the semi-structured or focus group sessions. The main aim of this survey was to ascertain their views on the differences between diagnostic and summative assessment and the different types of diagnostic assessment strategies that they used. The Teacher Perception of Courses Survey comprised of one hundred mainly closed questions and eleven Skills for Life tutors were asked to complete it. (Appendix 9) provides details of the survey.

3.10 Field notes

In addition to the data collection methods of semi structured interviews, focus groups, Teacher Perception of Courses and Student Perception of Courses, throughout this research study, I will also be keeping field notes. These field notes or journals will enable me to gain insights, plan and be reflexive, especially during the data analysis stage in each of the three phases (Appendix 5 & 6) of this research study (Bailey, 1996).

Table 3.1: How each research instrument will be used

Semi-structured Interviews	Focus Group Interviews	Teacher Perception of Courses Interviews
1Sent to participants prior to interview	1Sent to participants prior to interview	Link sent to participants via email
2Encouraged to bring to interview	2Encouraged to bring to interview	Participants have one week to complete the survey

3.11 Sample

The Skills for Life department was the first area where I drew most of my data from because this is the area in which I work (Appendix 5 & 6). These cases were selected using purposive sampling because the respondents in this research study have some knowledge and experience of the topic being investigated (Oliver, 2010). I also invited Skills for Life tutors who had not taken part in the semi structured interviews or the focus group sessions to take part in the Teacher Perception of Courses survey. Both the semi structured interviews and the focus group sessions lasted between forty five to sixty minutes. Finally, after the semi structured interviews and focus group sessions had been completed, the Teacher Perception of Courses Survey were sent out electronically to those Skills for Life tutors who had not taken part in either the semi structured or focus group interviews. The types of questions in this survey were mainly closed. However, the interview guide questions which were used in both the semi structured and focus group sessions were open questions in order to elicit individual responses. As the tutors who

were completing the survey were able to complete the survey and save their answers periodically, it was important that the questions were easy to follow and unambiguous. Whereas in the semi-structured and focus group sessions, the interview was done on a one to one, face to face basis where clarification and misunderstandings could be rectified at the time of the interview (Appendix 4). The justification for using these research instruments because this is a qualitative interpretive study where the responses obtained will yield rich detailed descriptions about individual work practices (Bryman, 2012).

Table 3.2: gives details of Skills for Life tutors who made a contribution to the semi structured interviews, the focus group sessions and the Teacher Perception of Courses Survey. This sample was chosen purely on the basis that they worked in the Skills for Life Programme Area and had some experience of teaching either Functional Skills maths or English or both on various courses across college and in the workplace. This was important as it would give me an insight into the perceptions and experiences that other Skills for Life tutors held about initial and diagnostic assessment who worked in and across different vocational areas in College Z.

Table 3.2: Data collection methods - Skills for Life lecturers sample

Lecturers	Semi-structured Interviews	Focus Groups	Teacher Perception of Courses
	7	11	9

The two tables, 3.3 and 3.4 below depicts background information about the tutors who were interviewed in the semi structured interview sessions on a one to one basis and those who were interviewed in the three focus group sessions. Table 3.3 gives background information on Skills for Life tutors who were interviewed in the semi structured interviews and Table 3.4 gives background information on the Skills for Life tutors who took part in the focus group sessions.

Table 3.3: Background information on tutors who attended the semi-structured interview sessions

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Ft/pt/ Fractional	Specialism	No. of years	Age range taught
Semi Structured Interview sessions							
Mary	50-60	F	White British	Full-time	Maths & English	11	16-18
James	50-60	M	White British	Full-time	Maths & English	10+	19+
Colin	30-40	M	White British	Part-time	Maths & English	5	16-18
Katrina	30-40	F	White British	Full-time	English	10+	16-18, 19+
Nadia	30-40	F	White British	Full-time	English	1+	16-18,
Derrick	50-60	M	White British	Full-time	Maths & English	10+	16-18
Taylor	30-40	F	White British	Full-time	English	9+	16-18

Table 3.4: Background information on tutors who attended the Focus Group sessions

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Ft/pt/ Fractional	Specialism	No. of years	Age range taught
Focus Group Sessions							
McKenzie	40-50	M	White British	Full-time	English	2+	N/A
Lloyd	60+	M	White British	Full-time	English	10+	16-18
Stephen	50-60	M	Asian	Full-time	Maths	9+	16-18
Monica	30-40	F	White British	Full-time	English	10+	16-18, 19+
Agatha	40-50	F	White British	Full-time	Maths	5+	16-18
Trinidad	50-60	F	White British	Full-time	Maths	8+	16-18
Virgin	50-60	F	White British	Fractional	English	10+	16-18
Mia	50-60	F	Asian	Part-time	English	10+	16-18
Rahaan	20-30	F	White British	Fractional	English	1	16-18

During Phase 2 of this research, purposive sampling was used to select vocational tutors to take part in the semi structured interviews and focus group sessions. Between three to five vocational tutors from each of the four following vocational Programme Areas will be selected: FE

Computing; Hair & Beauty; Hospitality and Catering and the Centre for Academic Studies. The Centre for Academic Studies teaches a range of traditional and non-traditional A 'Level subjects which include some of the following: Religious Studies; History; Chemistry; Physics and English Language, as well as English Literature. Some of the non-traditional subjects include the following: Psychology; Sociology; Product Design; Film Studies; and Media Studies. These Programme Areas were selected because they have the following characteristics: The gender balance of students in FE Computing is mostly boys, however there are an even number of tutors from each gender. Also FE Computing is a new curriculum area as opposed to the traditional curriculum areas of Hair & Beauty and Hospitality and Catering. In Hospitality and Catering the gender balance is mixed and this is also the case in The Centre for Academic Studies, amongst students and tutors alike. However, in Hair & Beauty the gender balance amongst both tutors and students is predominately female.

Table 3.5: Data collection methods – vocational and GCSE/Functional Skills tutors

Programme Areas	Total amount of lecturers	Semi structured Interviews	Focus Groups	Teacher Perception of Courses
FE Computing	33	3-4	6-8	33-12=21
Centre for Academic Studies	38	3-4	6-8	38-12=26
Hair & Beauty Therapy	32	3-4	6-8	32-12=20
Hospitality, Travel and Catering	37	3-4	6-8	37-12=25
Total	239	12-16	24-32	92

3.12 Ethics

This research study will adhere to the guidelines laid down by the British Educational Research Association (2014) which argues that all researchers should take account of the person, knowledge, democratic values, the quality of the educational research and the participants' freedom with regards to ethics. After my proposal was accepted by the University Research Committee, I then sought permission from the College where all the data from this research study was collected. It is for this reason that a Consent form and Information sheet was sent to all participants taking part in the semi structured and focus group interviews (Appendices 2 and 3). Every effort will be made to ensure that participants have been given the opportunity to exercise voluntary informed consent, not to deceive the participants in any way, give all participants the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process or not to offer inappropriate incentives which might interfere with the reliability and validity of results. At all times the privacy of the participants will be maintained in line with the Data Protection Act, (1998; 2005) and permission will be sought if any information is to be disclosed to a third party. Participants will not be identified in any way as the data will be kept secure, confidential and anonymous. However, if a participant discloses information which may have led or will lead to an offence being committed, the researcher has a duty to disclose this information to guardians or third parties (Stanley and Wise, 2012; Oliver, 2010, Wilson, 2013). All electronic files and data will be stored safely and securely on my own personal computer which is password protected. Any paper based data will also be stored safely and securely in files and folders in a locked room. Pseudonyms for the respondents will be used in order to make the data analysis chapter more personal instead of the respondent's real names to protect their identity. Only data sets have been used which are relevant to answering the research questions and these include the semi-structured interviews; focus groups and Teacher Perception of Courses data.

3.13 Verification

For this research study, external validity will be ensured in the form of the rich, and detailed descriptions which arise from the participants. Transferability will be ensured if anyone

interested in the study wants to use this framework in a different context for comparison purposes (Creswell, 2009). The three techniques used in this research study to ensure reliability are firstly that the research will provide a detailed account and focus of the study, which will include the researcher's role, the participant's position, sampling strategies used and the context of the research study. Secondly, multiple methods of data collection will be used to strengthen reliability, as well as internal validity. In order to ensure that a clear and accurate picture of the methods have been used in this study, the data collection and analysis strategies will be identified and reported in detail.

In order to provide a rich, thick description and holistic account, the findings of this research study will be reported narratively, using realistic tales and relevant quotes from participants to illustrate important points in the report. Also some information within the report will be displayed in tables.

3.14 Data Analysis

Each of the interview and focus group recordings, was transcribed, stored electronically, checked for accuracy and then copies were made to highlight, annotate and write on (Gray, 2004). It is very important that the researcher transcribes interviews into textual form as the process of transcription although time consuming, can aid in the familiarisation of the data where meanings are created (Bird, 2005). I will be using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse the data. Other methods which I considered but rejected using to analyse the data were content analysis and discourse analysis. These two forms of analysis were discarded mainly due to the fact that content analysis does not have the ethical scrutiny or consideration that exists in thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012). Discourse analysis does not only take into account what people say but the utterances, non-verbal communication and pauses they exhibit, so I decided not to use this method of data analysis as it would be too time consuming and might not add anything to the descriptions and explanations provided.

Braun and Clarke's, (2006) thematic analysis is a step by step approach to analysing the data collected within this research study. The six phases which they argue are the basic tenets that researcher should use:

1. Familiarise yourself with the data
2. Generate initial codes
3. Search for themes
4. Review themes
5. Define and name themes
6. Produce the report (Braun & Clarke 2006, p.87).

These six phases have been expanded on to form a 15 point checklist which can be found in Appendix 8.

After reading and re-reading the data set, my aim is to search the data for meanings and patterns. I will not be just looking for semantic themes (descriptions) but latent themes which aims to identify the underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualisations and ideologies which exist in the data. At this stage, I will be also taking notes and coding the data. After word processing the transcripts they will be manually highlighted and coded, initially using different coloured fonts, then different coloured pens for each of the respondents. A spread sheet will also be used to enable the researcher to look for similarities and differences between categories. Key words and phrases and paragraphs which can be used with the analysis will be clearly marked and underlined.

In phase 2 – generating the initial codes will enable me to become more familiar with the data and is where I will be compiling lists of ideas about what is inherent in the data. These codes may initially be semantic but as the analysis progresses, latent content will have more significance. Within a semantic approach, the researcher will identify themes based solely on what the respondent has said. This is also called surface or explicit meaning (Appendix 6).

In phase 3 – searching for themes will take place. This is where I will analyse the data set by identifying the codes used to generate across and within the data set, looking for themes. Phase 4 – Reviewing themes is where I will need to consider whether the themes are meaningful or

not. By reading extracts collated from the transcripts, I will be able to determine whether any patterns are forming. During phase 5 – defining and naming of themes will take place. Here, I will define and refine the themes, providing a detailed analysis of the themes and sub themes I have made or identified as valid and provide extracts from the transcripts which support my analysis. Finally, in phase 6 – producing the report, I will conduct the final analysis and this is where the write up takes place. The final report will include data extracts which provide a complete story in a concise, coherent, logical and interesting account which the data tells within and across themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.14.1 Worked examples of data analysis

After collecting data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, my first attempt at coding was to determine if the research instruments yielded relevant data which answered the research questions. For example I identified 14 relevant coding terms in relation to the first question states:

What types of assessments are used by tutors in the FE sector and how do they differ? RQ1

- 1 Assessment for Learning
- 2 Summative Assessment
- 3 Procedural – BKSB
- 4 Practice Tests
- 5 Informal
- 6 Formal
- 7 Verbal feedback
- 8 Marking and evaluating
- 9 Tutorial
- 10 Diagnostic Assessment
- 11 Practice discussions
- 12 Teacher's own notes
- 13 Peer Assessment

The above coding terms are an analysis of the different types of assessment which exist in education and which the tutors were familiar with.

Another example illustrates how I identified the semantic themes arising from RQ2 which is

‘Can you identify the difference between diagnostic and summative assessment?’

After coding the data for themes, I finally decided on the following ten semantic themes: Diagnostic and Summative Assessment; How do you communicate with students? Informal versus formal strategies; Techniques and tools which are effective; Constraints; Is diagnostic assessment always positive?; Maths and English; Initial Assessment; Assessment of Learning; and Diagnostic Assessment versus Assessment for Learning.

To illustrate one of these semantic themes, the following extracts were selected to demonstrate whether the tutor was able to identify the differences between diagnostic and summative assessment.

“Diagnostic assessment is what takes place generally on a day to day basis in the classroom and possibly what takes place outside the classroom as well.” (Colin)

“Summative, I also think of in terms of final exams or even mid-term exams or certainly more formal assessment types that refer to the requirements of the awarding bodies.” (James)

Alternatively, another tutor stated that she believed diagnostic assessment to be:

“To inform the teaching and learning during the course and summative is to measure achievement at the end. It's the final result.” (Katrina)

The examples above were selected because they encompass not just diagnostic assessment strategies used in the classroom but also indicate that diagnostic assessment can involve

strategies used outside the classroom as well, such as research, blended and flipped learning. Also, there is some mention of summative assessment in terms of how one of the main purposes of diagnostic assessment is to help students to achieve the requirements of the awarding bodies with respect to the successful completion of final exams (Jones, 2005).

3.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, a case study methodology has been used to capture data from participants in their natural setting. As well as the data collection instruments used to gather data from participants, the role of the researcher is also important. This study is qualitative and interpretive, rather than quantitative and positivistic. Through adopting a case study methodology, I will be able to explore the views and perceptions of individuals and groups within this study. Discussion has also been presented with regards to the standpoint of positionality and the ethical considerations of the researcher and also that purposive sampling is the preferred approach to sampling. The reasons why data collection methods and the use of semi structured interviews, focus group interviews, Teacher Perception of Courses, Courses and Field notes have been used has already been discussed. An important aspect of this research study will be to state what lessons, if any have been learned, compare the findings with past literature and theory, raise questions and state whether any reform is necessary. In addition, I have demonstrated reliability and validity procedures, as well as providing a discussion on generalisability.

In analysing the data from the semi structured interviews, the focus groups and the survey, I have been able to use Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis checklist to transcribe, code, analyse, and develop an overall picture of events. When analysing the data, comparisons will be made between tutors about the diagnostic assessment strategies used by the GCSE and Functional Skills tutors, as well as the vocational tutors depicted in this study.

In the next chapter, I will be analysing the data from the semi-structured and focus group interviews, and the Teacher Perception of Courses.

Section One

RQ1 What types of assessment are used by tutors in an FE College and how do they differ?

RQ2 In what ways if any, do tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

Chapter 4 Results and Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will be analysing RQ1-4 where I will be firstly discussing the types of assessment which are used by tutors in the college and how these types of assessment differ. In addition, I will be discussing the different types of assessment which the tutors have identified, as well as what they consider to be the purpose of diagnostic assessment. Secondly, I will discuss how these diagnostic and summative assessment types are then used to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy. Thirdly, I will discuss what tutors consider to be the most effective methods of assessment to help students to achieve their goals and determine whether they face any constraints in implementing these methods. Fourthly, I will also discuss whether the organisational culture and policy has an impact on the performativity and professional identity of tutors at College Z. Finally, I will give some indication about the main differences which the tutors have identified through detailed analysis of the data.

4.2 What types of assessment are used by tutors in the FE College and how do they differ?

4.2.1 The different types of assessment used in the college

There are a variety of different assessment types used by tutors at the FE College as well as similarities and differences which may exist between Programme Areas. Some formal or informal which may include teacher's own resources, whilst others can be described as 'assessment for learning' activities that include strategies such as giving and receiving written and verbal feedback. Some are procedural such as the BKSB Live 2 Initial and Diagnostic assessments. Whilst others are summative which will include end tests, coursework and exams or tests. Some assessment types are predominantly used by the Skills for Life and GCSE maths and English tutors whereas others are the domain of the vocational tutors, and include, flipped learning, blended learning and Moodle. Full details of the assessments used are provided in Appendix 7. Before I discuss the BKSB initial and diagnostic assessment, I will analyse some of the more effective assessments which tutors in the FE College use to illustrate how they differ.

4.2.2 Tutors' use of peer and self-assessment

Peer Assessment can be given in many forms; it can be verbal where the student is given some criteria against which to judge his/her peers work. It can also be written in the form of rag rating, colour coding each other's work (see Appendix 12). Brenda, a Hair and Beauty tutor said that peer assessment in the classroom:

“I've used peer assessment an awful lot and you know where they give peer marks out of ten for that particular hairstyle.”

Deidre, a vocational tutor described how and why she use peer assessment in the classroom by saying:

“It's that sort of peer learning, you're put on the spot. You've forgot a little bit but not in a humiliating way.”

In addition, Mandy, said:

“So we all do peer assessments as well so when they come in, we're looking at their appearance, we're looking at how well they've actually done the treatment.”

These tutors place great emphasis on the benefits of peer and self-assessment in supporting students to progress. The best ways in which diagnostic assessment can be embedded in pedagogy include when the feedback is provided via self or peer assessment in relation to tutors feedback which can take the form of carefully constructed, open-ended classroom questioning (Black and Wiliam, 1998). When diagnostic assessment is embedded in pedagogy, it is more effective due to the fact that both teachers and students are able to engage in activities which enable them to provide feedback which they can use to adapt teaching and learning.

4.2.3 Tutors' use of rag rating

Rag rating can take the form of numbers where a student is given a score out of ten and where ten is the highest score achievable and one is the lowest. Rag rating can also involve the use of colour coding such as red, amber or green to score students; giving full written feedback on a

recording sheet; annotating student's work or simply, marking the student's work (maths) with a simple cross (X) or a tick (✓) to indicate whether the work is correct or incorrect. Students involvement in the assessment process, not only enables assessment for learning strategies to be developed but also assessment of learning. Using assessment for learning strategies which 'work' will have a positive effect on the assessment of learning outcomes, therefore raising standards (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

Theresa expressed the following view about how she uses rag rating in the classroom:

“...the traffic light system. So in class, I use red, amber, green to indicate whether you've completed an assignment or not.”

As well as using rag rating in the classroom, some tutors use rag rating to inform them of what progress students are making when completing tracking documents, some of which are on the College system and this is where performativity might start to impact on tutors sense of meaning and the purpose of assessment (Appendix 15). However, if an individual student's work is repeatedly assessed by the teacher using this method, it is possible that some students, could become demotivated, especially if their peers have access to their marked work and feedback (Association of Colleges, 2014).

4.2.4 Tutors' use of written and verbal feedback

Tutor feedback, not only helps the student to see what progress they are making but can also help the tutor identify what areas of learning they need to focus on in their planning. Tutor feedback sometimes takes place in tutorials on a one to one basis or in a whole group situation where the feedback is more general and it usually identifies common areas of weakness. However, feedback given on a one to one basis can be as a result of clarifying or justifying comments made or given via written feedback or when the feedback is given on a one to one basis in a classroom context. This type of feedback tends to be verbal and immediate where the tutor will inform the student whether their work is of the required standard or not.

[I] give feedback regularly on the individual learning plan. That's an ideal situation with my interpreting students, because more time in tutorials where we discuss their progress and give them short tasks as well to measure their progress. (Katrina)

Tutors consider the giving of feedback important in helping the students to make progress. However, one tutor mentioned that it is important to give feedback confidently so as not to demotivate students (Torrance, 2012).

Some of the vocational tutors including Travel and Tourism, the Business and Computing and the Hair and Beauty Programme Areas described how they use tutorials in the classroom in both an informal and formal context.

In the tutorial process, we reflect on how they're going on. We'd address the English and maths and how they are progressing on the course. If they are getting lots of referrals, we'd address 'why is every assignment, you're putting in wrong? We'd reflect on it and talk about it. Also, we do one to one's [diagnostic assessments] and we record it in their ILPs. (Deidre)

I do it one to one with the students. That might be one to one after class or during tutorials. If they're absent for some reason [we use it] to get them caught up. (Martina)

The Individual Learning Plan is a document where progress and performance are measured, not only, by the tutor but the student as well. In most cases, the ILP is also monitored by the funding and monitoring body with respect to ensuring that quality assurance regimes and targets have been met and also by the provider or institution. This is a drive towards uniformity in the College (Gleeson and Nixon, 2011). College policy dictates that tutors use Individual Learning Plans to set targets, monitor progress made and to give feedback. These are written documents which both tutors and students have access to which identifies what the students' individual targets are, include results from diagnostic assessments and what they need to do in order to achieve their full potential (Warden, 2016).

Written feedback in the form of marking and evaluating student's progress is by far the most common type of feedback given to students by both maths and English and vocational tutors. Written feedback can take many forms. In some cases, it might be necessary to also give written descriptions, especially when the student has completed a practice maths test to show them 'a model' or 'simple' answer. In some cases, written feedback is given to students via tutorials where tutors can expand or clarify points or comments made to students on a one to one basis (Jones, 2005).

Rahaan said:

“I give them feedback to see if any students have made any progress.”

Whilst Taylor said:

“I’ll give them regular feedback and I’ll tell them how they’ll be assessed throughout the year and in lessons and the way they’ll be tested.”

Some of the vocational tutors emphasised the importance of marking and evaluating student’s work:

“Sometimes I mark the work in the classroom. If it’s just a short paragraph. I might just go through it and give them feedback straight away for the level ones.” (Martina)

In addition, Theresa, said the following:

There’s a section where you can get student feedback on every task that’s marked. I would write something on their piece of work that they’ve given me, maybe a learning point. For example, you’ve done this well, maybe we should look at this.

All tutors read and mark student’s work or assignments. This can be done in class, or away from the classroom in the form of written feedback. Instant feedback is usually verbal and can take the form of ‘yes’, you are on track’ or ‘no’, that is not what I asked you to do. However, tutors need to ensure that the feedback goes beyond, the yes and no and is constructive and developmental.

College policy, point 6.3 on the giving of feedback dictates that:

Effective, timely, personalised feedback will be provided on assessment decisions so that the students are empowered to improve (College Z, p.6)

In order that tutors are able to encourage students to engage in ‘deeper learning’ or what Ecclestone et al. (2010) describes as ‘pedagogy of engagement’, tutors need to develop strategies and activities which will enable them to do so. This can be achieved if tutors break the learning down into manageable steps by finding new ways of learning instead of using methods which are pedagogically focused on what is to be learnt, as well as what happens when learning takes place.

Verbal feedback is spoken feedback given to students on a one to one or in a group or whole class situation. Verbal feedback can be positive, although constructive feedback can also be either, positive or negative. The giving and receiving of feedback is important as if it is not given effectively, the student can take offence. The main purpose of feedback is that the student acts on it and finds it useful. If it is not acted upon, then it is not considered to be effective (Hattie and Temperley, 2007). Tutors who also teach Functional skills maths and English said that they usually give students verbal feedback rather than written feedback due to time constraints. For example, Agatha, a Skills for Life lecturer who mainly teaches Functional Skills maths said:

“I give mainly verbal feedback mainly due to the number of students that we’ve got.”

The main reason Functional Skills tutors are more likely to give verbal feedback on summative assessments scores is due to the way the summative assessment scores are presented by the awarding body. This is because the scores are presented on the awarding body’s website as pass or fail. No indication is given about how many marks are necessary to fail or whether the students has achieved a ‘good pass’ or just passed (City and Guilds, 2016). The tutor is left with no option but to inform the learner when he/she asks whether they have passed or failed because they are not given any other information to substantiate the pass/fail mark.

“They are only interested in pass/fail but my handwriting is a bit horrible and sometimes they can’t read it and they do ask if they can’t read the odd word.” (Virginia)

As the summative assessments at level 1 and level 2 is externally set, moderated and marked and only pass or fail comments are awarded to students, they usually just want to know if they’ve passed or failed. City and Guilds, the awarding body used at this college for Functional skills maths and English do not give tutors or students any indication about what score the student needs to achieve to be awarded a pass. However, based on previous past papers, Functional Skills tutors usually inform students that they need to get at least seventy per cent of the questions correct on the functional Skills paper at level 1 to pass or between fifty five per cent and sixty per cent at level 2 correct to be award a pass because each year, the pass mark for each level is aggregated; it can vary (City and Guilds, 2016). Due to the fact that the assessments are externally marked, the quality assurance process conducted by City and Guilds is undertaken on each paper used at the end of the year to determine whether overall the paper

was fit for purpose, whether the feedback from the different institutions indicate whether there was commonality with regards to issues in terms of answer of questions.

4.2.5 Tutors' use of observations

Observations of student's progress in practical and theory sessions are another form of assessment which tutors use to determine whether students are making the required progress or not (Hodkinson, 2004). Maths and English tutors tend to observe students in a classroom setting by looking at written work produced or by marking student's work, especially if it is a maths class. Vocational tutors tend to observe student's in the same way if it is a theory class where the students are doing written work and the knowledge and skills acquired are centred on their vocational subjects. However, in a practical class or environment the observations of student's work are carried out differently (see Appendix 9). For example, Travel and Tourism, Hair and Beauty and Business and Computing students will be assessed in terms of how well they apply the skills they have learnt by demonstrating the application in simulated or role play activities (Tummins, 2005). However, the College also has a working salon, where students are given the opportunity to practice their skills in a workplace environment and Business Studies students are encouraged to take part in enterprise activities as part of their course. Hair dressers could be observed by a tutor 'washing and shampooing' a client's hair. A Travel and Tourism student could be assessed, 'taking part in giving feedback to an irate customer', a Business and Computing student could be assessed by a tutor on how well they work as a team by completing a 'team building activity' and a computing student could be assessed on how well they are able to 'solve a fault' which they have been allocated. For example, a Business and Computing tutor said:

"So we get the students to present [their work] and then they're given feedback. Role plays, the same." (Theresa)

Nadia said the following about why she uses observation in her classes.

...monitor students where I can check their progress continuously throughout the lesson. Probably a lot of it is verbal, asking concept questions to check their understanding. Observations are always good and especially when you're doing speaking and listening. It's about using your ability to do that before you put them through the summative assessment.

This is assessment on an ongoing and integral aspect of social interaction between the student and the tutor in the classroom.

In addition, Katrina said that she found observations useful but added:

“...it would be nice to have something to record those observations.”

Emily, suggested:

“I tend not to do observations myself but I get them to observe each other to see how they’re learning. Because I don’t think they read the feedback as much as they would each other’s work.”

Ecclestone et al. (2010) argues that one way of improving learning is to introduce self-assessment diaries to students who can use these diaries to be ‘critical’ about their strengths and weakness in a ‘private’ space. One tutor demonstrated how this can be done:

When I was doing production management, I got them to do journals themselves and you observe the practical work and presentations. They create actions plans which are a little bit different and the plans make sense as you give them a list of how they’ve done so far and they create a spreadsheet based on the grades they’ve achieved. (Olivia)

Observation, not only helps the tutor to assess and check whether learning is taking place in the classroom, it also helps the tutor to determine whether a different strategy needs to be used or whether the present strategy is working (Hockley & Harken, 2006).

Gregson and Nixon (2011) argue that the Skills for Life agenda’s main purpose is to ensure that students have a good understanding of the Adult, Language, Literacy and Numeracy in terms of acquisition, context and associated relationship. However, this view of Skills for Life is contradictory to that of New Labour’s ideology who argues that all assessments in Functional Skills English and maths should be generic and universal. The Skills for Life agenda also suggest that Skills for Life tutors and students should be able to fill the gaps in their learning and the tutors to provide individual contextual activities which will enable students to acquire the appropriate skills needed to pass the qualification (Newman, 2001; Coffield and Edward, 2009).

4.2.6 Tutors' uses of direct and indirect questioning

Direct questions in a classroom setting relates to the type of questioning which is directed towards one named individual. This type of question could be differentiated according to the level at which the student is capable of answering. Indirect questions on the other hand, are usually questions which are not directed to one named individual but open to the whole group or class (Avis, Fisher and Thompson, 2015). The main purpose of any type of questioning is not only to elicit some sort of response from the student but also to elicit a response from the tutor. Questions are usually posed to either summarise whether the aims and objectives have been met or to develop and motivate students to become more engaged in the session. (Cotton, 1998) Rosa, said:

“You question them with indirect and direct questions and sometimes it can be used as a sort of peer assessment.”

When students ask their peers questions, the questions tend to be why did you do it this way and how did you arrive at this answer? Sometimes, peer learning involves a different way of arriving at the same answer which the tutor might do in a traditional way. The best ways in which diagnostic assessment can be embedded in pedagogy include when the feedback is provided via self or peer assessment in relation to tutors feedback which can take the form of carefully constructed, open-ended classroom questioning (Black and Wiliam, 1998). When diagnostic assessment is embedded in pedagogy, it is more effective due to the fact that both teachers and students are able to engage in activities which enable them to provide feedback which they can use to adapt teaching and learning.

Steven, a Skills for Life Curriculum Manager said that it was important to ask differentiated questions in order to determine whether understanding was taking place.

We ask questions as we get students who are at different levels and in the class and it may be that some are at entry 2, others at entry level, or level 2 so there is some difference in levels. So we would ask target questions first to see how well they understood whatever it is you're trying to teach them.

Asking questions is very important. It is sometimes necessary to ask open questions to the whole group or class in order to determine whether they have learnt a concept or not and to also identify those students who need more practice (Wallace, 2007). Directed questions can be

useful when seeking whether a student has understood a particular concept or not that you may have identified in their Individual Learning Plan or when asking differentiated questions, when students of different levels are in the same group/class which is the case mainly in Functional Skills maths and English classes. When a teacher asks probing questions, it can help students to determine what progress they are making or what they need to do in order to reach a particular target (Petty, 2004).

4.2.7 Tutors' use of formal and informal assessment

In terms of differentiating between formal and informal assessment, formal assessment can be described as any assessment which has an accreditation attached to it. All the tutors in this study teach on courses where the student will achieve a qualification or certificate at the end of their programme of study. Therefore a formal assessment can be described as a course which requires the student to undertake some sort of summative assessment which may be a test or course work which is marked by the tutor or externally (Gravells, 2016).

Mary expressed this view about informal assessments:

I've produced my own (resources) around every person matters. Did they enjoy the class; have they stayed healthy in the class and they did it on a Likert scale so they gave a mark and it was used two fold really. For me to see how they've done it, could they add up the average, work out the mode and range etc.

James made a distinction between formal and informal assessments:

I think formal needs to be recorded or its work that someone's done and I'm giving them feedback. Informally it could be basically just a chat throughout the lesson and it could be where I've noticed they're doing something incorrectly.

Rosa, describes how she uses formal and informal assessments:

So coursework would be the formal assessment that we do and we have criteria that we use from the exam board. Worksheets, questionnaires, drafts, which we provide feedback on would be the informal.

However, Nadia, another Skills for Life tutor describes formal and informal assessments in the following way:

It could be the assessments that you do at the beginning to assess where the students are, the level that they're working at so the BKSB, diagnostics, initial assessments. The informal is just everyday stuff that you do in your class so how well have they done on this particular topic, on that worksheet, on that paper.

Informal assessments in this context are strategies or practices which can be considered to be 'assessment for learning' strategies which tutors use to ensure that students achieve the required outcome. Some of the informal assessment strategies used by tutors at this FE College are practice, mock and sample tests or exams (Gravells, 2016). The maths and English tutors tend to use practice or sample functional Skills maths or English tests to gauge whether a student is making the required progress or not or in order to determine whether a student should be entered for an exam or not. Tutors who teach on GCSE maths or English courses also give students the opportunity to answer mock exam questions in preparation for the 'real' exam in the future. Vocational tutors on the other hand use sample questions in the same way to demonstrate to students what a model good, adequate or poor answer to a question would look like against the standards or the assessment criteria (James and Biesta, 2007).

4.2.8 Tutors' use of diagnostic assessment – Initial and diagnostic

There are many different types of diagnostic assessment strategies used in this FE College. Firstly, the Initial and diagnostic assessment in the form of the BKSB Initial and Diagnostic Assessment tool is used by both the maths and English tutors, as well as some of the vocational tutors. It is used to primarily determine a students' level of attainment at the start of the course in English and maths and, for Functional Skills and GCSE maths and English tutors, to identify which students will do Functional Skills or GCSEs. The vocational tutors use the results to determine whether a student will be able to cope with the demands of the vocational course they are undertaking (Ecclestone, 2013).

Katrina expressed the following view about diagnostic assessment.

Diagnostic assessment is to inform opinion, in my understanding it is to inform the teacher and learner, how well the course is going and the learners are achieving during the course and if they are making the desired impact. So if the students are learning what they're supposed to be learning during the course. Is the course effective? Are they gaining from it? Are they developing their skills? And so it happens during the course

so it's not at the end and not at the beginning. It's during the course and at different times during the course.

This tutor's view of diagnostic assessment is that it should be dialogical and reflective.

Since, September 2014, the government directive is that any student who has a GCSE grade D must now be given the opportunity to improve this grade to a grade C. This has meant that the GCSE English and maths department are no longer able to select students on the basis of whether they are able to achieve the qualification within one academic year but must follow strict government guidelines. Prior to 2014, any student who was assessed by the GCSE department, as being capable of achieving this was enrolled on a GCSE course. All other students who did not meet the relevant criteria would then do a Functional Skills qualification which is an alternative qualification (House of Commons Education Committee, 2012-13).

McKenzie, said that there were other types of diagnostic assessments:

“The other bits of the picture are the GCSE grades, the writing, if it's English etc. So you're just trying to create a whole picture of where there are up to.”

Mary said that:

“We have two diagnostic assessments. We have a blue one which is for numeracy and a green one for GCSE. The green one separates the higher tier from the foundation students.”

Whereas the Skills for Life tutors rely heavily on the results of the BKSb Live Initial and diagnostic assessments to guide them about the students' level of attainment, GCSE Programme Areas designed their own paper-based assessments. The Functional Skills English and maths qualifications were designed for students who did not achieve a grade C in English or maths upon leaving school and also for Apprentices or anyone who requires equivalent level 2 qualifications to GCSE grade C to gain employment or entry to university (Smith and Gorard, 2005). The following tutors described how they do or do not use the BKSb Live and Diagnostic assessment guide practice:

Nadia, a Skills for Life and Functional Skills English tutor said that:

“That’s what I’d base the majority of the work on. So if the students came out at level 1, entry 3, then I would tailor my Scheme of Work and also activities around that level.”

However, Derrick, who mainly teaches Functional Skills maths said that:

“To be honest, I don’t use BKSb probably as much as I should. I don’t know how to do it. I get the results and that’s it.”

Some of the vocational tutors use the results of the BKSb Live Initial Assessment (BKSb, 2014) to guide practice. But others have indicated that they find the results confusing because they don’t do the assessments with their students as they leave it for the Functional Skills tutors to do. At College Z, the Functional Skills tutors have the responsibility of administering the BKSb Initial and diagnostic Assessment to the student in their classes in the first week of teaching of the academic year. However, the main aim of this assessment is to identify learners’ skills gap in English and maths so that they can be placed on the correct vocational course which is dependent upon the results of the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment. In some cases, this assessment may have been administered by the vocational tutor prior to the student being placed on a vocational course but in many cases, this does not happen and students are placed on vocational courses despite the fact that their English and maths indicated that they might not be able to successfully complete the vocational course they have been placed on without interventions. In addition, some vocational tutors are not familiar with analysing the results from the BKSb Initial or diagnostic assessment and students may have been placed on vocational courses due to this lack of awareness and knowledge.

Gillian said that:

“We give them a paper based Functional Skills Level 1 sample paper.”

Other tutors agreed:

“We do it at induction.”(Emily) “We do it at interview and tell them not to rush it.” (Angelina)

However the following vocational tutors said that they did not do the BKSb Live 2 Initial or Diagnostic assessment with their students:

“We don’t do Initial Assessments.” (Linda) “Functional Skills do the BKSb.” (Deidre)

“We don’t do it.” (Olivia)

“We don’t do BKSb anymore.” (Theresa)

The implications of tutors not doing the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment with students prior to being placed on the correct vocational courses means that there is an over reliance on the Skills for Life tutors to do it in the first week of teaching. This may be possible in the first week but if students start their course in the following weeks, then they might not have the chance of completing the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment and if the Functional Skills tutor does not have access to computers in the classroom, this may not be possible at all. This suggests that students are being placed on courses throughout the college without identifying whether the student has the English and maths skills necessary to complete the course.

As you can see there exists no uniform, college wide approach to the use of the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment because some tutors do not know how to use it through lack of training. Moreover in most cases, only the results of the Initial assessment are recorded and no attempt is made to use the diagnostic assessment tool which would help tutors to ascertain whether student targets in English and maths is made (Clough, 2001).

Diagnostic assessment involves assessment which takes place at different points throughout a programme, module or unit at the beginning, or at the end of a unit or module or summative at the end of the course. Some tutors felt that the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessments can have a negative impact on students. For example,

James, a Skills for Life Trainer Assessor said:

Most people suffer anxiety about numeracy and situations than involve assessment, rather than social situations or even being observed. So what do we do on day one, is give them an assessment that really, ...is designed to make them as anxious as possible about maths and is not what we are trying to do and I think there must be a better form of assessment that we can use.

The BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment is a computer-based interactive, self-marking assessment tool which can be used to identify learner needs from pre-entry to level 2 in Reading and mathematics. This assessment is linked to the Functional Skills maths and English standards and the Core Curriculum in English and maths. The in depth tracking and reporting

facility enables tutors to gain useful data which they can use to inform lesson planning, learner management of data and to evidence for inspection. After the student has completed the BKSB diagnostic assessment where a provisional level has been indicated, the student is encouraged to complete the diagnostic assessment where the strengths and weaknesses of the student is identified with the level they are working at. Once the strengths and weaknesses have been identified, the BKSB assessment tool will generate interactive resources which are individualised to the student which they can complete independently inside or outside of the college (BKSB, 2010).

During lessons, tutors said that they were constantly monitoring and diagnosing student's progress and this is done through dialogue, humour and question and answer. The examples below illustrate how tutors diagnose student learning throughout the session using these strategies:

Colin, said:

"I think generally because I grapple with the learners that I'm able to throw in a little bit of humour."

I think the most powerful answer is direct and extended questions....With direct [questioning] you are directing it to everybody in the classroom. You can stretch and challenge and extend it and those that are not quite sure, you can ascertain how much she knows but not in a humiliating way. (Deidre)

You can also do it by different types and ways of teaching so it might be verbal, it might be on the worksheets. There are lots of different ways, variety is the key as well. (Nadia)

This is important as they sit on the boundary between assessment for pedagogy and assessment for performativity purposes. These two examples suggest that some care needs to be taken in deploying different kinds of assessment and is important in further education.

The different types of assessment which Nadia refers to will be discussed in greater detail later. However, some of these types of assessment include diagnostic and summative assessment; written assessment; peer and self-assessment; group work and some of the strategies which facilitate diagnostic assessment, such as blended and flipped learning and the use of Individual Learning Plans to set SMART targets (Appendix 7).

Tutors use a variety of techniques to diagnose student needs including paper based assessments that helps to alleviate their negative view of numeracy but also helps to reinforce it. Colin, demonstrates how he uses humour to engage students and Deidre, demonstrates how she used direct and extended questions to determine whether students are understanding the concepts covered in class and using different types of questions to challenge and stretch students (Braxton, Jones, Hirschy and Hartley, 2008). Building confidence in learners in further education can to be a crucial aspect of practice and this data illustrates how the institutional and mechanisms can undermine this.

Diagnosis can also take place during group work. Through listening to students talk to each other and there can sometimes be negative aspects associated with diagnosis.

Rosa, suggested:

“I use group and paired work, worksheets and discussions to engage students.”

“I think our students are used to being assessed and re-assessed and given feedback. They consider what can I do to take this from a grade C to a grade A to an A star.”

In GCSE English classes students are encouraged to draft and redraft their work based on the verbal and written feedback provided by tutors. Finally, diagnostic activities such as practice tests, quizzes and ‘fear in the hat’ activities which require students to share their anxieties, are ways in which diagnostic assessment can be used for different purposes.

“...When we are coming towards doing the actual tests, then I give them examples of test questions.” (Derrick)

“...I get them to do practice assessments.” (Taylor)

[We do] “Face to face communication on an informal basis by which I mean on a sort of friendly, off the cuff, encouragement basis.” (James)

In terms of monitoring learner’s progress, Angelina states that she has to physically observe a Computing and IT student undertaking this process before she can give feedback to the student against the standard criteria, indicating that they have successfully completed this activity. In the hair dressing salon, Mandy indicates how the students engage in in realistic practical activities which are assessed by a tutor who gives feedback to the student verbally on how they can improve their practice, if necessary. In addition, Barbara argues that she initially gives

feedback to students on their performance in the hair salon verbally and always starts by saying something positive before engaging in any constructive feedback or how they can improve. In recording the outcomes of the diagnosis, the tutors will be able to adapt their teaching to meet the needs and requirements of the students (Gravells, 2016).

Tutors use diagnostic assessment and summative assessment types in the course of their teaching. The main difference in assessment types between the Skills for Life tutors and vocational tutors were the practical assessments and Moodle which is a virtual learning area where vocational tutors communicate with students about all elements of their course (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 2015). This can include written feedback on assignments, schemes of work; assignments; exam and assignment dates; teaching resources, PowerPoints and videos; and course documentation. With respect to practical assessments, the Travel and Tourism, Hair and Beauty and Business and Computing tutors also give students some opportunities to take part in role play activities as this is one aspect of their course (Daly, et al., 2009).

Linda illustrates this point:

“We do all sorts of stuff like that. Observations, role plays because in Travel and Tourism we do lots of group tasks.”

Role play is not only important in the teaching of speaking, especially in terms of learning how to speak in different social contexts but it is also important in enabling students to experience ‘direct learning in their chosen profession. (Arum et al., 2016) Although, some elements of the vocational course include written assignments, another part will be a practical element where the student is assessed carrying out their duties as if they were in the workplace. For a Travel and Tourism student, they will be expected to take part in cabin crew and travel agent duties. An FE Business and Computing tutor will be expected to be assessed carrying out business activities and a computing student will be assessed on some aspect of computing. Below are some examples of how vocational tutors use practical assessments in the classroom:

“They have to upload software and change software around so those are the types of observations we do.” (Angelina)

We do practical assessments such as mock assessments as if they were working on a client and then pick up on how they can improve on when they’re doing their diagnostic assessment. We have a commercial salon class which is practical and a theory class as well. (Mandy)

We do it verbally. You know when we're doing a treatment and we give feedback to say absolutely fantastic. You need to look more on the skin analysis. I [also] have them drawing round each other and then measuring the bones and how big is your femur? Draw that on as well. (Barbara)

Almost, all vocational courses have a speaking and listening element where students are expected to take part in a team work activity or group discussion activity and this is where the vocational and Skills for Life Functional Skills English tutor could work more closely together as one element of the Functional Skills English course is that the student takes part in a group discussion and at level 2, the student has to prepare a power point presentation. However, the main purpose of the Functional Skills tutors English and maths course is that students gain transferable skills in reading, writing and speaking and listening, as well as numeracy skills which they can use in everyday life, as well as in a vocational context. (City and Guilds, 2016)

All tutors use diagnostic assessment strategies with their students but the vocational tutors find that the Ecordia helps to facilitate the diagnostic assessment strategies that they use more easily, especially with respect to the giving of written feedback and tracking progress made. The Ecordia is an electronic platform which some vocational tutors use to provide feedback on students' work and track students' progress (Further Education Learning and Technology Action Group, 2014). The Ecordia is a web based electronic application which can be accessed from anywhere and on a range of technological devices, including mobiles, tablets and laptops and is used for monitoring progress, submitting assessments, preparing assessment feedback and during the internal verification assessment process (Ecordia, 2013).

The vocational tutors use a variety of summative assessment types in the course of their teaching. They have more flexibility, whilst the majority of learning is assessed by assignments they also use course work that can also take the form of portfolios (Wallace, 2007). However, some elements of the vocational course are assessed online in the form of multiple choice questions. For example, the summative assessment types used in hairdressing are observation of performance, direct observation of the candidate in the workplace, documentary and other product based evidence, a personal report by the candidate endorsed by colleagues, questions, discussions and professional discussions, witness testimony by colleagues and line managers of the candidate, inspection of products and online (Gola) and paper tests and knowledge tests (City and Guilds, 2014).

Linda, said that in some of the Travel and Tourism courses:

All the mandatory units are going to be tests...They will have two intakes. They will do it in June and February and you get one attempt and one resits after if you fail and you've to pass both of the mandatory units' tests to pass the year.

There are also mandatory and non-mandatory tests. In the mandatory test, no text books can be used (SQA, 2015). However in the non-mandatory tests, which are 'open book' notes and texts books can be used (Scottish Qualification Authority, 2015). In both of these types of tests, the tutor is allowed to invigilate and the tutor is provided with sample answers for the knowledge tests. Whereas the GOLLA test does not require the tutor to mark it as the results are computer generated (Beetham, 2014). Students are expected to achieve seventy percent on any test to pass.

In terms of course work, tutors sometimes use sample questions from assignments to indicate what a model answer would look like in terms of a pass, merit or distinction (Wallace, 2013).

Theresa, a Business and Computing lecturer describes how she uses past exam papers:

"I might give them past papers to see how they've performed and before that they've been preparing for different topics and they need a chance to put them into practice."

When Whiniger (2005) used diagnostic assessment tests, summatively, he called this diagnostic summative assessment and his findings suggests that student performance in the real exam improved due to the qualitative feedback they received, as well as the quantitative mark or score they achieved which gave both the student and the tutor some indication of how well they would achieve in their summative assessment. When a summative assessment is used diagnostically, it can help to diagnose targets or areas of improvement (Dunn and Mulvernon, 2007). In contrast, summative assessments are externally motivated in terms of confirming and in the recording of achievement, as well as providing the basis for accountability and quality assurance (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, 2008).

The example below illustrates this point:

I tend [to say] you're not yet competent at that because with NVQ there isn't a pass or fail. I think it is coming. In NVQ, you're either competent or you're not yet competent and that's where you get feedback. (Barbara)

Evidence from summative assessments can be used to influence future performance with respect to advice and feedback. However, the diagnostic assessment ‘results’ tend to be private between student and teacher, but in some cases, the feedback from diagnostic assessment is given to inspectors and other identified parties which can result in the purposes of diagnostic assessment becoming blurred (Ecclestone et al., 2010).

4.3 Smart targets

The acronym SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Reliable and Time bound. All tutors whether they are maths and English or vocational tutors are expected to design a programme of study which will enable the student to achieve the required outcome and that relates to the subject matter that the student is studying. Falchikov (2005) argues that the tutor should consider, the ‘who, what, when, where, why and how, when’ writing objectives in order to motivate students (Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2003a).

Colin, describes a Smart Target as:

“A target that you can actually work on progress and they can actually see what it is they need to work on.”

When deciding whether a task or objective is measureable, tutors are expected to give some indication of how they will measure whether the outcome has been successful or not. This can take the form of a numeric value or descriptive comment relating to the success of the activity or not. With respect to ‘achievable’ tutors must consider whether the goals set are achievable. In terms of ‘relevant’ tutors must consider whether what they are delivering to students meets the aims and objectives of the course. With respect to ‘time bound’, tutors need to consider whether the aims and objectives, especially when setting tasks and providing resources, will be met at the end of the course (Day and Tosey, 2011).

Deidre, provides students with SMART Targets in order to show development:

“So before we’d just go level 1, level 2. We look at the areas that they need to develop...but we now look at Functional Skills targets more.”

Martina, a Business and Computing lecturer says that she reviews SMART Targets four times a year in order to show progress for the level one students' otherwise the aims and objectives have to be revised and the time to complete the course may need to be adjusted.

4.3.1 Tutors' use of using Formal and informal Tracking documents

All tutors in this study use tracking documents. The group or class register is paper based and is a legal requirement, as well as a college policy, and which all tutors must take at the beginning or end of their class to monitor attendance and punctuality. College policy, requires all tutors to also mark an electronic register. The electronic registers are known as e-registers and are expected to be completed at the end of each working day. All tutors are expected to indicate whether a student is present, absent, not expected, sick, has an authorised absence or withdrawn when marking the e-register (Coulson, 2016).

Tutors are also expected to complete tracking documents or the eTracker by the College in order to determine whether students are on track or not (VLE, 2017). The most recent of which is called a 'Progress Tracker' where the tutor is expected to indicate using rag rating of red, amber or green to indicate whether or not a student is making progress or not. The results of these are analysed and sent to the relevant course tutors who are tasked with implementing strategies to get students 'back on track'. Bearing in mind that different students learn at different rates, the eTracker mediates this by allowing the tutor to set individual as well as generic targets. Other tracking documents used by the maths and English tutors are the Functional Skills maths and English excel and paper-based exam tracking documents which Functional Skills and GCSE maths and English tutors use to register and enter students for exams (Werquin, 2010).

Barbara said she uses a tracking document to:

“...track a learner's progress throughout the course. It's being able to see how their strengths are and being able to identify their weaknesses and being able to set SMART Targets to make them achieve.”

Emily, said that all Travel and Tourism tutors use Ecordia to track student's progress:

It's an electronic marking system. All our students' work goes on Ecordia, so once they've done an assignment, it goes on there. We mark it, annotate it and identify where they've made mistakes. They have to accept the feedback and read it, then send it back again via Ecordia.

So what used to be individual focusing on ongoing assessment is now centralised and mechanicalised.

Tutors also use informal tracking documents which they have designed in order to capture data. These tracking documents tend to be paper based and could be a paper register where the tutors also includes some of the topics covered on a weekly basis or where they have rag rated students. Some tutors design their own spread sheets to capture data. Managers also design tables and charts which they expect tutors to complete in order to monitor progress so that they can develop strategies to help students to achieve.

4.3.2 Tutors' use of Individual Learning Plans

The theoretical framework for the use of paper based ILPs centred on the premise about encouraging learners to think for themselves about what they want to do in the future (Vygotsky, 1994). As technology has improved, the natural progression from the paper based form of ILP to the electronic has been a welcome benefit to the FE sector as it has enabled large amounts of data regarding a learner to be available in one place and accessible to all stakeholders, including parents. The learner and tutor are able to communicate and reflect on the learning experience more easily due to the fact that the data is interactive. This personal formalising facility centres on the idea that learning should start at a personal level, and then gradually progress to the public level (Crichton and Kinsel, 2003).

These plans (ILPs) are formal tracking documents which capture data about each individual student.

McKenzie says that:

“One of the vehicles for informing students is the ILP reviews and some sort of tracking of the learner achievement during the year. I think an ILP is a good way of measuring learners.”

The ILP includes information about the students' BKSBS and Diagnostic Assessment results and their smart targets. It will also give details about whether a student is doing a Functional skills or GCSE qualification in English or mathematics. Each Programme Area will customise the paper based version of the ILP to meet the aims and objectives of the course which the students are studying on. The main aim of the paper based ILP is that the tutor and student could review their progress five times per year to determine whether they are making progress or not. The student's progress is reviewed every half term during the academic year to check and monitor learning and so that the tutor can put interventions in place to enable the students to meet their targets. Diagnosis can take place during tutorials and review, however, in the case of Skills for Life tutors, this has to be done five times per year and recorded on the students' Individual Learning Plans. In addition, Skills for Life tutors, unlike vocational tutors do not have time allocated on their timetables to enable them to do tutorials so in many cases, tutorials and reviews takes place in the classroom when the students are working independently on other self-directed tasks. The tutor below said he uses:

“ILPs to write down, record what we've done, what the learners' have done, what they felt went well, what didn't, what would they want to learn more.” (Colin)

In contrast, Derrick suggested that in recording diagnosis:

“I think ILPs can be effective but I think it depends on the constraints you might have in terms of what the establishment might make you use in terms of the paperwork.”

Gregson and Nixon (2011) argue that some of the Skills for Life policy documents were difficult to implement and regularly contested by participants in their study. Some of the reasons given, were that the ILPs were time consuming, did not necessarily reflect needs of the student, bureaucratic and serve the purpose of the audit culture which was linked to funding and productivity. The general consensus amongst all tutors was that the ILPs were useful but were too cumbersome and did not serve the purpose they were intended for. What was needed is an ILP which all tutors have access to, and the student could see and feed into which was electronic and easy to access.

4.4 Findings and Discussion

The BKSBS Initial and diagnostic assessment tool is the first form of assessment which all students are introduced to before they begin their course. However these findings show that

not all students are assessed, prior to starting their course which leads to low motivation and dissatisfaction with their course. These findings also show that both the maths and English and vocational tutors use a plethora of diagnostic assessment types which are similar. The main types of diagnostic assessment used by tutors are the Initial and diagnostic assessment. In addition, other diagnostic assessment types are verbal and written feedback, peer and self-assessment which all tutors agree are the preferred mode of communication between tutors and students (Hattie, 2012). However, how this differs is in the way and the mode of delivery that the tutors use to feedback to students. Both sets of tutors will give verbal feedback to students in the classroom in tutorial sessions or in a group setting. However, maths and English tutors are more likely to give written feedback to students within a classroom setting; vocational tutors on the other hand tend to use a variety of other methods to do this. These include Moodle, the eTracker and other electronic web based tracking systems such as the Ecordia which the Travel and Tourism tutors used previously (Further Education Learning Technology Action Group, 2016). The FEITAG Report (2016) provides six themes in the context of the promotion of digital technology in the FE sector. The first is that the sector should strive to keep abreast of change. Secondly, that the sector should ensure that the technological infrastructure is affordable. Thirdly, that innovation, in terms of the effectiveness in improving learners' outcome should not be inhibited by regulations and funding. Fourthly, that the whole workforce is aware of the full capabilities of learning technology in enhancing students outcomes. Fifthly, the cause due to advances in technology, stakeholders, including community and employers will have greater access to technology inside and outside of the workplace. Finally, learners should be given greater opportunity to be empowered in terms of devolving a greater understanding and familiarity with digital technology for their own learning. Vocational tutors are more likely to use teaching and learning strategies which facilitate diagnostic assessment strategies to liaise with students in order to ensure that they gain the feedback in a timely manner. These strategies, include blended learning, flipped learning, the Core Online Learning assessment and Moodle all have some element of web based learning. The reason why the vocational tutors are able to use a variety of teaching and learning methods compared to the maths and English tutors is because College policy legislates that the vocational programme areas have priority over the use of portable laptops and stand a-lone computers in the classroom (Further Education Learning Technology Action Group, 2016). If this could be extended to include students who attend English and maths classes, this would enable the SFL tutors and students the same opportunities to access learning technologies which will enhance teaching and learning. Vocational tutors also tend to use rag rating with students within the classroom

to give instant feedback whereas, maths and English tutors expressed the view that they mainly use rag rating for administration purposes. For example: when using colour coding to suggest whether a student is making the required progress or not (Association of Colleges, 2014).

In the next section, I will be analysing the ways in which tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy.

4.5 How do tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

4.5.1 Tutors' perceptions of how they meet learner needs

In this section, I will be demonstrating how tutors use assessment to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy. In order to guide learner needs, it is important that these needs are identified. This is usually done at the beginning of the course when the student completes the Initial and diagnostic assessment in English and maths (BKSB, 2016). By completing these assessments, the English and maths tutors are able to determine the skills gap that the student may have and then use this data to put them on the correct level vocational course.

If the data is used correctly, the student will be able to improve their performance ultimately to level 2 in Functional Skills maths or English or GCSE, Grade C in maths and English which Looney, (2008) as well as the national policy argues is the level and grade which employers and educators believe is the minimum standard that students would be expected to achieve. However, in many cases, the results of the Initial and diagnostic assessments are ignored by the vocational tutors and students are enrolled on vocational courses using different criteria by vocational tutors.

There are various reasons why the vocational tutors ignore these results. The first reason is that they do not have the literacy and numeracy skills to be able to teach English and maths despite the fact that it is college policy that all tutors gain a level two qualification in English and maths. Another reason why vocational tutors do not take the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment seriously is because in some cases they have not had any training about how to use it.

Martina, Olivia and Theresa expressed the view that they did not do the Initial and diagnostic assessments with their students because:

We've been told by Admissions that we are not allowed to reject students on any grounds so doing a diagnostic before we decide they can stay on the course or not is pointless. (Martina)

Here we have evidence of assessment practices being determined by industry and Coffield et al. (2007) argues that three of the most powerful policy leavers which are used by government

in order to transform the industry are funding, targets and initiatives. Although there are others such as planning and inspection, the former three policy levers are used to set targets for retention and achievement.

It was [someone from the functional skills team] that did it and he just told them the result which was displayed on the screen. So literally, they knew the results, he looked at it, wrote it down and he gave them to me. So I didn't actually do them. I had someone from his team do it. (Olivia)

So all we do is look at the learners' English and maths grades for literacy and numeracy and we undertake the learners on that basis. (Theresa)

However, Angelina said that she found the results of the Initial and diagnostic assessments useful in determining which level of vocational course the students should do.

Each learner is assessed on literacy and numeracy when they come. I like to do it at interview to give me a good idea of where they're at, at this stage, and if their results indicate that I would be able to take them on to level 2 then that's great. If not, then I would sign post them perhaps to level one. But at the end of the day, it all depends upon what their grades are from school and it all comes together. So we use the Initial assessment results a lot. (Angelina)

In addition, Linda used the results of the Initial Assessments:

...to determine [what] they are going to learn. I would say that before we taught literacy, probably not so much as we sort of leave that to the Functional Skills tutors. We do consider it when we're putting them into level 1, level 2 and level 3. You know if they've got a really good result and they were due to be on level 1, we would perhaps do a bit more...assessment.

Likewise, Emily identifies how she uses the results of the Initial Assessment:

I personally do put Functional Skills into my group tutorials so I always do my own BKSB so this year I did them all and I manually test them so that I've got the results and I do a database worksheet so that I can see the areas of strengths and weaknesses and build that into my group tutorial.

In some cases this means that students are enrolled on courses based on whether they have prior achievement in the vocational course of study or not. The problem which occurs when this is done, in most cases, is that the students do not have the literacy and numeracy skills in order to do the course at a higher vocational level than they have already achieved. However, in some

cases tutors do not acquire the knowledge and skills necessary in order to improve their own performativity. Orr, (2009) found that when the recording of the thirty hours of Continuing Professional Development became compulsory in FE in 2008 requiring all FE tutors to register with the Institute for Learning, none of the respondents in the study said that it had made an impact upon their practice. In addition, Orr, (2009) argues that although government policy attempted to close the gap between policy and practice, this did not happen as tutors complied with the request by recording their CPD activities, in order to comply with government targets but only strategic compliers complied because of their personal and professional interest in CPD and others complied but made no attempt to improve their practice. This is clearly evident at College Z as all tutors have to attend compulsory Teaching and Learning Excellence courses throughout the year, as well as the Training and Planning (TAP) events where tutors can select courses which they want to attend which they can record as CPD.

Meeting the individual needs of the students requires the tutor to identify similarities between students, in terms of access to the curriculum, cognition, management of learning, motivation to learn and an understanding that personal factors can affect whether a student learns or not and within all these categories, students will have a different level of need and ability. In terms of curriculum and cognition, it is important that students have work which is aimed at their level of ability (Petty, 2004). The higher the level of ability, the heavier the workload should be. At the beginning of the course, due to lack of knowledge, the student is a passive learner but as the course develops and the student develops more skill and knowledge, they shift from passive to active.

The link between ability and assessment is important in ensuring students make progress. It is therefore important to firstly identify the learner's skills gap, as well as what the learner already knows in order that the student is placed on the appropriate course. The tutor will then become more a facilitator as the students become more engaged and participate in their own learning (Petty, 2004). There will always be students who require more help, which the tutor will be able to give as the more able student becomes more independent. Motivated learners once they have acquired the skills and knowledge to progress will be able to adapt to the constant changes in their career later on in life and in education (Looney, 2008).

Taylor, a Skills for Life, GCSE maths and English tutor illustrates how she uses technology in the classroom to motivate her learners:

“I use Technology in the classroom to engage them more and I will create resources that are linked to the things they can relate to so it could be things that have recently been in the news.” (Taylor)

In addition, Agatha said that she uses the following diagnostic assessment tools to engage her students:

I do face to face with them in the classroom. I also provide written feedback. For Functional Skills stuff, especially the IT, we mark against the criteria of skill...so if they've missed out a skill in a practice assignment or assessment, then I usually feedback there and then about that skill and ask them to develop that skills. I also use old practice papers. (Agatha)

With respect to approaches to learning, Skills for Life, and GCSE maths and English tutors place great emphasis at the beginning of their course of study on diagnostic assessment which they then use to plan teaching and learning and the level of attainment for each student. However, most vocational tutors place more emphasis on whether the student has an interest in the vocational option, rather than whether they have the literacy and numeracy skills to do the course or task. For example:

Brenda says that she relies more on the interview process than the initial assessment results:

“Well, right it depends on their initial interview and also what their initial assessment is and whether they can cope with the theory.” (Brenda)

Vocational tutors have more access to students than Functional Skills tutors who only see the learner once per week for one and a half hours. Whereas a vocational tutor might teach a number of units over the academic year, which might mean that they see the students for longer periods of time each week. In addition, prior to beginning a course, most students are invited to an open day where they provisionally select a vocational course and meet the tutors who will be teaching them. After making a formal application for a course and if their application is successful, the student will be invited to an interview where they will meet their course tutor who will then make a final decision about whether the course would be suitable for the student (Lucas et al., 2010).

When asked to describe the types of assessment which she uses in the course of her teaching, Gillian, a GCSE English tutor said that she used both formal and informal assessment types and these included the following:

“Well a formal one is the diagnostic that we do at the beginning as a starting point...we all use Functional Skills sample papers, the same one so it’s a true measure for standardisation purposes.” (Gillian)

This GCSE English tutor was arguing that at the beginning of each academic year all students prior to enrolling on a course at College Z, even if they have been at the college previously must do the formal BKSb electronic Initial and diagnostic assessment which is the sector norm in most colleges in England. In addition, at the beginning of the first session, some GCSE tutors who teach English mentioned that they give all students the same Functional Skills Sample paper for Reading and Writing and use the results of this paper to confirm or disagree with the results of the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment because they felt that the results of the BKSb Initial and diagnostic assessment did not give an accurate picture of student’s starting points. The word ‘true’ in the above statement relates to ensuring that the assessment procedure measures what it is supposed to measure. In terms of reliability, does the assessment test if trialled with more students in the field give the same results? In terms of validity, does the test scores give an accurate picture of whether the learner has successfully achieved the assessment or not?

The types of assessment which the vocational tutors from the FE Business and Computing Programme Area said that they used in the college were continual assessment and verbal feedback (Martina; Theresa). Olivia said that the types of assessment which she used included, ‘mock assessments, as well as practice tests, diagnostic assessment strategies, presentations and moodle.’ The FE Business and Computing tutors said that they used both diagnostic and summative assessment, as well as formal and informal assessment strategies in the classroom. However, whereas the Travel and Tourism tutors used the informal assessment tools to inform practice, the FE Business and Computing tutors said that they did not use these tools as they felt that this was the responsibility of the Functional Skills tutors.

Martina said that the reason for not doing the Initial and diagnostic assessment was that as a department they have been told not to refuse students on to their courses:

No, because we do it after they start anyway and we've been told by Admissions that we are not allowed to reject students on any grounds. So doing a diagnostic before we decide they can stay on the course or not is pointless.

Lydon, (2013) argues that the Initial assessment should be done by experienced and qualified staff and that an explanation should be given to the students about the purposes of the Initial assessment in terms of what the results show. However, as the above quote illustrates, this tutor also supplements what the Initial assessment tool results show by manually creating her own spreadsheet of data results for her class. Whereas the data is already available and the Initial assessment tool has a facility that can manage and create the data a lot more quickly and effectively so that she can do it manually. Due to her lack of experience and training this facility was not accessible to her and could have saved her a lot of time which she could have used in a more productive way.

In terms of pedagogy, tutors are expected to continually respond to feedback in order to adapt or change their teaching and learning strategies so that their students are able to learn the skills and knowledge they require in order to successfully complete the course, module or test. The three main types of learner which tutors are asked to identify in their classrooms are visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. In addition, you may have learners who are a combination of the three. Some learners could be described as read, write learners meaning that their preferred method of learning is information which they can read and where they can make notes. Visual learners, on the other hand, tend to like information displayed in the form of pictures, charts, films or diagrams or when they are able to visualise words and phrases. Auditory learners prefer to have ideas explained to them verbally and enjoy listening to ideas as they are natural listeners. Kinaesthetic learners prefer hands on approaches as they learn best by doing (Kolb and Kolb; 1984; 2005). Whichever type of learner exists in the classroom, it is important that the tutor identifies the preferred learning styles of all his or her students and provides activities which cater for their preferred learning styles in their Scheme of Work.

Motivation is not only the domain of the students but the tutors as well. The tutors in this research have said that the diagnostic and assessment strategies which they use to guide student learning include tracking documents and ILPs.

Mary, argues that:

“...are a good starting point but obviously from that starting point, you’ve got to do the initial and diagnostic etc. The assessment process is only as good as the assessment. Does it measure what it needs to measure?”

The BKSb Live Initial and diagnostic assessments helps to guide student learning by identifying the level of attainment in maths and English which can be used diagnostically to identify the strengths and weaknesses within the level they should be working towards at the end of the year and summatively to determine whether students have made progress. With respect to student needs some of the strategies, include techniques and tools which records student’s needs and these are Individual Learning Plans, tutorials and one to one and face to face tutorials.

The tutors below expressed the following views about tutorials:

We use a lot of them in observation, for the practical side of it. In tutorials, we do ILPs so we talk about what progress they’ve made, what they’ve passed, what they need to pass, deadlines. (Mandy)

“We do quizzes, group tasks and things like that.” (Mandy)

The motivational aspect of assessment should focus on the needs of the students rather than any other purpose of assessment (Falchikov, 2005). Some of the techniques which tutors used to measure achievement diagnostically as well as summatively are practice and mock tests, continual assessments, end tests, short tasks and formal assessments in the form of the summative GCSE English and maths tests, Functional English and maths controlled assessments and end tests. In addition, portfolios, short tasks, coursework and assignments to measure knowledge and skills at the end of a unit or module. The techniques and tools which tutors use to inform practice and their own pedagogy include the designing of tasks and activities which enables the tutors to check on student progress and help with differentiation.

Mia Dominica, a Functional Skills English tutor said:

“I’d rather design my own [assessment tasks] because I would find it more useful.” (Mia)

Some of the informal diagnostic techniques and tools that help the tutor and students to monitor progress are activities and tasks designed to help students learn the knowledge and skills to meet the aims and objectives of the course.

Some examples are:

“We have a skills checklist and it basically lists all the different skills that a student needs for GCSE maths.” (Mary)

I’ve produced my own [activities] around every person matters. Did they enjoy the class, have they stayed healthy in the class and they did it on a Likert scale so that they gave it a mark and it was used two fold really. For me to see how they’ve done in the class but also they could do numeracy tasks on it. (Mary)

Both the tutor and student can complete checklists in order to ensure that they have completed all activities. The teacher’s own performance can be measured through the colleges own performance strategy. This is done via the College’s own Peer Observation Policy (Harringey, 2016) which is conducted every year where all tutors are monitored (but no longer graded) on their teaching performance (Petty, 2004).

4.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In answering this research question about the ways in which tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy, I have shown that they use a variety of diagnostic and summative techniques and tools. Although all tutors use similar diagnostic and summative assessment strategies, they tend to use them for different purposes, especially, the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment (BKSB, 2010). Some of the different ways in which tutors use diagnostic assessment includes providing continuous feedback to learners about their work in order to improve their learning which can also be used by tutors to improve their teaching. In addition, diagnostic assessment’s main goal is to identify student’s strengths and weaknesses in order that the weaknesses can be improved on over time by the setting of targets. The main limitation of diagnostic assessment is that it takes time and is in addition to what is already planned in the classroom. Whereas the main limitations of summative assessment is that there is sometimes little room for creativity and some tutors are forced to drill students by teaching to the test, which neither engages or inspires the student’s interest to learn. When equal weight is given to both diagnostic and summative assessment in the planning of resources and activities, the outcomes or the learner will be more favourable. However, if there is a disparity in either, the outcomes for the institution are less favourable. Biesta (2006) argues that diagnostic assessment should be an

essential element of teaching and learning, and although, it does not contribute to the final mark, it makes an effective contribution to learning, in the form of feedback which should indicate what a student needs to do to improve on his/her work if the piece of work has not met the required standard. On the whole the maths and English tutors use the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment for the purposes it was designed for which is to assess and identify learners level of attainment in English and maths in order that the student is placed in the correct level vocational course that they have applied to do. Some English and maths tutors are not familiar with how the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment works and all associated resources that they can access on this system. The tutors who teach GCSE maths and English, as well as Adult Functional Skills tend to use their own specifically designed paper based Initial and diagnostic assessments which they mark individually and are sceptical about the results of the BKSB Assessment because they believe it does not accurately identify a level of attainment. Moreover within the Skills for Life team, some tutors are familiar with the BKSB system and some not. The maths and English team place great emphasis on getting the level of attainment correct at the beginning of the learner journey so that students are working towards the level of attainment in English and maths that they are capable of achieving. However, as the data suggests this is not always the case, because some tutors are more familiar with the BKSB Initial assessment system than others? In the case of the vocational teams, two of the tutors from the Travel and Tourism team who teach both English as well as their vocational course are more familiar with the purpose of the BKSB Initial assessment to determine whether a student could cope with the course he/she was teaching on. Whereas many of the other vocational tutors said that they left the maths and English BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment to the maths and English tutors to do and did not use the results of this assessment to determine whether a student was capable of doing any of their courses.

In terms of summative assessment, the maths and English tutors' used a combination of end of module assessments and exams. For example, students undertaking Functional Skills English assessments would take the assessment at the end of the unit instead of at the end of the academic year. The GCSE English tutors used a combination of coursework and terminal exams, the dates of which are set at the beginning by the examining boards in May and June. The Functional Skills maths and GCSE exams did not involve any coursework or end of unit assessments and the exams or assessments are taken at the end of the academic year and are nationally set. However, the college has the flexibility of determining when to set the Functional Skills English and maths assessments (Petty, 2004).

At the time of writing this research study, all Individual Learning plans were paper-based. Each programme area was responsible for customising the ILPs so that the ILPs were able to capture relevant data which was important to individuals such as managers, other course tutors and maths and English tutors. The Skills for Life team also had to complete ILPs for each individual student that they taught at least five times a year. However, when it came to sharing this information with the vocational teams, it was not possible to do so, systematically as the ILPs were completed by hand. This means that it was time consuming to complete. Vocational teams have time set aside to do tutorials whereas Skills for Life tutors do not so this means that the vocational teams can complete ILPs on an individual basis with students whereas Skills for Life tutors would have to ensure that the ILPs were completed as a group or class within their 'teaching' session. All tutors in this research study expressed the view that although they found the Individual Learning Plans useful for capturing data, they felt that the usefulness was only 'effective' for senior management and collegial requirement purposes but not for the sharing of information as some tutors completed it paper based and others completed it electronically. However, whether the Individual Learning Plans were completed paper based or electronically, there was great disparity in terms of sharing of information in the ILPs which for the most part was the intended purpose of the LIPs. The data yielded by this research study provides convincing support for the need for an electronic tracking system which will capture all the data, but only if the teacher engages with it, that the paper-based versions are supposed to capture and more importantly, be shared with the students, parents, and any tutor or relevant person that the students are associated with whilst at the college.

The introduction of marketization and managerialism and the business culture of targets and audits has changed the focus of FE from primarily working with Adult and work based learners to competing with schools for 14-16 year olds. The population in FE is much more diverse since incorporation and so are the types of courses they offer (Smith, 2007). In order to remain profitable, FE colleges were competing with other institutions for funding which was initially based on successful achievement of a course but with the new methodology encouraged by 24% in the first three years, post-incorporation, of which a 16% increase in funding would be provided. Colleges which were able to meet the demand led element (DME) of the new funding methodology invested heavily in new technologies like the Management Information Systems (MIS) which could track and provide the performance data. These colleges which were able to provide a variety of courses to meet the needs of the community, flourished and colleges

which struggled were those who were not able to diversify enough in order to attract a different range of students to their course. According to Smith, (2007), one successful college, Hilltop, was able to provide community courses in community centres which was previously unaccredited and taught by unqualified tutors. By encouraging these unqualified tutors to gain a recognised teaching qualification, not only changed the cultural 'glue' which was evident in this community where students relied on the altruistic and voluntarist nature of the tutors. These informal courses were now accredited by the college and the tutors employed on a part-time temporary fixed term basis which meant that the college had increased its student population and accessed already available resources in the form of unqualified tutors at the same time as responding to the requirements of performativity, professionalism and accountability in the sector by providing in house training for these tutors to gain a professionally recognised qualification in teaching.

The data clearly shows that all tutors use a variety of diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy. The results also shows that all tutors prefer to use feedback in the form of verbal, written or the marking of students work to give feedback to students about their work. Although all tutors expressed the view that verbal feedback was instant and could take the form of 'praise' or clarifying points, the Skills for Life tutors said that they used this type of feedback very frequently due to the fact that they only see the students they are working with once a week for one and a half hours. Whereas the vocational tutors will have access to these students for a minimum of three hours and possibly, six hours, if they are teaching the same students for more than one session per week. Also, unlike the vocational tutors, Skills for Life tutors do not have any course tutor or personal tutor responsibility of any of the students that they teach. In addition to verbal feedback all tutors place great emphasis and importance on the giving of written feedback to students. However, how this type of feedback is given differs greatly between the different tutors. Where the Skills for Life and GCSE teams will give written feedback individually on the student's work, after marking students work in class, the vocational tutors tend to use the virtual learning environment such as Moodle or Ecordia to give written feedback which is then discussed individually in tutorial time with the student. Students then have the opportunity of acknowledging receipt of the feedback individually, acting upon the feedback to improve a grade or score or discussing the feedback with the tutor privately. This is not an option for the Skills for Life or the tutors who teach GCSE and Functional Skills English or maths. Students can track their progress if they keep a record of their individual scores in the mock or practice

assessments but do not have the opportunity to discuss with the tutor privately any feedback given because not enough time is available for them to do this in either the Functional Skills or GCSE English or maths sessions. In addition, all tutors in this research study said that they used diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide their own pedagogy. These were the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessments; activities which they had designed themselves; practice and mock exams to not only identify gaps in learning but also to identify learner needs and differentiation (Vygotsky, 1978). This information will then be used by the tutor to inform their own pedagogy so that they can adapt the teaching strategies they use to inform practice.

The consensus view amongst all tutors is that in order to ‘engage’ students they need to be motivated and that tutors should ensure that they correctly identify student needs so that they can use appropriate diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, and their own pedagogy which will need to respond to the changing needs of the students throughout their learning journey. This can be done in a number of ways by using a variety of diagnostic and summative assessment strategies such as continuous assessment, verbal and written feedback; marking student’s work, through peer and self-assessment and by tutors reflecting on their own practice by discussing strategies with other tutors within their own teams. In order for students to be motivated, tutors should ensure that the feedback given is constructive and if negative feedback is given, that it is given in such a way as to show students what actions they can take to improve their progress. Verbal or written feedback, if given insensitively will demotivate students and demotivated students will become disillusioned with their programme of study. It is important that all tutors ensure that students are placed on courses according to their ability, where they can be challenged and have a realistic chance of achieving. If the course is too challenging or not challenging enough, students will become demotivated which may result in students leaving the course, not attending or being distracted during session time (Petty, 2004).

Chapter 4 - Section Two

RQ3 What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessment to help students achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

RQ4

What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performativity and professional identity of tutors in an FE College?

4.7 What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessments to help students to achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

4.8 Introduction

In the previous section, the most effective methods of assessment were identified as the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment, verbal and written feedback, as well as peer and self-assessment. In addition, some of the assessment strategies which facilitate learning were identified as the ILPs and the setting of SMART targets; web based tracking systems; rag rating, observation and role play. In this section, I will be giving examples of some of the constraints tutors face in the course of their duties. The issues which will be discussed are time constraints, increase in student numbers, behaviour, technology, lack of resources and accommodation, lack of motivation, pedagogical issues and misunderstandings regarding the principles and purposes of assessment methods and activities and finally, motivation which impacts on everything both the tutor and student does.

4.9 Tutors' perceptions about the impact of time

Although all tutors said that they were able to identify the preferred learning style of their students', they also said that many factors, including accommodation and lack of resources had an impact upon whether they were able to guide student learning. This was mainly the issue with the maths and English tutors but not so much the case with the vocational tutors. This was because most students select courses based on what vocational course they want to do, and not on whether they have the literacy and numeracy skills in order to do it and in some cases students were placed on courses by vocational tutors which the students had problems completing due to their lack of literacy and numeracy skills. However, maths and English tutors have problems with attendance and punctuality in some of their sessions for the reasons identified above and this has an impact on whether the tutor is able to use appropriate tools to guide their own pedagogy. If students do not attend maths and English sessions until the end of the academic year, then the tutor, due to time constraints, has limited time to ensure that the students are able to progress or complete the assessments. Catering for the different learning styles of the students in the classroom is therefore low priority, compared with ensuring that the learners have access to all the skills and knowledge in order to pass the course.

Another impact was the change in hours from three to two hours durations for the 16-18 year cohort because this means that the workload has increased. For example, if a tutor previously had up to twenty five students in a three hour session, this would mean that they would have a total of fifty students in two, three hour sessions. If a tutor is teaching, three two hour GCSE sessions in one day, this now means that the number of students being taught has increased to seventy five students which means an increase in workload which in turn will have an impact on the how many scripts tutors are realistically expected to mark. The marking of the course work is essential to the student's progress and development as they have to complete many controlled assessments (although this will change in 2018). This change in hours means that the GCSE and Functional Skills maths and English student numbers will increase dependent upon how many vocational 16-18 year olds from the vocational area these tutors work with.

Due to the change in hours, GCSE tutors have said that they now have less time to give written feedback on student's work as their workload has increased. Before, they might review a student's work two or three times before the student hands it in; they are now unable to do this as their workload has increased by fifty per cent. Vocational tutors are also no longer able to give verbal or written feedback to student before they submit a piece of work and in some cases, feel that this lack of diagnostic assessment puts some students at a disadvantage as it does not take into account the different learning styles.

GCSE tutors also said that they feel that the increase in workload by fifty per cent, means that the amount of diagnostic assessment they can give to students in the form of written feedback where students' work is marked and annotated is minimal. Both the Skills for Life tutors and the GCSE tutors said that the increase in student numbers means that there is less time to spend with each student which has an impact on the amount of feedback, whether written or verbal they can give.

James, illustrates this problem:

“Short timescales because you have to prepare resources are an issue.”

The consensus position of all the tutors was that lack of time available to spend with students had a negative impact on the amount of diagnostic assessment they could give. However, Angelina, an FE Computing tutor, and Mandy, a Hair and Beauty tutor said that the major issue

they faced was with behaviour, attendance and punctuality. For others, including Brenda, limited access to technology was a major hindrance because it took the students longer to complete their work.

Steven, also found that:

“In some classes where we need the use of computers, it’s not always available or new technology.”

Vocational tutors have seen a reduction in two hours per week from their timetable where they had done tutorials and, Course Leadership duties. Now the new Progress Coaches have this responsibility and all tutors are expected to work and liaise with the Progress Coaches who deal with things like sending letters to students, tracking student progress, via the eTracker to monitor attendance and punctuality.

Although a more manageable workload was achieved, in terms of realistic expectations of what the students would be able to achieve in the time available, she felt that her level one students would be further disadvantaged because they would not be given an all-round experience. To illustrate this point, Martina said:

This year we had twelve hours to deliver eighteen units. That’s been reduced to nine hours. All the extras that they do like raising money for children in need, match fit, the Enterprise fair has not been put into the timetable so They’re expected to do that in their own free time with no guidance or input from tutors... and that’s not possible, not for level ones.

Increased group size, punctuality and lack of technology are common themes amongst all tutors. However, most GCSE and Functional Skills maths and English tutors also mentioned that lack of appropriate accommodation was the main constraint which they faced in the course of their duties, compared to the vocational tutors who did not identify lack of appropriate accommodation as a constraint.

4.10 Tutors’ perceptions about how the changes made by awarding bodies impact on student learning

The change in hours that vocational tutors are able to give to diagnostic assessment impacts directly upon the level of attainment the student is able to work towards. Whereas tutors could

predict that students with ‘support’ would be able to develop deeper learning techniques throughout the course which would mean that they would respond to feedback more favourably; this is now not the case due to lack of time and the awarding body’s ruling about how diagnostic assessment can be given and under what conditions.

Some vocational tutors argued that recent changes to BTEC specifications means that they are no longer able to give diagnostic assessment to students and Olivia, states that:

“The idea is that you give them the assignment and you don’t have to help them anymore. They have to do it themselves.”

Deirdre, said that she considered that the new BTEC ruling was a major constraint.

“The new BTEC standards where you’re not allowed to guide them with what to do with an assignment. You’re not allowed to give them advice, where they’re going wrong.” (Deidre)

All three Travel and Tourism tutors, agreed with her. Linda also said that having to be more careful about giving feedback was a hindrance.

Obviously, if you want to say something to anyone about their work that has been weak and then in front of other students, you have to be careful or it’s giving them other skills for different courses. You have to be careful about what you’re saying. (Linda)

Emily, said:

The BTEC ruling is a massive one for me. You know our classroom numbers have gone up. I’ve had twenty five in my class this year. And getting, even a class with the teaching hours that we’ve got is an issue. The teaching quality that I like leaves no time for getting to know the students. (Emily)

Smith (2007) argues that the funding methodology in Further Education determines which students achieves maximum funding and which does not. However, this does not take into account the different rates that students learn at. Bums on seats is a concept which Balls (2003) argues is a threat to the authenticity of the powers of performativity that is associated with good teaching and learning as it is a strategy where over recruiting or ‘recruiting bland’ has led to low pass rates (Smith, 2007).

4.11 Tutors' perceptions of how lack of resources and accommodation can impact on student progress

Some tutors, especially the maths and English tutors felt that the vocational tutors received preferential treatment in terms of accommodation and resources. So they have limited access to resources due to the fact that they do not have dedicated maths or English rooms.

The Functional Skills English tutor below indicates how the classroom itself can pose a challenge in terms of the teaching and learning strategies that you use:

The constraints can be the classroom itself because you're limited. So for example, I've been teaching in the Media Suite and I've only got a flip chart there so other than handouts and a flip chart board, I've been restricted on giving any kind of, if you like 'visuals'. (Taylor)

This SFL tutor does not have an appropriate environment to teach in which gives the impression that English is a secondary subject to the vocational course which the students are studying on. This therefore has an impact on how they cater for the individual needs of students, especially if the electronic equipment such as smart and white boards do not work or are positioned in inaccessible positions which makes it difficult for the tutor to access unless they are contortionists. Another major constraint that Skills for Life tutors have identified is the lack of resources that include the perceived preference of base rooms (accommodation) given to vocational tutors. Vocational tutors are allocated teaching rooms in designated purpose built areas of the FE College and Skills for Life tutors, including GCSE maths and English tutors are expected to travel to these different venues on a daily basis to deliver lessons. The implications of this is that they do not have base rooms which they can decorate with appropriate resources and fill with adequate teaching and learning resources.

I do an awful lot of my teaching in the Art department and we have got all sorts of problems. The Art rooms are not suitable for teaching English. We don't always have computers or have a white board or an electronic whiteboard so some of the rooms may have computers and some might not. (Mia Dominica)

Due to this disparity and the continual travelling backwards and forwards between different venues, constantly packing and re-packing equipment, Skills for Life and GCSE maths and English tutors said that they feel marginalised.

4.12 Tutors' views of how attendance and inappropriate behaviour can impact negatively on students

Some tutors identified that the main constraints which affect whether a student is able to progress or not is lateness and attendance. If the student is not present at the beginning of the class, then they will have missed some of the vital information which may not have been provided in the handout given out in class or available on the moodle VLE. In addition, the tutor may have planned to give feedback to the student but if he/she is not present, then this feedback may be delayed or may not happen at all which will have an impact on the student's ability to progress, especially if his/her learning style suggests that they may need follow up explanation or small group sessions in order to develop and consolidate concepts (Petty, 2004).

Some tutors said that behaviour and attendance and punctuality issues sometimes have an impact on student learning in the classroom.

For example, Angelina said that she felt that the major constraint she faced derived from the student:

The only time that there is any constraint, is constraint which flows from the learners. Well for instance, poor attendance, poor behaviour in distracting the teacher away from speaking to the learners. Behaviour, bad behaviour from students demanding more time which limits the amount of diagnostic assessment that you can do.

In addition, Nadia, argued that:

Behaviour affects the way that you run the class. What tends to happen with me is that if it's not tackled anywhere else within their classes, I end up spending more time trying to discipline the students and then you get the other half of students who want to do it, not getting the time to spend with them.

Steven, illustrates this point further when he says that the open zones are not conducive places for learning because:

“There are students who are passing by and those that are in the class get distracted. There are a lot of distractions.”

However, as you can see from the examples above the negative impact of behaviour means that the precious time the teacher has with the students in the class is in some cases directed towards

dealing with inappropriate behaviour instead of the innovative teaching that the teacher is attempting to pursue.

4.13 Motivating and re-engaging students

Ecclestone et al. (2010) argues that it is important to understand how students combine strategic approaches to learning which are primarily based on external motivation with self-determination and personal agency (Ecclestone et al., 2010). Prenzel (2001), argues that motivation is affected by social factors in a learning group such as family, peers and work colleagues and has identified different types of motivation.

Amotivation suggests that students at various times throughout the course may become demotivated. This may happen in response to students' attitude towards formal education or assessment and will only improve if external or intrinsic rewards are given. The Skills for Life tutor below expressed the following view about why Amotivation may happen:

“It’s hard to make it relevant to the vocational areas as well because you don’t have enough communication with these people so it makes it difficult.” (Nadia)

Due to the limited amount of time that the Skills for Life tutor has with the student on a weekly basis of a maximum of one and a half hours per group of sixteen, this illustrates how assessment is impacted on by external forces. In addition, this imposition on them by institutional factors, rather than meeting the needs of the student, this tutor feels that she is not able to build up a student tutor relationship or a relationship with tutors from other vocational area. Due to the limited amount of communication and time she has with the students, this tutor feels that she does not have enough time to meet the individual needs of all of the students in her class and must therefore prioritise targets to meet the needs of the majority of students instead.

External motivation only happens if students are rewarded in some way. In order that a student’s ego and feelings are not embedded, external rewards such as financial incentives or payments to encourage students to improve their attendance and punctuality can have the opposite effect. This may mean that students will only attend classes if they are rewarded, rather than because it is a requirement of the course. Instead of the ‘deep engagement’ required, ‘instrumental compliance’ becomes the norm (Ecclestone, 2010). The example from the tutor below indicates how this may happen:

“I tend to juggle things around every year because if the formal exams are too early, they won’t come anymore and if you leave the speaking and listening until the last exam, they won’t come and do that either.” (Virginia)

Introjected or internalised motivation is a therapeutic term where the supportive external structure has been internalised and is therefore articulated by students as their own. This is prevalent in vocational courses where students are aware of the pass, merit and distinction requirements through feedback only because they have a ‘deeper understanding’ of the specifications and the number of points needed to move to the next level. Colley (2003) argues that tutors need to develop techniques which enable them to re-engage students and the example below illustrates how this may happen:

I think feedback is really strong...It works really well where you’re doing past practice exams. I like to sit with individuals and go through the papers with them, discussing where they need to develop, or need to work on, what they’ve done well. You’ve got to give them positive praise as well as giving them areas of improvement. (Nadia)

Identified motivation only occurs if students agree that the content or activities are relevant even though they may have an extrinsic reward such as a qualification. The targets may need to be achieved in order that the student achieves the required goal. An example where this occurs is in the speaking and listening element of the Functional Skills English qualification where students are required to do some research and engage in practice speaking and listening activities before they are formally assessed. The examples below from tutors illustrates the concept of ‘identified motivation’ succinctly:

I use observations just to see how well students are doing in certain tasks and if we need to repeat the assessment activity and focus on something else to inform them to see how they are progressing to achieve those targets. (Katrina)

...In order to motivate them to the desired outcome, if a student knows exactly where they’re up to and what they’ve got to achieve, they become far more engaged with their learning. (Angelina)

Intrinsic motivation happens when learners are interested in a topic. They are motivated to learn, independent of any external factors. However, some educators would argue that students’ choice is in some way associated with external factors which may influence student’s choice, as well as the learners’ personal experience; the family histories of individuals and the perceptions that learners have of education and their career choice (Foskett and Hemsley-Braun,

2001). Some of the external factors which impinge on a learner's ability to make a choice about what they do in their daily life and in the future. Some of the decisions learners make are as a result of the political, economic, social and cultural environment which determine some of the choices they are able to make about their lives. The implementation of marketisation of education in FE in the 1980s and 1990s are based on principles of competition prevalent in the private sector where the government attempted to expand education for purely social and economic purposes in the absence of any attempt to increase the amount of money spent. The economic factor which affects learner choice are the need to raise standards of achievement in young people so that the global competitiveness in education and training is achieved for the UK economy. In order that a learner achieves autonomy, they must feel empowered. Learners must make informed choices about the choice of school or college they wish to attend but this is in essence dependent upon the choice they make about the institution they attend. In terms of social factors which impinge on learner choice, there are two contrasting debates which are at play. These are liberalism ideology which argues that the individual should have the freedom to make their own choices about what they do with external intervention and conservatism which believes in centralised statutory control and constraint. The cultural factors which affect a learner's ability to choose is what Bourdieu, (1990) argues is cultural capital. In other words some students have higher worth than other. This means that learners and their parents are not necessarily 'active choosers' in terms of which institution their child goes to as the institutions performativity in some ways will determine which students they attract. Students with less cultural capital in terms of their ability to achieve the institutional outcomes are therefore less likely to be able to make informed choices about the courses they do or institution they attend. Learning is therefore context driven, because learning can take place inside or outside the learning group. The example below illustrates what can happen if a learner is not interested in a topic:

It depends what groups you're teaching. If it's adults, then yes but I've taught some PRU [other] students and ...no they don't. They just want to do it in the classroom so you have to build all that in because you know that they're not going to come back with anything so you have to structure your class to cater for this. (Gillian)

Interested motivation happens irrespective of any external factors. Students exhibit deeply personal meanings to a content. Where this type of motivation differs from intrinsic motivation is that in this type of motivation, students will seek higher levels of learning, independent of the target set. Maslow (1943) calls this self-determination and self-actualisation, in terms of when a student has a sense of purpose and identity among his or her peers.

If you were just teaching them to pass an exam which is the ultimate goal, to get the funding, in you have to do that because it's your job but I also think that you have to progress students on for the next part of their journey. It's not just about once you've left me, that's it. I feel that I have got to prepare them well enough to manage the next level of their course as well. (Gillian)

Fluctuating motivation is dependent upon the social factors which are 'part and parcel' of the student such as class, gender, race, work related opportunities, as well as teacher's perceptions about the factors that affect them as students. As a result of these deeply personal meanings, a student's motivation might fluctuate on a daily, weekly or task basis.

Derrick, illustrates this point:

"The positive is that they like getting things right and if they really have not got into a topic then the negative or the downside is that sometimes they give up."

In order to maintain momentum to complete a task or course, students need to achieve higher levels of extrinsic, intrinsic and interested motivation at given points throughout the course in order to maintain the high levels of self-determination they need to complete or achieve. Other factors which students may require in order to achieve autonomy, is the ability to be able to make their own choices in relation to self-determination and discovery. Also, factors which will engage students are giving student support for competence which includes effective feedback so that they can improve; ensuring that the climate in the classroom facilitates learning and this can be done by ensuring that social relations such as cooperative working in a relaxed and friendly working atmosphere is achieved. If students can see the relevance of competence and can apply it to everyday life, they will be more motivated. In addition, if the quality of teaching and assessment is authentic and enables all students to see the relevance, through differentiation, students will become motivated. Finally, if teachers are 'motivated' students will follow suit and become motivated, as a result of being inspired by the enthusiasm of their teacher (Ecclestone et al., 2010).

4.14 Conclusion

In this section, I have shown that the most effective methods of assessments which teachers use to help students to achieve their goals and identified some of the constraints, they may face in implementing these methods. The most effective methods of assessment which tutors have

identified are feedback, both verbal and written and in addition, peer and self- assessment. There are many techniques and tools which tutors use to motivate students. However, the most important technique which permeates everything that both the tutor and the students aim to achieve is motivation. Motivated tutors inspire and motivate students. If the tutor is demotivated or disillusioned, then the student will be. In order that tutors are able to 'motivate' students, educators argue that it is essential that they embed diagnostic assessment into their teaching and learning at the outset (Falchikov, 2005; Ecclestone, 2002; Ecclestone, 2010; Petty, 2004; Rogers, 2004). Improving attendance and punctuality and identifying those behaviours which impact negatively on students' learning, ensuring that enough time is allocated to sessions and giving training to tutors so that they are clear about the changes to the amount of diagnostic feedback they can give to students, including, constantly reviewing, the teaching and learning process, in terms of what works, the tutor will be more able to adapt the teaching and learning to meet the needs of the students which in turn will lead to the students acquiring the deeper learning skills that they need for lifelong learning, the world of work and life skills.

The organisational culture and the communities of practice theoretical framework impact on the motivation of tutors and students in a number of ways. Firstly, the organisational culture of top down managerialism, new policy initiatives which are not given enough time to be implemented and the 'Bums on seats' culture all contribute to the lack of motivation which some tutors and students experience. Secondly, with respect to the communities of practice theoretical framework, Wenger (1998) argues that members of a group come to know and progress in terms of learning and understanding and are able to realise meaning if they are able to collaborate and engage in joint enterprises. This is possible for the vocational tutors, however, most SFL tutors in this research study feel that they are marginalised from both the vocational tutors and their own peers and colleagues. This is because they are not able to liaise with members of their own team because they are not located in the same building or staffrooms.

4.15 What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performativity and professional identity of tutors in an FE College?

4.16 Introduction

In this chapter, I will analyse the impact that organisational cultures and policy have on the performativity and professional identity of tutors at College Z, using relevant examples drawn from the semi-structured and focus group interviews. For the purposes of this research study, organisational culture relates to the underlying beliefs, assumptions and values which help to shape the ways in which people within organisations interact with each other. Through interaction, a bespoke social and psychological environment of an organisation can be achieved. In addition, policies relate to a set of plans which are used to enable or enforce decision making processes and procedures within an organisation. In FE, government policies are the main drivers which FE Colleges respond to in order to meet national targets and improve performance. Professional identity relates to how the quality of educational provision in vocational education is paramount to enhancing the professional identity of tutors in FE Colleges.

One definition of professionalism:

The core of democratic professionalism is an emphasis on collaborative, cooperative action between teachers and other educational stakeholders (Sachs, p.149).

Performativity relates to the audit culture of marketisation in FE that has impacted upon the work practices of tutors in this research study.

Ball, (2003) describes performativity as:

Performativity is a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as means of incentive control, attention and change based on rewards and sanctions – both material and symbolic (Ball, 2003, p.216).

4.17 Organisational Culture in FE

4.17.1 Background

College Z, is a large Further Education College in the north of England with over 25,000 students. The range of courses offered at College Z is vast and very diverse and includes full and part-time courses. Courses offered range from pre-entry or introductory level courses though to post graduate level. College Z also has one of the largest HE provisions in the FE sector where the majority of courses are validated by a nearby University.

Marketisation in FE brought with it the need for Colleges to be more competitive and efficient, through the use of targets and measurement of productivity such as compliance and surveillance (Clarke and Newman, 1997) resulting in working practices in FE Colleges becoming more intensified lecturers responded to these changes in three of the following ways: rejection, resignation or conforming. Competitiveness, not only exists between the organisation and its market competitors but also between employees. The market model is the most aggressive and capitalist of the four common corporate culture models. The corporate culture which exists with College Z is mainly hierarchical.

Feather (2016) argues that a negative impact on the organisational culture in further education colleges is the fact that it is too diverse, especially in terms of its provision of Higher Education courses in Further Education (HEFE) and this results in a culture of blame, in terms of how the culture of the organisation has an effect on the employees, its students and the wider society. In addition, the requirement of professionals to maintain an allegiance to the institution (Healey, Jenkins and Lea, 2014) rather than to the profession or academic discipline, not only stifles 'ecologies of practice' but affects 'ecologies of performance' (Hodkinson, et al., 2008). Ecologies of practice relates to the lack of interaction which is in operation between tutors who teach courses at the College. In essence how different tutors do what they do in terms of teaching their chosen subject. Ecologies of performance relates to some of the barriers which makes it difficult for tutors to do their jobs effectively. However it can also relate to some of the statutory global and local policies such as the monitoring of Teaching and Learning which are used to monitor teacher effectiveness and student learning in FE. Feather (2016) goes on to liken the culture which exists in FECs to an exclave operation within an enclave surrounded by different culture within an overarching culture. The overarching culture is that of FE, the exclave is the HE provision and the enclave is all the other provision that is associated with FEC since the Second World War such as training, schools and now higher education (Feather, 2011a). This analogy could be used to describe the present culture which exists in College Z where the Skills for Life and GCSE maths and English Programme Area are the exclave,

operating within the ‘enclave’ of the other cultural territories which in this research study are the FE Business and Computing Programme Area; the Travel and Tourism Programme Area; and the Hair and Beauty Programme Area.

4.18 Performativity

Within this research study, the findings were that there was a lot of bureaucracy, especially with respect to the completion of the Individual Learning Plans for funding purposes, target driven, and the lack of collegiality as some tutors especially the Skills for life tutors felt marginalised. Also the constant barrage of policy initiatives and directives, including government managerialism reforms has resulted in structural instability due to the fact that FEs are serving two masters, those of the institution and the government (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005).

Ball’s (2002) view of educational reform is described by him as ‘policy technologies’ which has three elements of the market, managerialism and performativity. These policy technologies has some relevance to this research study as it illustrates how the global and national landscape impacts upon how Communities of Practice adopt and react to the new top down policy initiatives. In addition, Lave and Wenger, (1998) argue that in order for an organisation to be productive, the organisation needs to ensure that all Communities of Practice are encouraged to exist and where new members of the group come to know and understand concepts and new ways of working more quickly from existing members of the group.

Further Education has been the central concern of UK policy makers for many years and since incorporation in 1992, the widening of participation and the raising of achievement has been the main focus. In order to ensure that social stability and enable active citizenship, learning is seen as the main key to economic competitiveness (Avis, 1999; Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Sachs, 2001). Ball (1999; 2003) in his attempt to make sense of the climate that teachers in FE have been exposed to in FE since Incorporation, refers to it ‘as the struggle for the soul of the teacher’. The marketisation of FE has resulted in policy driving teachers and lecturers into managerial and performance mode of achieving targets, the measure of productivity and displays of quality. This has resulted in teachers having little opportunity to maintain critical democracy and social justice. Bathmaker and Avis (2005), argue that professional identity of teachers in FE is in a constant state of dispute due to it being constantly exposed to change, as

well as being formed and reformed. For this reason, it is important to establish how the teacher identities enrich the teaching and learning in Colleges.

Further Education Colleges in the past offer a wide range of education and training and is a second chance saloon, Cinderella service, (Gleeson and Shane 1999) for many post school students who want access to vocational and tertiary sector of universities. In recent times, the provision in FE has widened to include students in late secondary, higher education, including degree programmes, as well as academic qualifications such as GCSE and A Levels in Sixth Form Centres and a range of occupational and vocational qualifications which FEs have been traditionally associated with since the Second World War.

This SFL tutor gives an example of the type of student that she encounters:

We know that on paper it looks fine but this type of student don't want to do GCSE. That's why they've come in to do plumbing and because they're not academic...Traditionally that's the kind of student that has gone on to the vocational but [now they have] to get a C or above. (Gillian)

The above example illustrates the nature of the cross college work which many SFL tutors do on a daily, weekly basis, compared to the vocational tutors who mostly work in base rooms. The implication here is that vocational tutors have more status than the SFL tutors as they have base rooms which reflect the vocational area in which they operate.

A SFL tutor gives an example of how this impacts on her ability to work effectively:

What we should have is base rooms where have filing cabinets and pens and paper for when the students forget to bring pens and paper. I'm carrying things around with me, I'm travelling all over the place and I'm carrying things about including dictionaries and it's horrendous. (Mia)

This means that unlike their vocational counterparts, the Skills for Life tutors were continually on the periphery of their own team, as well as the vocational team. They were on the boundary of the legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998).

Some examples are identified below:

“It’s harder to make it relevant to the vocational areas as well because you don’t have enough communication with these people so it makes it difficult.” (Nadia)

“A lot of what I’ve learnt from (another tutor) is by going and asking other teachers with more experience than me and longer service.” (Colin)

Another issue, which was identified by Margery, a SFL tutor was that she was constantly on the boundary of different communities of practice due to working in different areas of the College:

I’ve got three vocational GCSE classes (16-18) but the rest are 19 plus. I’ve got an Art and Design groups and I’ve also got a Childcare group. I’ve also got a Public Service group.

Talk and language is a powerful tool in enabling a newcomer to move towards becoming a full member of a community of practice. Before a newcomer becomes an established member of a community of practice, they have to talk, walk, work and interact and collaborate with old timers. This could entail shadowing a more experienced colleague. In this study when interviewed, the less experienced lecturers, such as Mia, who had less than one year’s teaching experience at College Z, talked about the things she enjoyed, disliked or respected such as the usefulness of the ILP in tracking learner progress and the need for a separate tracking document which was more focussed on the individual needs of the student. In this research study, there are a lot of atrocity stories taking place amongst SFL and vocational tutors in the staffroom and some of these are identified below. The main issue that the SFL tutors argue affects their practice are the lack of initial and diagnostic assessment results which they can use to inform practice; increased group size and differentiation (Bathmaker and Avis, 2005).

Monica, a SFL Manager said:

I think that sometimes we’ve got mixed ability levels of students and you have a couple of students who have very low scores. Obviously, you attention goes to them a lot more and therefore you do expect the higher level students to work more independently.

However, in practice, the majority of SFL tutors argued that management was aware of this issue as identified above but the logistics of organising ability groups for both Functional Skills maths and English was the main hindrance to its implementation. The following SFL tutors argue their case for ability groups.

Mia, sums up the feeling of most SFL tutors in this study when she says the following about differentiation:

It's not always easy to handle the fact that one student is consistently working at a higher level than another. We have mixed groups, mixed levels in our groups and it's...really difficult when you've got students at every level who obviously isn't going to do the same stage of work as someone at level 2. It's really difficult to be tactful and diplomatic in their sort of situations.

When talking about conducting tutorials and group size, Nadia pointed out that:

"I can only do it with smaller groups, I can't do it where I've got maybe 18."

A similar viewpoint was held by Rehaan, another SFL tutor who says that:

"If you've got big groups, it can be difficult to dedicate that time to one individual but it's more positive if the groups are smaller and you can monitor your students more easily."

In comparison, the vocational tutors have identified that the main issue they find is the new BTEC ruling regarding diagnostic assessment; and the time taken away from their timetable to do their course tutor duties: Deidre, expresses the following view about the limitations of the new BTEC ruling on the amount of feedback students should receive.

The new BTEC standards where you're not allowed to guide them on what to do with an assignment. You're not allowed to give them advice. You're not allowed to tell them where they're going right, where they're going wrong.

However, Susan, argues that:

"Diagnostic assessment to me seems more like an actual awarding body wants to see rather than you just assessing to see what they've learnt in lesson on that day, if it makes sense."(Gillian)

In comparison, SFL and GCSE tutors have identified that the new government policy on GCSE English and maths retakes for students who have a grade D or 3 is another challenge, Gillian points out when she says that:

Well it's the government isn't it that's said, if they've got a D then they've got to go straight on to a GCSE course. If they have below a D, then they must do the alternative

qualification of Functional Skills in maths or English, unless they have level 2 which will enable them to do the GCSE.

The findings of this study are that quite a lot of the tutors' time was spent teaching, preparing resources and marking. Although whole class teaching was a priority, not enough time was available for tutorials, one to one provision, giving students advice as well feedback and counselling relating to their work in formal and informal workshops. In addition, some lecturers also mentioned that in some cases they experienced problems with their own professional identity in terms of the need to develop skills in ICT literacy, English as a second language and study skills.

Below, I have identified some of the issues which the SFL tutors face in carrying out tutorials:

“We don't have time to do tutorials, reviews. They're doing a two year course in less than one year. (Rosa)

“I've just done probably the first time I've done tutorials because my mentee is taking the group and I've just called them [students] out and given them their exam results.” (Taylor)

“...difficult to have time to spend with student to say this is what your needs are. I think just the time to do 1:1s.” (Nadia)

Unlike vocational tutors, SFL tutors do not have as much access to the students they teach. Vocational tutors work and are located in teams, where they can negotiate with each other to swap classes, meet with students at specific times in order to give feedback or conduct tutorials. The performativity of SFL tutors is limited due to the lack of access to the students and the insensitivity of workload they have compared to the vocational tutors who teach three hour sessions compared to change of class and sometimes venue every one and a half hours for SFL tutors. The SFL tutors of College Z lack of status, no car parking space or photo copying which in some cases, they had to find themselves were other limiting factors. Due to the location of classes in different buildings, some SFL tutors were forced to do some of their photo copying at home, during break times and at lunch time.

The findings from this research study found that there was a dichotomy between the SFL tutors imagined roles and identity as FE is renowned for the commitment to providing education for students who missed out, where lecturers role as facilitators were emphasised and the requirement to assist learners to learn (Appendix 13). However, some SFL tutors found that

the culture which existed was of ‘bums on seats’ climate and a ‘them and us’ situation in terms of how experienced lecturers responded to the management style and constant changes to FE from central government (Smith, 2007).

This SFL tutor argues that when the vocational tutors reduce student numbers by removing students from their courses who they think will not complete, it impacts upon her success rate too as this process is done without any collaboration with her.

But also I think that when vocational tutors get rid of all the weak ones and re-group, instead of being fair, that messes things up enormously (Virginia)

However, a SFL maths tutor gives an alternative perspective when she says that:

I was exactly where they were, you know 15-20 years ago. You know and I understand the difference that education makes...I have much more empathy with these students who have come back ready to learn, want to learn, have a purpose, and have an end goal.

Overall some tutors were disheartened and over stretched due to the increased amount of work and insecurity associated with the changes taking place in FE relating to conditions of service. This is mainly due to the amount of time spent completing the ILPs which serves the purposes of funding, rather than identifying the true needs of the students.

Some of the SFL tutors identified themselves as reverting to their own experiences as learners in order to maintain their idea of positive experience of learning which was very different from how the students learn in FE. In addition, the SFL tutors also argued that there was a need to rebrand the professional identity of teacher or lecturer in FE to that of ‘Learning Professional’ (Guile and Lucas, 1999).

James, argues that he feels disheartened at the amount of time and energy he puts into completing the ILPs for funding purposes but does not feel that the students find them relevant:

No just because of the short timescale but because of the time you have to prepare, lack of time and being able to prepare really individual ILPs...The other thing about it is I also don't think that the students or learners, always really look at the ILPs or quite appreciate or understand what you've written or even if they do, the following week they've forgotten them.

Martina, provides a similar view, as well as her hopes for the future with respect to the new electronic E-tracker which will make it easier to share communication with other staff.

The ILP which we have to use is twenty-six pages long and for level 1 students, it doesn't work as it's too long. Four times a year they must set smart targets. I hope it's (E-tracker) going to make it easier to communicate between staff...and students.

Some experienced lecturers were exposed to 'strategic compliance' or what Shain and Gleeson and Easthope and Easthope (2000) refer to as 'unwilling compliance'. Not unlike the trainee lecturers in Bathmaker's and Avis' (2005) study, some SFL tutors also identified that teaching in FE was marginalised due to the constant changes in policy and the cultures of community of practice did not match their imagined identity as they felt that they were being forced to reconcile their ideas.

In this research study, the following SFL and vocational tutors give examples of some of these issues such as inappropriate work areas; poor accommodation and lack of resources; and student behaviour:

"We taught in art rooms and the desks are covered in materials like glue sticks on them and there's like sharp equipment." (Mia)

The constraints, I think can be the classroom itself so you're limited [in] how exciting you can make the lesson...This year I've been teaching in a media suite and I've only had a flip chart so other than handouts and a flip chart I've been restricted on giving any kind of visuals. (Taylor)

Functional Skills English, time, workload, number of students in College. It's my first year of teaching functional skills and I've found it difficult. You don't know whether to focus on controlling the students and behaviour, teaching or assessing. (Katrina)

"We do experience some problems with students having to book out laptops." (Brenda)

Bathmaker and Avis (2005) argue that there is a need to renew a commitment to lifelong learning in the FE sector and encourage the transformation of teaching. In doing so, there is a need to take into account the social, economic, political and technological context which affect how FE operates so that the 'messiness' of educational practices can be discussed in order to achieve a broader shared reflexivity about work of learning in the twenty first century which allows for critical and uncertain accounts.

This GCSE English tutor illustrates how she thinks this could be done when she says that:

If you were just teaching to pass an exam which is the ultimate goal, to get the funding in, you have to do that because it's your job but I also think that you have to progress students on for the most part of their journey. It's not just once you've left me, that's it. I feel I've got to prepare them well enough for the next level of their course as well. (Gillian)

This SFL tutor identifies how some of the content of the level 5 diploma, does not reflect the reality she faces in the classroom:

We've been discussing it on the level 5 literally last week about how class times, how long the class is an hour, spread over and we had to do lesson plans on grammar, as if you had an entry 3 group, because of course, some do if you are working in different places as you do have groupings, and it was really interesting to do it that way and receive feedback from everybody as to how it works because you can't do an entry 3 lesson, really. (Virginia)

This tutor was attempting to demonstrate how the FENTO level 5 course which she was undertaking did not take into account the reality that some groups she taught had students who ranged in ability from Entry level to level 2 and this tutor only had an hour to cater for the multiplicity of levels. The reality is very different to what they are expected to do on the course.

However, Martina identified that the reduction of contact hours and not being able to teach properly was an issue which resonates with some of the tutors in this study when they say that:

For vocational it's gone down to two. For normal mainstream, you know adults, 19 plus, it's three [hours] and I do think it should be the other way round. I think on the vocational should have two, two hour slots because there's a lot of work they've got to get through. (Gillian)

The overall organisational culture towards the BKSBS Initial and Diagnostic assessment is one of apathy. Most SFL tutors are familiar with the main aim of the BKSBS Initial and diagnostic assessment. However, this is not always the case with the vocational tutors.

The following vocational tutor illustrates this when she says:

"We have done [it] in the past for level three. We still would do it for level three because there is no formal entry requirements for level one." (Martina)

A whole college focus on enabling the BKSBS to be used by all tutors for the purpose it was designed for is necessary and this must be driven from the top by Senior Management. Once

this is done, the results from the literacy and numeracy Initial and diagnostic assessment can be used to help inform tutors which level vocational course students are suitable for.

Foucault (1980; 1997; 2002) argued that power is everywhere and can be used in organisations to coerce employees into doing things which will enable the company to meet their targets. In College Z, Senior Management hold the power and translate government legislation and policies into institutional policies and procedures. However, power is not just the domain of those at the top, it can be evident in the Communities of Practice which exist in the different Programme Areas in this research study and can be associated directly with the more experienced lecturers who have more knowledge than the less experienced newcomers. Also, power is not always a negative entity, as it can be necessary in order to ensure that the organisation remains productive (Gaventa, 2003). Some of the themes which arose from Foucault's framework included the following: power-knowledge; surveillance, discourse and normalisation. In addition, further key concepts included using individual agency and structure to identify how the use of language can be used to examine the relationships which emerge. Foucault believed that in order to understand the mechanisms of observation of teaching of learning, it is necessary to do so in terms of the power structure which underpins it. In the pursuit of knowledge of production, which is socially produced and interconnected, Foucault argues that some are more legitimate than others and those in position of power have more influence than others in creating 'regimes of truth' (Foucault, 1980). Regimes of truth are created by the people that hold the power within the organisation and where 'dominant discourses' support and reflect the power structure which determine the rules, procedures, regularities, distribution and circulation (Foucault, 1980; 2002).

Normalisation therefore relates to how behaviour is adjusted in line with prescribed standards (Perryman, 2009). Normalisation of observation of teaching and learning relates to how what is considered to be 'good practice' is adopted by the 'community' and by the people in positions of power.

The SFL manager illustrates how in his position of power, he considers the use of ILP to be an example of good practice, despite the fact that many tutors found the process as a means of capturing data for managerial purposes:

I think that the ILPs are somewhat personalised but at the same time, they've got to get through a syllabus of things to get their functional skills. I think that it's a real art to get them through the learning and through their course. (McKenzie)

However, the gap occurs when 'gaps' in performance are identified, creating what Foucault refers to as the 'examination' where the hierarchy sets the agenda in terms of the combination of techniques and the normalisation of judgements (Foucault, 1997). Without discourse, these policies and procedures will not be enacted. It is only when they are adopted within the Community of Practice that understanding of how to implement the policies and procedures is achieved. Once these policies and procedures have been accepted by the Community of practice, then inaction will take place and through action, normalisation of the activity will be achieved over time. Most of the tutors in this study have normalised their practice according to the standardised checklists and criteria provided which was described by some as 'playing the game' which resulted in a default model of Observation of Teaching and Learning occurring in response to a toolkit or checklist being provided of 'good', or 'outstanding' session.

The findings of this research are similar to O'Leary's (2003) study who found that graded observations are a source of contentions in the course of becoming normalised in most FE Colleges and as a result is used to measure performativity and accountability according to the managerialistic principles that promote it.

"I always think observations are alien to what we do." (Gillian)

Tutors are categorised by their performance in the OTL due to continuous government reform which impacts upon professionalism and professionality of tutors in the workplace subjecting them to meeting the practical priorities, instead of adopting an approach to teaching and learning which is primarily student centred. By compliance and showing allegiance to institutional and government demands, the autonomy of tutors to achieve 'agency' is limited (O'Leary, 2013). A suggestion could be for this College and tutors to reject or adjourn the OTL process in favour of one that allows them to achieve greater autonomy about their own practice with respect to the impact it has on the teaching and learning of students which is at the heart of what they do.

4.19 Organisational Culture in context

Power is still centralised by the government, even though FE Colleges have control of their budgets. Funding dictates the types of courses FE Colleges provide. Managerialist principles has resulted in an increased culture of accountability and performativity (Ball, 2003) and has meant that Colleges have had to produce quantitative data in order to illustrate to the government that they are meeting the targets. As a result, Colleges have had to buy and invest in Management Information Systems which are capable of capturing the data more easily. In addition to a culture of performativity, marketisation has resulted in the need for teachers to question their professional identity. The pressure to meet targets has mean that some lecturers have adopted questionable practices, such as ‘teaching to the test’ and ‘spoon feeding’ to meet those targets. This has been particularly evident in the Skills for Life sector where the introduction of functional Skills maths and English qualifications in 2007 has replaced the Key Skills Literacy and Numeracy qualifications for the above mentioned reasons (Literacy Study Group, 2010; Edwards and Smith, 2005; Fletcher, 2010).

The SFL tutors below indicate some of the pressures that they face in the course of carrying out their contractual duties:

“Just pressure from the odd student who thinks that I can miraculously put them through the next level when they’re not capable of it.” (Taylor)

“If you remember last year, before last year every student who wanted to do a one year GCSE retake course, we assessed them all. So [even] if they couldn’t write a sentence, we would take them.” (Rosa)

When funding priority shifts, this impacts upon the type of students that the FE College caters for. The removal of funding for Train to Gain in 2012 and the introduction of the new 16-19 funding which includes students Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs) and Apprenticeships, especially for the older age range has been given more status and priority. Some initiatives like the 14-19 Diplomas introduced over a five year period proved to be unsuccessful whose aim was to close the divide between vocational and academic qualifications. However, the Functional Skills element of the diploma proved to be a better alternative that the key skills counterpart due to the need to revise the literacy and numeracy curriculum to make it more relevant and transferable.

Emily, illustrates how she has found a better insight into the purposes of the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment in placing students on their vocational courses:

This year, more so because we have taught literacy. So obviously we have used it to determine what they are going to learn.

These SFL tutors give examples of the types of students they work with:

“Where I worked before, I worked with NEETs students [which] were very unique to the college.” (Nadia)

“You can be the best plumber in the world but you won’t get that certificate at the end to day you’ve passed if you haven’t passed your maths and English.” (Gillian)

The new funding methodology does not serve the best interests of the students, because it does not take into account that some students need more time than others to complete activities. The main issue that impacts on what teachers are able to do in FE is that of ‘time’. Efficiency and productivity are the side effects of the new funding methodology which in FE funds courses according to the number of hours (Sennet, 2007). Managerialist positivism denigrates knowledge production and education to that of accreditation, retention, achievement and progression where there is no room for student centred approaches to teaching (Smith and O’Leary, 2013).

College Z has a subsidiary company, College X which provides teaching and learning opportunities for work based learners or apprentices who may come into college one day per week or from block release to learn the theory behind the working practices they experience in companies. In addition to work based learning, apprentices are also expected to do Functional Skills maths and English qualifications which is part of their overall framework.

This SFL tutor illustrates some of the confusion that arises from students not being correctly informed about the importance of maths and English:

These students are NVQ led so College X don’t even mention that they’re doing hairdressing or they’re becoming chefs or they’re doing electrician work... that maths and English are involved until I mentor or get the referral or ring one student and they say that I did maths and English at school. (Trina)

Approximately a third of the SFL tutors in this research study are trainer assessors who were originally employed to do Train2Gain but in some instances have been asked to teach classes in College Z. the introduction of more flexible IT based learning has resulted in less tutor control and raises questions about tutors ownership of intellectual property. Performance indicators which are outcome based such as recruitment, retention rates and exam results have priority

over process. The marketisation and surveillance of lecturers has undermined their professionalism so that they are subject to both student and employer mechanism of control which are inspection, appraisal, observation and Student Perception of Course Data (Shain and Gleeson, 1999).

Some SFL tutors argue that the lack of technology undermines their professionalism in the classroom compared to that of the vocational tutors who have more access to technology.

We've no computers in the rooms and I knew that if we went to the powers that be, they would say, 'Oh well you've got to go and get them, you've got to count them in and count them out, make sure they're charged.' Half the time [they] don't work properly or you can't get the students logged on. (Margery)

"I think in some classes where we need the use of computers, it's not always available. Or new technology lets us down. I think they've got some issues with that." (Stephen)

Very often technology. I do an awful lot of my teaching in the art department and have got all sorts of problems....The art rooms are not suitable for teaching English. We don't always have a white board or an electronic white board so some of us might have rooms with computers or we might not and it's not necessarily according to need. (Mia)

James and Diment (2003) identifies lack of support as one of the main issues which undermines the professionalism of tutors in FE.

These tutors illustrate how they adapt to the environment that they are working in, for example:

"I think within my lesson apart from using the smartboard and white board, I try to be interactive by getting them to use, to do transferable skills applying to the outside setting of its use." (Colin)

The lack of appropriate resources undermines the SFL tutors professionalism and status at College Z compared to their vocational counterparts. The result is that it makes the SFL tutors look unprofessional due to them constantly not having access to the same basic technology which the students require to complete BKSB activities and resources such as word processing documents in English sessions or accessing the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment resources.

In this research study, College Z has a hierarchical culture where the Senior Management sometimes does not enter into any consultation with tutors or their representatives before implementing change. This style of management is synonymous with how the government

exerts control over what colleges do. Fuller and Unwin (2004) argue that the best environment for employees is an environment which they refer to as the ‘expansive-restrictive environment’. An expansive environment is where learners are given a range of opportunities to learn their practice in a range of different environments, such as in the workplace, in the classroom and as an apprentice. Whereas a restrictive environment is the polar opposite as it does not allow the learner to engage in opportunities where they can participate in networking activities, collaborate with others, including more experienced members of the group; engage in training opportunities or form legitimate identities at work or at college. This is similar to the view of Lave and Wenger (1998) who argue that students’ progress better when they are able to engage in different Communities of Practice and are able to move between the situated and the context boundaries where other opportunities for participation exist. For example, learning in different contexts boundaries could include learning which takes place in and outside the workplace, formal or informal. At college, the apprentice could engage in classroom theory sessions which is concerned with their workplace practice which would be considered to be formal learning. On the other hand, informal learning could take place outside the classroom when the apprentice conducts research on his or her own initiative in order to improve their practice which is a fundamental attribute of lifelong learning.

4.20 Professional identity

Tutors need to be provided with opportunities to develop their own occupational strategy, where they are able to negotiate power, rewards, collaborate and form relationships with others so that the policies and procedures of the organisation are acting in the best interests of the tutors, rather than the organisation (Sachs, 2001). By entering into discourse with colleagues from other communities of practice, tutors are able to build up alliances which will enable them to better support hard to reach students such as excluded students, NEETs and the community. Through collaboration and cooperation between teachers and other educational stakeholders such as employers, the professional identity of the teacher will be enhanced and promoted due to the shared attributes, values which differentiate one group from another.

According to Sachs (2001), in order for tutors to enhance their practice, they have to be given opportunities where they can negotiate meaning and ‘come to know’ through practice in an environment which fosters joint enterprise and democratic discourse. Stiggins (2000) argues that this can be done very easily in Communities of Practice. However, tutors also need to

collaborate with people outside their own practice so that they can share good practice and develop a better understanding about their subject matter in order to enhance their own professional identity from within the profession.

These vocational tutors illustrate how they work collaboratively with the SFL tutors:

“We work really well with the Functional Skills tutors in our area and the FS tutor will send them through to me and we discuss it one to one and at interview.” (Brenda)

I photocopy them and gave them to the Functional Skills tutor. I recorded what they did previously as well so if they come in from school, I’ve got their grades so I know that they’re not on the wrong Functional Skills course. (Susan)

Within each of the different programme areas, professional identity is formed when tutors adopt a more transformative attitude and acceptance of legitimate, individual and collective self-narrative over the illegitimate dominance of some individuals and groups in order to rework professional identity through activist rather than entrepreneurial principals (Gergen and Gergen, 1988). This means that tutors need to be given opportunities where their voices can be heard in public spaces so that they can make a contribution to the improvement of their own practice from within the profession rather than from outside (Smith, 2007).

An FE Business and Computing tutor used negotiation to have the units on her course reduced to a more reasonable workload in order to meet the needs of her students more easily and the following example illustrates how she did this:

Yesterday, [my manager] met with one of the consultants and he said that we don’t have to deliver that many units this time. We can cut it in half and because we are delivering two courses, he said the funding changed... Well it changed last year, then we only have to deliver one course now. (Martina)

Through democratic discourse, this tutor was provided with an opportunity to negotiate a reduction in the amount of units the students would do. Communities of Practice enable lecturers to create a shared knowledge that reflect on practice and negotiate enterprises which lead to transformation of peoples’ lives (Smith, 2007). This FE Business and Computing tutor was able to participate in a community of practice where meaningful activities, including interaction, were in operation and where negotiation of new situations were able to come into place. This led to helping the role of the teacher as ‘activist’ to be legitimised, recognised and

practiced due to the provision of appropriate working conditions. When the professional identity of 'teacher activist' is adopted and mutually negotiated over time, lived and practiced, this will allow the teacher to develop a new identity that is also open to challenge from both within and outside the profession. The challenge within comes from colleagues, from different communities of practice who might disagree with some of the practice in operation. Challenge from outside comes from the government or relevant stakeholders who have a vested interest in the education of young people as they will be the employees of the future.

The main difference between the term professionalism and professionalism is that professionalism relates to the external attempts of the government through the implementation of policies to impose their view of professionalism in terms of 'quality of service' or improvement of service on to teachers (Hargreaves, 1994; Holye, 2001). Professionalism on the other hand is associated with the internally constructed view which teachers hold about their own practice which relates to where meaning is negotiated through enactment.

Dualism operates within most organisations between agency and structure which can affect the professionalism of tutors especially when the structure they operate within does not allow any opportunities for autonomy. In order for professional practice to be trans diagnostic, there needs to be an environment which encourages social and democratic ideas regarding professionalism and accountability (Gleeson and James, 2007). Discourse provides tutors with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of how knowledge is produced in both formal and informal settings. Lack of discourse with colleagues in other communities of practice where ideas can be shared and negotiated is not always possible if tutors are isolated. In some instances, participants in this study which includes tutors, trainer assessors and managers identified how these assumptions could contribute to the maintenance of certain cultures due to lack of interaction or collaboration with their vocational counterparts (James and Dement, 2003).

Some the tutors in this research study project identified with the roles and responsibilities associated with professional identity and placed great emphasis on the ability to achieve autonomy in action in the workplace.

However, sometimes this is not possible and Martina explains why:

I like doing Personal and Social Development because I think it gives them soft skills. But for them to do 18 units in nine months, that's two units a month. It's a heavy

workload for me and level one. So it's going to make giving it up bit easier for them and take the pressure off marking for me and all my courses are externally moderated as well so we have to do that. (Martina)

Martina found that she felt like a welfare officer which resulted from a 'poorly funded inclusion policy' that involved the College's recruiting hard to reach students on to inappropriate course which created tensions between practitioners about what teaching should be about. This dichotomy between the old and the new practices were in conflict with the values of social justice and equity due to the fact that Martina viewed her status as diminishing to that of 'teacher' of low level courses, from that of 'accredited subject specialist' (Ecclestone, 2000). Reflection on practice, through research is an essential part of teaching pedagogic thinking and the reduction in time, resources, staffing forced tutors to consider alternative ways of improving their practice. However, some tutors were disgruntled with the ever increasing culture of monitoring recruitment, retention and certification brought about by College funding, remuneration, as well as movement of ability (Bloomer, 1998) As a result some tutors felt that OFSTED was more focussed on teacher performance than student learning.

Although the NVQs provision warranted 'assessment only' provision, tensions arose due to the separation of competency from learning and this issue required some tutors to go beyond what they were contractually supposed to do in terms of negotiating with employers to support learning which led to 'underground working' and emotional capital such as extra tutorials outside normal teaching hours to support students (James and Diment, 2003).

This SFL tutor gives an example how she gets distressed sometimes due to lack of support:

I was nearly in tears twice just because I didn't know where to turn. You get in with this and you do that... It's so intensive, it was the end of a long day, after six and a half hours; I was tired by the end of it. (Virginia)

Although both Martina and some of the other tutors in this research study complied with instructions, they did so in different ways. This rule breaking and 'fabrication of activities' and audit culture results in the mediation of how professional practice is perceived in terms of 'trade-offs' and the re-storying of professional identities (Stonach et al., 2002; Wallace and Hoyle, 2006; Ranson et al., 2004). As well as autonomy 'strategic compliance' Gleeson and Shain, (1999) argue that some tutors, not unlike the tutors in this study also use their knowledge of mediation to negotiate and provide value and opportunities and learning experience which

were not accounted for in the syllabuses or timetable (Ranson, 2004). It is clear to see that managerialistic principles has not eroded the old fashioned ideas of professionalism which are associated with flexibility, altruism and innovation (Gewirtz, 2002). This is clearly evident when the tutors in this research study identified lack of tutorial time, inability to give diagnostic feedback due to BTEC specification ruling and reduction in time and increased workloads of GCSE tutors compared to previous years.

The view of teachers as self-interested and unaccountable, a consequence of marketisation has had the opposite effect, by validating teachers' professional identity. However, the competency of teacher's skills and lack of theoretical knowledge, in favour of instructional forms of initial training and in service staff is still prevalent. Bureaucracy has undermined the concept of professionalism where the rights of the individual as a customer takes precedence over student centred learning. In order to meet the needs of all stakeholders, including employers, business government, students and professional associations, customer choice is a complex entity which locates over who has more power and voice and that learning is not as a result of simply ensuring that students meet the requirements of the specification (Milliband, 2006). This research study has detected that increased prescription does not lead to the removal of professionalism because tutors constantly strive to ensure that they are relevant (Bourdieu, 1990; Gleeson, and James, 2006).

Gleeson and James (2006) argue that in order to understand professionalism in FE, there is a need to take into account how cognisance (awareness) , as well as 'ecological' influence the learning culture which relates to the different contexts over the life course which and individual encounters that could be temporal or spatial.. Despite repeated reforms to 'professionalisms' in FE, the tutors at College Z are still achieving autonomy and self-interest remains. Tutors are still finding the time to design their own resources to meet the needs of their students which demonstrates that they are passionate about teaching and learning.

4.21 Policy

The top down managerialism culture which came about due to the Incorporation of FE in 1992 had the effect of imposing the business and financial model borrowed from private sector on FE which promoted greater competition, autonomy and responsibility for their own budgets. However, government policies and procedures still exerted pressure on Colleges than ever before through their funding mechanisms. According to Lucas and Crowther (2016)

managerialism did not solve the problems which existed in FE before incorporation but resulted in constant change, instability and marketisation principles of managerialism which moved FE from a government centralised control to a decentralised business like environment where FE Colleges had to now compete for funding streams. Coffield et al. (2007) argued that the imposition of government policies and initiatives without entering into any consultation with them has been met with resistance, due to the increased workload and bureaucratic nature of audit and accountability culture. This illustrates how Communities of Practice within an organisation can become disrupted. For example, many Colleges have faced redundancies through restructuring by Senior Management, brought about by different funding mechanisms; performance indicators; the need to meet national benchmarks on achievement and success rates and change in government policies.

College Z has responded to government initiatives over the years, especially in terms of changes to qualifications. As well as the traditional A'Levels and GCSEs, College Z provides students with a range of qualifications from entry level in English, maths and vocational subjects and vocational qualifications ranging from pre-entry level to 3 and from awarding bodies such as City and Guilds and BTEC. Functional Skills English, maths and ICT qualifications were introduced in 2007 and are currently being reviewed by the Curriculum and Qualifications Authority in order to make them more rigorous and fit for purpose. These are available at entry level to level 2. As a result of the Curriculum 2000 agenda, Basic Skills in Adult Literacy, Number and ICT were introduced in 1999, along with Key Skills qualifications in Communications Skills, Application of Number and Information Technology which integrated elements of industry to meet the requirements of employers. These qualifications were available from level 1 to level 3. General Certificate of Education qualifications (GCSEs) replaced GCEs and CSEs in 1988 and the A star element was introduced in 1994 to identify those students who had achieved top grades. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) were introduced in 1986 and came under the jurisdiction of the Curriculum and Qualifications Council between 1997-2009. The Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualifications were introduced in 1984 and are awarded by EDEXCEL and replaced (Hayes, et. al., 2007).

The Individual Learning Plans were the instruments which the government used to set targets and measure outcomes against the National Core Curriculum. However, Hamilton (2009) argues that the ILP did not allow teachers to be innovative or improve their teaching and

learning due to the focus on regulatory practice with centralised government prescription of targets and top down vertical accountability.

The main problem with this approach is outlined below:

...widely expressed as a crisis of time, the inability of the ILP to represent the diversity of student experience, their needs or their narratives about their experiences and progress and constrain what counts as learning... tutors take p an enforced position as broker or mediator between student needs and demands and system requirements. This translation work is demanding and involves a high level of engagement that involves constrained manoeuvres within a tightly controlled framework drawn up by experts external to practice allowing tutors to make only a limited range of procedural decisions. (Hamilton, 2009, p. 225).

Some of the government policies which have had an impact on what tutors do in this research study include the Skills for Life strategy which was developed in 1999 by Moser, whose aim was to improve the basic skills in literacy and numeracy to level 2 of adults so that the UK was more economically viable compared to other European countries. Thus the literacy and numeracy Core Curriculum was developed. At the same time as the Adult literacy and numeracy qualifications were being developed which ranged in levels from Entry 1, Entry 2, Entry 3, Level 1 and level 2, Key Skills qualifications at Level 1 and Level 2 were developed for work based learners which involved apprentices taking the literacy and numeracy Basic Skills Test, as well as completing a portfolio to demonstrate how what they have learnt could be used and applied in the vocational or occupation context which they were working in. In order to make literacy and numeracy qualifications more relevant, Functional Skills maths, English and ICT qualifications were developed and first introduced in 2007 but at College Z not implemented until September 2011, after a successful pilot study was completed the previous year in a few departments in College Z to ascertain whether the qualification was fit for purpose.

Further policies included the Wolf Report (2011) which argued that not enough students on low level vocational courses progress to level 2 courses, especially in construction and questioned whether these types of courses were economically viable. In addition, the independent review of education for 14-19 year olds made some of the following recommendations about vocational education and these included some of the following. In order to make institutions more accountable, move from 'per qualification' funding to 'per student' funding. Also, the report found that there was a need to improve the quality of apprenticeships and to expand the quality

of teaching of English and maths qualifications, as well as use the teaching of vocational qualifications. Finally, to ensure that all students on full-time study programmes have access to relevant work experience

The BTEC ruling on feedback was to be introduced in 2015 at College Z and some of the vocational tutors were apprehensive about how this would impact upon some of the students that they taught, especially the students on level 1 courses. Most of the FE Business and Computing students do BTEC courses which involve mostly coursework as a means of assessment. However, changes to the way some BTEC courses were assessed were also identified by one tutor to make the course more robust to include mandatory tests as well as coursework which she likened to ‘making the qualification more academic’. This did not necessarily take into account the way in which some of the students who chose to do BTEC courses learn as some of them chose coursework as opposed to traditional GCSEs because of their ‘fear’ of exams and tests.

The GCSE resit policy and Department of Education strategy in English and maths, to be introduced in College Z from 2015 with 14-16 year olds and from September 2016 with other students required students with a grade D the chance to re-sit and improve their grade to a ‘C’ or grade 4. Also, the raising of the school leaving age from 16 to 18 had an impact on College Z student numbers as more students would now be entitled to Education and Training and were more likely to be undertaking these qualification at an FE College rather than at school as FE Colleges have more choice and diversity about the types and range of course they are able to offer at post 16 compared to schools. Students can leave school at 16, however under present legislation, The Education and Skills Bill (2007) the school leaving age will rise to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015. This does not mean that children have to stay on at school as they can attend College, a private training provider, do an apprenticeship or attend part-time training courses, as well as earning money.

The two main internal policy decisions which directly affected tutors in this research study was the increase in time from 1.5 hours to 2 hours for Functional Skills tutors in 2015. However, the decrease in time from 3 hours to 2 hours for the GCSE maths and English tutors was greeted with apprehension and resulted in limited amount of diagnostic feedback being given to students as a result.

4.22 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how organisational culture and policy have an impact upon the pedagogy, professionalisation and performativity of lecturers in College Z in terms of the different communities of practice which operate in College Z.

The quality of teaching, pedagogy and performativity in FE Colleges is not only centrally controlled by OFSTED at national level but controlled at local level by the Quality Department in Colleges who in many cases uses the same 1-4 grading criteria and standards which OFSTED use to measure the quality of teaching within the College in terms of whether it is meeting the external quality assurance standards and benchmarks imposed by OFSTED. In using the same grading system as OFSTED, College Z is demonstrating compliance with centralised policy which will become normalised when tutors adopt the policy by agreeing to its use to grade their effectiveness as tutors (O’Leary, 2013).

Lack of technology support and computers were identified by SFL tutors as the main hindrance to the way in which they were able to teach students. In addition, lack of accommodation in the form of base rooms also meant that their status in terms of professionalism to that of the vocational tutors was compromised. Vocational tutors on the whole have access to base rooms which are fitted out with adequate resources dependent upon the vocational areas in which they work. However, this is not the case for maths and English tutors (FELTAG, 2016).

The most contested issue amongst all tutors in this research study was the ILPs where all tutors criticised the ILPs, in their present format, as being time consuming and not fit for purpose, arguing for a more ‘electronic version’ which would mean that data could be easily shared amongst colleagues, more easily such as the E-tracker. This issue illustrates how the organisational culture at College Z of policy audits and measures has had a negative impact on the performativity and the professionalism of tutors due to excessive bureaucracy. In contrast, some vocational tutors such as the Travel and Tourism tutors mentioned that they were already piloting a system similar to the E-tracker. Only the vocational tutors used the Core Online Learning Assessment which was implemented on a College wide basis to all students on level 1-3 courses. This policy stipulates that part of the students’ learning and assessment must be done outside the classroom independently. This means that lecturers must provide opportunities and resources for students to engage in learning by using platforms such as

moodle VLE, blended learning or flipped learning (Appendix 12) where the learning includes videos and other technological devices before, during or after classroom based instruction has taken place to support learning. Due to the opportunity for vocational tutors to vary their teaching styles in the classroom, the interview data did not generate examples where access to technology was an issue, only that the time they had to produce extra resources was limited. One FE Business and Computing tutor did however, make the comment that the availability of software on the computers to enable the students to complete their studies was problematic, even though she had repeatedly informed her manager of this. However, this was not the case for the SFL tutors who argued that COLA (Appendix 12) was not something that they could do as they had limited access to computers, due to preference given to vocational tutors and lack of access to smartboards and whiteboards so being able to vary their teaching style to meet the needs of the students was not available to them, through no fault of their own due to the rooms they had been assigned 'not fit for purpose'.

Although all tutors argued that 'time' to do things was an issue, especially in terms of the reduction in teaching hours for SFL and GCSE tutors from two hours to one and a half hours which means that there is not enough time to teach Functional Skills level 2 as the assessment is two hours and GCSE tutors from three hours to two hours. This has resulted in an increase in the number of sessions through the working day for 16-18 year olds between 9am and 5pm, from two to three sessions as a reduction on the quality of feedback being given to students. Similarly, vocational tutors have argued that the new BTEC ruling has resulted in them not being able to support the students in a student centred way due to externally imposed policy in the form of new standards which indicates how much diagnostic assessment they can give to students. This does not take into account that some students prefer course work, rather than linear tests. However, in order to raise standards, some awarding bodies have reformed their vocational qualifications in line with the GCSEs academic qualifications to include a variety of assessment types and opportunities. Some maths and English tutors, especially the GCSE tutors identified that they had not received any training on how to use the BKSB due to lack of mentoring, coaching and access to training sessions and preferred to use more formal methods such as the GCSE practice papers which would not only identify the gaps in their learning, but give them some idea of the journey they need to make to pass the qualification. The top down centralised policy culture has been adopted by College Z where Senior Management transmit government policy into local policy which tutors are coerced into complying with.

Although, the Further Education (1992) Act gave Colleges greater freedom with regards to managing their own budgets, top down centralisation of FE Colleges was maintained through government policies relating to targets, performativity, the quality of teaching and the performance targets attached to different funding streams which imposed penalties for retention, success and achievement. New Public Management and marketisation of education in FE has meant that the focus has shifted from student centredness, being at the heart of what we do as teachers to that of performance measures and accreditation being the focus. A variety of different studies have been used to demonstrate that the issue addressed in College Z may be evident in other Colleges to varying degrees. By using other studies which includes perceptions and views from a wider range of people, including lecturers, trainer assessors, trainee teachers, senior management and union officials, in comparison to the tutors in this study, I have been able to provide a wider view which can help to validate the study. This includes examples from other studies and the fact that some tutors in this research study have questioned Senior Management about some of the policy initiatives that they have tried to implement, for example the reduction in course units on a level 1 course; tutor was able to negotiate with Senior Management.

By using the theory of Wenger (1998) I have been able to show how different communities of practice that exist within College Z come to learn and produce knowledge within groups. For example, how the Travel and Tourism tutors work together to ensure that students are placed on the appropriate level of course. However, the main way to ensure that the different communities of practice view students in an holistic way is if they are given opportunities to talk to each other, learn how to co-operate with each other more easily, collaborate and have respect for each other's disciplines and have access to all the resources and accommodation which will enable them to meet the needs of the students more easily compared to vocational tutors. Although all tutors experienced low morale due to the redundancies, SFL tutors feel more isolated, de-professionalised and marginalised due to their lack of status within the College compared to vocational tutors. If all tutors were given the opportunity to enter into discourse with Senior Management about their work practices, it is possible that the organisational culture at College Z will become one where cooperation, consultation, openness to discourse increases and where performativity will be more relevant and less bureaucratic and the professional identity of tutors will be improved by becoming more supportive.

The political, economic, social, technological and environment has been critically discussed in this section in order to present a wider picture and background of how government policies have impacted on the organisational culture, performativity and professionalism that operates in colleges. In addition, to illustrate how the UK policy initiatives, the organisational culture and Community of Practice which exists within an organisation can impact upon the performativity and professional identity I have used a variety of research studies ranging from the local to the national and global. Some relevant examples from my own research study have also been used to identify the similarities such as lack of tutorial time, as well as contested issues evident such as the ILPs, the BTEC ruling on diagnostic feedback and the reduction of time for some tutors in College Z. The different Community of Practices gives a holistic viewpoint of the College, distinct from the Skills for Life, GCSE maths and English and vocational tutors which are the main participants in this research study.

Lave and Wenger (1998) argue that when Communities of Practice are able to cooperate and share ideas and knowledge within and between groups, this not only leads to better productivity and skills within the organisation but results in better trained and motivated staff that will be better equipped to motivate their students to achieve their targets. The culture of 'terror' which Ball (2003) argues is synonymous with performativity is still prevalent in today's society, more than 25 years since Incorporation. This is mainly due to the dichotomy which exists between the view that teachers are thical beings and the dispassionate new policy technologies where neo liberal reforms in education has given prominence to measurable an quantifiable data over quality and excellence. The marketisation of FE has resulted in the centralised regimes of accountability, judgements, change through policy initiatives and the market culture and led to the de-professionalisation of tutor's professional identity.

Chapter 5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I summarise my findings, draw conclusions and make recommendations in response to the aims of my research which was to find “what is the purpose of diagnostic assessment in an FE College?” This overall aim was broken down into the following four research questions:

- 1 What types of initial and diagnostic assessment are used by tutors in an FE College and how do they differ?

- 2 In what ways, if any, do tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

- 3 What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of initial and diagnostic assessment to help students achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods.

- 4 What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performance and professional identity of tutors in an FE College?

Following a comprehensive review of literature, the key authors that influenced my approach to this research are Ecclestone et al., (2010); Falchikov (2005) and Looney, (2008). Their research into the different types of diagnostic and summative assessments used by tutors in FE and HE to enhance learning and teaching builds on the research conducted by Black and Wiliam (1998) who developed a range of strategies which tutors could use to promote learning in secondary schools. My research was framed by the social constructivist theories of Vygotsky, (1978) and Lave and Wenger (1991, 1998) that holds that all knowledge is socially constructed through language, collaboration and culture which is then internalised by individuals. By interacting with others, individuals are able to gain a deeper understanding of the environment in which they live. In addition, a further review of literature also identified that the organisational culture and policy initiatives has an impact upon the performance and

professional identity of tutors and I have used the literature of Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Smith, 2007; Orr, 2009, among many others to illustrate this.

The methodology used was a case study design as this research was to be conducted in one FE College in the North of England. The methods used to collect primary data from tutors in the first three research questions were one to one semi-structured interviews; focus group sessions; and the Teacher Perceptions of Courses Survey. Data were collected from tutors in 2013 and 2015.

As an insider (Innes, 2009), I had to consider how my position in the field could affect the answers that the tutors gave in the interviews and questionnaires. It was therefore essential that I followed the British Education Research Association Guidelines 2010) and the University of Huddersfield guidelines for conducting research (2016). This also meant that it was necessary to gain informed consent from all participants and also to inform them that they could withdraw their consent, if they so wished.

In the next section I will summarise the findings in relation to my four research questions.

5.2 What type of Initial and diagnostic assessments are used by tutors in an FE College and how do they differ?

The types of assessment which tutors use in this FE College were surprisingly similar. The most effective types of assessment used were verbal and written assessment. This is because students on level 1 and level 2 courses tend to want instant feedback. However, the vocational tutors were more likely to use strategies which facilitated the use of assisted technology such as blended learning; flipped learning; Moodle; Core Online Learning Environment with their students than the GCSE and Functional Skills maths and English tutors (Association of Colleges, 2015). The main type of assessment which tutors used in the classroom was feedback, both verbal and written. Whilst the Skills for Life tutors preferred to give verbal feedback to students on their work immediately, the vocational tutors used different forms of media to inform students about progress made or not (Jones, 2005). This could be via the Moodle – virtual learning environment where tutors upload student marks on assignments or written feedback via a feedback sheet. Although, the types of assessment used by tutors were not predominantly diagnostic; most tutors identified that the main purpose of ‘assessment for

learning strategies was to enhance progress leading to the summative. A variety of different summative assessments were used by tutors and these included, course work, assignments, end tests, portfolios and formal exams which are internally or externally marked.

5.3 How do tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?

In addition, to verbal and written feedback, tutors preferred to use peer and self-assessment and group work activities to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy. Peer and self-assessment enables the teacher to be reflexive, check their own learning, promotes discussion and collaboration, as well as self-checking and learning. It also enables the learner to gain a better understanding of what they have done well and of what they need to work on (Jones, 2005). In addition, it enables the student to discuss with their peers what they need to do to improve and compare their own marks, as well as the tutors' marks. In order to guide student learning, tutors argued that the best way to do this would be to identify students strengths and weaknesses and then to develop strategies to help students to do this effectively. Some of the most popular strategies are quizzes which can be used diagnostically, as well as summatively to check and consolidate learning. Some vocational tutors argued that the best way that they found to use peer and self-assessment is by giving students the opportunity to rate of each other's work because it gave the students the opportunity to engage in discussion where they are given the opportunity to review and reflect on what they have learnt (Petty, 2004). Through discussion and verbal assessment, the learner is able to gain an instant decision about progress made or not. Whereas written feedback, when detailed and constructive, enables the learner to have a greater understanding of what they need to do to improve their score; what they need to work on; and how they can make the suggested improvements. However, if feedback is not acted upon by the student, it then becomes ineffective. When feedback, whether verbal or written is acted upon it is considered to be relevant. Feedback therefore needs to be constructive, encouraging the student to want to make progress, as if it is not constructive, the learner may become de-motivated which will lead to non-completion and underachievement (Sharrock, 2016). In terms of the tools and techniques which tutors use to inform their own pedagogy, constantly reviewing and updating their own knowledge in the field is an important aspect of self-development. By constantly reviewing what works, as well as what needs to be improved upon, the tutor is being reflexive, become more motivated about learning is are more

likely to pass this technique on to their students. Motivated tutors, motivate students (Petty, 2004; Sharrock, 2016).

5.4 What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessment to help students achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

Although, tutors found that the most effective method of assessment to help students achieve their goals were verbal and written feedback and the major constraint in getting students to achieve their goals was lack of time to teach topics (Larson & Milana, 2006). However, at the higher end of abilities, the students still require tutor input, especially level two students but do not always get the support because the tutor's time is spent catering for students at the lower end of the scale (Wallace, 2007). Whereas the main dilemma which the vocational tutors face is the reduction in hours from their timetable which limits their ability to do other duties such as course leadership, tutorials and pastoral duties. These hours are now the domain of the new Progress Coaches who liaise between the vocational course tutors and the maths and English tutors to encourage students who have attendance and punctuality issues to attend their sessions. The vocational tutors are expected to plan activities for students for the Core Online Learning Environment which must be done outside the classroom. Some tutors, especially the Skills for Life tutors argued that accommodation and lack of appropriate resources was the main constraint which they faced. The Skills for Life tutors also felt that priority was given to the vocational tutors with regards to classrooms which had smart boards and technology access to computers or adequate furniture for the students to sit on. A further constraint was the priority given to vocational subjects in terms of base rooms. This means that not only do the vocational tutors have more status than the Skills for Life tutors, but management and leadership also give them more status because areas in the college are designed with a vocational focus, such as a catering areas, travel and tourism area and construction area. However, this is not the case for the maths and English Programme area, who because of the transferable skills which they deliver, do not have access to base rooms (Sharrock, 2016).

Another constraint for tutors was the belief that some activities are purely diagnostic and purely summative. For example, some tutors have identified diagnostic assessment as those assessments which are teacher led and summative activities as those activities as 'continuous' assessment which are broken down into manageable steps in order that the student achieves a

modular or summative assessment task. Some misunderstanding also occurs when students' view of diagnostic assessment is formed by the feedback they receive as 'teaching' (Office for Standards in Education, 2014). If the diagnostic assessment strategies used are seen as an integral part of pedagogy which is not only based on the transmission of knowledge but the transaction between teachers and students, they are motivated to learn to a higher level (Petty, 2004). Although all tutors used diagnostic assessment practices, the purpose, principal and techniques used amongst tutors had different goals, and very different effects were achieved amongst the different vocational and programme areas in this study the main difference in whether students achieve their goals lies in the policies and practices which affect what teachers and students learn in Adult Language Literacy and Numeracy and vocational education which will influence cognitive progression (Torrance, 2012). Whereas the policies and practices which have influence on vocational education have had a different impetus which is to prepare students for the role of work taking into account the personal dispositions of the students and the social life and work skills associated with the different vocational occupations (Association of Colleges, 2015).

5.5 What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performance and professional identity of tutors in an FE College?

It is clear to see that the organisational culture within College Z is one of uncertainty due to the constant changes in top down government policy. The constant changes has meant that tutors feel that they are not given enough time to implement the changes which therefore impacts upon their performance and professional identity in the workplace. In order for tutors at College Z to feel valued, it is necessary for tutors to be given the opportunity to collaborate, discuss and share their views and concerns about their work practices with other colleagues, as well as senior management. The perceived lack of status amongst SFL tutors compared to vocational tutors results in some tutors not seeing the value gained by attending maths and English sessions. Organisational culture and policy impacts negatively on the performativity and professional identity of tutors, especially in terms of access to relevant and appropriate resources which can include suitable accommodation.

The organisational culture which exists at College Z is hierarchical where senior management adopts and implements government legislation in a top down hierarchical way via the Curriculum Team Leaders without any dialogue or negotiation with the tutors who will be at

the forefront of implementing these new developments. Although College Z has responded to government in the provision of courses for all age groups and levels from entry to masters level, some might say that the College has lost its identity and is no longer the College where students can obtain good quality vocational and academic qualifications because there is too much diversity. This is mainly due to the low status of HE in FE compared with traditional higher Education institutions who command more stringent entry requirements (Feather, 2016).

The status of Skills for Life and GCSE maths and English tutors compared to vocational tutors is that no provision has been made to develop resources and accommodation which allows these tutors to deliver their subjects in an atmosphere which fosters good teaching and learning. Good diagnostic assessment includes identifying learner needs, requirements and gaps so that strategies can be put in place to fill the gaps (Vygotsky, 1978). At College Z, this can be done by ensuring that all tutors have access to training on the benefits of the BKSB initial and diagnostic assessment in identifying students strengths and weaknesses before they start a course, tracking student progress and in providing a range of web based or paper based resources which can help with differentiation and to promote independence and autonomy (Logan and Neumann, 2010). This may be due to lack of knowledge and awareness at Senior Management level on the long term benefits of obtaining English and maths qualifications which are transferable, lifelong and life changing skills which can be used not just for in a vocational context but in the real world and help to improve the educational attainment of all students. If students are better informed about English and maths before beginning a course, they are more likely to succeed, attendance and punctuality will improve and a climate where both the vocational and the English and maths subjects will have more of an equal status.

Highton, et al., (2017) argue that when vocational tutors are on board with the purpose and benefits of English and maths, students perform better in these subjects. It is there important that all tutors promote the all-round benefits of English and maths to students so that students are aware that good English and maths skills are transferal across all vocational areas, will enable them to compete more effectively in the workplace and 'climb the ladder' more easily thus creating a more mobile workforce (Foster, 2005). In today's society, a student may change jobs a number of times during their life span, so it is necessary that students are prepared for the lifelong learning journey and not given the impression that 'jobs' are for life.

However, effective training must be given to these tutors whose own knowledge of literacy and numeracy makes it difficult for them to successfully embed literacy and numeracy in their theory lessons. Senior management must be more transparent with their implementation of government policies and give all tutors time to digest new information, provide access to training and CPD, if necessary, in order to put policies into practice, as well as time for the new strategies to develop.

5.6 Limitations

The main limitation which I experienced during the course of this research study was negotiating time with my peers to conduct the semi structured interviews and focus group sessions. Whereas, this was much easier to do with the Skills for Life tutors in Phase 1 of the research study, it was more difficult to do in phase 2, when collecting data from the vocational and GCSE maths and English tutors (Appendix 7). While I was able to use a variety of methods to collect data from the Skills for Life tutors such as the use of semi-structured interviews, focus groups, the Teacher Perception of Courses Survey, I was not able to use all these different methods with the vocational tutors (Appendix 9). This was mainly due to the fact that towards the end of the 2014/2015 academic year, the College went through a major restructuring which meant that some tutors who I had been previously approached to interview were no longer available due to redundancies, uncertainty about the future and inaccessibility due to the time of year which I had available to collect the data which was around the exam period. Although, I was able to conduct semi-structured interviews with the vocational and GCSE maths and English tutors more easily, this was not the case with the vocational tutors as I was not able to conduct any focus group sessions with these tutors due to lack of availability. Some of the data had to be collected at the beginning of the next academic year in 2015/2016 from the Hairdressing tutors who had had the worst 'hit' as a department which saw at least nine tutors made redundant. This ensured that the sample size of vocational tutors depicted in this research study was viable.

Another limitation which had an impact upon the completion of this research study was the lack of time I had available to carry out the research and write up the findings. During the course of the study, my father died which had some impact upon my motivation for a period of time.

However, with the support of my Supervisors, I was able to focus on my research and gain the motivation necessary to continue with the study instead of taking a break.

5.7 Contributions to knowledge

My contribution is the focus of the research on the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment in the FE sector, particularly in making a comparison between what Skills for Life and vocational tutors do. Although there is already a plethora of research on assessment in the FE sector, this study has made a contribution to knowledge in providing an in-depth enquiry on the topic of initial diagnostic assessment strategies (Black and Wiliam, 1998). In addition, I have shown through examples how the organisational culture and policy initiatives introduced at College Z can affect the performativity and the professional identity of all tutors which may have an impact upon the types and effectiveness of initial and diagnostic assessments used.

5.8 Recommendations for the future

The following recommendations made to help FE Colleges improve the learning experiences of students in general and particularly their assessment practices.

- It is important that the status of maths and English whether it is Functional skills or GCSE is given high priority and status in colleges. This will ensure that students who have not achieved the required A-C grade know that maths and English are transferable life skills which they need to achieve in order that they function adequately in society.
- Colleges must ensure that they actively promote maths and English qualifications in their literature and websites so that all students are aware that they will have to do these qualifications alongside their vocational course until they get level 2 Functional Skills or A-C GCSE qualification.
- All tutors who teach GCSE or Functional Skills maths and English should be qualified to the National Standards – i.e. Level 5 Diploma if they do not have a subject specialism qualification such as a relevant degree in the subject they want to teach. In addition, tutors who have had time out of teaching and need to retrain should be encouraged to

do a bridging course or the Level 5 Diploma subject specialism at the very least to ensure that their knowledge and understanding is current and relevant.

- Measures should be put in place to ensure that all vocational tutors are familiar with the purpose of the BKSB Initial and diagnostic assessment, as well as the associated resources they can access for students, if necessary through whole college Continuing Professional Development.
- In order that Functional Skills and GCSE maths and English tutors are able to deliver their sessions fully, every effort should be made by management to ensure that students are placed in base rooms or classrooms where tutors have the same access to technology and resources as vocational tutors.
- Different communities of practice view diagnostic assessment differently due to the culture of the group, disposition and attitude which is constructed about a subject matter within the group. For this reason, greater collaboration between GCSE and Functional Skills maths and English tutors and vocational tutors is necessary if all tutors are to gain a better understanding of each other's subjects. This can be achieved by offering training to tutors, mentoring, coaching, through emails and creating greater opportunities for all tutors to collaborate through discussion.

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Appendices

Appendix: 1 1-10 Principles of Diagnostic Assessment

The ten principles of Diagnostic Assessment

- 1 be part of effective planning for teaching and learning so that learners and teachers should obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals; planning should include processes for feedback and engaging learners.
- 2 focus on how students learn; learners should become as aware of the 'how' of their learning as they are of the 'what'.
- 3 be recognised as central to classroom practice, including demonstration, observation, feedback and questioning for diagnosis, reflection and dialogue.
- 4 Be regarded as key professional skill for teachers, requiring proper training and support I the diverse activities and processes that comprise assessment for learning.
- 5 should take account of the importance of learner motivation by emphasising progress and achievement rather than failure and by protecting learners' autonomy, offering some choice and feedback and the chance for self-direction.
- 6 promote commitment to learning goals and a shared understanding of the criteria by which they are being assessed, by enabling learners to have some part in deciding goals and identifying criteria for assessing progress.
- 7 enable learners to receive constructive feedback about how to improve, through information and guidance, constructive feedback on weaknesses and opportunities to practice improvements.
- 8 develop learners' capacity for self-assessment so that they become reflective and self-managing.
- 9 recognise the full range of achievement of all learners.
- 10 promote fundamental care principles (Assessment Reform Group, 2002).

Appendix 2: Information sheet

Information sheet

Title: What is the purpose of Diagnostic Assessment in the FE sector?

Invitation

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Aim: What is the purpose of this study?

This study aims to explore the experiences, perceptions and views of relevant professionals, including Skills for Life and vocational tutors about their use of diagnostic assessment methods and strategies.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this study because your views about diagnostic assessment are very important to this research project.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

What will happen if I take part?

I envisage that this research project will be completed in the 2016/2017 Skills for Life tutors year. The first part of the study (Pilot Study) will be completed by December 2013. The second stage of the study will begin in 2014 will involve the data collection, data analysis and findings will be completed by the 2016/2017 Skills for Life tutors year.

Data Collection Methods

Data will be collected by semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews in the first instance. Every effort will be made to ensure that you receive a copy of the interview questions, prior to the semi-structured interviews taking place.

Who is organising and funding the research?

If you need any further information or would like to contact me, please do so at the following address.

Dee Kesler
Skills for Life Lecturer
College Xavier

Finally, you will be given a copy of this information sheet, along with a consent form to sign, indicating that you wish to participate in this research project which you are expected to keep for future reference.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent Form (E4)

Informed Consent Information Sheet

University of Huddersfield

School of Education and Professional Development

Participant Consent Form (E4)

Title of Research Study: What is the purpose of Diagnostic Assessment in the FE sector?

Name of Researcher: Dee Kesler

Participant Identifier Number:

☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

☐ I understand that all my responses will be anonymised.

☐ I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

☐ I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Name of Researcher: Dee Kesler

Signature of Researcher:

Date:

Appendix 4: Semi-structured Interview Schedules and Focus Group Interview questions

Semi-structured interview schedule/Focus Group Interview Questions

This study aims to explore some of the strategies that tutors use to identify and respond to learner need. In order to gather data about your experiences of diagnostic assessment, I would appreciate it if you would answer the following questions.

1 What do you consider to be the purpose of diagnostic assessment?

2 Can you identify the difference between diagnostic and summative assessment?

3 In what ways, do you communicate with your students about diagnostic assessment? For example, how do you inform your students about progress made or lack of progress made?

4 Do you use both formal and informal assessment in your class? If so, give an example for each. An example of formal could be a whole college measuring instrument whereas an example of informal could be a measurement which you have personally designed or adapted.

5 What techniques and/or tools do you use in the course of your teaching? Do you consider these to be effective? For example, observation, ILPs to give feedback, journals, quiz etc.

6 Do you experience any constraints in implementing diagnostic assessment strategies in the classroom? If so, what are they?

7 Do you feel that diagnostic assessment has a negative or positive effect on student progress? Give an example.

8 How do you use the data from the Literacy/Numeracy Initial Assessment?

9 How do you inform your students about their diagnostic assessment results or BKSB results?

10 Can you differentiate between the terms assessment for learning and assessment of learning and give an example of what each term might entail?

11 Do you consider there to be a difference in how the term diagnostic assessment and assessment for learning is used? If yes, please give an example.

Appendix 5: Research Plan

Research Plan

October 2011 – December 2011	Prepare Research Proposal
January 2012- April 2012	Revise research proposal
April 2012-July 2012	Named Supervisor selected
September 2012-December 2012	Literature Review
January 2013 - April 2013	Methodology chapter
April 2013 – July 2013	Pilot Study Data Collection
July 2013- October 2013	Pilot Study Data Analysis
November 2013 – December 2013	Revise Literature Review
January 2014	Prepare draft Progress Report
February 2014	Final Progress Report 1
W/k beg 24 th February 2014	Progress Viva and Form 6
March 2014	Progress Report Revisions 1
February 2015	Progress Report 2
April 2015-July 2015	Data Collection vocational tutors
August 2015-December 2015	Data Analysis
January 2016-July 2016	Data analysis of all, results, findings
August 2016-August 2017	Writing up revisions
September 2017	Completion

Appendix 6: Phase 1-3 Participants breakdown

Phase 1: Skills for Life Lecturers

Methods

Semi-structured Interviews	7
Focus Group Interviews	11
Teacher Perception of Courses Survey	9
Total	27

Phase 2: Vocational lecturers by Programme Area

Methods	FE Computing	Hair and Beauty	Centre for Academic Studies	Hospitality, Travel and Catering
Semi-structured Interviews	3-4	3-4	3-4	3-4
Focus Group Interviews	6-8	6-8	6-8	6-8
Teacher Perception of Courses	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	4	3	4	4

Appendix 7: Tutor Techniques explained

Table 6.2: Skills for Life and vocational tutors' techniques explained

Techniques	Explanation/definition	Vocational tutors	Skills for Life/ GCSE Maths tutors
Direct questions	Questions directed to one individual	Theresa	Stephen Rosa Mary
Indirect questions	Questions directed to a group/class	Martina	Rosa Mary Stephen Monica
Formal Assessment	Controlled assessments/summative assessments	Barbara, Linda	Lloyd Mia Virginia Monica Mary
Summative/End tests	End tests or assignments	Linda Emily Olivia	Virginia Trina Mia Gillian
Diagnostic Assessment	Anything before the summative	Olivia, Deidre Barbara, Angelina, Linda, Emily	Monica, Trina Stephen, McKenzie, Gillian
Informal Assessments	Tutor designed activities which could include sample, practice and mock tests/exams	Mandy Sarah Angelina	Monica Katrina Taylor Derrick Mar

Practice tests/mock exams	Sample assessments	Olivia Mandy Gillian Emily Angelina	Agatha, Virginia, Mia, Gillian Mary
Smart Targets	Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound	Emily	Colin, Rosa
Tracking documents	Paper-based or electronic student tracking of progress made or not by student	Angelina Linda Emily Martina Theresa Mandy	Rahaan Mackenzie Mia Nadia
ILPs	Individual Learning Plans (paper based)	Mandy Brenda Angelina Emily	Monica Nadia Katrina Rahaan Mackenzie Gillian Virginia Mary Mia Colin Rosa
eILP	Electronic Individual Learning Plan which students, parents and tutors can feed into	Mandy Brenda Martina Barbara	
Flipped Learning	Where students learn new content outside the classroom	Brenda	

Blended Learning	A combination of face to face and computer or internet based learning	Brenda Martina Mandy Emily	
Moodle Virtual Learning Environment	Online Virtual Learning Environment	Emily Angelina Theresa	
Ecordia	Electronic tracking system	Linda Emily	
COLA	Core Online Learning Area- web based modules of study	Olivia Angelina Theresa	
Observations (practical and monitoring)	The monitoring of student's progress in both practical and theory sessions	Emily Linda Olivia Angelina Brenda Martina	Katrina Nadia Gillian Nadia Virginia Colin
Peer Assessment	Students assessing each other's work/activity	Brenda	Trina Agatha Colin Rosa
Self-assessment	When students assess their own progress	Mandy Brenda Emily	Derrick Colin
Rag rating	Similar to peer assessment where student/tutor gives the student a score out of ten, where ten is the highest score achievable	Brenda Theresa	

Role Play	Where students act out or mimic a situation in a vocational context	Theresa Deidre	Nadia Katrina
Tutorial	Individual discussion between students and tutors about progress	Mandy Emily Barbara	James Mary Nadia Derrick Colin Rosa
Verbal Feedback	Discussion with student about their work	Angelina Theresa Barbara Angelina Emily Linda	Rosa Stephen Trina Mia Agatha Gillian Mia Mary Rahaan Taylor James Virginia
Written Feedback	Marking student's work/annotating/written feedback	Linda Emily Barbara Brenda	Lloyd Agatha Gillian Rosa

Appendix 8: Braun and Clarke's (2006) 15-point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

15-Point Checklist of Criteria for Good Thematic Analysis

Process No. Criteria

Transcription

1 The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for „accuracy“.

Coding

2 Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.

3 Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.

4 All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.

5 Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.

6 Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

7 Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.

8 Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.

9 Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.

10 A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.

Overall

11 Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis

Adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.

Written report

12 The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.

13 There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.

14 The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.

15 The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just „emerge“.

Appendix 9: Teacher Perception of Courses Survey

Teacher Perception of Courses SPOCs - 2013

What is diagnostic assessment?

This survey was designed in order to collect information about your experiences of working with students at this college. Some of you may work predominantly in one vocational area, however, others (Skills for Life tutors) may work across more than one vocational area.

Welcome to this research project on diagnostic assessment. Please answer the questions as truthfully as you can. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. There are 100 questions in total. Most of them require you to make a selection, from agree completely to disagree completely, some are yes/no questions and a few ask you to write comments.

There are 100 questions in this survey

Pre course

1 [Pre1]The students were informed about the qualifications they would get.

2 [Pre2]The students were informed about what entry qualifications they needed for their course.

3 [Pre3]You ensured that the students did an initial assessment for Literacy and Numeracy.

4 [Pre4]The results from the assessment helped the students to learn.

5 [Pre5]If applicable, the students were informed that Functional Skills would form part of their course.

6 [Pre6]The students were informed, how many hours per week they would be expected to be in class.

7 [Pre7]The students were told how much extra work they would have to do when not in class?

8 [Pre8]You informed the students about what they could do after the course.

9 [Pre1]The students were informed about the qualifications they would get.

Induction

10 [Ind1]You informed the students about the kind of support they could get from the College.

11 [Ind2]You showed the students the Student Handbook.

12 [Ind3]You have informed your students about the complaints procedure.

13 [Ind4]How did you inform the students about the College Code of Conduct?

15 [Ind6]You informed all students how you expect them to behave as a student.

16 [Ind6]You inform the students how they will be assessed on the course.

17 [Ind7]How do you inform students when and where their classes will be taking place?

19 [Ind9]You found the online college induction useful.

20 [Ind10]You found the departmental induction useful.

21 [Ind11]Staff mentoring is good in your department.

22 [Ind12]There is a buddying scheme for new members of staff in your department.

Whilst at College

23 [Whil1]Have your students visited the Learning Resource Centre (e.g. Library, IT Suite, Workshops)?

24 [Whil2]Your students know about the College's programme of enrichment activities (e.g. sport, extra courses).

25 [Whil3]Your students feel safe at College.

Teaching and Learning

26 [TL1]You feel that the teaching on your course is good.

27 [TL2]You feel that you know your subject well.

28 [TL3]You use different ways to help students learn.

29 [TL4]You help students to learn and use their time and how to study effectively.

30 [TL5]You help students to develop their ideas and work independently.

31 [TL6]You set high standards for your students to achieve.

32 [TL7]Your students able to keep up in lessons.

33 [TL8]You make the aims/learning objectives clear to the students.

34 [TL9]How do you keep students interested in classes?

35 [TL10]You talk to the students if they have a problem with their studies.

36 [TL11]You take students individual learning needs into account.

37 [TL12]You help the students to learn new skills and help them to progress on to the next course/into employment.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

38 [TL13]You consider your course to be good.

39 [TL14]You feel that the students have made good progress.

Tests/Assessments

40 [TA1]Students know how they will be assessed on their course.

41 [TL2]Students know the deadlines for handing in assessed work and these are clearly stated.

42 [TL3]Students always meet the hand-in date.

43 [TL4]The students consider the feedback on their work to be helpful.

Not applicable

44 [TL5]The students consider the assessment to be fair.

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

45 [TL6]The students know what they are doing well and what they need to do to improve.

46 [TL7]You inform students what to do if they disagree with their marks.

47 [TA8]The assessment of their work was fair.

48 [TL9]All students meet the hand in date.

49 [TL10]Students get prompt feedback on their work.

50 [TL11]Students are given the opportunity to peer assess their own and each others work.

Support I receive

51 [Supp1]You have regular 1-1 with students.

52 [Supp2]You consider the regular 1-1 reviews with students help you to set realistic smart targets.

53 [TL3]You set students challenging targets.

Learner Resource Centre and IT Services

54 [LRC1]There are good resources on Moodle to support this course.

55 [LRC2]You actively encourage Moodle.

56 [LRC3]I have used the resources and/or services that Creative Media & Innovation (Central Media) provide.

57 [LRC4]The Creative Media & Innovation (Central Media) staff were friendly and helpful.

58 [LRC5]Media resources were available when I need them.

59 [LRC6]The computers that I have used have had the software that I needed.

60 [LRC7]The classrooms I used were well equipped with ICT facilities (e.g. Computer, smart board etc).

61 [LRC8]Printing facilities were excellent.
Course overall

62 [Over1]You feel that all students are on the right course and level.

63 [Over2]If applicable, you inform students where they can get advice about changing course.

64 [Over3]How do you know whether your students are enjoying their course?

65 [Over4]You feel that your students are achieving what they set out to do.

66 [Over5]You consider the course to be well organised.

67 [Gen1]You enjoy teaching on the course.

68 [Gen2]You feel the students are achieving what you set them to do.

69 [Org1]You feel the course was well organised.

70 [Org2]You feel that different parts of the course were linked together well.

71 [Gen3]You think the students achieved what they set out to do.

72 [Gen4]There have been changes/improvements made on this course as a result of feedback.

College services

73 [Col1]You know what to do if the alarm rings.

74 [Col2]Students know about my Live@EDU account (My Email, Skydrive, Storage and Collaboration Space Online).

75 [Col3]You know how to keep yourself, the students and your work and the student's work safe when online.

76 [Col4]You inform the students how to seek help should they come across bullying, harassment, inappropriate contact or unacceptable use of online services.

77 [Col5]You inform students what kind of help they can get from Student Services.

78 [Col6]You inform students what kind of help they can get if they have a disability/learning difficulty.

79 [Col7]You inform students how to stay safe in College.

80 [Col8]You inform students about Healthy/"Healthy College".

81 [Col9]You inform students what the student union does.

82 [Col10]The students know who their students' union officers are.

Functional Skills

83 [Func1]You help students to get better at using numbers.

84 [Func2]How do help students to get better at reading and writing?

85 [Func3]How do you help students to get better at using computers?

86 [Func4]You inform students how Functional Skills will be assessed.

87 [Func5]If applicable, how many functional skills subjects do you teach and can you name them?

88 [Func6]You offer students the opportunity to attend ALS sessions if you consider that they need extra support.

89 [Func7]You have been told which vocational area/s you will be working in next year.

:

90 [Func8]You feel that you know specialist subject well.

91 [Func9]You have been invited to attend subject specific standardisation meetings.

92 [Func10]You know who has curriculum responsibility for each of the functional skills subjects and levels.

93 [Func11]You know who the Curriculum Team Leaders are for functional skills.

94 [Func12]You know the subject areas that the Functional Skills Curriculum Team Leaders are responsible for.

Next steps

95 [Nex1]You helped with progression (e.g. to apply for job or other options i.e. next level, another subject, university, higher education)

96 [Nex2]You think that students have the confidence to apply for jobs.

97 [Nex2]You think that doing this course has helped the student in their chosen career/job.

Equality and Diversity

98 [Eq1]You take into account equality and diversity issues when planning your lessons.

99 [Eq2]If applicable, students are given the opportunity, in a confidential setting, to discuss existing and additional support on induction and to review their needs throughout the duration of the course.

100 [Ind3]Please feel free to add any relevant information which you think might be useful to this project

Appendix 10: Original research title and research questions

Original Research Title

What is the purpose of formative assessment in the FE sector?

Revised Research Title

What is the purpose of initial and diagnostic assessment in an FE college?

Original Research Questions

- 1 What types of assessment are used by Skills for Life and vocational tutors in the FE sector and how do they differ?
- 2 In what ways do Skills for Life and vocational tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?
- 3 What do tutors consider are the most effective methods of assessments to help students to achieve their goals and do they face any constraints in implementing these methods?

Revised Research Questions

- 1 What types of initial and diagnostic assessment are used by tutors in the college and how do they differ?
- 2 In what ways, if any, do tutors use diagnostic and summative assessment tools to guide student learning, needs, achievement and their own pedagogy?
- 3 What impact does organisational culture and policy have on the performance and professional identity of tutors in an FE College?

Appendix 12: Course and units of study offered by some programme areas

FE Computing and Business Courses

a.

Before I begin to discuss the different types of assessment which the FE Business and Computing Programme Area do, I will give you some indication of some of the level one and level two courses this programme area offers to students. These are as follows:

Accounting AAT Certificate Level 2; Accounting Skills to Run Your own Business AAT Award Level 2; Book-Keeping AAT Award Level one; Business Administration levels two; Business and Retail Certificate level one; Business Diploma QCF level 2; Business Engty level Certificate; Business NQF Extended Certificate level 2; Computerised Accounting AAT Award level 1 and 2; Customer Service level 1 and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Certificate level 2. Some of the FE Computing course which the college offers are as follows; CISCO IT Essentials Part 1; Computer Science/Software Development; Computing-Internet and Email; Computing for Beginners; Creative Media Level 1 (Cambridge National Diploma); and (Games Development) Diploma Level 2; Email ITQ Level 1; ICT (System Support) Diploma level2; ICT IMPROVERS: ICT level 1 (Cambridge National Diploma); IT Users (ITQ) Certificate level 1; ITQ Award level 1; ITQ level 1 and level 2; and Web Design Introduction and Improvers.

Service Industry Programme Area Courses – Travel and Tourism

Some of the Travel and Tourism units which are offered at the college include the following: Cabin Crew Introduction Certificate Level 2; Retail Travel Extended Certificate Level 2; Service Access Cultures Level 2; Travel and Tourism City and Guilds (vocational route); and Travel and Tourism Extended Certificate/Diploma BTEC Level 2 (academic route).

Hairdressing

As well as being assessed on their knowledge and understanding of hair and beauty techniques, all vocational students must complete a work related health and safety unit. The students not only learn how to cut, style and colour hair but learn about the different hair types and how certain techniques and products can improve hair-quality or damage the hair if not applied correctly. The hair and beauty units offered at the college include the following. Units include,

Hair and Beauty Introduction shampooing; presenting and Professional Image; Styling Hair; Make Up Applications; Dressing Hair; Plaiting and Twisting hair; and colouring women's hair. In addition, some of the hair dressing courses offered include Hair and Beauty Sector (Introduction); Hair and Media Make-Up Diploma Level 2; Hairdressing (Apprenticeship) Level 2 Diploma (NVQ).

Appendix 13: Definitions of assessment

In order to illustrate how the different types of assessments are used by tutors, Table 3.7 includes definitions of the assessment types used, with examples of how each assessment type is used in context. In addition, although, Table 3.7 includes some of the more familiar types of assessment used in the FE College by tutors, there are some types of assessment which need further explanation and these are identified further. Below I have identified some assessment types from the table, with examples of what the term means.

Rag rating - is when either the student or the tutor gives a student a score out of ten for successfully completing an activity. An alternative to giving a score out of ten, is to colour code the progress made by students. This can be done on the student's work or on a tracking document. An example of colour coded rag rating is as follows: Red equals, requires improvement, Yellow/Amber means that the student is on target and Green means that the student has completed the activity or is making good progress. If it is a peer assessed activity, the score will give the student some idea about progress made or not. If the tutor is rag rating a student on the completion of an activity, such as 'washing or shampooing hair' this instant feedback can help to motivate the students into trying harder to use the appropriate techniques.

Role play – This is mainly the domain of the vocational tutor where students get the opportunity to act out their job roles. However, the only opportunity where Skills for Life tutors have the opportunity to do role play activities is when they contextualise an activity or their Scheme of Work to a vocational area. As the Functional Skills tutor's primary aim in maths and English is to contextualise activities to 'real life' situations as much as possible, role play activities and situations are embedded in the Scheme of Work. However, further opportunities to 'role play' is evident in the Speaking and Listening unit where the Skills for Life tutors can give the student the opportunity to present or talk about in a group situation, any aspect of the vocational course they are studying.

Observations - in the classroom is generally a tutor led activity which involves the tutor monitoring the student's progress throughout the session. This is a procedure which all tutor's undertake and is a technique prevalent in both Skills for Life vocational tutors' classes.

Peer assessment - is when a student assesses another student's work and gives it a score out of ten or when a tutor has marked a student's work and both the peer and the student identify whether their marks agree. Self-assessment is when a student is involved in the assessment process in some way, assessing their own work in terms of the assessment criteria.

– is an electronic ILP where tutors, students and parents can access individual student's learning outcomes, programmes and progress with permission. It can also show the tutor all the students that they teach at a glance, under the 'My student' tab. This is the first year that the has been used by both vocational and Skills for Life tutors, the Skills for Life tutors will do the once the data is correct as it is basically an electronic version of the paper based ILPs. The main issues which the Skills for Life tutors are experiencing with the are the fact that if the E-registers are not correct, then the information relating to students that they teach will be incorrect. This means that they are not able to input any data. Vocational tutors, on the other hand have been using the since conception.

Moodle – is a virtual learning environment where tutors put teaching and learning activities which may include, videos, exams in pdf format, PowerPoints or any learning activity so that students can access resources remotely inside or outside the college on a 24/7 basis. For Moodle to be effective for students studying Functional Skills English or maths, they need access to computers or laptops. Most Functional Skills maths and English classes, as well as GCSE English and maths classes take place in classrooms without computer/laptops. This means that students would have to book out a computer or laptop from the technology department. Although maths and English topics are available on Moodle, it would be difficult for students who need constant supervision and support to work independently. Functional Skills English and maths, as well as GCSE English and maths are not distance kills courses so it would be of no benefit to students to put the whole of the Functional Skills maths or English and GCSE English and maths topics on course on Moodle. In addition, Moodle, the ILP and the are vehicles for which diagnostic and summative assessment results can be recorded. Technically, as the ILP and are reviewed periodically and Moodle is used to communicate with students. These are considered to be diagnostic assessment strategies which enable both the tutor and student to track progress made or not, in some cases.

Blended learning - is where face to face instruction is combined with computer or internet web based instruction and is more suited to vocational tutors' way of working, than Skills for Life

or GCSE English or maths tutors. **Flipped learning** on the other hand is a form of blended learning where homework activities which have traditionally been done outside the classroom moves into the classroom. This means that there is an over reliance on online instructional and web based research which means that the student is taking more responsibility for their own learning.

Core Online Learning Assessment – is an online learning facility where students can undertake part of their course online. This might involve researching a topic, completing a web based module or training programme which has been developed to be accessed online.

Ecordia – is an electronic tracking system, similar in nature to the which the Public Services Programme Area and Travel and Tourism Programme Areas have been using to give feedback to students on assignments and track progress in this College for a number of years.

Appendix 14: Tutor profiles

Table: 6.3

Tutors & previous roles	Gender	Programme Area	Role	Year interviewed	Time at College
Mackenzie	M	Skills for Life	Manager Full Time	2013	2+
Lloyd	M	Skills for Life	Curriculum Team Leader Full Time	2013	10+
Monica	F	Skills for Life	CTL FT	2013	10+
Stephen	M	Skills for Life	CTL Full Time	2013	9
Agatha Trainer Assessor	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	5+
Trina	F	Skills for Life	Trainer Assessor Full Time	2013	8+
Virginia	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Fractional	2013	10+
Mia	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Fractional	2013	23+ experience
Rehaan	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Part Time	2013	1
James	F	Skills for Life	Trainer Assessor Full Time	2013	7
Mary Young Offender	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	1
Nadia NEETs	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	1
Katrina ESOL	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	7

Derrick	M	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	7
Taylor Assessor Supply Teaching	F	Skills for Life	Lecturer Full Time	2013	9+
Colin Engineer	M	Skills for Life	Lecturer/Trainer Assessor 2 X Part Time posts	2013	2
Brenda Hairdresser	F	Hair and Beauty	Lecturer Full Time	2015	12
Mandy Hairdresser	F	Hair and Beauty	Lecturer Full Time	2015	10
Barbara Hairdresser	F	Hair and Beauty	Lecturer Full Time	2015	4
Rosa	F	English and Maths	Lecturer Full Time	2015	15+
Gillian Pupil Referral	F	English and Maths	Lecturer Fractional	2015	N/A
Trina Supervisor	F	English and Maths	Lecturer Fractional	2015	12+
Linda	F	Travel and Tourism	Lecturer Full Time	2015	7
Deidre Travel & Tourism Industry	F	Travel and Tourism	Lecturer Full Time	2015	9
Emily Branch Manager	F	Travel and Tourism	Lecturer Full Time	2015	7
Martina	F	Business and Computing	Lecturer Full Time	2015	9

Angelina	F	Business and Computing	Lecturer Full Time	2015	10
Theresa	F	Business and Computing	Lecturer 2 X Part Time posts	2015	N/A
Olivia	F	Business and Computing	Lecturer Full Time	2015	8

Appendix 15: Link, Engage, Assess, Progress table



Table 6.4: Link, Engage, Assess, Progress

Stage	Description	Example text	Suggested Tools
Link	A short explanation of how the COLA module links to the learning that has already taken place, if applicable.	In this COLA module we will develop our work on and explore ...	Moodle label
Engage	A resource or resources that introduce or further develop an area of study.	You should now watch the YouTube clip below and then read the attached article.	YouTube clip Podcast PowerPoint (ideally with voiceover to provide explanation using Screencast-o-matic)
Assess	A point at which learning is captured through online assessment.	Test your knowledge in our quiz. Share your thoughts by posting on our Padlet wall.	Moodle quiz Moodle discussion forum Hot Potatoes quiz Padlet
Progress	A short explanation of how the learning will be developed in the next taught session.	In our next session we will investigate how 'x' is used in a working environment.	Moodle label

You can find examples of sample COLA modules and instruction guides and videos of how to create a range of resources by visiting our COLA site on Moodle. Support is also available from a member of the Teaching and Learning Development Coaching Team by contacting d.annonymous@thiscollege.ac.uk

