Skein Report for XYZ College

Skein

> **The further education and skills system requires a cultural shift to enable it to improve further the quality of teaching and learning**
>
> **157 Group Report**
> **"Leading learning and letting go" (2012)**

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2

Introduction

This is the report for XYZ College of the Skein assessment carried out on X date by CUREE (Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education).

Background

In X year, XYZ College merged with C and D colleges, creating cross county coverage focusing on a wide range of vocational subjects and A-levels. Overall XYZ College has seven main campuses in Countyshire, with smaller centres elsewhere in the country. In 2011/12 the college had 29,500 learners of whom over 4,500 were 16-18 year olds on full-time courses, 4,500 were on work-based learning programmes, and 2,100 were studying university level courses. This is a widely dispersed college, which has implications for collaborative professional development strategies, exemplified by staff during the Skein visit.

Employer engagement is a key strength of the College, which is also a member of several partnership groups including the Learning Partnership, the 14-19 Strategic Partnership and the Countryshire Transport Partnership. The College is active in peer review, working with a number of other colleges. The most recent Ofsted inspection was in x date. The inspection found the college to be Good (Grade 2) for overall effectiveness of provision. Capacity to improve was assessed as outstanding (Grade 1).

Evidence for this report

The evidence for this report is based on an analysis of college documentation; individual interviews with two curriculum area managers (CAMs), two lecturers, and one project development officer; five focus group discussions/activities; and a survey. A group interview was held with five members of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) with responsibility for CPD.

The focus groups were attended by 60 members of staff (teachers, trainers, tutors, assessors, middle and senior leaders, including corporate curriculum leaders (CCLs)) from a range of curriculum areas, including:

- Health, Public Services & Care
- Arts, Media and Publishing
- Science and Mathematics
- Conservation
- Marine and Ecology
- Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care
- Health and Social Care
- Education and Training
- Hair and Beauty
- Hospitality
- A Levels
- Business, Administration & Law
- Engineering & Manufacturing Technology
- Leisure, Travel & Tourism

The survey was completed by 85 staff in the following roles:

- 20 curriculum managers/leaders

- Two advanced practitioners

- 24 contract lecturers

- 11 sessional lecturers

- Six LSPs

- Two technicians

- Two finance administrators

- 16 identified as ranging from deputy CEO to course managers, heads of college, programme managers and work experience co-ordinators.

All the college sites were represented in the survey, with a good spread between the main FE sites and the smaller, specialist sites.

The college leadership and other staff were generous with their time and were helpful in providing a rich array of documentary and other evidence which together created a picture which we believe offers a fair representation of the college as a whole. Our findings, reported on the next page, are put forward on this basis but with the obvious caution that we can only report on the evidence we found.

Overview of the professional learning and development in the college

Performance Management Review is the main mechanism for identifying and setting individual CPD targets. It is used to monitor effectiveness and to put in place strategies for remedying identified weaknesses or developing the skills required to effect new externally and internally imposed objectives, such as the integration of English and maths across the curriculum. The college continues to encourage the 30 hour CPD requirement and staff log a wide variety of experiences under this rubric, encouraged by the college's human resources management. In practice, staff tend to regard external courses, conferences and training as CPD. Although they value and recognise the learning opportunities offered through professional dialogue with colleagues and managers in everyday workplace situations, most of the staff who participated in the Skein review did not necessarily associate this learning with their 'formal' professional development.

The college has established a number of structural mechanisms to promote professional development as part of its strategic commitment to promoting high quality teaching and learning. These include:

Three CCL-led CPD days per year	A three year, residential development programme to promote learner-led teaching
Residential leadership training followed by internal coaching	An annual learning and teaching fair
Learning and teaching workshops	Lesson observation and development plans
Learning walks plus peer observation, or 'buddying'	External courses and training, some of which may be award bearing
Initial teacher training, additional specialist training for teachers of mathematics (numeracy) and English (literacy), training for SpLD (dyslexia) specialists, for assessors and internal verifiers and short training/briefing sessions on key	

Some mechanisms are better recognised by staff and more sought after than others. For example, the learner led residential training is highly regarded and oversubscribed, whilst peer observation is regarded as problematic because of perceived time obstacles. CPD varies between subject areas.

Summary of the main findings and recommendations

Overall, the college approach to CPD has a number of **significant strengths**, including:

1

Understanding of senior and middle managers of *the potential of* collaborative professional learning in improve practice and a commitment to encourage this

2

Its commitment to continual improvements in teaching and learning and the recognition of the significance of CPD in this

3

Structures and mechanisms for sustaining staff learning following external residential training courses

4

A designated programme of CPD days in all subject areas

5

A systematic and extensive focus on observation and feedback to improve practice, including non-graded observations and learning walks

6

Strong awareness of the important contribution of learner voice to staff development

In order to build on these strengths and increase the learning potential of the staff development programme, **the college should focus on:**

Needs analysis

⚓ Ensuring that colleagues develop a deep understanding of their own and their students' starting points and progress by;

⚓ focussing on specific sub groups of learners in turn and

⚓ visualising how success in developing staff understanding and practice would enhance target learners learning skills and outcomes

⚓ Developing a range of strategies for differentiation within formal CPD sessions that reflect approaches to differentiation that the college is encouraging staff to adopt for students

⚓ Ensuring strong and explicit links between the outcomes of learner reviews, learner led forums and other college review mechanisms and CPD planning

Collaboration

⚓ Developing a culture of evidence-based co-coaching by providing tools, protocols and training in peer review, observation and shared analysis/debriefing to sustain and structure, collaborative, work based professional learning activities and establishing protocols that separate these clearly from more formal monitoring of performance.

Summary of the main findings and recommendations

Use of Specialist Expertise

✍ Developing a systematic approach to the identification of internal specialists to support embedded and ongoing staff professional learning

✍ Exploring how occupational/vocational knowledge and expertise from the field intersects with teaching, learning and assessment processes, building on colleagues' existing, keen interest in what is working and expected in the industry

✍ Developing a broader range of ways contextualising new approaches/knowledge and understanding in different subject/vocational contexts

Evidence for Learning

✍ Introducing enquiry methods at both leadership and practitioner levels to help colleagues explore the connections between changes in their practice and student learning

✍ The use of video to help overcome the logistical challenges associated with peer observations, to support further inter site collaborative learning increased enquiry activities

Leadership of CPDL

✍ Greater and more visible participation in professional learning about teaching and learning by the college corporate leaders

✍ Revisiting the "list" of CPD opportunities which staff access internally to highlight the opportunities for internal specialist support

✍ Including a wider group of staff (e.g. Graduates of residential programmes) in exploring CPD based evidence and using this to help design and monitor the development of *a professional learning culture* and a XYZ College model of professional learning through, for example, identifying and testing benchmarks to highlight different levels of sophistication in professional learning and student led learning.

Summary of the main findings and recommendations—detailed analysis

Based on an analysis of the international evidence base and the research and inspection evidence in the UK, CUREE, an internationally recognised centre of research about continuing professional development, has identified five core areas which are crucial for a college professional learning environment to be effective and efficient. These areas are:

- Needs analysis
- Collaboration
- Use of specialist expertise
- Evidence for learning
- Leadership of CPD

For each of these areas, CUREE has developed research-based benchmarks which encompass a four point range of quality and consistency of professional learning practice across a college. These express key characteristics highlighted by the international and national research specifically for each core area. Broadly speaking the quality range is:

'developing' - the college offers its staff an opportunity to engage in a number of external and internal CPD opportunities, in accordance with either the college priorities or staff needs and interests

'enhancing' - a significant proportion of the college staff participate in a range of good quality CPD, including long-term work-based learning opportunities and access to specialist expertise; many of the opportunities are well tailored to staff and their learners' needs and are also linked to college development priorities

'embedding' - most of the college staff, including the leadership team, behave as professional learners on an ongoing basis and are aware of, and explicit about, their learning; they are engaged in interactive development of practice and collaborative enquiries with colleagues; the college has tools and mechanisms in place which aim to create coherence and depth of professional learning across the college and tightly link it with student learning and outcomes

'transforming' - the college is a highly successful, transparent and coherent learning environment to which all staff make a positive contribution. Learning processes and support are characterised by the presence of all the features internationally recognised to be required and significant for truly effective staff learning

Using the materials made available by XYZ College and evidence captured during interviews and focus groups, the following sections of the report describe the college's professional learning environment against the benchmarks for the five key areas.

Key areas of professional development

Diagnostic activities and range of information considered

Enhancing

College–wide diagnostic activities include graded Performance Management Reviews (PMR), observations for individual staff and, more recently introduced, an additional professional development observation. Every teacher has an annual PMR where the outcomes of a recent observation are discussed. If a class taught by the teacher was observed in a recent LTA Review and the lesson graded 1 or 2, that report can be used. Where an LTA Review report is not available (or should the teacher or manager wish it) a separate professional development observation is undertaken. This is focussed on development opportunities and is not graded. The information under consideration during the PMR sessions is strongly learner focused. Learner achievement and retention data are reviewed during performance management meetings. Learner feedback is regularly reviewed, given serious consideration and acted upon. Where observations uncover weaknesses, development goals are set for the teachers concerned and further observations scheduled. Learning walks, also recently introduced, are beginning to be used to identify areas where professional development has the potential to address weaknesses or solve problems. There is enthusiasm to carry out learning walks and observations, and middle managers are appreciative of the fact that they now conduct these, whereas traditionally it was the remit of the school of education. However, making time to do this and analyse the outcomes systematically is an emerging issue.

External or regulatory changes can also trigger CPD initiatives, either across the college or in particular sector subject areas. For example, Arts and Media leaders were prompted by the requirement for maths and English integration across the curriculum to arrange collaborative planning time for staff to discuss and plan how they were going to change the way they structured the curriculum. At the same time, in the same subject sector, leaders identified that staff were struggling to integrate AfL (an internal college priority) into their practice, and focussed part of the joint discussions on addressing these issues simultaneously.

CPD has also been arranged in response to very specific problems. For example, in two cases described by college staff, learners themselves identified behavioural issues, and professional development support was put in place for the staff concerned to help eliminate the problems. In another case a pastoral issue resulted in awareness training for staff. The college also has an active learner body, supported by the college, whose representatives play an important role in identifying issues and prompting action for change.

During group meetings staff perspectives on the identification of CPD needs spanned a broad range of circumstances. However there were two themes around needs analysis which appeared to be shared by some teaching staff and CAMs/CCLs. The first was that some CPD tended to be reactive and remedial (a CCL comment: "We largely develop the skills of weak performers"), and the second was that much CPD centred on compliance. Few staff at C College and D College, particularly those who believed they needed opportunities for industry updating, appeared to feel able to identify personally targeted CPD opportunities provided or prompted by the college which were specifically targeted at their personal professional learning.

Linking professional development needs and student learning

Embedding

The college is committed to raising learner achievement. It is into the second year of a major three year cross-college CPD initiative whereby groups of volunteer staff participate in a three-day residential training course on Learner Led teaching. Where a lesson observation identifies a significant development need, attending the learner-led residential may be written in to a post-observation development plan. This residential is followed up internally to consolidate and develop practice. At corporate level there is a general acknowledgement of the need for a systematic focus on learner focused goals and outcomes. Performance management processes have been revised to place greater emphasis on student learning and a developmental observation of teaching practice has been introduced to complement the accountability based observation. The leadership course in which senior leaders have participated had student learning at the heart of the initial needs analysis. In July the Learning and Teaching Fair will include learner centred topics such as enterprising behaviours, co-construction and assessment for learning.

Learners themselves, supported by college leaders, play an active role in the college in identifying problems and issues which can and do lead to specific staff development activity. For example, there has been some CPD aimed at resolving learner behavioural problems which was a direct response to learner feedback.

There is a college wide goal of moving towards being an outstanding college in relation to teaching and learning. Many staff in the group interviews (and well over half of survey respondents) indicated that their team meetings and their informal discussions with colleagues are an effective source of professional learning, and outcomes of focus group activities also indicate that these meetings and discussions are often strongly focussed on the learning needs of particular groups of learners.

The next stage in developing strong links between professional and staff learning relate first to building on existing good practice more widely. Less well developed in relation to professional learning is more formal CPD, which is aimed at developing specific learning outcomes for particular groups of learners. For example, some of the learning support staff pointed out that they had opportunities for training aimed at supporting specific groups of learners with learning difficulties, but this knowledge was not shared by the teaching staff with whom they worked. The second key area for development is inviting staff to identify the specific changes in the learning of particular learners that will flow from their own professional learning during formal CPD events and identifying ways to help them achieve this.

Needs analysis

Degree to which the college and individual needs are aligned

Enhancing

The operational objectives in the college's strategic plan drive its approach to CPD, taking into account specific curriculum developments, changes in the regulatory environment and individual needs identified from the performance management process. Curriculum leaders and managers reported that where funding for individual CPD was concerned, professional development needed to be aligned with departmental priorities. There was also evidence of 'unplanned' CPD activities taking place in individual subject areas and of staff calling on help from (for example) lead teachers or CAMs to help them develop practice in order to cope with problems such as behavioural issues. Access to this kind of professional help was not always consistent between subject areas, and some staff did not appear to know that such support was available to them internally.

Departmental meetings, course planning and conversations with colleagues were highly valued in the survey responses as professional learning experiences for individual members of staff. This was consistent with the feedback from focus group sessions. Links between learning at this devolved level and the college's operational objectives were not explicit during Skein visits or the survey but are likely to provide a fruitful area for development.
Most staff who responded to the survey felt they had some degree of control over their own development goals and learning processes. Most colleagues also felt that most of the CPD was also aimed at college or CCL priorities, suggesting a degree of alignment in colleagues' minds between their own and the college's goals

One example of this came from colleagues at Townsville, who felt that science as a curriculum area needed to contribute better to the college priority of equality and diversity. Time was allocated for staff to participate in collaborative planning and developmental work to address this. A minority of survey respondents (20) felt that they were never or rarely involved in identifying their own development needs

CCL days originally focused on college-wide strategic goals. They are now more closely aligned with individual subject sector priorities, identified by CCLs within the college's overall strategic plan. Staff in the focus groups reported having found these more relevant to their own professional learning needs than CPD which was generalised and not contextualised within their subject area. Similarly, 26 out of 79 survey respondents report few opportunities for differentiated learning experiences within formal CPD sessions, which might account for the number of colleagues who reported such sessions as a 'waste of time.'

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Enhancing

There were strong suggestions both in the focus groups and from survey respondents that they felt more subject/industry specific training would be of benefit. At Townsville, the picture shared with us was rather different. Here it is common for staff to engage in industry work experience, work on a locum basis, and take sabbaticals to conduct their own, subject specific, research. Decisions on the level of support the college provides are based on the extent to which their individual CPD aligns with college priorities. In most cases, even when the CPD corresponds to personal rather than college priorities, cover is provided as a minimum of support.

In terms of identifying individual need, CAMs considered that the key issue for them was communication, given the geographical spread of the college's provision. "Each department is very different. We need to talk to people in each area to find out their needs..."

The college's practice sits partly at *Embedding benchmark*

This already competent and responsive approach to needs assessment could be further enhanced by linking practice more closely to the college's strategic goal of moving to outstanding by:

1

Ensuring that colleagues participating in CPD focus on specific groups of learners and a concrete picture of how success in professional learning would affect these learners' learning

2

Identifying pockets of excellence in teaching and learning that others can explore and use as a springboard for development

3

Analysing the individual professional learning goals from staff PMRs, focussing CCL days and learning fairs around the common learning needs extrapolated from these goals, and developing a range of strategies for differentiation within CPD activities,

Key areas of professional development

Collaboration

Collaboration during formal CPD sessions

There are structured opportunities for collaboration across the college, including the residential courses, the CCL days and the Learning and Teaching Fairs. The extent to which the latter two were perceived as collaborative varied. For example, one recent CCL day was divided between a relatively top-down update on current developments within the college and in the external regulatory environment, and an interactive, collaborative session during which staff shared practice and ideas. Because of the college's geographic dispersal, opportunities for formal collaboration within subject areas across sites require considerable planning and organisation.

HE staff are encouraged to engage with the wider research community of their specialist area, and act as peer reviewers on specialist journals.
Some, but not all colleagues feel that performance management reviews are opportunities for collaboration and the new developmental observations are thought more likely to achieve this. "Hopefully the Learning walks will change the culture and open up dialogue."

During the collaborative three-day residential training on learner led teaching, which a large number of staff have undertaken to date, participants share practice and ideas with each other and are encouraged to continue to do so as they make changes in their teaching following the residential. The same applies to the residential leadership course, which is now being rolled out to middle managers. It is precisely because of the learning opportunities offered by the collaborative nature of these courses, and the arrangements for sustaining this learning via peer observation and coaching which the college has made, that they have proved to be highly effective and sought after learning experiences for participants.

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Collaboration

Professional dialogue

Professional dialogue emerged from the focus groups, survey respondents and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) as a key professional learning process within the college. Team meetings, course planning meetings and informal discussions with colleagues were identified by the majority of survey respondents as valuable professional learning opportunities. Evidence from focus group participants suggests that these meetings tend to focus both on keeping up with subject and course developments and on student learning related issues. They tend to be characterised by a 'supportive' 'problem-solving' approach in the context of 'open' discussion. Similarly, 'discussion about relevant issues' with a range of colleagues and managers scored considerably more highly as a learning process amongst survey respondents than did feedback on practice.

A peer observation process exists but is underused as staff perceive there to be insufficient time and/or timetabling difficulties. The learning walks and developmental (ungraded) lesson observations are relatively recent innovations, so colleagues who identified greater 'two way flow' or 'more personalised' and 'more open' professional dialogue as desirable changes to the status quo may be referring to their 'summative' 'data driven' (Focus groups) experiences of such feedback prior to the introduction of these more recent approaches to professional learning. The college has introduced a series of 'Themed Weeks' (e.g. cultural diversity) during which events take place on every campus and staff and learners engage in joint learning activities.

Collaboration

Integrated collaboration

The college works with a range of external partners and is part of a collaborative college peer review group. So the college models collaboration in a number of ways despite the geographical dispersal of sites. Staff collaboration is strongly encouraged, particularly through the peer observation structure and at CCL days. On the other hand, staff in group interviews indicated logistical challenges to peer review; they reported that they either did not have the time within their 'contract' hours for peer observations or that timetabling meant that appropriate colleagues were not available at the same time as them in order to undertake mutual observations and debrief. Some colleagues exhibited concern and expressed reservations about observations, but a number also spoke very highly of an observation workshop at the Learning fair.

CMT members and those CCLs who have participated in the residential leadership training have identified the opportunity to collaborate with peers at the same level as themselves as one of the most significant elements of the programme. Equally, staff feel they benefit from CCL days as an opportunity to work together with colleagues in their curriculum area, e.g. science, who are working on other sites of the college. The corporate leadership team is fully aware of the professional learning benefits to be derived from collaboration and is committed to encouraging it in various forms across the college. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment reviews are expected to be instrumental in this.

> ## The college's practice sits at the *Enhancing* benchmark for *collaboration, with elements of embedding*

The strong culture of collaborative working focused on raising learners' achievement could be translated into a strategic approach to collaborative professional learning by:

1

More structured of video conferencing to enable increased use of collaborative teams as a way of tackling practical challenges in improving teaching and learning and of overcoming some of the split site challenges to collaboration. Senior management use video conferencing as a matter of day to day practice, but it does not appear to be used as frequently or consistently at all levels of the college. Given the premium which colleagues place on interaction and professional dialogue, the college may want to think about structuring opportunities for professional learning via this medium, for example through careful groupings of staff to facilitate professional learning by working collaboratively through new approaches to promote strategic objectives

2

Developing tools and protocols to ensure that collaborative activity translates into deeper learning through the use of debriefing meetings or for example, action learning sets

3

Developing structured peer support as a way of helping staff to personalise their own learning

4

Developing a more positive perception about the nature, role and usefulness of observation by training colleagues in the principles and tools of co-coaching based around observation for professional learning

Key areas of professional development

Use of specialist expertise

Recognising the need for and identifying specialist expertise

Enhancing with elements of embedding

Culturally, the college is well accustomed to identifying and drawing on specialist and external expertise. Internally, most of the teaching staff in the focus groups identified colleagues within the college or within their professional field as their principal source of specialist expertise. There is also a specialist teaching and learning team in the education department on whose expertise and support colleagues are able to draw to improve aspects of their practice. Senior managers are well aware of the benefits of developing staff observation skills. Although the college has systems in place for identifying and addressing weakness or lack of skills, it is less clear what systems are in place for identifying, celebrating and making strategic use of individual colleague's skills in particular areas.

Externally, both the popular learner led residential course and the leadership course have drawn on specialist inputs. Specialists are also 'regularly brought in to enhance the learners' learning experiences.

Use of specialist expertise

How specialist expertise is used in the college

Embedded

The college values specialist expertise and draws on it extensively. Most external specialist expertise was described in terms of 'industry professionals'. One CCL commented "We bring people in to work with our learners a lot. What we don't do enough, because of budget, is get professionals in to help develop our staff". In many cases though, it seems that staff do take care to learn from specialists who are brought in for the learners' benefit. One lecturer described how she developed and used a new set of resources in her teaching as a result of a specialist working with her learners. In HE provision, staff are encouraged to attend sessions led by guest speakers to hear developments in their field 'from the horse's mouth'. External specialists are also used where there is a lack of internal expertise – for example a lack of drawing skills in Arts and Media meant that a specialist had to be brought in to develop those skills. In other instances, lead practitioners might spend a day working with an external consultant and then train their own teams internally.

At all group interviews, 'colleagues' were the most frequently cited source of specialist expertise for leaders, teachers and support staff. Staff room discussions, team meetings and industry placements were all cited by group interview participants as the most useful for drawing on specialist expertise.

Use of specialist expertise

How specialist expertise is used in the college continued

For teachers, curriculum leaders were second in importance whereas for middle leaders (e.g. CAMs) external consultants took second place. One CCL described how he identified and used internal staff to deliver sessions on new skills – software updating for example. Middle and senior leaders had more opportunities to interact externally and described how they kept up with their professional networks and learnt through discussions with external colleagues as well as internal colleagues.

Use of specialist expertise

Applying and interpreting specialist knowledge

In general, the strong emphasis on specialist expertise and collaboration work together to support an informal and organic approach to supporting the interpretation and application of specialist expertise. But the college has put in place more formal, sustained and systemic structures to ensure that the specialist knowledge gained by staff who participated in the learner led residential training and/ or the leadership training is methodically embedded and developed. This involves:

- staff who completed the learner led training being required to attend at least two of the half termly development forums which have been introduced at a number of sites. They provide an opportunity for on-going discussion and the sharing of best practice between teachers who have attended the residential. All teachers who complete the residential in 2012/13 are additionally required to undertake a peer observation of another teacher who has completed the training

- several CCLs intend to ask staff who have completed the residential to lead development sessions with colleagues on CCL-led development days.

- Some CCLs have identified learning walks, peer observations and performance management as strategies for further development in this area.

CMT acted as coaches to the participants in the leadership course after the residentials, which as now included a coaching module to move the college more towards a coaching culture.

It's well established interest in and support for developing expertise would be strengthened and move quickly to fulfil its potential for transforming practice if:

1

The college sets about systematically identifying excellence amongst both internal and external specialists. Identifying benchmarks through carefully selected staff working groups supported by appropriate external experts where necessary to avoid the risk of group think in particular areas (subject expertise, behavioural management, AfL etc). Colleagues meeting benchmarks at the most sophisticated levels could then be asked to act as mentors or specialists for other colleagues.

2

The existing interest in the contributions of specialists were extended:
- Systematically beyond learning about what is working and expected in industry and the workplace to why certain approaches do and don't work in different teaching and learning contexts
- To developing a broader range of ways of contextualising new approaches/knowledge and an understanding of how specialist knowledge from the field intersects with teaching, learning and assessment processes

In order to enable colleagues to embed new practices within engaging and appropriately challenging learning experiences.

3

The college formalised the opportunistic practices of piggy backing professional learning on the opportunities that arise when external/industry specialists are brought in for the benefit of learners. The development of the peer observation approach into a fully-fledged peer coaching model would provide a means of extending this emerging practice, ensuring it is understood as a positive opportunity for deepening the professional learning gains that some creative and enterprising colleagues are already starting to establish.

Key areas of professional development

Evidence for professional learning

Types of evidence used in CPD

Traditionally the college has focused its CPD efforts on 'development' and staff and college leaders all demonstrate an interest in and commitment to running effective CPD activities alongside a fairly traditional view of what they constitute and what they can contribute. More recent developments including the learner led learning programme, the leadership programme and the renewed emphasis on peer observation, learning walks and on developmental as well as the more summative observations all implicitly emphasise the role of evidence within professional, work based learning for teaching, learning support and leadership colleagues. Other sources of evidence for professional learning in the college include:

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Review observations which measure the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in the context of national standards, highlighting best practice and practice in need of improvement;

- Performance Management observations: At least one observation of each full-time and substantial part-time teacher is undertaken every year as part of the college's Performance Management scheme. The observation concentrates on in-class teaching and its impact on learning. Feedback takes the form of a discussion focused on celebrating good practice, strategies for sustaining success and opportunities for targeted improvement. The outcomes of performance management observation and its follow-up are picked up through Performance Management Review

- the annual performance management report which incorporates course data, learner feedback, and targets and goals for the department

- CPD evaluation forms;

- individual learner reviews and survey questionnaires; and

- learner representative feedback.

While there is a good deal of evidence available to support professional learning, it is not clear whether colleagues in the college perceive this as supportive of their own learning goals or as a springboard for 'remedial' action. A next stage in development would be extending and enabling the use of peer observations as part of the peer coaching to ensure that all colleagues, rather than just college leaders have the opportunity to learn from looking.

When exploring the ways in which evidence of different kinds supports and informs their learning, the members of staff who attended the focus groups highlighted that much of it (in particular learner progress data) was used in assessing their performance and progress towards their targets. For professional learning purposes, teaching staff cited a surprising array of sources of evidence, including planning notes, skills assessments, learners' workbooks and work shadowing notes. Learner voice activities were mentioned as a form of evidence used for both accountability and for their own professional learning purposes. Other types of evidence used in this way included observation of practice and feedback notes.

According to our evidence, colleagues also appeared to collect and use evidence for their own professional learning in a self-directed and independent way, for example via learning journals and post-training action plans. What they don't see as yet is an opportunity to interpret such evidence collectively and in order to build a shared understanding of the role of evidence in building college CPD strategy.

Evidence for professional learning

Evidence for connecting staff and student learning activities/support

Enhancing

Learner progress data plays a key role in determining staff development targets at the college, but was perceived by very few staff as a trigger for their own professional learning. It featured more prominently under the rubric of monitoring staff performance. Learner workbooks and learner voice were more commonly cited as springboards for professional learning and most focus group participants selected student learning goals and outcomes as the principal focus for their own professional learning. The college has introduced a major professional learning programme on learner led teaching, which is likely to lead to a more explicit and widely shared understanding of the ways in which evidence of student learning processes and outcomes feed directly into CPD planning.

The college's practices sit overall at the *enhancing* benchmark in relation to the use of *evidence in professional learning with some elements of embedded and others of developing*

Its well established use performance evidence for diagnostic and progress tracking purposes and performance appraisal and development would be strengthened if:

1

Colleagues are introduced to inquiry methods such as the use of micro enquiry tools within peer coaching or research lesson study to help them explore the connections between changes in their practice (e.g. the greater emphasis on learner led teaching which the college is actively promoting; or Assessment for Learning) and student learning so that colleagues feel increasingly comfortable with observation and recognise it as a valuable learning experience rather than a summative judgement of their teaching.

2

Colleagues are supported in building a shared language about the nature of work based professional learning about the key role of evidence in ensuring that such learning has depth. The use of evidence within professional learning of this kind is key to ensuring that professional learning is personalised, disciplined and anchored in aspirations for learners.

3

Arrangements are made, from time to time, to involve a wider group of staff in exploring and reading across different kinds of evidence in order to develop the colleges' professional learning strategy.

> **Leaders in further education should make the leading of learning for staff and learners their top strategic priority**
>
> 157 Group Report "Leading learning and letting go" (2012)

Key areas of professional development

Leadership

Modelling professional learning

Many of the middle managers involved in the research felt that they were generally well networked within their professional area and were able to take advantage of opportunities for meeting industry colleagues and engaging in professional dialogue with them, both informally and at events such as conferences. They felt able to share any new developments and knowledge they acquired through attendance at courses/conferences and professional networking with their staff. This view was supported by teaching and learning staff responses and only a relatively small number (35%) reported knowing little or nothing about what or how middle leaders learn.

Although senior leaders and managers engage in professional development in a number of ways, ranging from identifying priorities, shaping and occasionally delivering internal CPD to participating in professional learning and development alongside other staff, there is, understandably given the size of the college, rather less awareness of this amongst colleagues. Some CMT members are aware of the benefits of modelling professional learning and try to make their learning experiences explicit. But despite the depth and variety of professional development senior leaders were involved with, 62.8% of survey respondents said that they knew little of the CPD senior leaders were engaged in.

Briefing sessions seem to be one of the mechanisms through which colleagues can develop a sense of how the college develops. About a quarter of respondents said that their team leaders deliver a briefing session for colleagues after attending external development opportunities and just over 12% commented that they were aware of the college leaders' learning and development through briefing sessions following attendance at external courses or 'hearing about it' informally. Although the size and diversity of the college make lack of awareness about leaders' professional learning unsurprising, this evidence also suggests that there is scope for further and more active use of explicit modelling of professional learning processes.

Leadership

Tools

The college makes good use of its VLE where staff can find a range of information, briefings and guidance. It is also developing a range of resources for staff to use in key areas. According to our evidence the college has yet to develop a systematic approach to the use of professional learning tools (e.g. observation protocols, peer review protocols etc) amongst staff. Existing tools and protocols include the standardised Performance Management Scheme, Evaluation of Training Event form, Higher Degree funding application form, Application for Staff Development form and CPD evaluation form. Whilst securing consistency, we found little evidence that these forms helped to develop understanding of professional learning.

Evaluation of CPD

Both CMT and CCLs acknowledged that there is no systematic focus across the college on the quality of the outcomes of CPD, particularly on learner achievements. Staff are still required to log their '30 hours' but according to the available evidence this could include, for example, an outing with learners, not necessarily one with an explicit focus on the teacher's professional learning, which may or may not have taken place.

All staff attending CPD events/training have to fill out an evaluation form within three months. These forms include potentially powerful reflective and analytic questions as to why they attended the session, what they hoped to achieve from the session, whether they feel their training need has been achieved by the session and what they are doing differently, with what concomitant benefits to the college. There does not appear, as yet, to be any systematic collation of these outcome-related evaluations, nor of the collective aspirations for CPD together with any feedback collected via the PMR process. Such analyses could help the College to explore the relative effectiveness of different approaches. They could highlight the importance of the embedded/ongoing professional learning processes put in place around CPD activities and reinforce the skills involved in ensuring that staff make good use of their learning opportunities. The Learner Led forums taken in conjunction with the learner reviews and surveys will create regular opportunities for monitoring the effectiveness of the CPD programme as well as sustaining effective changes to practice.

> The leadership benchmark spans a wider range of issues and as a result there is a span of practice for the different components.
> Overall the college's practice is *partially embedding.*

The college's impressive efforts would be enhanced and made fully embedded and more sustainable by:

1

Revisiting the "list" of CPD opportunities which staff access internally to highlight the opportunities for internal specialist support as well as the usual external courses and conferences. Perhaps if it included a "ten minute observation" or a "co-coaching session" or the opportunity to observe someone else then the dialogue around CPD might change and staff may be helped to think about themselves as professional learners.

2

Ensuring strong and explicit links between the outcomes of learner reviews, learner led forums and other college review mechanisms and CPD planning.

3

Greater and more visible participation in learning by the college corporate leaders.

Links to useful research and resources

Some of the **research and resources** that the college might find helpful in developing and enhancing its CPD programme might include:

1

Cordingley,P. (2011) *Evidence for professional learning.* Summary available at http://www.curee-paccts.com/node/2439

2

CUREE (2010) *What do institution leaders do that is effective in facilitating quality improvements in teaching and learning?* Coventry: LSIS Summary available at http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/node/13208

3

School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why. Summary of the Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) conducted by V. Robinson, M. Hohepa and C. Lloyd. (2009). Available at: http://www.curee-paccts.com/files/publication/1260453707/Robinson%20Summary%20Extended%20Version.pdf

4

The role of specialist expertise in the teacher's CPD (2008). GTC Research for Teachers Summary. Available at: http://www.tla.ac.uk/site/SiteAssets/RfT1/06RE045%20The%20role%20of%20the%20specialist%_20in%20the%20teachers's%20CPD.pdf

5

Cordingly, P. (2008) *Sauce for the Goose: learning entitlements that work for teachers as well as their pupils.* Available at: http://www.curee.org.uk/content/sauce-goose-learning-entitlements-work-teachers-well-their-pupils

6

Bell, M. Et al. (2010) *Practitioner Use of Research Review.* Available at: http://www.curee.co.uk/files/publication/1292498712/PURR%20Practitioner%20Summary.pdf