Opening Doors, Opening Minds

Exploring and evaluating the implementation of a teacher learning and development framework to support quality improvement at The College Merthyr Tydfil

Research Report

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August 2017

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Acknowledgements

This research study and subsequent report grew out of discussions which started on a rainy afternoon in Merthyr Tydfil College in August 2016. Margaret Phelan, Jonathan Martin, Lisa Thomas and I all shared a passion for supporting teacher professional learning and lively conversations ensued. This report, the underpinning research and the rich data collection would not have happened without their support, enthusiasm and persistence or the courage and integrity of the college principal, John O'Shea and the support of the University and College Union and Welsh government. The year long partnership particularly between Margaret, Lisa and I certainly supported my own professional learning and I thank them both and Meurig Roberts for interesting discussions, analysis and support. The collaboration of UCU official, researcher, college leadership and Welsh Government is quite unique and reflects the principles of the inspiring social partnership model in Wales. I would also like to thank all the staff – managers, observers, teachers, union representatives, support staff and students at Merthyr for their unstinting involvement, time and contributions to the project and for allowing me into their classroom spaces. The warmth of the welcomes, the lilt of their voices, the power of their practice and desire to enhance their learners' lives will stay with me and was inspiring during a year of political volatility and national tragedies.

Diolch. Thank you.

Louise Taylor

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1) Executive Summary

This report was commissioned to evaluate the pilot of a new professional learning and developmental observation framework at Merthyr Tydfil College and explored 5 questions:

- What are the aims and rationale of the new approach and what does it look like?
- To what extent and how does the pilot framework support practitioner reflection, autonomy and responsibility for their own development?
- How has the pilot supported enhanced practice in teaching/learning?
- What are the features of effective professional discussions and interactions between observers and teachers?
- How can the pilot framework be expanded and developed to further enrich professional practice?

The aim of the new approach was to improve the experience and progress of learners and to promote professionalism through staff development, collaboration and reflective practice. The college sought to develop a process which opens doors and focuses more explicitly on teacher and student learning. The framework was designed to promote evidence-based practice and encourage professional learning, innovation and deeper engagement with and analysis of pedagogy.

The framework focused on quality improvement and the college moved from a graded to developmental (ungraded) observation approach which was positioned to actively support the individualized CPD (continuous professional development) taking place within the college. The driver was to create space for reflection on teaching and learning and allow teachers to engage in sustained focus on particular aspects of practice which would improve outcomes for students. The framework was built around a cycle of five stages carried out over the academic year.

The findings from the pilot suggest that the significant majority of staff found the approach empowering and effective in supporting improvements in reflective practice. Teachers felt there was a logical thread between different components of professional development which supported a range of improvements for their students. Managers felt the process supported improved relations and collaboration across and between teams. The majority of teachers believed that the approach promoted autonomy and responsibility for their own learning and development. This was particularly linked to the fact they could choose their observer and the observation session and identify their own area of focus for this. A small minority of staff were less positive about the approach and this related to their observer's understanding of the process, the amount of time needed for the elements of the cycle and discomfort in relation to the shift from managerial evaluation to teacher development within the observation approach.

Levels of engagement with the pilot and the evaluation of it were high and there was a palpable buzz around teaching and learning and learning conversations. Teachers and managers understood the rationale for the professional learning approach and were optimistic at the start of the pilot and enthused by it at the end.

A range of factors appeared to support teachers' enhanced reflection, autonomy and responsibility for their development and their perceptions that the framework will enhance practice in teaching and learning. These were:

1) Understanding **the rationale** for the framework and buying into it
2) Feeling it reflected **authentic working** and therefore was meaningful
3) Benefitting from **collaboration** fostered by the framework
4) Feeling a sense of **ownership** and empowerment
5) Having opportunities to **explore and take risks** in their practice
6) Feeling **supported and engaged** in the process
7) Feeling it had **immediate impact**

In addition 6 features emerged as influencing the efficacy of professional discussions and interactions between observers and teachers.

1) Moving from 'feedback' to more **informal discussions** and conversations
2) Authentic inquiry
3) The types of **questioning** adopted, suggestions made and ideas generated
4) **Contextualised learning** within their own classrooms and with their own students
5) The explicit **promotion of ownership** by senior leaders, managers and observers
6) The **time** given to the process

The report provides background and context in section 2 and the themes are explored further in section 5. Section 6 concludes by highlighting how the pilot at Merthyr reignited teacher curiosity and reflected the sustained investment the college has given to staff development and professional learning. The approach reflected many of the principles embodied both in current research into teacher development and professional learning and the Welsh Government's professional learning model for educational practitioners in Wales. Section 7 lays out a number of recommendations to further enhance the pilot and its reach beyond the college.

2) Context and Introduction

This project was undertaken following discussions between University College Union (UCU) Wales and the pilot college, Merthyr Tydfil College (MTC), the Welsh Government and the researcher who has designed, introduced, advised on and researched similar approaches in a number of English further education colleges.

All parties involved shared a deep interest in reviewing ways to stimulate teachers' professional learning and development and the conditions and approaches which would serve best to help this occur. These discussions started in early 2016 and led to the pilot of a professional learning policy which is at the heart of this study.

These discussions were held against a backdrop of research and reform within Welsh education. 2015 heralded several significant reports and reforms impacting on further education in Wales; *Successful Futures* (Donaldson, 2015), *Teaching Tomorrow's Teachers* (Furlong, 2015), *Fostering High Quality Vocational Education in Wales,* (James and Unwin, 2016) together with the implementation of the Education Workforce Council and entitlement to professional learning for teachers. These are wide-reaching in implication and rich in opportunities for re-thinking teacher development and teacher learning.

The Donaldson report called for teachers to have more control over what they teach, how to teach and how to assess their students. Furlong suggests this will mean teachers needing to know the 'why' and the 'how' of teaching, not just the 'what'. In order to promote problem-solving and creative and critical thinking in students (Donaldson, 2015) teachers will need opportunities to engage further in this themselves. Donaldson argues for *'an extensive and sustained programme of professional learning'* (p.96) which was supported by the then Education Minister's New Deal proposals to introduce a professional learning model which includes coaching and mentoring, reflective practice, effective collaboration and effective use of data and research evidence. This approach is supported by the findings in James and Unwin's report (2016) which discusses the importance of ongoing CPD as differentiated and individually tailored to recognise the fundamental nature of professional identity.

Estyn's annual report for 2015-16 contains useful inspection and thematic survey insights into professional learning and highlights that "*only a few colleges plan time for peer observations and too few teaching staff participate in professional learning communities within or outside their colleges*". The report outlines factors to support improved professional learning and outcomes for students including creating the right culture and conditions for professional learning, building collaborative and supportive professional relationships within and between schools, engaging with research evidence and carrying out research.

Current education reforms in Wales are posited around the concept of the self-improving organisation. This means that schools and providers, leaders and practitioners take responsibility for their own development and that of their peers. This points to a 'growing maturity, confidence and shared sense of endeavour' across the sector identified by Rowlands (2016).

The maturity, confidence and shared sense of endeavour led to this collaborative research project between MTC, UCU and the Welsh Government.

MTC is based in two town centre campuses in the smallest local authority in Wales within an area with considerable challenges of deprivation. There are around 2800 learners and 122 teaching staff.

The interests of all parties commissioning this research were in developing and evaluating a new direction and new approach to support quality improvement and professional learning within further educational institutions. The rationale, in support of current education reforms and priorities, was to promote teacher professionalism by creating the climate for teachers to develop through collaborative practice, coaching and deeper engagement in reflective practice.

Central to this approach was situating observation as a tool for teacher learning. The approach recognises the limitations of graded observation approaches in terms of both effectiveness and efficiency. Research suggests graded observation processes often provide an unrealistic picture of the quality of teaching and learning, use a grade profile which masks underlying issues in improving the quality of learning or can be unstable. Questions have been raised over the costs of graded observation processes –v- the benefits and the impact on teacher improvement and professional learning. (See Coffield et al. 2014; O'Leary 2013, 2014, 2017; Washer 2006; Wragg et al. 1997; Taylor, 2009, 2017, Martin 2017). Studies have shown that staff perceptions of observation as a tool simply to measure performance may limit their engagement with the process and their ability to be honest and self-critical about their practice. (Hichey, 2010: 6)

MTC was keen to develop a process which encourages professional learning, innovation and deeper engagement with and analysis of pedagogy to support improved learner outcomes. In order to maximise learning from the pilot of the new framework and evaluate impact this research review and practical guide was commissioned.

3) Research Aims

- Evaluate the revised teacher development and observation pilot at MTC to identify the effectiveness of this in supporting expansive and contextualised teacher learning.
- Explore and identify the extent to which the framework develops reflective practice and effective collaboration to support enhanced teacher learning within the college's context and culture.
- Capture a range of elements that support teachers' enhanced practice in teaching/learning and reflection.
- Evaluate the interaction between observer/coach/mentor and teachers and learners and identify strategies which support the effectiveness of the interaction.

Key Questions:

3.1 What are the aims and rationale of the new approach and what does it look like?

3.2 To what extent and how does the pilot framework support practitioner reflection, autonomy and responsibility for their own development?

3.3 How has the pilot supported enhanced practice in teaching/learning?

3.4 What are the features of effective professional discussions and interactions between observers and teachers?

3.5 How can the pilot framework be expanded and developed to further enrich professional practice?

4) Methodology and Approach

Action research approaches were proposed as action research is concerned with the emancipatory purpose of research, together with the promotion of change.

Action research requires reflection by all involved of their practices, ideas and assumptions. There is limited scrutiny and exploration of the *practice* behind the processes of observation and feedback systems adopted in most further education colleges   The desire for change in both curriculum content and delivery within further education in Wales and a growing maturity in self-assessment presented an opportunity to reflect on existing practices, ideas and assumptions and posit an alternative approach which promotes individualised support programmes for teachers in and on the teaching and learning where it happens - in the classroom.

Improvement and involvement are central to action research and this research project sought to address both through the involvement of MTC and UCU in working with the researcher to shape and participate in the research. Robson, (2003: 215) highlights the components of action research as *"the improvement of a practice of some kind, the improvement of the understanding of a practice by its practitioners, and the improvement of the situation in which the practice takes place"*. The research included 'active' observation of practitioners with immediate discussion following observation to deepen the understanding of practice. It also included reflective discussions throughout the pilot with UCU, MTC and the researcher to discuss emerging findings and use these to refine and enhance the process whilst the pilot was in process. This included sharing emerging findings with all staff and other stakeholders through research newsletters. In addition working groups were set up within the pilot for staff to help shape underpinning documentation and approaches.

The research adopted a mixed-methods approach to gathering data, utilising both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. The rationale for this approach was to provide as rich a picture as possible both of perception, practice and impact across a range of staff. The research focused on three key curriculum areas in MTC; Construction, Creative Industries and Humanities, chosen to capture a broad spectrum of teachers. There was also a wider survey of teachers across the college and discussion with learners at the observation stage.

The main research tools were semi-structured interviews and focus groups, observation and online survey in addition to a literature review of MTC documentation and of relevant current research and policy in Wales and the UK.

5) Findings and Discussion

5.1 What are the aims and rationale of the new approach and what does it look like?

MTC's improvement plan is focused on improving and increasing excellence in teaching and learning. The vision is underpinned by a range of innovations and MTC is the first FE College in the UK to be accredited as an OLEVI Hub able to offer the Outstanding Teacher Programme[1]. Building further on this and in response to recent national reviews and proposals MTC designed a teacher development and observation framework (the Peer Learning Policy) piloted in 2016-17. The framework sought to support the development of teachers equipped to meet new curriculum challenges and professional standards through a differentiated and individually tailored approach. The purpose of the policy was to:
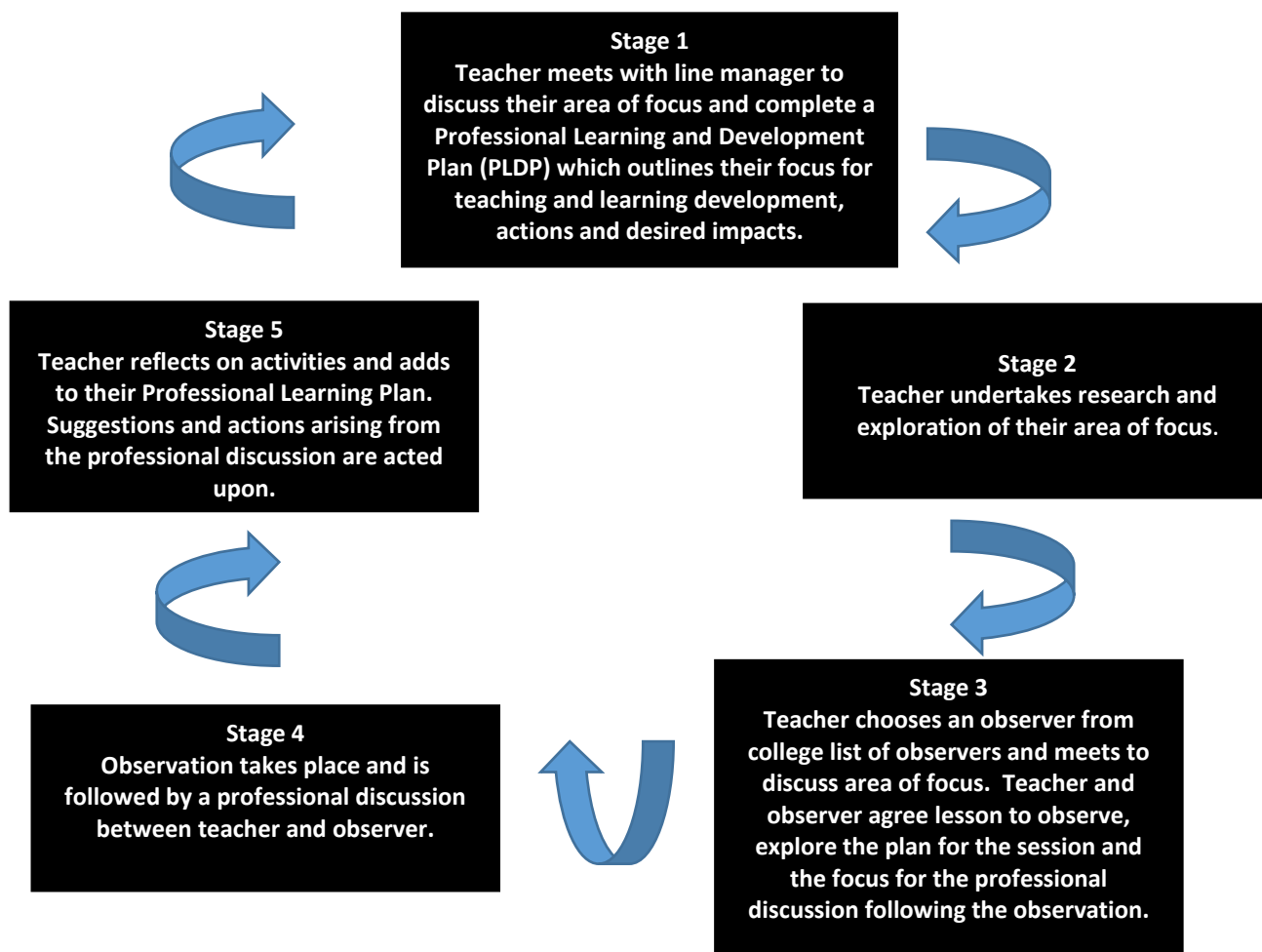
- Support development and improvement in the experience and progress of learners consistently across the college.
- Promote professionalism through staff development, collaboration and reflective practice.
- Help deliver the college's strategic objectives in line with the quality improvement plan.

The new framework was aimed to support quality improvement rather than act as a quality assurance tool. The driver was to allow teachers to engage in sustained focus on particular aspects of practice. It reflected many of the principles outlined in The Sutton Trust Review (2014) *What Makes Great Teaching*, particularly in moving attention to the learning rather than the teacher, encouraging the teacher to be an independent learner, providing feedback by a mentor in an environment of trust and support in which the college's leadership promotes an environment of professional learning. (Coe et al. 2014: 5). The framework design shares many of the principles and phases outlined in the Professional Learning Community Guidance (Welsh Government, 2013). The framework included a developmental observation positioned to enhance teacher practice through a cycle of professional discussion - observation - reflection.

The MTC approach also shares elements of 'Lesson Study' in that teachers are placing specific student needs as a focus for development, professional learning happens in real classrooms with real students and teachers are engaging in a form of collaborative enquiry which takes place over time and is not a one-off event. (Dudley, 2014)

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[1] OLEVI is the branding for the International Centre for Leadership in Teaching and Learning – an organisation which runs the Improving Teacher Programme and Outstanding Teacher Programme with 2200 facilitators across England and has a number of designated centres.

5.2 The Framework

Stage 1
Teacher meets with line manager to discuss their area of focus and complete a Professional Learning and Development Plan (PLDP) which outlines their focus for teaching and learning development, actions and desired impacts.

Stage 2
Teacher undertakes research and exploration of their area of focus.

Stage 3
Teacher chooses an observer from college list of observers and meets to discuss area of focus. Teacher and observer agree lesson to observe, explore the plan for the session and the focus for the professional discussion following the observation.

Stage 4
Observation takes place and is followed by a professional discussion between teacher and observer.

Stage 5
Teacher reflects on activities and adds to their Professional Learning Plan. Suggestions and actions arising from the professional discussion are acted upon.

5.3 To what extent and how does the pilot framework support practitioner reflection, autonomy and responsibility for their own development? How has it supported enhanced practice in teaching/learning?

The pilot of the new framework ran from September 2016 to June 2017 and the findings are based on the perceptions of the managers and teachers who were interviewed at the beginning (September), during (March) and at the end of the pilot (June) and researcher observations during shadowing of staff across the different phases of the framework. A cross-college survey was undertaken in May. Learner views were also sought during observations of teaching and learning.

Survey responses were completed by 41% of teaching staff and it is interesting to note that the previous staff survey generated a 20% response rate, the responses to the cross-college survey were often detailed and thoughtful; both the level and depth of responses suggests the willingness of staff to engage in the policy. Alongside the survey, in-depth interviews and focus groups with just over 35% of staff were held, together with observation shadowing to triangulate findings and 'test' out emerging themes.

90.7% of respondents to the survey felt that their discussion with their manager held to complete their Professional Learning and Development Plan (PLDP) (stage 1 of the framework) was helpful.

This reflected the findings from interviews with staff held following their professional discussions with managers (stage 1) where teachers commented; '*this felt really natural, it was great to talk about my teaching and get some support'; 'it helped to craft my thinking'; 'really positive, my previous experience ...* (in a different institution) *was that CPD was just a box to tick, this seems like a genuine desire to meet our needs*'; '*it felt like it* (the area of focus) *was mine, very positive direction from the college'*.

Managers commented; '*It's good to have an opportunity to speak 1-1 with staff about T&L rather than the whole division'; 'Have some staff on the outside always reluctant to join in. They are now giving ideas about what they would like to do ... so this is encouraging.'*

82% of respondents felt that the framework was helpful in improving their teaching and learning and 77.6% felt the overall approach was effective in supporting their own learning and development. Again, this balance of views was reflected in discussions with teachers, observers, teaching and learning co-ordinators and managers at the mid and end points of the pilot.

Those who did not find the process helpful cited three main reasons for this. The first was linked to observer understanding of the process. *"The observer was unaware of the process and did not observe the improvement area or give any specific feedback."* This was explored with one of the teachers interviewed who commented that their observer seemed unaware of the rationale for the approach, the aim of the professional discussion and observation in relation to an aspect of practice (stages 3 and 4 of the framework). This contrasted with a significant majority of respondents who had the opposite experience; "*I have found all stages of the process to have been well considered and very supportive. I feel it has been a very important factor in its fruition that my mentor understood exactly what the new PLP[2] strove to put in place, and the methodology of how to communicate the process with me, before he helped me as a mentor."*

In-year review with observers and continued observer training may help to ameliorate the gaps in understanding and improve the experience and impact for teachers. It is important to note however that this was only cited by 1 survey respondent and by 2 teachers during interviews. A number of observers did raise the question of communication and more communication of operational details at local level needed. Observers also linked this to the cultural shift and commented '*we have been very conditioned into the graded model and staff will be thinking about this even within the new model.'*

The second reason cited in the survey was time – "*it was rushed. No time to carefully plan what would benefit the actual teaching and learning...it felt like a tick box activity so that paperwork was in order ready for ESTYN visit."* A number of teachers raised the issue of time during interviews and focus groups, particularly at the start of the process; observers were also concerned about the number of observations they would be undertaking and with who had what responsibility for each aspect of the framework. It was interesting that there was less concern

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[2] Professional Learning Plan

expressed at the mid and end points perhaps highlighting the need for time for new strategies to embed. One manager commented that the ESTYN inspection (in November 2016) had 'pushed back' some of the activities and this was echoed by some of the teachers. Some staff actually commented at the end point that it had been less time intensive and others had felt the activity to be so worthwhile they were happy to give additional time to it.

Thirdly, there was some minor discomfort from a small minority of staff around the shift and 're-designation' of observations to a CPD/developmental context rather than in the more familiar quality assurance arena with one member of staff seeking more measurable targets and one trade union representative reported staff commenting in their area about a perception that there was a lack of rigour as you could choose your observer.

"I like the process, but I do not necessarily think it can fully replace manager observations. I think they should still happen every few years to ensure quality is maintained and to help appraisal target setting."

Several other comments were made in relation to factors that teachers felt diluted the approach. One member of staff gave an example of feeling, during her initial discussion with her manager (stage 1 of the framework), that she had too many cross-college targets 'forced' into her developmental plan with insufficient focus on the areas she would like to develop. Three teachers commented on the need for more CPD alongside the framework which could provide expertise and examples of how to improve on the aspect of practice they had identified. MTC has already identified the need to create a database which captures all the areas of focus from staff and will be aligning the CPD offer with this for 2017-18.

The significant majority of comments both in the survey and in interviews however showed overwhelming endorsement of the framework and to the ways in which this has begun to fuel enhanced reflection, autonomy and responsibility for development by staff.

The Vice-Principal of Quality commented that she could not have predicted the levels of staff buy-in and that the framework came at the right time for the college. She highlighted factors that had influenced the creation of a cultural climate ready for the new approach *"for the last four years we have been on a journey with staff and have instilled trust which has helped to break down barriers."* This was echoed by a significant majority of staff who commented on the cultural shift as being *'positive, logical and natural'* and with positive endorsement of *'a great scheme', 'a wonderful opportunity', 'empowering', 'supportive', 'innovative'.*

Seven key themes emerged as a) influencing enhanced reflection, autonomy and responsibility for development and b) supporting enhanced practice in teaching and learning.

1) Understanding the rationale for the framework and buying into it

2) Feeling it reflected authentic working and therefore was meaningful

3) Benefitting from collaboration fostered by the framework

4) Feeling a sense of ownership and feeling empowered

5) Having opportunities to explore and take risks in their practice

6) Feeling supported and engaged in the process

7) Feeling it had immediate impact

5.3.1 Understanding the rationale for the framework and buying into it
The majority of staff clearly understood the rationale behind the framework which they interpreted as being to *'raise everyone's game'*, *'investment in staff'*, *'building a reputation in a positive way'*, *'breaking down the them and us divide'*, *'reducing stress and pressure'*, *'encouraging self-reflection'*.

There was a sense from the vast majority of staff surveyed and interviewed that the old graded observation scheme did not support real learning or improvement and that it was a blunt instrument with highly contentious, and for many, negative connotations. It was described as *'being misused'*, *'supporting complacency'*, *'subjective'*, *'not supporting professional progression'*, *'threatening'*, *'artificial'*. The move to a new approach which situated observation within a framework for learning and improvement rather than quality assurance was welcomed as a significant departure.

There was excitement and enthusiasm for the new strategy, it was described as being *'pioneering'*, *'encouraging self-reflection and ownership'*, *'more genuine'*. Teachers commented following their professional discussions they '*can't wait to get started'*, *'feel it is mine'*, *'it's a genuine desire to meet our needs'*, *'felt really natural'*, *'bring it on – I'm loving this.'*

5.3.2 Authenticity
A number of teachers commented on the shift from a '*dressed up'* or '*shiny lesson'* which they would work on for their annual graded observations to a more authentic lesson which reflected their day to day teaching. This was felt to be more meaningful in stimulating teacher learning as it reflected what teachers actually do on a day to day basis. *"The observations are in a more relaxed setting and therefore both the tutor and the students are more comfortable and likely to work as they would usually do, without being self-conscious."*

The skilful use of probing and challenging questioning from observers and managers, additional opportunities to engage in discussion and particularly the inclusion of the pre-observation discussion (stage 3 of the framework) promoted a sense of autonomy in staff which led to deeper reflection. *"We were able to talk about the reasons for choices, some of which had become "auto pilot" rather than thinking specifically about why they work"*, *"It allows you to become more aware of what you are doing within your sessions, specifically aspects that you aren't very confident about. It also gives you an opportunity to see what you're doing well."*

The process felt more professional to teachers, they commented on being 'switched on' rather than 'switched off' during the process. *"The informal but supportive approach is beneficial to my development: I am more likely to remember the feedback and also give a more realistic impression of my day to day teaching, during the observation."*

5.3.3 Collaboration
Teachers and managers commented on the levels of collaboration the policy had fuelled. There was felt to be '*increasing trust and open-ness'*, increased sharing of practice and, as one

learning co-ordinator commented, a sense of *'moving knowledge around'*. This was felt to have a powerful impact on enhancing practice;

"Just talking it through with someone made me see how it could be refined and improved."
"Just having an outside eye check my teaching was very helpful, and made me reassess my delivery style and methods." "It was also good to discuss things with my line manager and forge a better working relationship in a 'hands on' way. Her experience is immense and once again it was good to get other peoples' insight into things."

Teachers were able to choose from a list of observers and what was surprising to some of the managers was the number of observers chosen from outside the teachers' curriculum area. The majority of staff chose someone to work with from a different department and this experience was, with the exception of one or two comments, considered to be wholly positive. It was felt that *"sharing ideas, thinking about how a scientist would deliver photo- technology as opposed to another artist"* and *"getting a fresh perspective from a member of staff from a different department and a professional discussion about teaching and learning techniques without any added pressure"* helped to support innovation and reflection.   This also helped to promote more joint practice development across the college with one member of staff commenting that she would now feel more confident in approaching colleagues from another team to peer observe and a manager commenting on how it was developing relationships outside departments on a personal as well as professional level. It was seen as breaking down barriers, *"it has encouraged dialogue between departments and sharing of excellent practice within the college." "People are more open, they ask for advice, talk amongst each other more, sharing is encouraged."*

Many observers commented on the learning they gained from the experience and the relationships they developed by engaging with colleagues which supports O'Leary's notion of *"observation as a tool for reciprocal learning having the potential to break down some of the traditional hierarchies and power imbalances"* (O'Leary, 2014: 114). This was further supported by managers commenting on the improvement in relationships with staff as a result of having their initial professional discussion (stage 1) and adopting a more supportive approach throughout the framework. The comments made by both managers and teachers seemed to suggest that the framework ameliorated the 'two-college divide' between managers and staff articulated by Coffield (2014: 158-161).

5.3.4 Ownership and Empowerment
The increased choice embedded within the policy, (being enabled to choose the aspect of their practice to develop, the observer and the session) had a significant impact on teachers' sense of ownership and empowerment which fuelled increased autonomy and responsibility and led to perceived enhancements for learners – particularly in learner engagement in lessons.
'I generally found the old system of formal observations was at times a case of jumping through predetermined hoops. What works for one subject (or teacher) might not be right for another subject. Under the new system I have been able to take ownership of what I do. The consequences of the new system are that I now have a useful computer package in every lesson on a long term basis. I believe the old system would not provide anywhere near this level of

benefit to my teaching." "(It) made me feel I was thinking through my teaching in an organic and creative way, without the structure of inspection and grading and the stress of this being on your file – three things I wrote down to work on and improve further – all of them I will do because I own them."

Teachers commented on the process 'feeling different', 'feeling more professional' and relating more explicitly to what they wanted to develop.

There was a feeling from two observers that some teachers were not sure what to choose to work on or what they wanted to gain from the process. "Sometimes (it's) difficult to get observees to identify what they want from the observation – they are used to being in passive mode." This reflects some of the thinking in Teacher Development 3.0 (2017) and highlighted by Helibronn (2017) who believes that teachers have been 'shielded from ambiguity and complexity'. In a sense many teachers have felt disempowered by what they perceive as observation tick-lists (O'Leary 2014). One teacher commented that under MTC's new framework there was "less pressure to meet the tick boxes required for past observations. The ability to try something new and not be penalised for it ... gives teachers more freedom to find the approaches that work." Helibronn (2017) argues that teachers need to develop 'personal judgement skills to be autonomous professionals and not just technicians'. MTC's framework is helping to encourage the development of judgement skills in relation to authentic classroom practice. One manager commented that the college was moving away from 'being done to' and was more 'active rather than passive'. This is likely, as O'Leary points out, to lead to more success in achieving meaningful learning outcomes for them (O'Leary 2014: 118).

5.3.5 Exploration and risk-taking

The careful staging of the framework and the fact that teachers could identify their own area of development and aspect of practice to interrogate served to promote greater exploration of the 'how' and 'why' of teaching and not just the 'what' referred to by Furlong (2015). There was also a sense of being freed from bureaucracy and the fear of consequences. "Made me concentrate on teaching again rather than the paperwork required." The removal of grading helped to support increased exploration and risk-taking "the fear was taken away". This reflects findings from Taylor, (2009) and (2017) where many teachers felt judged, criticised and disengaged from the graded observation process.

Teachers welcomed the space to explore the rationale for and impact of activities, being able to step back and explore the processes and rationale with someone else in the form of a 'critical friend'. This served to drive more innovation, trying out new techniques and risk-taking. "...More inclined to try new things and being less stressed about it being perfect. It's like an experiment. If it doesn't work why not and then fix it, it's a learning curve. Opens lines of communication between staff." "This approach allows the sharing of good practice and moves away from judgements which can be detrimental to the observation process. It offers more opportunities to take risks in the classroom." "Having the support and sharing different ideas has helped me try new teaching and questioning techniques in class."

"Due to the non-judgemental nature of the peer observation I am more likely to try techniques and strategies that are new or have a greater risk than tried and tested methods. This will develop the teaching and learning experience for students and staff."

This appeared to be a powerful antidote to the teacher constraint described by James and Unwin (2016: 17) where they commented teachers 'had learnt to see themselves as highly constrained, in what they could do to maintain quality or improve teaching and learning, especially through innovation in pedagogy and curriculum'.

Teachers also saw the new framework as being a trigger to explore aspects of practice they had not focused on previously.

"I felt the lesson observation helped me refocus on the use of ICT in my lessons. Over the years I have seen the use of Autograph in maths lessons and thought it was brilliant, however for one reason or another I never got around to having it installed. The lesson observation helped me focus on getting this done ... I have started to use it on a consistent basis in my lessons. Overall it was just the nudge I needed, I feel myself and the students are already benefitting from this tool."

5.3.6 Support and Engagement

Teachers commented repeatedly that the framework felt supportive and developmental and this led to them feeling highly engaged in the process and more willing to try out new ideas and continue to refine their practice post-observation. *"I used to think about 'what am I going to do wrong' – now I am excited about it."* *'The positive and approachable manner of the person helped a great deal. This allowed me to plan a more "experimental" lesson'.* *"I feel that the new approach is more focused on supporting and developing teachers rather than managing performance."*

"My CPD is a vital part of my professional practice and I greatly value the new PLP[3] which allows continuous development of my T&L strategies, in a highly supportive environment. Having a mentor to critically and creatively discuss my ideas with, is a great asset which has helped me really focus on what I seek to achieve. In contrast to the old system of graded observations, the PLP is a much more holistic approach that really serves the needs of the lecturer."

Teachers and observers found the opportunities to give and receive ideas valuable and several commented on the changed discourse and relationships enabling ideas to flow from critical analysis of practice post observation that were not one person's ideas but those that grow from meaningful discussion and interaction with another. *"Ideas were generated through discussion."* *"Will help my students because I will be taking a step back more often and reflecting on my practice and the impact on them"*

5.3.7 Impactful

The framework was welcomed by many teachers and observers as having much quicker and more influential impact on their practice than any other forms of observation or CPD. This stemmed from many of the above factors – particularly the sense of authenticity, ownership and engagement that was engendered. *"It feels tailored, individual and meaningful – not CPD for CPD sake."* Teachers felt that their discussions with their line managers during stage 1 and the following pre observation discussions at stage 3 helped to ensure impact was felt **during** the observation rather than as a result of feedback and action planning **following** an observation. In a sense the action planning came before rather than after the observation as one teacher stated *"discussion before was really useful and the observer made some*

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[3] Professional Learning Plan

suggestions. In the old way these would have been areas for improvement after the event – this way addressed them before the lesson."

Teachers were asked to identify what they perceived to be the impacts on their practice for their learners and these were wide-ranging. They included higher levels of learner engagement, increased learner confidence, independence and participation, improved peer learning, better evaluative writing, more integrated use of personal targets, improved strategies for meeting individual needs, stretching and challenging learners, developing thinking skills and promoting deeper learning, improving management of larger groups, developing starters and plenaries, improved questioning, encouraging second language speakers to speak more English.
"Having started to explore new teaching and learning strategies, I have observed a high level of student participation and involvement in my lessons, with strong evidence of learning having taken place."

In addition to pedagogical impact the framework also had impact on developing reflective practice between colleagues across the organisation; staff described an emerging community of practice, moving beyond the parameters of the framework leading to differing types of collegial engagement.

5.4 What are the features of effective professional discussions and interactions between observers and teachers?

Part of the research process included shadowing the different stages of the framework from stage 1 (initial discussion with line managers) to stages 3 and 4. This, together with observer and teacher interviews, enabled the researcher to draw out elements of practice which appeared to foster meaningful discussion and lead to impact on teacher learning. Six key features which supported effective engagement and led to perceived improvements in practice are summarised below.

5.4.1 Informality
'These observations are informal and the emphasis is completely on teaching and learning."
The 'freeing up' of observations from the weight of bureaucracy, lists of criteria and the choice inherent within the framework suggested to teachers that the process was a) more informal and natural and b) related explicitly to their teaching and learning. This was further enhanced by shifts in the power relationships between observer and teacher. This was partly due to the fact that observers were chosen and in a sense 'invited' to lessons but also related to the change in discourse. The discourse was 'conversational' in nature both in pre and post observation professional discussions and this, in turn, led to the stimulation of ideas and insights *'the observer gave ideas – it was really great'*. Both observers and teachers found choosing an observer from outside their subject area was of benefit. *"Great to have someone impartial and from outside the team to give a teaching and learning perspective"*, *"you learn more as an observer when you go into a different subject area – makes it more authentic."*

The absence of grading and fear of consequences also supported more informal conversation as one teacher commented *"this is more relaxed, less of a chore, I really enjoyed it." "The feedback was different – it was more of a discussion."* The removal of high-stakes consequences as a result of the interaction appeared to impact on nature of the dialogue, body

language and direction and depth of the conversations. A number of teachers and observers also commented on the fact that they were building new relationships with colleagues who they had not interacted with before.

5.4.2 Promoting Ownership

Many of the observers asked teachers 'what do you need from me?' which gave a sense of autonomy and ownership to the teacher. Many teachers felt they 'led' the discussion and that it was a doing *with* rather than doing *to* interaction. One teacher commented on the power of being given *"the ability to discuss exactly what you were looking to target and develop and what the successful outcomes would look like."* The discourse appeared to be shifting from being performative (linked to criteria) to moving towards an informative approach in which observer and teacher jointly explored and reflected. When talking about the post-observation discussion it was interesting to note that most observers and teachers used the word 'discussion' to describe it and only one or two referred to 'feedback' which suggests a shift in interpretation of the practice and or perception of the event.

5.4.3 Authentic inquiry

A number of factors highlighted in section 5.3.2 served to make the experience feel more authentic to teachers and observers. At the professional discussion level this was fuelled most effectively when observers adopted a stance of genuine inquiry. Shifting the focus from teaching to learning and commenting on learner activity in response to an area the teacher had identified and asking questions which were genuine (and the observer was not just leading the teacher to the answer) engaged teachers actively in reflecting on their practice. *"This will help my students as I will be taking a step back more often and reflecting on my practice and the impact on them."* This shift could be seen in the type of questioning adopted – moving from 'how do you' to 'how do they' type questions (McVey, 2017).

The shift to informative inquiry was further fuelled by observers 'noticing and wondering' (McVey, 2017) rather than scrutinising and judging. This underpinned a sense of engaging in professional dialogue into the how and why of aspects of practice and led to teachers feeling empowered. *"We rarely get a chance to just talk through, rationalise and think about how we teach – this was empowering." "I felt really motivated to continue to research and explore different ways to differentiate and take it further." "Discussion was useful to enable the teacher to think aloud and go through her rationale – she is very reflective."* There was a recognition that as Page (2017: 73) suggests, 'Teaching is about experience. To make sense of this experience requires one to retell, reshape and readjust it in one's mind.' Many of the teachers in the study felt they were being given the opportunity to do just that.

Where observers were from a different subject background the sense of authenticity was perhaps felt more deeply by both parties as the observers commented on how they felt they were learners of the subject as well as observers of the session and therefore felt they could ask more genuine questions.

The notion of an authentic discussion promoting reflective deliberation was also supported by discussions which led way beyond the slice of teaching observed. The discussion following an observation of a performing arts teacher moved from looking at developing student evaluation skills to integration of personal targets. Another commented on how following her feedback

where *"I learnt from just talking about the lesson"* she then felt motivated to *"talk to someone else about it and got more ideas."* This was reflected in observer, manager and teacher responses when asked whether conversations about observation and teaching and learning had changed – many commented that there was much more of a buzz and energy around teaching and learning. *"The conversations staff have about teaching has changed. There are more informal conversations about TLA[4] generally....there is collaboration and collegiality in an unenforced way. It is promoting natural, genuine conversations."*

5.4.4 Questioning, 'Coaching' and Suggestions

The type of questioning which was felt to be effective in supporting greater reflection and teacher learning challenged and interrogated practice – we return to the 'how' and 'why' type questions. One highly skilled observer used many coaching style questions to prompt the teacher to reflect; for example beginning with *"What do you want to get from this discussion"* and then continuing with *"How did the students respond to x?" "How do they normally react when…"*, *"How can you do more of X to support Y?"* This led to the teacher commenting *"I have been on autopilot for so long and haven't been asked these kinds of questions for years – it really will make a difference and move me out of my comfort zone."* Teachers also welcomed suggestions from their observers and the questioning alone was not sufficient to create the type of discussions teachers felt to be most valuable. Many teachers commented on the value of suggestions and the generation of ideas through discussion and teachers wanted these. Supporting teachers to identify what could further develop practice and to take ownership as proposed by O'Leary (2014) significantly supported teachers enhancing their practice. One observer asked *"what do you want to focus on next to make things even better?"* This shift in a) posing further development as a question rather than a directive and b) referring to 'focus' rather than 'action' and c) suggesting it would make things 'even' better supported a highly positive response from the teacher who commented that she would undertake all actions she had made note of.

Some observers were less confident than others either in questioning or in making suggestions. This led to discussions which appeared to hover on the surface of teacher 'activity' rather than digging deeper to unpick and interrogate practice and look at the impact of teacher activity on student learning. For example asking what students enjoyed about the lesson rather than what they learnt, commenting on what they (the observer) 'liked', feeling nervous about giving any constructive critique in case it was perceived as negative. One observer commented *"it can be quite daunting – we are there to help but there is so much going on … also want to help challenge the teacher in a constructive and supportive way."* This was particularly felt by peers going to observe their peers and when asked about it many observers commented on their fear of appearing negative. There was also uncertainty from one or two observers about giving suggestions, stemming from not wanting to undermine the teacher and not wanting to 'tell'.

A number of observers adopted a more 'feedback' style of interaction where they reported what they had seen in a continuous narrative and did not move beyond this to explore rationale or impact. This appeared to be linked to observer confidence, (for many observers this was the first time they had observed) and the amount of training received. Observers commented, *"we need to focus people on a collaborative dialogue. This needs more training." "Effectiveness*

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[4] Teaching, Learning and Assessment

will depend on the individual. Can work really well and can be just a surface box-ticking." Those who were more confident had often benefitted from more training both in observing and coaching or mentoring.

5.4.5   Contextualisation

The fact that the framework stimulated contextualised learning within teachers own classroom contexts was felt to be powerful in providing a rich tapestry of data for discussion both pre and post observation. *"It was rooted in the reality of my classroom", "it was just real." "In the professional discussion it felt lovely to have attention and to feel what I do is important, someone was interested in my teaching and my students."* Added to this was the fact that they had identified their own area of focus for the observation which immediately led to contextualised discussion before the observation (stage 3) which then fostered more meaningful continued discussion post observation (stage 4).

The specificity of the discussion was felt to be useful *"it helped me refine my thinking about questioning and expand the approaches I use."* Equally where teachers did not feel the discussion was sufficiently contextualised or specific it was felt to be a less positive experience. *"I asked for feedback on a specific element but I didn't get it. Got positive general feedback and a few insights but I would have liked more."* Another teacher felt that her observer was not briefed either on the process or the focus on an element of practice *"my observer didn't know anything about the process and this made it difficult – it was like the blind leading the blind."*

The inclusion of developing a specific area of practice within a specific learning context led teachers to feel they would be more likely to change their practices as a result – this was encouraged through the professional discussion before the observation where observers encouraged teachers to consider the impacts they wanted to achieve, the rationale for their approach and the type of activities they would undertake.   There appeared under the new framework to be a conceptualisation of observation as a 'complex, constructed process framed by context' (Lahiff, 2017: 60).

The contextualisation and focus felt less over-whelming than previous experiences and led to comments that the experience would have more long-term benefits. *"The consequences of the new system are that I now use a useful computer package in every lesson on a long term basis*." *"I discussed my proposed T&L strategies with my mentor and I decided on drilling down to find more specific methods I would use to start building on the foundations to my ideas. My mentor prompted me to focus on what I wanted to achieve and helped me realise that these strategies were an on-going strategy that I would build upon, year after year."*

5.4.6   Time

Time mattered to the teachers both in terms of how long and when. Professional discussions both pre and post observation were felt to be more effective when sufficient time was given and for a number of teachers when discussions were held close to the observation. The busy life of colleges makes this challenging as there are timetables to co-ordinate, cover to arrange and pressures and workloads that can impact on the best wills in trying to meet.

6) Conclusion

The findings indicate that a significant majority of staff at MTC perceive the framework piloted in this study to be a powerful and empowering method to support professional learning. Staff levels of engagement were high, underlining the success of the college leadership team in implementing the new policy. The framework has been designed to incorporate the Welsh Government model of professional learning which embraces reflective practice, collaboration and coaching and mentoring and the use of evidence and data. This was underpinned by practice which explores the 'why' and 'how' of teaching as well as the 'what' outlined by Furlong (2014). It was also welcomed by staff as '*differentiated and individually tailored to recognise the fundamental nature of professional identity'* (James and Unwin 2016). It aligns with the notion that a professional be a '*self-critical, competent practitioner responsible for his/her own decisions and actively engaged in continuing development of themselves and their discipline'* (UCU, 2013).

The framework was viewed by staff as well-crafted, credible and meaningful to those involved; signifying how college leaders are creating a positive professional learning environment with a shared sense of purpose - highlighted as necessary for developing great teaching by Coe et al. (2014). There was a logical thread between the various components of CPDL and provision of opportunities for teacher learning which are consistent with student learning being promoted. The coherence and integrity of situating the framework in a developmental and quality improvement context was welcomed by staff. The iterative nature of the framework fostered a rhythm of activity through multiple instances of support, and activities with overt relevance of content to the participants and their day to day experiences with students described by Coe et.al (2014) as being important in developing teachers. Teacher curiosity was reignited – an essential component of craftsmanship emphasised by Sennett (2008) and the approach could be used positively to promote teacher self-efficacy (see Pearson, 2017:152-160).

The factors that appeared to undermine the experience for the minority of teachers referred to in section 5 above centred around a) observers not fully understanding the approach, b) under-confident observers or observers who had limited experience or training, c) teachers who would prefer a grade to feel their practice is recognised and who felt that the observation process should include more measurable targets and d) staff not feeling there was sufficient time devoted to the process. These were small in number but their concerns need to be acknowledged. Due to the action research approach adopted in the study many concerns and feedback from staff during the process have already been addressed.

It is early days to judge the impact of the framework on student learning and their outcomes but perceived impacts by teachers for their learners were wide-ranging and profound. One manager described the impacts on a team where the drop-out rate had fallen, complaints had reduced and predicted outcomes had improved. An analysis of the survey findings indicated that increased learner engagement was the highest perceived impact, followed by increased sharing of resources and strategies, improved confidence/risk-taking and innovation. 50% and above staff indicated these had improved. Staff did identify improvement in predicted learner outcomes (26%) and quality of student work (22%) but these were significantly lower than other perceived impacts. This may suggest needing to put greater emphasis at stage 1 and 3 of

the framework on aligning the focus of teacher activity more explicitly to improving learner outcomes and in sharing strategies and practice which may have direct impact on this. Learners questioned after observations where teachers were linking their chosen focus more explicitly to learner outcomes, (for example focusing on student evaluative writing and improved assessment), were better able to articulate the impact it had had on their learning than those where teachers were focusing for example on new forms of technology. The learner survey in 2016-17 included a set of questions on specific aspects of teaching and learning for the first time, and in 34 out of 38 areas of learning 90% or more learners rank TLA quality as good or better. We cannot compare this with the previous year but there was an increase of 7% in learners who would recommend the college. Merthyr has also just been made a designated OLEVI centre of excellence – the only Further Education College in Wales to be designated and one of only three centres across Wales. This designation recognises the innovative teacher development approach within the College.

Part of continued refinement and development could be to bring the learner voice more explicitly into the framework, providing another lens (Brookfield, 2005) to analyse and reflect on practice. Several teachers sought learner feedback, and one teacher who really embraced the new framework undertook a range of different activities and approaches to support peer learning, and after each intervention took feedback from learners, recording and videoing this for further analysis.

The introduction of the framework came at a stage in MTC's development journey where staff, in the main, embraced the process beyond the expectations of the senior leaders. It reflects the sustained investment MTC have given to staff development and professional learning and an on-going commitment to transforming the learning environment, which is not just seen as a quick fix. It reflects the changing landscape of CPDL and the rhythm of learning activity outlined in *Developing Great Teaching* (2014). One teacher commented *"the college is dragging us into the twenty-first century – and it is really exciting!"*

Certainly thinking about teacher learning has changed. Wiliam suggested in 2010 'We are beginning to learn what kinds of structures need to be in place to help teachers change habits. Teachers need to be able to exercise *choice*, to find ideas that suit their personal style, and they also need the *flexibility* to take other people's ideas and adapt them to work in their own classrooms. Because teachers use a number of well-established routines to manage their classrooms, changing these can make their teaching, at least in the short term, less fluent, so they need to take *small steps* as they develop their practice. Teachers need to be *accountable* for developing their practice—the evidence is that left to their own devices, teachers improve their practice slowly if at all. And because changes in practice are so difficult, they also need to be given *support* for change.' (Wiliam 2010: 5). The framework at Merthyr is supporting teachers to interrogate their habits, exercise choice and provides a structure through engagement with managers and peers and their PLDP[5], which both stimulates professional learning but also makes teachers accountable for their own development.

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[5] Professional Learning and Development Plan

Research suggests that teachers working in organisations with more supportive professional environments continue to improve in their practice beyond the first few years post training. Those with the least support actually decline in their effectiveness. (Coe et al 2014). The approach adopted at MTC is poised to support teachers in enhancing their practice. At the start of the pilot staff were asked about their hopes for the new framework. These were outlined as increased trust and open-ness, greater confidence, happier staff, more collaboration, learners enjoying their experience more, people comfortable about sharing ideas, empowering staff and students to own their learning and a culture where, as one teacher commented, *'access to knowledge becomes a norm and confidence and practice improves'*. There is considerable evidence from the findings that staff's hopes are being fulfilled.

7) Recommendations and Next Steps

How can the pilot framework be expanded and developed to further enrich professional practice?

7.1 At the college level

It is clear from the findings of this research that the pilot has had considerable impact on opening doors and opening minds to engage more in exploring different aspects of teaching and learning practice and in working with colleagues from across the organisation. There have also been improved relations between managers and their staff, a rhythm to professional activity which builds logically from the Outstanding Teacher Programme and other initiatives.

In taking the framework forward and embedding it into policy a number of factors could help to further enrich professional practice.

7.1.1 Communication

Despite having a clear communication strategy and sharing the policy, frequently asked questions and supporting documentation with staff there were still gaps in people's understanding at local levels.

Recommendations:
- Consider holding a re-launch at the beginning of the year using findings from this study and individual teacher successes to refresh staff's understanding, celebrate and disseminate their practice more widely.
- Have the professional learning policy on management agendas as a standard agenda item and review this throughout the year.
- Consider having a slot at team meetings for staff to feedback to others on what they are focusing on, what they have learnt and to share strategies and resources.
- Develop a tracking system with names of all staff, their observers, their focus and note completion of each stage of the framework to a) identify areas of focus which can inform CPD programmes, b) link staff together with shared interests, c) monitor completion.
- Undertake further clarification of roles, responsibilities and deadlines for all involved in the framework and for who is responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of impact. Link to teacher responsibility for their own development and CPD requirement.

7.1.2   Training and Focus on Learner Outcomes

The new framework increased the number of observers considerably and for many this was the first time they had observed others and for all staff the nature and format of the observation was very different from previous cycles and there was some 'suspicion' as to how the new framework was being used and on levels of ability to reflect on and critically appraise practice.

Recommendations:
- Consider having more training and reviews throughout the year for observers – consider running an 'observation' training course and/or the use of the coaching module from the Outstanding Teacher Programme for all observers and facilitate observer reflection of what worked well and less well during the pilot.
- Include teacher development sessions that explore reflective practice within the CPD offer.
- Include CPD for all staff which focuses on using evidence-based practice and teacher effectiveness research to explore and test strategies and help teachers with how to align activity and areas of focus to impact on learner outcomes.
- Support staff from stage 1 of the process to identify in their PLDPs the desired impact on learner progress.

7.1.3   Celebration

A minority of staff commented on the fact that they missed having a grade as with it they 'knew where they were' and felt that their practice was being acknowledged. (This was particularly from staff who had been given high grades in the old system).

Recommendations:
- Support managers in ways to effectively give feedback to staff on their overall performance through 1-1 and team meetings and appraisal to enable staff to 'know where they are'.
- Build in celebration events and methods to acknowledge and share good practice (for example a teaching and learning newsletter which gives examples of what teachers have been working on or shares resources and strategies, an online forum which posts strategies and resources, marketplace type CPD events)
- Consider how the framework can support segmentation of teachers into collaborative groups to explore similar themes (see Jayaram et al. (2012) for more information on this).
- Consider giving mini 'research' grants per department of, for example £100 to support teachers (identified based on the quality of their PLDP) with their areas of focus which includes a commitment to giving a presentation at the end of the year.

7.1.4   Clarity and Understanding

Implementing change is a complex and challenging process and the pilot has shown the extent to which the rationale for the change and the associated processes have been widely applauded and understood. To extend and embed the applause and understanding to all staff a number of factors may assist.

Recommendations:

- Update and revise the policy in the light of findings from the pilot and staff feedback including setting out how the policy aligns with other policies – e.g. for teachers in training, for teachers on the Outstanding Teacher Programme, its relationship to peer observation, the probationary process and how it links to other forms of professional learning to ensure the thread linking and distinguishing activity is explicit for staff.
- Consider the language used – Does the word 'observation' within the framework convey the meaning required? Is the 'observer' a coach, a peer, a mentor, an observer, a colleague? All of these were used by staff. Does it matter?

7.1.5   Evaluation and Learner Voice

A number of staff sought to gain learner feedback on the impact of their interventions and explorations of practice and in one case this was done particularly well. In the main, however, the involvement of learners directly both in introducing and reviewing staff mini research was under-developed.

Recommendation:

- Encourage staff to make greater use of their learners both in involving them in their focus at the introductory stage and also in reflection and evaluation of impact. Share good examples of this together with methods to involve learners further through training.

7.2 Wider Implications and Next Steps

This has been a small-scale study in a particular institution at a particular point in time and as with any research and evaluation we are often left with more questions. The aim of the pilot was to explore ways of stimulating teachers' professional learning and the effectiveness of the MTC framework in supporting this. The six questions for further exploration below could help to frame discussions for next steps.

7.2.1   How can the findings from this study and the professional learning framework at MTC support the implementation of a national professional learning policy?

7.2.2   How can the findings and the professional learning policy be effectively integrated with other initiatives in professional learning in Wales including the new professional standards?

7.2.3   How can colleges best structure CPD to foster the approaches outlined in the ESTYN 2015-16 report and provide time and reflective spaces for practitioners to engage in their CPD?

7.2.4   How can the learning from this pilot be shared and disseminated with other colleges and schools in Wales?

7.2.5   How can engagement between UCU, the Welsh Government and colleges be best continued to explore ways in which practitioner and college research and evaluation can inform, expand and improve professional learning and pedagogy policy and practice?

7.2.6   How can research be continued to explore a) alignment and impact of professional learning on learner outcomes and b) ways in which learner voice can inform teacher professional learning?

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Appendix 1

Research Activities and Participants

Activity	Participants	Total
Interviews and Discussion (throughout pilot)	Deputy Principal, Vice Principal, UCU Official	3
Focus Groups at pilot start x 5	Heads of Division, Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators, Union Representatives, Teaching Staff, Observers	20
Observer interviews x 7	College observers	7
Observee interviews x 8	Teaching staff	8
Shadowing of observations x 5	Observers, observees, students	5
Learning Co-ordinator interviews x 1	Learning Co-ordinators	2
Review of Professional Learning and Development Plans	Teacher generated	30
Review of Lesson Observation Records	Observer generated	20
Survey	All teaching staff	50 responses (41% of teaching staff)
Focus groups at pilot end X 3	Heads of Division, Teaching and Learning Co-ordinators, Teaching Staff, Observers, Trade Union Representatives	18
Students questioned during/post observations	Students	25

Appendix Two

Survey Questions

Curriculum Area	
Gender	Male ( ) Female ( )
Number of years teaching	0-3 years 4-8 years 8-12 years 12+ years

1	Did you have a discussion with your manager to help complete your professional learning plan? Yes/No
2	How helpful was this? 1 2 3 4 5 Very helpful – helpful – quite helpful – not very helpful – not helpful at all Optional Comment:
3	Have you had a peer observation this academic year? Yes/No
4	Did you have a pre-observation meeting with your observer? Yes/No
5	How helpful was this? 1 2 3 4 5 Very helpful – helpful – quite helpful – not very helpful – not helpful at all Optional Comment:
6	Were your pre observation meeting, developmental/peer observation and discussions helpful in improving your teaching and learning? Yes/No
7	If yes, what was helpful? Comment:
8	If no, why not? Comment:
9	What will you do differently or experiment with, following this? Comment:
10	How do you think this will help you improve the learning experience for your students? (For example, learners will be engaged in more challenging tasks, learners will experience a wider range of activity types, etc) Comment:
11	What have the overall impacts been for you? (please tick those that apply below)

|	
	a) Improved confidence in exploring new approaches ( ) b) Improvement in predicted student outcomes ( ) c) Increased sharing of resources, strategies and approaches ( ) d) Improved student attendance ( ) e) Improved quality of student work ( ) f) Improved student engagement ( )
12	Do you think the approach this year is more effective in supporting your learning and development? Yes/No
13	Why/why not? Comment:
14	This has been a pilot year and we would welcome any comments or suggestions for improving the process? Comment:

Appendix Three

Quantitative Data from cross-college survey (May 2017)

1. Number of Participants   50
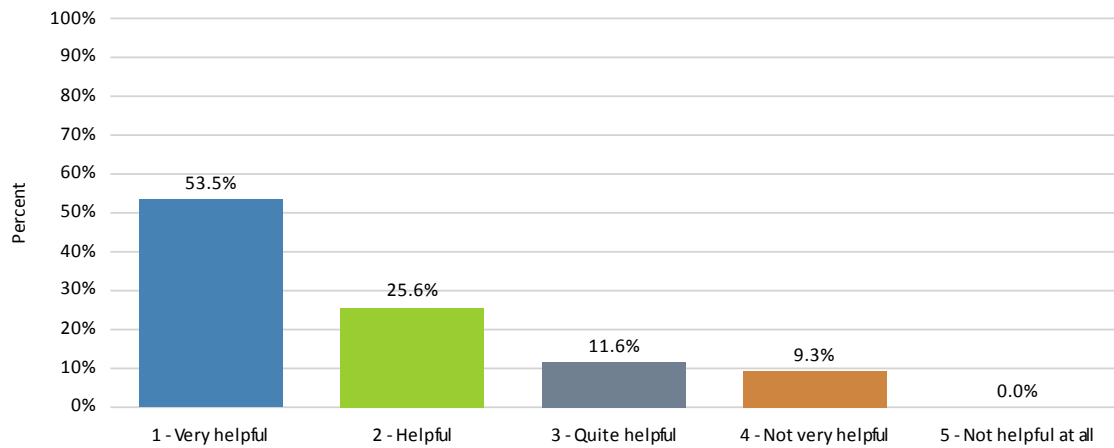
2. Gender
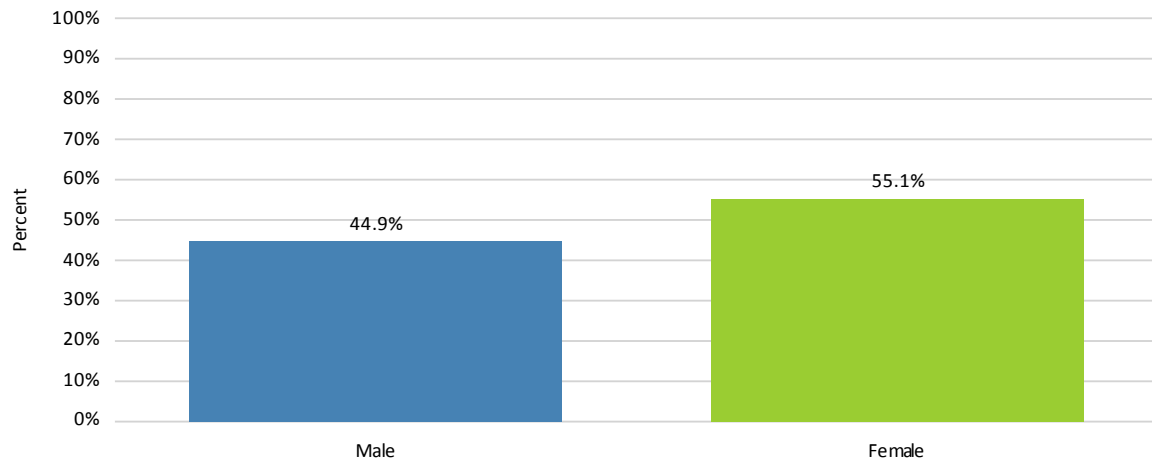
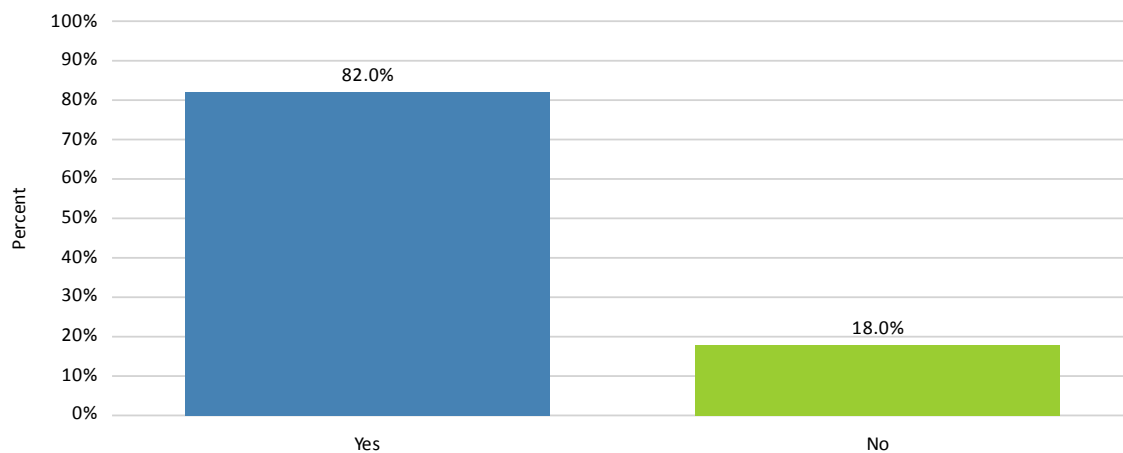## 3. Number of years teaching
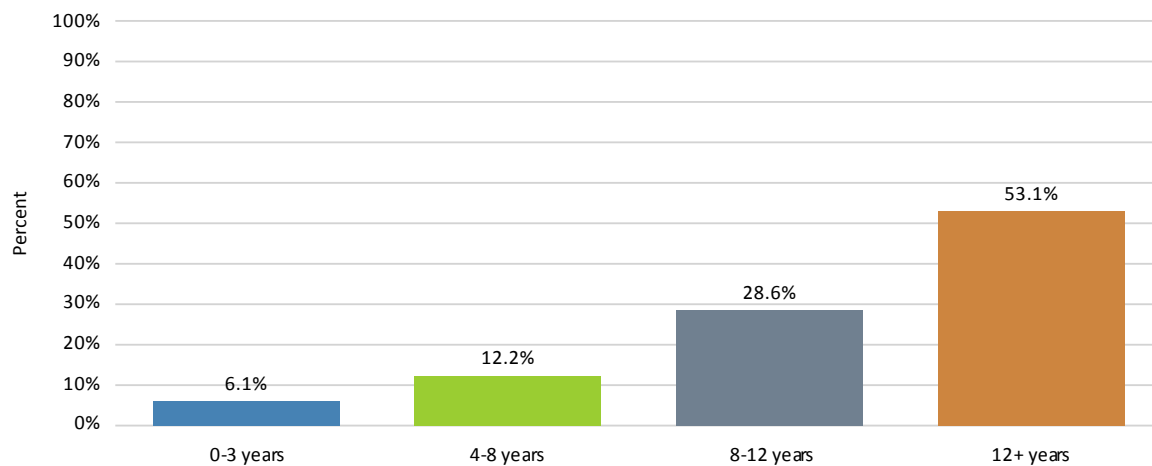
4. Did you have a discussion with your manager to help complete your professional learning plan?
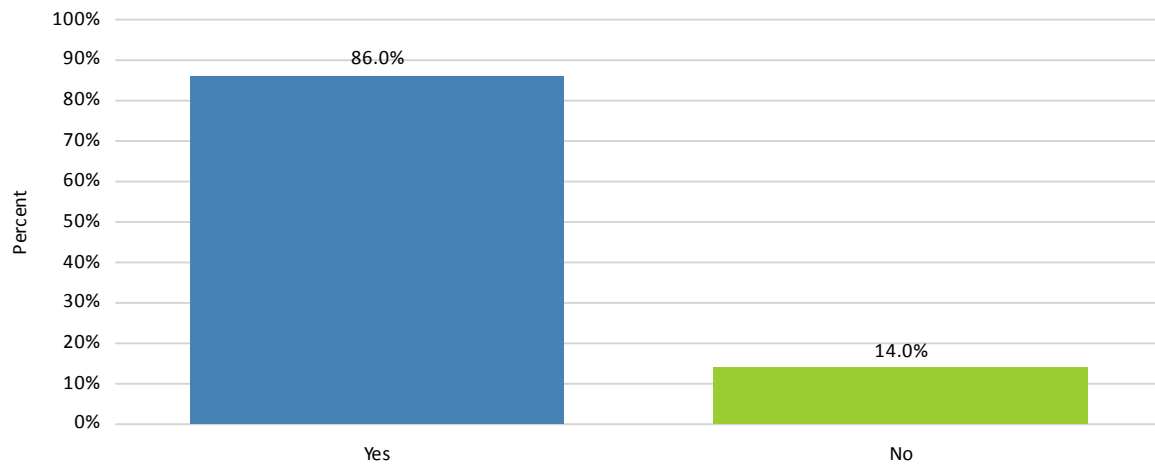

5. If yes, how helpful was this?

6. Were your pre observation meeting, developmental/peer observation and discussions helpful in improving your teaching and learning?

Questions 7-10 are text based only and samples of comments have been integrated into the report.

11. What have the overall impacts been for you? (please tick those that apply):

Name	Percent
Improved confidence in exploring new approaches	54.3%
Improvement in predicted student outcomes	26.1%
Increased sharing of resources, strategies and approaches	56.5%
Improved student attendance	8.7%
Improved quality of student work	21.7%
Improved student engagement	60.9%
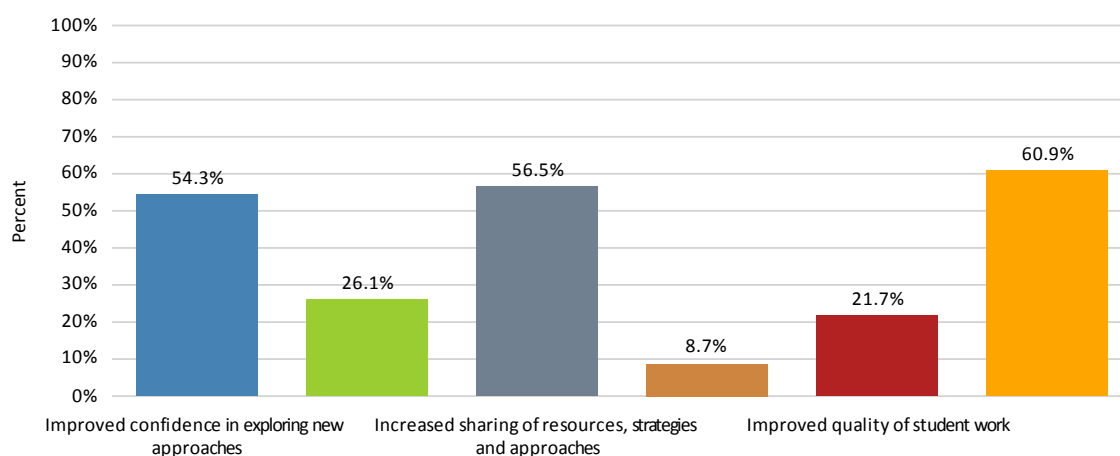
12. Do you think that the approach this year is more effective in supporting your learning and development?
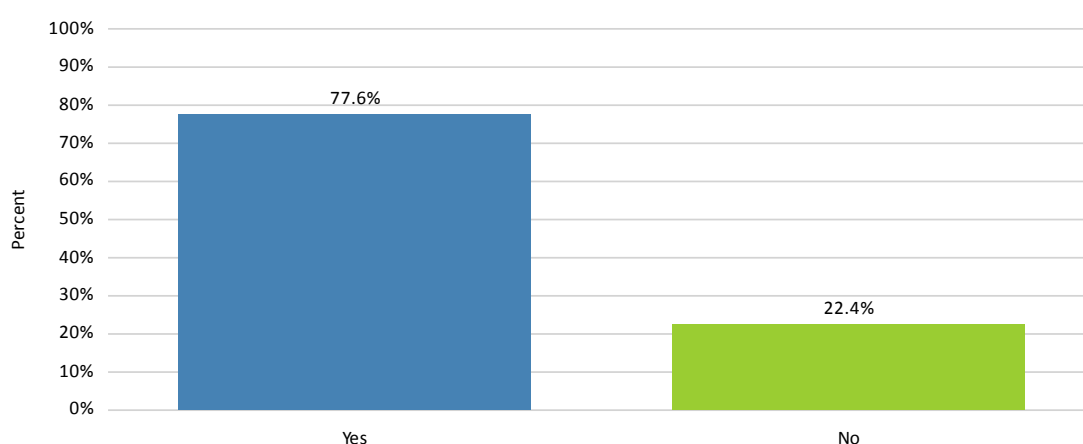
Questions 13 and 14 are text responses and integrated into the report.