

**Continuing Professional Development
in Higher Education:
Voices from Below**

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to further understanding of faculty-based academics' views on what influences their understandings, behaviours and attitudes towards their continuing professional development. Informed by critical realist ontology, it is argued that it is necessary to explore academics' understandings and accounts of professional development in their practice context in order to gain a better understanding of the complexity and differential practices that underlie professional development in academia. In doing so, the research addresses the current under-representation in the literature of the voices of faculty academics about what influences their approaches to professional development. The data collection was carried out during the academic year 2007-8, using a qualitative multi-case study approach. Methods included semi-structured, narrative interviews with academics, more structured interviews with 'key informants' and examination of relevant institutional documents. Findings from this research have enabled new themes and areas for reflection to emerge about the constraints and enablements academics perceive in respect of their professional development. In particular, themes such as issues of interpretation and meaning; concepts of professional status and academic values; misaligned initiatives and priorities; the influence of supportive networks; and emergent personal, individual concerns have surfaced. The conclusion is drawn that the significance of agency raises the importance of opening the debate and responding to the 'voices from below'.

Key Words: Continuing Professional Development; Critical Realism; Higher Education; Academics

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CHAPTER 1 – Overview

Introduction

‘Continuing Professional Development? I’m looking at a jigsaw puzzle with pieces missing’ (Sharon, full-time academic, 11-15 years experience). The missing pieces of the jigsaw are the voices of faculty-based academics about what influences their understandings, behaviours and attitudes towards their continuing professional development. It has been acknowledged that ‘top down institutional and quality agendas shape the context for much continuing professional development’ (Clegg 2003: 42) and it is therefore these ‘voices from below’ that are investigated in this research, as it is argued that ‘to develop a meaningful understanding of continuing professional development practices in academia it is necessary to start with an exploration of what academics understand by continuing professional development, what they do, and why, taking account of the context within which it happens’ (Crawford 2009: 112).

Situated in the context of higher education in England, the research aims to offer insight into the views of academics, with the intention of furthering knowledge and offering relevant explanations in respect of academics’ approaches to continuing professional development. It was undertaken between September 2007 and July 2008, commencing with an initial pilot single case study and followed by the substantive qualitative data collection in two case study English universities, hereafter called University A and University B. The starting point of this research was that ‘staff expertise is the most important asset in a university; without it literally nothing can be achieved’ (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003: 23); by implication, the professional development of these staff, in this case academics working in faculties, is of significant importance. Yet the views of faculty academics with regard to what influences their approaches to professional

development are currently under-represented in the literature. This qualitative study, therefore, focuses on participants' narratives of professional development in the context of the social environment of higher education.

This first chapter serves as an introduction to the thesis, detailing the rationale and objective of the research before setting out the questions for the investigation. Having set the focus of the investigation, the chapter then considers the notion of continuing professional development in the widest context of the occupational landscape. The discussion then centres on an overview of the contemporary national policy context of higher education that may have a bearing on academic practice, and thereby on academic professional development. Building on the importance of context, the chapter moves on to discuss the underpinning conceptual theory that has informed the research throughout, in particular the concepts of critical realism (Bhaskar 1978). A personal reflexive account explaining the researcher's 'position' within the research precedes the conclusion.

Research rationale, objective and questions

The research was both timely and pertinent, given that the continuing professional development of academics can be seen to take place within a complex array of competing challenges and perspectives. The contemporary environment of higher education is both fluid and complex. Academics are working with changing national policy directives; increasing and shifting demands and expectations are being made both on their employing institutions and on themselves as professionals (Cullingford 2002). In response to some of these drivers, there are changes in organisational structures which may impact upon their work. The responsibilities and activities commonly recognised as elements of the academic role, and thereby the role itself, are changing

(Blackmore and Blackwell 2003), as are the relationships to other roles, both within and without the institution (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003). Added to this there are new national policy standards, requirements and budgetary barriers/drivers that may impact upon the institution and its members in different ways (Deem *et al.* 2008). Within this context, the overall objective of the research was to investigate how academics working in faculties, perceive that their understandings, behaviours and attitudes towards their continuing professional development have been shaped. The central research question was therefore:

What do academics consider to be the main influences on their understandings, behaviours and attitudes toward their continuing professional development?

To examine this issue the following sub-questions were explored:

- What influences the ways in which academics interpret and give meaning to professional development?
- In what ways do extra-institutional and intra-institutional factors influence academics' attitudes and behaviours in respect of their continuing professional development?
- What other concerns influence academics' behaviours and attitudes toward their continuing professional development?

Research context

The term 'continuing professional development' is widely used across a range of occupational fields. Therefore, to explore the research context, the first part of this section of the chapter discusses the background and usage of the concept across the professional environment beyond higher education. The second part of this section of

the chapter then develops a more specific focus on continuing professional development in the context of higher education in England.

The context of continuing professional development outside higher education

It is widely assumed that continuing professional development is a generally desirable thing to do (Sadler-Smith and Badger 1998; Roscoe 2002). There is, however, a lack of clarity and agreement about what that ‘thing’ actually is, and some acceptance that the concept of continuing professional development is ‘neither innocent nor neutral’ (McWilliam 2002: 289). It is evident, however, that the nature of continuing professional development has changed and developed over the past two decades with, it is suggested, an increasingly interdependent relationship between development and notions of professionalism (Friedman *et al.* 2008), professional status, license to practice, professional registration and accreditation (Rothwell and Arnold 2005). This interrelationship is also apparent as frequently claims of professionalism are validated through mandatory requirements to evidence continuing professional development (Dexter: 2007: 22). Furthermore, there is a view that the notion of continuing professional development has gained more significance because of the ‘accelerating pace of economic, social and technological change’ (Woodward 1996: 1), alongside shifting demographics and an increased demand for accountability (Duyff 1999).

In the field of human resource management and organisational behaviour, Rothwell and Arnold (2005) take this further, identifying contributory associations between the changing world of work, characterised by turbulence and insecurity, and the increased need for professional status and recognition to ensure employability and future success. Megginson and Whitaker are even more unequivocal when they state that ‘the need for continuing professional development arises because security for individuals no longer

lies in the job or organisation we work for but in the skills, knowledge and experience that we have within ourselves' (Megginson and Whitaker 2007: 3). Indeed, the argument is made that the more shaky the foundations and status of the profession are considered to be, the greater the need for robust, explicit and verifiable professional development policies (Rothwell and Arnold 2005). It is relevant then that the foundations of the academic profession are thought to have been considerably weakened by the 1988 Education Reform Act, which abolished the virtually absolute right of tenure (Henkel 2000: 156).

Further to this, there appears to be unanimous agreement in the literature that there has been a significant increase in the number of occupational groups who consider themselves to have professional status (Rothwell and Arnold 2005). In a research project that involved 23 professions, The Institute of Continuing Professional Development (ICPD) acknowledged that there is 'a proliferation in continuing professional development policies, practices, activities and strategies for implementation' (ICPD 2006: 4), whilst it is recognised that continuing professional development is a cornerstone of policy and practice in all professional bodies (Watkins 1999). The ICPD research (2006) reflects findings from an earlier study of 162 professional associations where significant inconsistencies were found across continuing professional development policies and programmes, with 40 associations having no policy on continuing professional development (Friedman *et al.* 2000, cited in Friedman *et al.* 2001). That being said, there is recent evidence of professional associations adopting a more rigorous approach to continuing professional development monitoring and recording, for example the development of continuing professional development frameworks in Social Work (General Social Care Council 2005); for the Social Care Workforce (McDonnell and Zutshi 2006); and in Physiotherapy (The

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy 2003). The role of the Higher Education Academy and the development of professional standards related to teaching and supporting learning (HEA 2006) are discussed in the next part of this chapter (pages 17-18).

It is no surprise, then, to find an overwhelming consensus in the literature that there is no one clear, agreed, definition of 'continuing professional development'. The concept is broad, vague and debated, having multiple dimensions, meanings and purposes (Friedman *et al.* 2001; Day and Sachs 2004; Friedman *et al.* 2008). The term itself is scrutinized by Jones and Jones (2007) who, writing from the position of school teachers, associate the word 'development' with negative connotations of being coerced into roles and models by those in more powerful positions. They propose a replacement term of 'critical professional learning' which they suggest implies that challenge and debate is welcomed, with educators not simply responding to externally imposed requirements or targets. Yet 'continuing professional development' is undeniably a term that is in widespread usage. One of the more commonly used definitions of continuing professional development was originally developed by the construction industry in 1986:

The systematic maintenance, improvement and broadening of knowledge and skills, and the development of personal qualities necessary for execution of professional and technical duties throughout the individual's working life (cited in Friedman *et al.* 2008: 18).

This definition appears to have been adapted and adopted by the Institute of Continuing Professional Development, who define continuing professional development using a very similar phrase but, perhaps significantly, adding the term 'competence' and excluding the notion of developing 'personal qualities', hence:

Continuing professional development is the systematic maintenance and improvement of knowledge, skills and competence, and the enhancement of learning, undertaken by an individual throughout his or her working life (Institute of Continuing Professional Development, undated).

In contrast, Hargreaves (1995, cited in Day and Sachs 2004: 34), writing in the context of continuing professional development for school teachers, argues for a very inclusive and broad approach to understanding professional development which would include ‘emotional attachment to and engagement in their work’. Reinforcing the focus on the individual and individual power, but without the slant towards personal qualities, Megginson and Whitaker offer a different, but arguably not contradictory, definition:

Continuing professional development is a process by which individuals take control of their own learning and development, by engaging in an on-going process of reflection and action (Megginson and Whitaker 2007: 3).

Such an explicit focus on individual responsibility and control begs question of the role of professional associations and, perhaps more significantly, employers. Woodward redresses the balance to some degree, suggesting that:

The term ‘continuing professional development’ describes learning activities that are undertaken throughout working life and are intended to enhance individual and **organizational** performance in professional and managerial spheres (Woodward 1996: 1, emphasis added).

It is also evident that despite the many divergent nuances there is a reluctance to define continuing professional development either as role-related reactive learning to ensure and maintain capability in a current role, or as career-planning related learning to ensure

planning and preparation for progression and future roles. Many of the definitions avoid this issue completely, are particularly vague, or suggest continuing professional development should meet both purposes.

A government circular outlining the importance of continuing professional development as a key element in the delivery of the government's objectives for the National Health Service (NHS) also attempts to straddle both individual and organisational needs, stating that 'continuing professional development is a partnership between the individual and the organisation', thus focussing on the priorities of the NHS, the needs of patients and meeting individual career aspirations and learning needs (DoH 1999: 3). This attempt to encompass all possible facets of a complex notion may be ambitious. Indeed, in a critique of lifelong learning policies, Field (2002: 201) conveys concern about the effectiveness and implementation of policy, outlining the disparity between 'policy rhetoric and policy achievement' and 'conception and delivery'. Such concerns may be partially explained by the apparent lack of consensus of the meaning and scope of key concepts such as professional development.

Thus, it can be seen that the concept of continuing professional development and its implementation outside beyond higher education is not straightforward. It is not surprising, therefore, that continuing professional development in academia is also fraught with contention, complexity and challenge. In the next section of this chapter, the context of continuing professional development in higher education is considered.

The context of academics' continuing professional development in higher education

The research reported in this thesis was carried out in English universities and is therefore identified and explicated principally within an English context. However,

often the national context and the literature that considers it, is inclusive of the other countries that make up the United Kingdom and in these instances, this will be made clear. In England, as of August 2008, there were 130 higher education institutions (Higher Education Funding Council 2009). These are independent, self-governing bodies, legitimised and given status through Royal Charter and statute. The authority to award degrees is also conferred on institutions by national statute, although the qualifications are legally owned by the degree-granting institution and not by any legislative body. Politically, at the time of undertaking this research, oversight of higher education across England was placed with the government Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, with processes of audit, funding, quality enhancement and implementation of national strategy being delegated to a range of other national bodies. These include the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The latter body is responsible for distributing funds for universities in England and ‘plays a key role in ensuring accountability and promoting good practice’ (HEFCE 2005). All higher education institutions in England have charitable status under the Charities Act 1993.

Despite the apparently high level of independence that this contextual discussion would indicate, there is a plethora of government-driven policies, drivers and initiatives that, arguably, impose pragmatic solutions and ‘goals entirely dictated by political fashion or public purse strings’ (Graham 2008: 4-5). Additionally, Land (2004: 8) argues that such initiatives set in place a powerful discourse that can result in ‘self-regulatory behaviours and regimes’. These national imperatives can, therefore, be seen to directly influence the context of higher education and therefore, potentially the practices and professional

development of academics who work within it. It is to the most relevant of these national initiatives that this section of the chapter now turns.

In 1997 the government commissioned a study of higher education in England, to report with 'recommendations on how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education...should develop...over the next 20 years' (Dearing 1997: 3). The report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, known as the Dearing Report after its chairman, continues to have significant influence today. However, its recommendations have been criticized for proposing 'a series of uneasy compromises between market forces, state control and professional interests' (Tapper and Salter 1998: 33) in the higher education sector. This results in universities no longer contributing knowledge to society, but themselves being 'shaped by society through the "knowledge specification"' and with this comes a discourse of delivery and performance (Light 2000, cited in Light and Cox 2001: 2). Debates about the 'neoliberalist' university (Clegg 2009), an 'increasingly managerialist environment' (Trowler *et al.* 2005: 427) and performance-led cultures reflect wider concerns about the impact of regulatory forces on professional development. Deem *et al.* (2008: 5) explain that from a critical realist position the increase of new managerialism can 'be explained in terms of the changing material conditions and structural constraints' that have changed the welfare state. The government White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES 2003), for example, amongst a rhetoric of more freedom and self-determination for universities, is infused with the new managerialist discourse of 'recognition and reward', 'quality and standards systems', competition and economic efficiency (DfES 2003: 50-51), the consequence of which is 'new public management' that arguably results in 'declining trust and discretion' (Deem *et al.* 2008 35).

Within this, despite the breadth and complexity of the academic role, the 2003 White Paper develops a focus on the enhancement of teaching, this being ‘central to the purpose of higher education (DfES 2003: 46). The White Paper also included an undertaking to develop professional standards for teaching in higher education and the requirement for all new teaching staff to receive accredited training (DfES 2003). Here were signs of ‘the idea that university academics might become scholars in teaching as well as in their disciplines’ (Ashwin 2006: 15). In ‘an attempt to pull some of the separate parts of [the] previous strategy together’ (Trowler *et al.* 2005: 432) and in response to the DfES 2003 White Paper, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) was established; this was effectively a merger of the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ITLHE) and the Learning and Teaching support network (LTSN). At present, the HEA operates through a network of 24 Subject Centres located in universities, and aims to provide subject-specific support for enhancing the student learning experience. Smith (2005), writing as the academy was in early stages of development, suggested that this was a high profile, strategic body which would ‘facilitate the development of all staff in higher education’ (Smith 2005: 27). The HEA itself claims to be seeking to lead, support and inform the professional development of staff in higher education (HEA, cited in Oakleigh Consulting Ltd 2008). In its current strategic plan however, professional development is subsumed in a wider aim related to brokerage, wherein attention is centred on accreditation processes (HEA 2008).

The HEA inherited a system of membership and accreditation of academic development programmes from its predecessor organisation, the ITLHE. There is a wealth of literature that explores the notion of professionalism and the role of professional associations; it is not possible to address all of these here, suffice to record that the ITLHE was considered to have a particular model of professionalism that offered ‘a

framework and a support system within which individual staff ... manage[d] their own professional development' with an overarching principle of self-regulation (Bucklow and Clark 2003: 82). This model arguably addresses British academics' concerns about a form of professionalism characterised by skills and standards and lacking creative and moral facets (McLean 2008). It is then relevant to note that the HEA does not claim to be a professional association for academics or those teaching in higher education, but does purport to have a 'major focus on enhancing the status of teaching in higher education' (Ramsden 2008: 3).

Thus in 2006, in accordance with the commitment in the DfES 2003 White Paper, the HEA developed the first United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF) (HEA 2006). These standards aim to act as 'an enabling mechanism to support the professional development of staff engaged in supporting learning' with the underpinning areas of activity including the 'evaluation of practice and continuing professional development' and the professional value of a 'commitment to continuing professional development and evaluation of practice' (HEA 2006). However Allen (2006) writing in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, and representing the lecturers' union of that time, Natfhe, argued that the standards were 'bland' and their development lacked engagement with academics. Yet in an interim evaluation of the HEA by Oakleigh Consulting Ltd., reported some two years after Allen's article, it was found that many of the respondents to the research thought the UKPSF to be 'a necessary and flexible platform for use by the sector' (2008: 6). The initiative was closely followed in 2007 with an aligned, non-mandatory 'professional recognition scheme', replacing the previous 'membership' approach and explicitly designed to support the implementation of the UKPSF. There are three categories of recognition: Associate, with the post-nominal AHEA; Fellow,

with the post-nominal FHEA; and Senior Fellow, with the post-nominal SFHEA (Higher Education Academy, undated). In an attempt to acknowledge the specific organisational development needs of higher education institutions and integrate them with individual professional development, recognition and status, the HEA has now developed a process of accreditation for continuing professional development frameworks within institutions, which is linked to awarding powers for the recognition scheme. The discussion of national policy drivers has so far centred on those that set the context for professional development, focussed on the enhancement of teaching practice. Yet it is acknowledged that the relationship between teaching and research is synergistic and that ‘the opportunity to do research is an important reason why people decide on an academic career’ (HEFCE 2000, cited in Jenkins *et al.* 2003: 143). Furthermore, there is a view that at this policy level such synergy is not realised or enabled with ‘dual or separate support systems for teaching and research ... and ... little or no concern as to how these two functions might be linked’ (Jenkins *et al.* 2003: 147). Key examples of influential drivers of research-related academic activity in higher education at this time are the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the outcomes of the ‘Roberts Report’ (Roberts 2002).

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) is a UK-wide activity that results in ‘quality profiles’ for each submission of research activity made by institutions of higher education. It is carried out by the Higher Education Funding Councils across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the outcomes determine future research grants for the participating institutions (Research Assessment Exercise, undated). The RAE has been called the ‘national research game’ (Lucas 2006: 29), and has been accused of having ‘a disastrous impact’ on higher education. Examples of the consequences have been ‘widespread demoralisation of staff, the narrowing of research

opportunities through the over-concentration of funding and the undermining of the relationship between teaching and research' (University and College Union 2008). The process of determining research funding allocations will change after the 2008 RAE; the new 'Research Excellence Framework', will draw upon citation data to measure research output (HEFCE 2009). Concerns and recommendations about professional development in the research aspect of the academic role were expressed in the 'Roberts Report', an influential review of the supply of science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills throughout the education system, chaired by Gareth Roberts (Roberts 2002). The report revealed that graduate students and post-doctoral academics did not have enough training in skills other than those used directly in their research projects. Several recommendations relating directly to post-graduate and post-doctoral academic researchers and academic research careers were made, including the mandatory provision of specific training in transferable skills and support for clear career development planning (Roberts 2002).

This section of the chapter has outlined some examples of policy drivers that set the national context of academic practice in higher education. The examples chosen here have been those that explicitly focus on teaching and research related activities; there are however many more national initiatives that can be seen to be influencing the complex, changing context of higher education and, by implication, the practice and professional development of academics. Whilst it is not possible to explore all of these here, the following are worthy of mention: the political commitment to 'promote the expansion of non-traditional learners in universities' (Bridge 2006: 61) through 'widening participation' of under-represented groups in higher education (Ashwin 2006; DfES 2006; Taylor *et al.* 2002); increasing international recruitment (Bridge 2006); and

changing fee structures that are potentially putting the collegiate basis of the student-academic relationship at risk (Times Higher Education Supplement 2005).

In concluding this section of the chapter, it is argued that the contemporary developing and changing national policy context of higher education may have significant implications for the roles and responsibilities of academics (Becher and Trowler 2001) and, may therefore, be a potential influence on academics' continuing professional development. The research reported in this thesis focuses on developing a meaningful understanding of academics' views on continuing professional development, but in order to develop a holistic understanding it is necessary to situate this within the extra-institutional, intra-institutional and individual contexts. This 'situatedness' is given further clarity and substance through the theoretical and conceptual influences on the investigation, which are explored in the following section of the chapter.

Theoretical and conceptual influences

The ontological meta-theory of critical realism has influenced and guided this research. Key aspects of critical realism that have informed the ideological assumptions embedded in the research aims and objectives, the design and process, and the analytical lens are explicated in this section of the chapter.

Critical realism is a meta-theory (Cruickshank 2007: 3, Danermark *et al.* 2002: 162) that is underpinned by general systems theory. It provides a broad way of thinking and understanding that informs empirical research, but allows the construction of specific theories to emerge from the research topic (Cruickshank 2007: 3, Danermark *et al.* 2002: 162). The primary emphasis of critical realism is its ontological basis, postulating that reality exists independently of whether it is observed or experienced. According to

Bhaskar (1978) there is an ontological distinction between three levels, or domains, of reality: the empirical level, the actual, and the real or causal level. The empirical level is the point at which we experience or observe the phenomenon and therefore develop a form of understanding about it. The actual level is where all events, whether or not 'activated', and thus experienced, are generated. However, it is the last domain that is of particular relevance to this study and to its underpinning philosophy; this is the domain of the real, or causal level, where generative 'mechanisms' are situated that can result in change or 'events'. Such causal mechanisms may not be tangible or visible, but result in events and produce 'tendencies', the consequence being that we seek to understand and explain these tendencies (Houston 2001). In this instance the tendency is for complexity and differential practice with regard to academics' approaches to continuing professional development.

Following this emphasis on the nature of reality, Scott (2000: 3) suggests that 'the essential ontological relation which educational researchers need to examine is the relationship between structure and agency or enablement and constraint'. Similarly, but writing more recently, Cruickshank (2007) argues that ontological hypotheses regarding structure and agency are significant in shaping data collection. Indeed it can be seen that the interplay between influences from the social system, its rules and resources (the structure) on academics' approaches to professional development and the power of individual human action (agency) is of primary interest in this project.

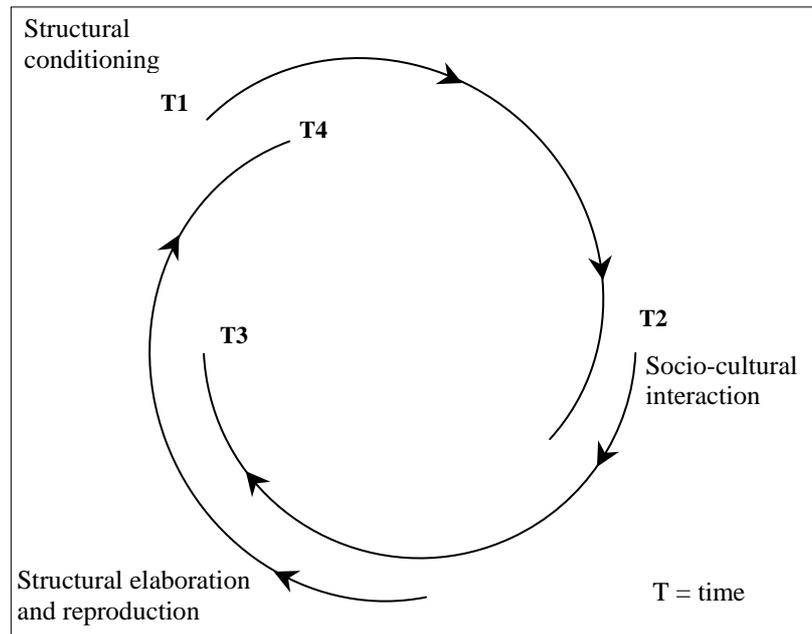
Structure and agency are commonly seen as two opposing forces, with one or the other being granted prominence in different approaches to sociology. Giddens (1976) proposed 'that social theory must be able to account for individual subjectivity and powers of agency, as well as appreciating the significance of the interrelationship

between agency, social interaction or collectivity, and social structures. His theory of 'structuration' of social systems argues that the relationship between structure and agency is one of interdependency; he refers to 'the duality of structure' (Giddens 2006: 108). From this perspective 'agency is dependent on being knowledgeable about a legacy of ways and means of doing things To the extent that it is made rule- and resource-dependent, and past-dependent, it is objectified and conjoins subject and object' (Parker 2000: 59). It is this 'conjoinment' that is vehemently critiqued by critical realists, in particular Archer (1982; 2003) who argues that Structuration Theory conflates the concepts of structure and agency as though the two were inseparable. Whilst agreeing with Giddens that the influence of structure is mediated through human agency, Archer (1982), disputes Giddens' (1976; 2006: 108) 'duality of structure' and proposes 'analytical dualism', suggesting that to understand the interplay between the influences of structure and agency it is necessary to separate them analytically. Writing from a critical realist position, Archer alternatively proposes that both have 'causal powers' and that each makes 'autonomous contributions to social outcomes' (2003: 2).

The critical realist concept of 'causal powers' is of particular interest in the current investigation. It is also known as 'generative mechanisms', and defined as 'potentialities which may or may not be exercised' (Hartwig 2007: 57). It is, then, the interplay between causal powers of structures and causal powers of agents that is relevant here. In critical realist terms these powers or influences then become 'constraints' or 'enablements'. Archer (2003: 5) argues that constraints and enablements only exist if they are exercised, in other words they only have impact if, 'in the light of their objective circumstances', individuals perceive the constraints and enablements as being relevant to their actions. 'For anything to exert the power of a constraint or an enablement, it has to stand in a *relationship* such that it obstructs or aids the

achievement of some specific agential enterprise' (Archer 2003: 5). Further to this, Archer acknowledges the complex nature of human deliberations and decision making when exploring issues of 'intention', 'anticipation', 'forecasting' and 'expectation' (2003: 6). As such, structures may mediate, but they do not determine (Sayer 1992). It is argued that as individuals' actions are shaped according to whether or not they activate different constraints or enablements, there will not be an inevitable, predictable outcome or response (Archer 2007). Similarly, Archer (1982, 1995, 2003), in her morphogenetic approach, proposes that society is continually reshaped by the interplay between structure and agency, this taking place across the additional dimension of time. Archer's morphogenetic approach is an expansion of Bhaskar's transformational model that describes the connection between structure and agency from a critical realist position (1993, cited in Danermark *et al.* 2002: 180) Diagrammatically represented in Figure 1.1 below, Archer contends that the influences of structure and agency have effect over different time periods (represented as T1 – T4 in figure 1.1), because structure must 'logically predate the action(s) which transform it', and 'structural elaboration', or in other words the possibility of structural change, 'logically postdates those actions' (Archer 1995: 468). Whilst her representations are shown as linear, Archer adds that 'structural elaboration' then becomes the start of a new morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1995).

Figure 1.1 The morphogenetic cycle developed from Archer (1982, 1995, 2003)



For critical realists, therefore, human knowledge claims emerge, as discussed earlier, from the empirical domain of reality, where reality is experienced or observed through the latter phases above. Therefore because agents, social actors, or in this case the researcher and the research participants, are ‘contingently positioned and therefore always observe the world from a fixed position’ (Scott and Morrison 2006: 107), the resultant knowledge is, and will always be, fallible. However, access to reality is via these fallible truths, just as this project relies on participants’ accounts of reality in the empirical domain and hence the knowledge produced is tentative. However, Sayer is clear that whilst all knowledge is fallible, it is not all equally fallible and that ‘practical adequacy’ is achieved when the resultant knowledge is useful and effective in the contemporary context (Sayer 1992). In order to achieve practical adequacy, relevance and efficacy in this project, an ‘intensive’ research design, described by Sayer as the ‘study of agents in their causal contexts’, was considered the most appropriate to investigate the current research question (Sayer 1992: 243).

The details of the methodological design of this project are discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis (pages 67-69), however, it is relevant here to note that the research was undertaken using qualitative methods as it is contended that ‘qualitative research is essential for any substantial sociological inquiry into how structure and agency are interrelated’ (Cruikshank 2007: 5). Similarly, it was considered necessary to use an approach which is capable of giving ‘an account of mechanism and process ... in terms of system properties, individual dispositions and individual action within recognised social practice, in such a way that the effective linkages between these levels may be demonstrated’ (Nash 2002: 398). It is therefore, through a critical realist approach that this project explores such linkages, enabling analysis of relationships and construction of ‘an explanatory narrative of the social process(es)’ within academic communities (Nash 2002: 398).

The project could be seen as both deductive and inductive, in that it aims to develop understanding from the data collected (inductive) whilst also being underpinned by a critical realist ontology that provides a theoretical grounding (deduction). Scott (1996: 60), citing the arguments put forward by Hammersley, states that ‘there are inductive and deductive elements involved in all types of data analysis’. Similarly, Cohen *et al.* (2000: 4) cite the work of Mouly as they describe an iterative process moving between induction and deduction during the course of the research. In contrast, the two approaches have been described as being diametrically opposed (Johnson 1998) with qualitative research defined as being purely inductive in nature (Janesick 1998: 47). Whilst it is contended that there can be ‘no theory-neutral access to the world’ (Cruikshank 2007: 5), it is suggested that, using the phraseology proffered by Scott and Morrison (2006: 131), the dominant component of this project is inductive with the less

dominant component being deductive. Furthermore, in accord with the stance taken by these authors, it is argued that it is 'not possible to observe anything without some pre-conceived schema to understand it' (Scott and Morrison 2006: 130), in this case, the 'pre-conceived schema' are drawn explicitly, as described earlier, from a critical realist ontology together with the researcher's values, experiences and previous knowledge. It is to these latter components of the research underpinnings that the chapter now turns.

The researcher

This section of the chapter examines the researcher's professional career experiences, learning journey and the development of values and philosophy. This brief professional biography forms the basis for a reflexive discussion about my 'location' within the research processes, placing myself at the core of the study as both the researcher, and a representative of the population being researched. As an academic employed in higher education I am effectively an 'insider', working alongside the research participants in the pilot case study and being in a similar role to participants in the substantive study. I came to this project, therefore, as at one and the same time an 'outsider' and an 'insider'. Usher, R (1996) and Sayer (1992) argue that it is not possible for the researcher to stand outside the research and indeed, whilst I had no direct working relationship with the participants, I brought my experiences, values and interpretations to this work. Additionally, I acknowledge that my background, my philosophical approach and biography are 'essential to understanding the type of data that are collected' (Scott and Usher 1999: 116). Moreover qualitative research of the type entered into here, 'is an interactive process shaped by [my] personal history, biography, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting' (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 6).

I am currently employed as an academic working in higher education; my professional career background is in health and social care practice and managerial practice. My own subject-related professional status is legalised and formalised on a national register, and is in part maintained through evidence that pre-determined, mandatory, national requirements and standards for continuing professional development have been met. Having worked in different capacities within the caring professions, I first became involved in academic practice some seven years prior to the start of this research work. My professional and managerial experiences in health and social care included substantial periods working within the National Health Service and Local Government.

My experience of continuing professional development, learning and career progression has been characterised by personal commitment, personal sacrifice and, at times, effective employer and manager support. With dual professional qualifications, both at undergraduate level, I studied for my first degree through a part-time, distance learning route. My undergraduate study sparked my early interest in exploring the impact of social and political change and continuity on individuals within society. As I became aware of new concepts, research, literature and theories, I was fascinated and stimulated by the learning and the opportunity that this new knowledge provided to challenge and question my own prejudices, assumptions and values.

During the 1990s, working in local government through periods of restructuring, the embedding of a managerial, performance management culture became gradually more apparent. Moving into managerial and strategy development roles within a social care service, which encompassed human resource management, budgetary management, performance management and the development of the service, I experienced my first exposure to practice as part of a managerialist culture. Managerialism has been

described as a method that emphasises financial efficiency (Howe 1996), but has also been criticised for being in conflict with and in opposition to a professional mode of welfare delivery (Fook 2002: 25) and the traditional values of ‘collegiality, trust and professional discretion’ (Deem 1998: 52) that characterise academic practice – both now facets of my professional experience. Writing more recently, following research in the academic context, Deem and Brehony (2005) consider the alternative concept of ‘new public management’. The notion of a pure dichotomy, however, can be disputed as the drive towards improvement and development in service delivery is integral to a professional value base. However, I found that the methods, style and ethos within a strongly performance-led managerial local authority culture did, at times conflict with my professional social work values and, increasingly, with my personal moral values. At this level of management there was an expectation that I would engage with and become part of the managerial culture of the organisation; challenging or questioning the established style was considered to be insubordination and rebellion. ‘New managerialism’ has been likened to ‘hard management’, which includes the ‘imposition of discourses’ and castigation for those employees deemed ‘incapable of self-reform or change’ (Deem 1998: 53). Interestingly, these approaches are then further associated with gender and male management practices (Deem 1998). Within this context, I reflected upon my heightened awareness, understanding and experience of the challenges and value conflicts inherent within the complexities of managing professional activity in a large organisation (Davies *et al.* 2000: 302), specifically one with these particular approaches to management. My growing enthusiasm and understanding of critical approaches to social work practice were clearly also responsible for the tensions I perceived between the managerial culture and a more personal, holistic, critical approach to practice.

My early experiences of research work occurred during this time in professional social work practice and included an extensive investigation into the local use of social care eligibility criteria in adult services. This was effectively practitioner research, which Fook (2002) constructs as an approach to recognising the value of a range of perspectives. It was through the critical appraisal of relevant theoretical models, policies and legislation that the impact of structural imperatives, competing interests and professional power on services and responses to individuals became starkly apparent. This research was also an early introduction to the debate between professional and managerial modes of practice; the use of fixed eligibility criteria in determining service provision is at this interface and the resultant dilemmas caused for practitioners were evident throughout the data.

Therefore, after much thought, reflexive deliberation (Archer 2003) and analysis of my previous experiences and learning, I accepted an opportunity to move into higher education, effectively changing my professional career pathway. This was perhaps a clear example of critical realism's agential response, being in this case, one of 'evasion' (Archer 2007: 15). Erben's views on the powers of individuals to drive change in their lives seems very applicable; 'the intentions of individuals (given the various contexts and settings in which they find themselves) are the perpetual guiding and layering goals that constitute life history' (Erben 1996: 164).

On moving into academia, after many years of working for local government and the National Health Service, I experienced not only a change of employer, but also a change of culture and emphasis in work priorities and managerial approach. Whilst I recognised some features of managerialism within the academic environment, for example, through subject reviews, audit, the Research Assessment Exercise and published league tables, I

also felt liberated on seeing how good teachers and critical researchers are valued for their ability to interrogate the nature of dominant discourses, managerial and professional processes and how such constructive challenge is welcomed. In essence, whilst it took some time to adapt to the changes, I felt a sense of emancipation as a professional, able to openly explore different viewpoints and paradigms as ways to reframe problems and issues. I am also aware that as workplace cultures and practices influence individuals' identities (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004), so over the past years, working as an academic, my professional identity has changed and developed. I perceive myself as having moved from being a professional nurse and social worker who taught, to being a professional educator who, incidentally, is a social worker.

My professional career experiences, current practice and the related development of my values, views and beliefs have underpinned not only my approach to this research project, but also my position within it. The range of experiences described in this section of this chapter has enabled me to understand and appreciate a diversity of approaches and methods. Within this, I have developed a particular interest in issues at the interface between structural requirements and individual perceptions, where the 'personal' and 'political' impact upon each other and are 'inextricably linked' (Fook 2002: 5).

As discussed earlier in the chapter (page 16), there is a view that the culture of higher education is becoming progressively more managerialist (Deem 1998; Blackmore and Blackwell 2003; Trowler *et al.* 2005) and within this there is a 'growing focus on the development of abilities that are more akin to the modern entrepreneur than the traditional academic' (Light and Cox 2001: 5). These perceived changes, related to

extra-institutional and intra-institutional influences, are of interest to me. My reflections on previous and current practice experiences, recognising both the strengths and 'pitfalls' of two very different managerial approaches, enable me to identify these changes as potential opportunities to develop professional excellence, rather than perceive them as a move along a continuum towards deprofessionalisation and bureaucratic constraint. Professional excellence, within this context, allows for and values, in my view, a critical approach to practice. Brechin *et al.* (2000: xi) describe this as 'open-minded, reflexive process, built on a sound skills and knowledge base, but taking account of different perspectives, experiences, assumptions and power relations'. However, I hold the view that in order to embrace such opportunities to enhance professional excellence within an organisation it is necessary to take account in a meaningful way of the views and experiences of all those involved, particularly those most affected by the developments; in other words 'knowledge is multi-perspectival' (Scott and Morrison 2006).

These views expose a personal ontological approach which is consistent with critical realism's view that reality cannot be understood through 'the interpretation of statistical patterns without any direct knowledge of the social processes by which they were generated.' (Nash 2002: 409), but can only be accessed through people's descriptions of it, their thoughts, impressions and subjectively defined 'constellations of concerns' (Archer 2007: 17). My ontological and epistemological perceptions, my experiences and own development have significantly influenced the qualitative, interpretivist methodology, methods and instruments employed for the research. Moreover, as an academic currently working in higher education and undertaking a study of the perceptions of other academics, I am aware of the significance of my personal experience and current role, which will have influenced the project throughout.

Essentially, in this research I have been both researcher and a member of the population being researched. At one and the same time, I could be seen as an ‘insider’ and an ‘outsider’; being from within the academic community, but practising outside the case study institutions. In the pilot study for this project, undertaken within my own employing institution, my position as an ‘insider’ appeared less ambiguous. McNamee (2002: 6) states that ‘who counts as ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ a field of research at any given time is unclear’, although from a critical realist position, Scott and Morrison (2006: 107) are clear that there is ‘no outsider perspective that allows the individual access to complete knowledge’, yet, perhaps helpfully, Hellowell (2006: 483) refers to an ‘insider-outsider continuum’.

In my view, the need for precise labelling of my position in this work is less imperative than ensuring conscious, explicit awareness of ‘positionality’; acknowledging my ‘autobiography as one marked by gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity’, historical experiences and external contexts, that may effect the research processes and outcomes (Pendlebury and Enslin 2002: 63). This ‘paves the way’ for ‘a reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the data gathered and of the literature read’ (Cousin 2009: 32). In raising the voices of academics in respect of their perceptions of continuing professional development, I have set out to develop ‘intersubjectivity’ (Usher, P. 1996: 134), in other words putting myself at the centre of the study along with those who have participated.

Throughout the project I have maintained a ‘self-reflexive’ stance, being alert to how prejudices and allegiances might influence my practice (Usher, P. 1996). Thus, as argued by Usher, P. (1996: 134), it is my view that ‘far from being a distorting influence, [my] experience [was] ... an asset’. My position on Hellowell’s (2006: 483) insider-outsider continuum was advantageous in a number of ways, arguably offering

the strengths of both approaches. I was however, mindful that whilst I have some understanding of the participants' context, this cannot be reduced to 'a source of hypotheses explaining their actions' (Sayer 1992: 37). Yet, through an insider's understanding of the complexity of participants' working environments and the resultant discourse, I was able both to establish collegiate relationships with participants, enabling them to express issues of significance (Usher, P. 1996), whilst also being able to stand back as an 'outsider', in respect of the intricacies of the intra-institutional aspects of the case study universities.

It can be seen, therefore, that the subject matter, the philosophical approach and the research strategies for this research are not only relevant to, but are integral and embedded in my own professional 'journey'. Janesick (1998) develops the metaphor of dance to express the complexities of qualitative research and, in doing so, argues that the use of metaphor offers a powerful method of description and that 'metaphoric precision is the central vehicle for revealing the qualitative aspects of life' (Eisner 1991, cited in Janesick 1998: 209). This investigation, in essence, explores my professional journey of learning and career development, through the narratives of 'fellow travellers', those who participate in the research, their journeys and constructions. Thus, through undertaking this work, I have furthered my understanding and interpretation of my personal learning trajectory. I have found, as Scott states, that 'educational research is itself educational. The researcher is as much a learner as those who form the subject matter of the research' (Scott 2000: 2). The significance of this, in respect of the approach taken, is encapsulated by Erben (1996), who states that, 'biographical method is an educative exercise, its axiomatic purpose being not only the accumulation of information and the interpretation of data but also a development in the moral reasoning of the researcher' (Erben 1996: 159).

Throughout the research, I have consciously embedded and centralised my own reflexive position and values, with myself and the individual participants being the focal points of the study:

. . . it is equally . . . important for the continuance of the university as we know it that we look systematically and critically at our own professional behaviour, at our structures of university self-governance, at our processes for peer review and at our underlying academic beliefs. (Dill 2005: 178).

Conclusion

This first chapter of this thesis has introduced the research project which, in the context of higher education in England, investigates and analyses academics' views on what influences their approaches to continuing professional development. Through the sections of the chapter, an account of the foundations of the research has been given; making explicit the context within which the investigation took place, its theoretical underpinnings, and the position of the researcher in the process. The research originates from the contention that the voice of faculty academics, with regard to their own continuing professional development, is under-represented in the literature and, as such, our understanding of the experience of developing as an academic is incomplete. Cousin (2009: 14) notes that critical realism is a perspective that has 'a concern for power' and this project therefore focuses on the narratives of academics and their 'agential deliberations' (Archer 2003: 5) in two case study institutions and a parallel exploration of the literature, to further understanding through an inclusive, holistic approach, presenting the findings for consideration and to increase dialogical engagement.

Following the model of critical realist research advocated by Danermark *et al.* (2002: 109-112) this thesis moves from concrete to abstraction and back to concrete. Thus, the first three chapters of this thesis set out the first stage of the research process in describing the phenomenon: concretisation. Chapters 4 and 5 move to abstraction in that they analytically divide the causal components of language, extra-institutional factors and intra-institutional factors, and present the data accordingly. Finally Chapter 6 draws these generative mechanisms together to provide a thematic exploration of their relative explanatory powers and to place them back into the concrete reality of practice in higher education.

At the outset it is important to note that throughout this study the terms ‘continuing professional development’ and ‘academic professional development’ are used interchangeably, unless the literature specifically employs a different term. However, it is acknowledged that these terms and concepts are potentially ambiguous and their very nature is contested (Friedman *et al.* 2001), thus as ‘both a medium and product of social interaction’ (Sayer 1992: 20) language, in relation to professional development, forms significant elements of the discussion in this and later chapters of the thesis. Whilst the complexity of definition and meaning are considered as integral to this research and, as such, are debated within this thesis, particularly in Chapters 2 and 4, it is not felt appropriate to impose a definition.

CHAPTER 2 - Literature review

Introduction

The four sections of this chapter review the literature that has informed this research project, with regards to both the focus on the voice of faculty academics and the key questions investigated. The first section of the chapter explores what light the literature can shed on meanings and understandings of continuing professional development in the context of higher education. The following two sections then explore what is known about the potential influences, both extra-institutional and intra-institutional, on how academics perceive and approach their continuing professional development. The fourth part of the chapter considers how academics exercise ‘agential reflexivity’ (Archer 2003: 130), effectively the individual or ‘agency’ dimension. However, it is recognised that such segmentation of the concepts is artificial and is undertaken here only to give structure. The chapter conclusion will therefore draw together the key aspects of these separate sections in order to summarise how the literature helps us to understand the ways in which the interplay of the relationships and interdependencies may make a difference to academics’ responses to continuing professional development.

Whilst this review will demonstrate that the literature is informative, it will also reveal that the literature is limited in a number of ways. Firstly, there is a wealth of sources that explore the context of higher education and the issues that impact upon, or may influence academic practice; these are often skewed to teaching and learning practice. Yet, the literature and research that explicitly considers how these matters might influence academic professional development is less comprehensive. Where the more specific knowledge exists, it is drawn largely from one particular position, the academic developers’ community (Clegg 2009). Furthermore, much of the knowledge is based

upon developers' reflections on their own practice and the use of theories about adult and workplace learning (Clegg 2009) and consequently has limited empirical foundation. Åkerlind (2005: 3) concurs, but adds that the limited literature rarely adopts a 'holistic perspective on development across the range of academic work'. Moreover the voice of faculty-based academics is absent from the dominant discourses about academic professional development, there is therefore an emerging need for inclusive, participative research that enables academics to enter the debate:

Fundamentally, we cannot account for any outcome unless we understand the agent's project in relation to her social context. And we cannot understand her project without entering into her reflexive deliberations about her personal concerns in conjunction with the objective social context that she confronts (Archer 2003: 131).

Understanding continuing professional development in higher education

The study of 'interpretation or elucidation of meaning' is known as 'hermeneutics' (Hartwig 2007: 230), but because, on the one hand, individuals' meanings are then interpreted by the researcher, and on the other hand, these meanings are themselves the result of individuals' conceptual formations, the study of academics' conceptions of professional development can be seen as 'double hermeutics'. Sayer (1992: 38) states that 'whether the meanings are delusions or correct they can be constitutive of social phenomena and therefore cannot be ignored in studying society'. The notion of continuing professional development in higher education is fluid, subjective and potentially attributed with a number of contestable meanings. The literature that exposes these complexities and tensions is now examined, both as the starting point for the wider review of literature and to underpin the data collection.

The concept of development, in its broadest sense, can be associated with deficiency and power imbalance (McWilliam 2002). McWilliam highlights issues of power relations by comparing academic development with Third World development, contextualising Hobart's (1993) generic, broad, critique of the concept of development into the context of professional development in Australian higher education (McWilliam 2002). She suggests that because 'development is always predicated on the idea that someone is knowledge-able while someone else is knowledge deficient, such communication cannot be a conversation among equals' (McWilliam 2002: 290). As has already been seen in Jones and Jones' (2007) critique of the term 'continuing professional development', (page 12), it is apparent that the discourse of 'professional development' in higher education is 'neither innocent nor neutral' (McWilliam 2002: 289). Using a theoretical meta-analysis of continuing professional development in higher education to explore the complexities further, Clegg argues that 'the problem of continuing professional development ... of professionals in higher education is that it operates around a series of unresolved tensions' (2003: 37). There are 'fault lines in conceptualising' continuing professional development in higher education, as it is a term that is not in common usage in academia, and is fraught with definitional problems (Clegg 2003: 37). That being said, universities are well-established providers of professional development opportunities for other professionals (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003; Clegg 2003), but have arguably less experience in adopting the concept themselves. There is thus a notion in academia of continuing professional development as a product rather than a process and hence 'some sort of fudge somewhere in the middle' (Roscoe 2002: 3). 'Current unsophisticated notions of continuing professional development [in higher education] are likely to become more coherent', however, as a

result of higher education's engagement with other occupations in this regard (Parker 2003: 37).

It can further be argued that, in contrast with the situation in many organisations outside higher education, ambiguity arises from the range of alternative terms with similar meanings being in use in different higher education settings at different times (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Zuber-Skerritt 1992). Thus for example, the terms 'academic development'; 'academic practice'; 'educational development' 'staff development' 'continuing professional development'; and 'lifelong learning' may have very different meanings for some, but are used interchangeably by others. The Higher Education Academy uses the term continuing professional development yet, despite an increasing focus on the professional development of academics, at the time of compiling this literature review it has not been possible to locate a definition of continuing professional development on their website (www.heacademy.ac.uk). However, in a document published in 2005 that appears to be no longer publicly available, the HEA offers a definition of continuing professional development clearly linked to process, which is explicitly broad and inclusive, stating that:

continuing professional development is defined as any process or activity, planned or otherwise, that contributes to an increase in or the maintenance of knowledge, skills and personal qualities related to learning and teaching and broader academic practice. This includes appropriate research and scholarly activity and the leadership, management and administration of academic provision and support (HEA 2005: 1).

In essence this definition may seem incontestable; however, that can be attributed to the broad approach taken. It could be argued that this definition falls short of clarifying the

purposes of, and responsibility for continuing professional development. Conversely, however, this definition eschews the tensions of power inherent in ‘top down institutional’ approaches (Clegg 2003: 42), facilitating individual determination and control.

Interestingly, two years after this definition appeared, the HEA published through their web pages a different definition of continuing professional development, which was explicitly developed from that of the Institute of Personnel and Development. It stated that ‘continuing professional development is systematic, on-going, self-directed learning. It is an approach or process which should be a normal part of how you plan and manage your whole working life’. This definition no longer appears on the website, which may be because it omits to consider the position of the organisation or employer and unequivocally places responsibility for continuing professional development on the individual.

It is argued that not only is there ‘no settled meaning’ for the term, but that there is unlikely ever to be one (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003: 3). Thus, the literature reveals that current understandings and meanings attributed to continuing professional development in the context of higher education are varied, incomplete and contested. However, this literature is largely theoretical and abstract in nature, with little explicit empirical data offering academics’ interpretations of continuing professional development in their professional context. It was, therefore, crucial that the current research started from a point of exploring what academics understand by continuing professional development within their own working context, and furthering understanding of correlations between how academics define continuing professional development and their approaches to it.

Extra-institutional influences

Chapter 1 of this thesis, in setting the background for this research, drew attention to the policies and literature that expose the context of higher education in England, starting with consideration of debates about neo-liberalist managerial approaches (Clegg 2009, Light and Cox 2001, Trowler *et al.* 2005) and new public management (Deem and Brehony 2005). This contextual discussion (pages 14-21) also outlines national policy drivers that may influence different aspects of the academic role and related professional development, namely teaching and research. For example, on the one hand, the increasing drive for ‘good-quality teaching for everyone’ by ‘staff that are trained to teach and continue to develop professionally’ (DfES 2003: 49), through initiatives like the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF) (HEA 2006) and, on the other hand, the influence of research funding initiatives such as the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) that have arguably permeated into many aspects of higher education. The changing position of students in higher education was also highlighted (page 20), through consideration of national initiatives such as ‘widening participation’ (DfES 2006) and changing fee structures. This section of the literature review, therefore, builds upon these contextual themes by exploring current knowledge about the ways in which these extra-institutional factors may mediate academic practice and thereby, potentially influence academics’ responses and views with regard to professional development.

Many authors have highlighted the high levels of national policy, cultural change and development impacting upon the nature of British higher education (Ashwin 2006); however very few of them consider the potential effect such changes may have on academics’ approaches to professional development, for example, Evans writes about the significant impact of extra-institutional changes on the academic role, without

mention of academic professional development (Evans 2002). Åkerlind (2005) notes that there are many texts that specifically address academic development, but these largely focus on a single aspect of the whole academic role, teaching (see Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Macdonald and Wisdom, 2002 for examples). However, often these texts arise from within the academic developers' community, may not have an empirical basis (Clegg 2009) and are exclusive of the views of faculty academics. For example, Land, reporting on interviews with educational developers in 35 universities in the United Kingdom, provides a comprehensive, research-informed discussion about many aspects of the changing extra-institutional environment (Land 2004). Whilst this includes pertinent matters such as funding initiatives, accountability, the marketization of higher education and radical changes in the higher education curriculum, the analysis focuses exclusively on the impact of these movements on the culture and practice of educational developers.

Thus the literature demonstrates acute awareness that academics are working with changing national policy directives that, as argued in Chapter 1 (page 8) of this thesis, can have a significant influence not only on institutions, but also on professional roles and responsibilities within them (Cullingford 2002). Despite the limited consideration in the literature, it is possible to discern agreement that academics' responses to professional development will be affected by the external policy environment. Changing demands can arise through, for example, the impetus to meet the UKPSF (HEA 2006) and a range of indicators of "'quality" academic performance' (McWilliam 2002: 296). Within this, tensions are apparent: Clegg (2009: 406) perceives 'a general turn towards neo-liberal policies' alongside 'a general decline in collegial governance'. Whilst on the one hand, standards and frameworks are viewed positively as having 'standardize[d] the work of higher education teachers...[and having] provided a way to accredit and reward

satisfactory performance' (Sharpe 2004: 137), there are opposing voices of concern about the standardisation and generalisation of professional development in a context that is valued for its ability to question and challenge (McWilliam 2002). With similar concerns about the dangers of 'credentialism', Davidson, citing the example of institutions that mandate new lecturers to complete accredited teaching development programmes, calls for academics to 'assert critical agency...in the face of the "moral ascendancy" of managerialism' (Davidson 2004: 300). Writing more broadly about lifelong learning policies, Field (2002) considers that the complexity of 'measurability' and demands for evidence can result in only two opposing potential solutions: high levels of trust or strong regulation. There is currently a perceived 'crisis of trust' (McLean 2008: 124) within the 'complex and changing balance between "trust" and "control"' (Deem *et al.* 2008: 19). Mistrust can be seen as an insidious theme of current accountability agendas (Cullingford 2002) that are increasingly more evident in the context of higher education. Within a critique of institutional standards, rules and frameworks that are changing 'all over the world', Dill argues vehemently for the maintenance of academic autonomy, but warns that 'we must offer convincing evidence to each other and to the larger public that our collegial processes for the maintenance of academic standard are vigorous and valid' (Dill 2005: 178). It is this concept of academic autonomy or freedom and 'self-regulation' (Dill 2005; Karran 2009) that is now considered in terms of its implication for academics' approaches to continuing professional development. Academic freedoms are enshrined in legislation where academics have 'freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions' (HMSO 1988, Education Reform Act: IV, 202, 2a). Academic freedom, in its various guises of autonomy and self-regulation has been widely written about, as

have the potential threats to its maintenance (Brennan and Shah 2000; Dill 2005; Karran 2009; Harvey and Knight 1996; Robinson 2006). Broadly, Brennan and Shah (2000) and Dill (2005) agree that the rise of quality assessment, regulation and external frameworks is a significant threat to academic freedom, whilst Karran concedes that ‘the relatively low level of research by academics and their lack of teacher training represent cogent arguments in favour of restricting academic freedom’ (Karran 2009: 27).

Although it is not made explicit in this literature, it seems very likely that such influences on the practices, roles and responsibilities of academics would have a direct relationship with perspectives on continuing professional development, its direction and related responsibilities within institutions. However, there is very little attention paid to academics’ views on how academic freedom and perceptions of managerialist and marketised approaches may influence responses to the concept of professional development. Furthermore, it may be that with professional development and formal professional recognition currently being both unregulated and non-mandatory in English higher education, this debate is yet to reach ‘full volume’ and, as such, would be more robust if it were informed by the views of academics. As an example, the process of developing the UKPSF (HEA 2006) has been criticised for lacking engagement with academics (Allen 2006, Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008), resulting in standards that are ‘bland’ (Allen 2006). However, the balance between trust and control may be shifting in response to ever-changing external drivers (Deem *et al.* 2008) such as enhanced regulation in other educational sectors (see for example Lifelong Learning UK, undated), the revision of the Research Assessment Exercise, and moves towards the development of national accreditation of continuing professional development frameworks within institutions.

Thus far, in this section of the chapter, literature that may further understanding of the extra-institutional influences on the teaching and research aspects of academic professional development has been considered. However, the academic role has become increasingly stratified, diverse (Becher and Trowler 2001), complex, and subject to change (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003), and is consequently influenced by a wider range of national initiatives. Arguably some of the more significant strategies are those directed towards ‘widening participation’ (DfES 2006), increasing the numbers of international students, and changing the funding of higher education programmes with consequent additional costs to students and their families. Again, there is little in the literature about how academics perceive that these agendas influence their responses to professional development. From the position of educational developers, however, Scott (2002, cited in Gordon 2004: 10), states that ‘it has been one of the remarkable achievements of UK higher education that massification has taken place without radical change to academic practices and values’. Conversely Slaughter and Leslie (1999), use the term ‘academic capitalism’ to denote the accelerating trend towards market-like approaches in academia, and suggest that this results in academics moving ‘away from values such as altruism and public service, toward market values’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1999: 179). Similarly, it has been argued that growth and change in the student population result in tangible changes ‘at the level of values and underlying structures of belief’ that have significance for ‘emergent forms of professional agency’ (Land 2004: 3). Yet the changes in the ways academics approach aspects of their work in response to these developments may be more subtle (Gordon 2004). From the same viewpoint, Percival and Tucker (2004) explore the implications of various extra-institutional policy goals and strategies on the work of educational developers and managers. The authors describe a range of external agendas as being ‘useful vehicle(s)’, providing ‘legitimate

ways to engage with practice within the [institution]’ (Percival and Tucker 2004: 24), before stating, albeit without empirical data, that academics perceive such policies as ‘inconveniences, interferences and hoops to jump through’ (Percival and Tucker 2004: 25).

It can be seen that the literature implies that the various extra-institutional policies and drivers for change have an impact on academic practice and may therefore influence the ways in which academics respond to their continuing professional development. However, ‘the relationship between the identifiable shifts in the landscape on the one hand and academic cultures, work conditions and disciplinary communities on the other is dynamic, complex and far from tightly-coupled’ (Becher and Trowler 2001: 16) and there is little knowledge of how academics experience and respond to this relationship.

Becher and Trowler continue with the ‘landscape’ metaphor and provide a pertinent concluding excerpt for this section of the chapter:

...land exists without an observer, but landscape does not: the ‘scape’ is the projection of human consciousness, the way the land is perceived and responded to (Bowe *et al.* 1994) ... It is important, then, to remember the role of agency in change: the important role of the reception, interpretation and implementation of new policies and responses to changing environments by academic staff themselves (Becher and Trowler 2001: 16).

Intra-institutional influences

This section of the chapter examines literature that considers the relationship between academics and the institutional environment within which they work, highlighting debates about how this intra-institutional context of academic practice may influence

academics' approaches to professional development. The section starts by considering the potential influence of provision for development, and specifically how it is arranged, perceived and prioritised within institutions. Literature that debates the influence of tensions arising from the complexity of the academic role, compounded by differing views on whether meeting institutional objectives or individual needs should be of prime concern in implementing approaches to professional development, is also considered. Broadly, the literature drawn on in this section supports concerns that there are limited sources that arise from engagement with academics. Moreover, it is evident that despite extra-institutional drivers, the concept of continuing professional development in academia, its implementation in institutions and, by implication, the potential influences on academics' approaches to development, remain problematic.

There is an interdependency between the extra-institutional influences on academics' professional development discussed earlier and the intra-institutional environment. Managerialist, output-led, audit cultures, for example, are arguably embedded in the 'rules', culture and policies of the university as a system. It is suggested that these approaches of 'coercive accountability' centralise control within institutions and suppress the creativity, innovation and professional autonomy (Shore and Wright 2000; Wright 2003) that are at the very core of 'the Entrepreneurial University' (Barnett 2003), replacing them with oppressive management practices (Wright 2003). In the Reith lectures, O'Neill (2002) uses the term 'Herculean micro-management' and reflects Shore and Wright's (2000) stance, stating that the real aim of this approach is to control the management of professional organisations. Essentially, these concerns can be seen to relate to the interplay between structure and agency and the extent to which 'structure conditions agency, and agency, in turn, elaborates upon the structure which it confronts' (Archer 2000: 306).

Debates about where the focus for continuing professional development lies, precisely what is focussed on and prioritised, further complicate the process of understanding the influence of the intra-institutional context on academics' responses to continuing professional development. There are two 'dualisms' in respect of what is considered appropriate content and focus of continuing professional development in higher education (Clegg, 2003: 38). These opposing concepts are the research-teaching nexus and orientations or loyalties to discipline-organisation; both can be seen to reflect the way influences on academic identity impact on how academics act with regard to professional development (Clegg, 2003). The first of these is considered in the following paragraphs and the second tension, between disciplinary and organisational allegiance, is examined later in the chapter (page 55).

There has been much written about the links between teaching and research and the relative status and importance afforded to each area of activity within institutions of higher education (Barnett 2003; Malcolm and Zukas 2001). The perceived 'disproportionate status and reward accorded to research in universities' (Trigwell and Shale 2004: 523) and the emergence of 'two academic tribes – those who prioritize research within their career, and those who tend to prioritize teaching' (Ramsden 1998, cited in Trigwell and Shale 2004: 523) have consequent implications for continuing professional development, specifically its development, interpretation and impetus in the institution (Clegg 2003) and, potentially, for how academics themselves embrace the concept. There is an apparent incongruity in that while research and related subject-based informal activity are the 'major focus of much early and mid-career development' (Clegg 2003: 39) with a dominant research culture in many universities (Gosling 2008), such activity is often not identified as continuing professional development (Clegg

2003; King 2004). Adding to this 'charming absurdity' (McWilliam 2002: 290), the reality remains that formal programmes of continuing professional development for academics have traditionally prioritised teaching and learning (Åkerlind 2005; Clegg 2003) and generalisable technological and managerial knowledge (McWilliam 2002). They do not address the holistic needs of academics and their complex role, resulting, for example in 'ongoing development as a researcher throughout an academic career [being] rarely addressed and the focus on teaching development still predominat[ing]' (Åkerlind 2005: 2). The function of supporting academic development in institutions is most commonly centred on educational development departments; these have different nomenclature in different institutions (Beckton 2009; Zuber-Skerritt 1992), and extreme diversity in how they are positioned in institutional structures (Beckton 2009; Malcolm and Zukas 2001; Gosling 2008). The common thread, however, is that they all have an explicit focus on teaching and learning development (Gosling 2008). Indeed, research involving 43 institutions in 2006-7 highlights resultant tensions for these units, given the 'dominance of the research culture' (Gosling 2008: 2). Further tensions are identified for centralised services of this type, in that their functions are often directly linked to confused notions of quality enhancement and quality assurance and consequent associations with accountability and managerialism (Land 2004).

Academics are 'dual professionals' (Dexter 2007; Jackson 2005, cited in Rothwell 2007) and are required to have subject, research and teaching expertise. Traditionally they are engaged in teaching, research and administration, but latterly are experiencing a complex 'academic role [that] is in flux', which can now include a wider range of tasks and responsibilities (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003: 19). In a similar vein, Light and Cox (2001: 1) discuss the 'challenge of professionalism' in higher education, referring to the overwhelming, changing demands of practice as the 'academic storm'. Yet the

discourse of professionalism is seen as one that emanates from governmental agencies, and relates specifically to teaching (McLean 2008). King's (2004) research, despite investigating the specifics of teaching development, further supports this debate as she recommends that professional development needs to accommodate all aspects of the academic role. These contradictions are furthered when one considers the UKPSF (HEA 2006), which also focuses on teaching and learning and does not mirror either the breadth of the 2005 HEA definition of continuing professional development cited earlier, or the complexity of the whole academic role. It could be argued that the standards do not enable academics and institutions to take a more inclusive approach to considering continuing professional development. Indeed, the UKPSF (HEA 2006), audit requirements, changing research agendas and budgetary barriers/drivers are impacting upon institutions and academics in different ways. There are changes in the nature of the academic role and the responsibilities attributed it, and in the relationships to other roles both within and without the institution (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003; Light and Cox 2001); these will potentially also impact on academics' responses to professional development. Yet the ways in which these factors, in a complex and changing context, might influence the views, experiences, behaviours and attitudes of academic staff towards academic development is not addressed in the literature and therefore remains unclear.

Although the literature is not inclusive of academics' views it does evidence a range of opinions on whose goals and needs should be the focus of continuing professional development in higher education, with the recognition that 'the core tension in this relationship is that between those needs for the continuity of the work practice and individuals' needs to realise their personal or vocational goals' (Billett 2002: 56). There is a view that continuing professional development in higher education operates as a

response to hierarchical and managerial agendas (Clegg 2003), yet reporting on research with educational developers across the United Kingdom, Land (2004) sets out a complex typology of varying orientations to educational development in institutional contexts. From the position of critical realism, it is proposed that ‘we humans form society through our activities, but that we ourselves are also shaped by it’ (Archer 2000: 307) and that only through consideration of the different properties of each can anything be said about their interplay (Archer 2000). Similarly, but specifically referring to continuing professional development in higher education, Zuber-Skerritt suggests that this relationship is situated in mutually influential social processes, in that ‘to change people means to create a different climate for generating different working relationships. Changed people are the result of changed climates, and changed climates are the results of changed people’ (Zuber-Skerritt 1992: 158).

The recently piloted process of HEA accreditation for continuing professional development frameworks within institutions, outlined in Chapter 1 (page 19), is linked to awarding powers for the HEA recognition scheme and arguably provides evidence of an appreciation of this mutual interdependency across the system. In particular, there is a recognised interdependency between the development of the organisation and the development of the individual academics it employs; a concept of ‘synthesising’ that Hargreaves (1994) advocated when writing about school teachers’ development in the context of a ‘new professionalism’. This is reflected quite specifically in the HEA’s current strategic plan, within which it is stated that the organisation ‘will work to develop synergies between the needs of individuals for professional development and recognition and the desire of institutions, governments and students for a better-trained workforce’ (HEA 2008: 8).

There is, however, no consensus in the literature that continuing professional development in higher education is approached in this integrated manner. Indeed, referring to the history of policies that set out to enhance teaching and learning in higher education, Trowler *et al.* (2005: 439) describe a ‘policy bundle’ that is ‘incoherent and incomplete’ (Trowler *et al.* 2005: 432). It is also acknowledged that such policies originate separately and at national and institutional levels, yet they are experienced at practice level where they ‘hit the ground together’ (Trowler *et al.* 2005: 439). It is the practitioners’ experience of the potential contradictions and paradoxes that this raises which is of particular interest here. Land, referring to how educational developers, rather than academics, respond to the policy environment, develops the work of Wellington and Austin (1996, cited in Land 2004: 179), suggesting there is more of a continuum between ‘an adherence to expressed policy on the one extreme and commitment to “emancipatory” critique’ at the other. Clegg (2003: 38), citing Land’s earlier work (2001) also from the educational development perspective, furthers the distinction, labelled as ‘domesticating tendencies’ and ‘critique’, where the former aims to align continuing professional development to the needs of the institution, and the latter has a more ‘emancipatory purpose’. Whilst overtly favouring ‘critique’ as well as creative dialogue and indicating concern about processes of continuing professional development being ‘enmeshed with the reform quality agenda’ (Clegg 2003: 45), Clegg concedes that institutional agendas can be more inclusive and less discriminatory than forms of professional development that centre around exclusive networking (Clegg 2003).

Taking a more ‘clear-cut’ stance, it is argued that the emphasis of any continuing professional development strategy should be more on institutional and departmental alignment and away from a focus on individual academics (Blackwell and Blackmore

2003). However, despite some acknowledgment of the strengths of institutionally-led approaches (see Clegg 2003 cited above), there is evidence through the literature of alternative approaches being advocated. For example, Knight (2006) suggests that whilst professional development is a strategic activity, it is located in ‘distributed activity systems’ which ensure alignment to context within collaborative working environments. Similarly, institutional bureaucracy can be seen to jeopardise the development of knowledge through social communicative processes (Zuber-Skerritt 1992), the quality of workplace environments being seen as the central means of creating ‘cultures of concern’ and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning (Knight 2006: 36). Knight and Trowler (2001, cited in Clegg 2003: 47) develop the concept of ‘making the academic department the hub of activities’. However, Clegg (2003) continues to stress the influence of central functions in the institution, so arguably develops a stance akin to Blackwell and Blackmore (2003), who echo the views expressed both by Engeström and Miettinen (1999) and Zuber-Skerritt (1992) in suggesting that ‘the analytical distinction between ‘individually focused and organisationally focused development is in practice blurred and the relative “gain” from learning is often shared in somewhat unpredictable proportions’ (Clegg 2003: 14).

Individual (agential) concerns

The foremost objective of this research is to develop understanding about faculty academics’ views on what influences understandings, behaviours and attitudes towards their continuing professional development. Critical realism asserts unequivocally that ‘agents’, or in this instance, individual academics, have powers to actively transform their social world whilst, in turn, being transformed by it. Powers of agency arise through interaction with the social environment (Archer 2000), for whilst people create their own history, this happens within the pre-existing constraints (Archer 1983, cited in

Houston 2001). This section of the chapter therefore moves on to explore what is known about how the individual academics' experiences and professional characteristics may influence their approach towards professional development, in other words, influencing how 'agential reflexivity' is acted out (Archer 2000: 130). The scarcity of empirically-based literature that reports on faculty academics' views on these issues, discussed earlier, has particular consequences for this section of the chapter. The current research is underpinned by the view that the basis of any investigation should be an analysis of academics' views and conceptions on their professional development within the context of their discipline, their employing institution and national drivers (Crawford 2009), this being the only means to gain a real and comprehensive understanding of academics' continuing professional development practices. From a critical realist stance, 'in short, without knowledge about their internal deliberations, we cannot account for exactly what they do' (Archer 2007: 13)

Earlier in the chapter (page 49) two 'dualisms' were referred to, that are considered to impact on the way in which academics approach professional development (Clegg 2003: 38). The literature related to the first of these two opposing concepts, the research-teaching nexus, has been discussed in previous sections. The second of Clegg's 'dualisms', orientations or loyalties to discipline-organisation, is now considered. Clegg (2003) argues that there is tension between academics' allegiance to the organisation and to their discipline, which is compounded by significant disciplinary influences on approaches to continuing professional development. Allan *et al.* (2003) see these differences as evolving from epistemological sources and liken the outcome to 'tribes and territories' (Allan *et al.* 2003: 66). Bourdieu's (1977) notion of 'habitus' is of interest here in understanding collective practice and the way in which individuals may internalise and integrate social structures, becoming both part of, and yet separate from,

the workplace and professional communities (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004). Archer (2007: 41) arguing from a critical realist viewpoint, states that Bourdieu's approach reduces the emphasis on the powers of individual reflexivity as it suggests that habitus influences individuals 'semi-unconsciously'.

It is evident however that academics are positioned within many systems or communities, each of which may have different discourses, understandings of continuing professional development, approaches to teaching and learning, and priorities; the degree to which the causal powers of these communities are activated is dependent upon individual deliberations. Further to this is the compounding dimension that some academics are members of one or more discipline-specific professional bodies, which may have requirements for continuing professional development that are unique to that particular body (Roscoe 2002). The notion of discourse and a 'shared repertoire' within disciplines, is considered significant to professional identity and 'community' membership (Wenger 1998: 82). However, Hargreaves and Dawe (1990: 227) warn against institutional attempts to replicate this sense of community in order to promote professional development, as these result in 'contrived collegiality,' which merely enhances administrative control, rather than fostering effective collaborative cultures. Roscoe (2002) also questions whether some continuing professional development activities would develop transferable, general skills and knowledge. Further to this there is a view that some academic staff may only give credence to development opportunities created and offered from within their own disciplinary area (Jenkins 1996, cited in Allan *et al.* 2003) rather than centrally driven support. Also of relevance are the potentially competing approaches and needs of the discipline and the institution, and here the critical realist concept of causal mechanisms, outlined in Chapter 1 (page 21), is of significance. Communities of practice, such as the discipline,

the professional body, or the academic team, generate ‘potentialities [to influence individuals] which may or may not be exercised’ (Hartwig 2007: 57). With reference to the activation of such generative powers being dependent on agents (Archer 2003), in this case the academics, the different degrees of engagement and commitment to various communities can be understood. Furthermore, it can be seen that these tensions also relate back to the earlier discussions in this chapter (pages 16, 43, 48-9) with regard to a perceived incompatibility between managerialist, performance-led approaches and disciplinary scholarship:

For those academics who are sustained by what flourishes in their disciplinary garden, the call to a culture of performativity comes as a call to replace what sustains the scholar in favour of what sustains a market-driven economy (McWilliam 2002: 297).

Thus there is a view that academics most frequently prioritise development related to their subject area, where they may have the most interest and confidence, above developing other areas of skills and knowledge, for example, teaching (Allan *et al.* 2003, Zuber-Skerritt 1992) As this review has shown earlier, teaching is commonly the focus of centrally-driven development opportunities (Åkerlind 2005). It is contended, therefore, that disciplinary orientations and the way in which they are played out in organisations are important factors to take account of when considering how individuals respond to formal academic development (Clegg 2003).

In addition to inconsistencies related to the content and focus of continuing professional development there is a clear variance of opinion about the appropriate form of continuing professional development activity. This links back to fundamental issues of definition and whether the whole range of learning in the workplace, both formal and

informal, is perceived and, potentially more importantly, valued as being professional development. Taking the metaphor of an iceberg, Knight (2006), who incidentally uses the phrase 'educational professional development', argues that there is more tacit, contextual, situated knowledge below the surface, than there is formal, tangible and explicit knowledge above it. Writing some ten years earlier, following research with a range of occupational groups, Becher (1996) also contended that professional learning takes many forms, including 'learning by doing', personal research, networking and professional interactions. However, despite this recognition, 'some of the most significant activities academics engage in through personal scholarship are not usually conceptualised as continuing professional development' (Clegg 2003: 38). Thus, as discussed earlier, research and scholarly activity are often not perceived as continuing professional development, as there is 'a tendency to regard professional or staff development as comprising only those sorts of activities that are formally recognised' (Clegg 2003: 37), therefore making continuing professional development synonymous with training courses (King 2004). These perceptions are indicative of tensions in institutions; they pervade the organisational perspective despite research demonstrating that '...practitioners in general take a different view' (Becher 1996: 54) and a clear consensus in the literature that 'not all professional knowings are explicit' (Knight 2006: 31).

Earlier in this chapter the impact of extra-institutional drivers on both individual and institutional responses to professional development was discussed. Further to this, the ways in which institutions respond to accountability agendas, mandatory requirements and regulations may result in continuing professional development being 'accountancy-driven' and as such development that cannot be scrutinised, evidenced and counted, will not be valued (Schuller and Field 2002: 78). Consequently, only professional

development that is linked to formal approaches is considered acceptable evidence of having acquired new knowledge; only attendance at accredited courses and formal training events is valued (McWilliam 2002). Indeed it is asserted that ‘professional development must be seen to be done – it must be demonstrated, so it must be performed in ways that can be measured’ (McWilliam 2002: 296).

Whilst the literature does not clarify faculty academics’ views on this, it may be reasonable to assume that individuals will either comply with these agendas or respond in ways that challenge them; paralleling the institutional and educational development responses of ‘domestication’ or ‘critique’, discussed earlier in the chapter (page 53) (Clegg 2003: 38). However, approaches can be less deliberative than this would suggest as ‘most often professional learning [is] spontaneous and opportunistic’ which implies a ‘just enough, just-in-time’, reactive approach (Roscoe 2002: 5). It is interesting that both Becher’s (1996) research which did not include academics, and King’s (2004) findings from a quantitative study undertaken in the discipline of Earth Sciences, one of the few studies that examines academics’ responses, upheld the perception that professional development takes a wide variety of forms encompassing both informal and formal approaches. However, in what can be construed as further support of this inclusive view of professional development, Billett (2002: 58) contends that the dichotomous distinction between ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ workplace learning is not helpful, suggesting that workplace learning needs to be framed as ‘engagement in goal-directed activities that are structured by workplace experiences’.

Rather than ‘goals’, in a critical realist frame, the concepts of ‘constraints and enablements’ are considered to inform individuals’ deliberations and thereby influence action (Archer 2003). In the context of this study, the focus is on academics’

perceptions of what the ‘constraints and enablements’ are and in what ways they might influence their approaches to professional development. ‘Motivation refers to the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behavior ... having the desire and willingness to do something’ (Brown 2007: vii) and is a significant area of study in the field of psychology; as such, it is not possible in this study to explore the generic psychological theories of motivation and intention. However, it is worthy of note that in higher education, at both institutional and national levels, a range of incentives or what might be perceived of as ‘enablements’, such as recognition and reward schemes, exist with a view to influencing academics’ perceptions (Percival and Tucker 2004), and arguably motivating them to develop in line with particular intra- and extra-institutional priorities. That being said, as before, there is little empirical evidence on whether and how these incentives influence academics’ approaches to their professional development.

This chapter set out to discuss the current state of knowledge about whether and how individuals exercising ‘agential reflexivity’ might ‘actively mediate between ... structurally shaped circumstances and what [they] deliberately make of them’ (Archer 2003: 130). The lack of literature that furthers our understanding of academics’ views on what influences their professional development has, therefore, had a particular impact on this discussion. Nonetheless, in this section it has been possible to explore current thinking about how disciplinary orientations and professional identity may make a difference to the ways in which academics approach professional development. Additionally it is apparent that there are differing views on types and forms of professional development, and within this is contention on activity that is valued from different positions. Finally, this section of the chapter briefly considered the notions of motivation and intention, as this study effectively seeks to investigate the ways in which

the extra-institutional, intra-institutional and individual professional context of practice influence motivation and approach to professional development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has explored the literature that has informed the questions and investigation reported in this thesis. Broadly, the analysis of the literature has considered some of the perceived tensions, debates, connections and interactions in relation to a range of potential influences on academics' approaches to their own professional development. The literature provides evidence of the many ways in which key aspects of the system of higher education, its integral relationships and interdependencies, may mediate academics' responses to continuing professional development. However, it has also exposed the lack of research and resultant literature arising from the voice of faculty academics themselves. There is consequently a need to supplement the existing knowledge, making it more inclusive and representative of those whose development practices are the central point of debate.

The many complex and divergent facets discussed in this chapter result in what might be described as a complexity of continuing professional development in higher education, and beg question of what academics would consider to be the key influences on their engagement in development activities, whether formal or informal. Arguably the most common thread in the literature is the emphasis on recognising and creating dialogue to challenge the tensions and contradictions, as by 'problematizing' the issues and the concept, we acknowledge the complexities and encourage contestation through participative debate (Clegg 2003). Suggesting a clearly critical stance, Rowland (2002) advocates that academics should be proactive in creating their own identities, rather than taking a passive approach and allowing them to be shaped by external forces, as

could be said to occur through national imperatives and institutionally centralised professional development requirements. If ‘the interplay between sociocultural properties and the exercise of agential reflexivity is essential to explanation’ (Archer 2003: 130), and the desirability of inclusive debate is undisputed, it is particularly surprising that the literature reveals a stark dearth of empirical evidence that emanates from the voices of faculty academics. Further to this, studies of academia and academic work are commonly quantitative in nature, focussing on demographic profiles, values and attitudes towards teaching and research, work environment and job satisfaction and rarely ‘take a holistic perspective on development across the range of academic work’ (Åkerlind 2005: 3).

Thus, whilst this body of knowledge is valuable and informative, it could be seen as limited in providing knowledge about the influences on academics’ responses to their continuing professional development. Notable exceptions are King’s (2004) small scale quantitative study in one disciplinary area, focussing on teaching practice prior to the publication of the UKPSF, Rothwell and Rothwell’s quantitative study in one English university (Rothwell and Rothwell 2009), and Åkerlind’s (2005) phenomenographic study undertaken in one Australian university. It is therefore argued that the current research is highly relevant and of consequence, given the amount of change in higher education and current debates about continuing professional development within this context. McWilliam opines that professional development is a ‘flawed project’ and concludes:

Academics and academic managers should bring to professional development the same systematic curiosity and capacity for scepticism that is the hallmark of good science and good scholarship whatever the object of analysis. These capacities should not be rendered irrelevant by a new order of thinking that

insists that generalisable theories are the only useful knowledge, and naïve optimism is the only legitimate basis for engagement (McWilliam 2002: 298).

CHAPTER 3 – Research Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative research project was undertaken using a multi-case study approach. Data was collected through narrative and semi-structured interviews, supported by documentary data, within two English universities known here as University A and University B. This chapter starts by examining the philosophical and value-based assumptions that have underpinned and influenced the development of the study. Within this, the researcher's ontological and epistemological positions are made explicit and their influence on the methodology is detailed. This supports and complements the discussion in Chapter 1 (from page 27), wherein a reflexive account of the researcher's 'location' in the investigation is provided. This examination of the research methodology continues with a brief description of the pilot study that furthered the development of the overall research process and data collection instruments. The learning and changes that resulted from the pilot study are then integrated throughout the relevant sections in the remainder of the chapter. Thereafter the discussion moves to explore the overall research process for the main study, including details of ethical considerations, practical activities undertaken to complete the study and strategies for data collection and analysis.

Philosophical underpinnings

'Every research tool or procedure is inextricably embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world and ways of knowing that world made by researchers using them' (Hughes 1998, cited in Corbetta 2003: 12). The commitments of the researcher undertaking this project, made explicit within Chapter 1 of this thesis (pages 21-35), are further exposed in this section of this chapter. Thus the following discussion

will illuminate the philosophical positions that have informed decisions about the way in which this investigation into academics' perspectives should be carried out.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the current work is informed by a critical realist ontology. It makes the assumption that there can be no determinism or objectivity, rather there is a mutually interactive influencing process that occurs between the researcher and the researched, with the 'biographically situated researcher' being embedded in all the research processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 21). The two main philosophical paradigms in social research, 'positivism' and 'interpretivism', (Corbetta 2003: 12) represent opposing theoretical views on how social reality is understood and as such, each perspective has generated a range of research methodologies and strategies most appropriate to that school of thought (Corbetta 2003). Positivists view social reality as objective and existing independently from, or outside of, human behaviour and interpretation (Crossan 2003). This scientific, empiricist approach incorporates the view that 'reality can be measured' and that causal relationships can be conceived in terms of the interaction of variables (Creswell 1994: 116). This approach is vehemently rejected by critical realists (Sayer 1992) and would not enable an appropriate investigation of the research questions and purposes set out for this project, as attempts to understand human perceptions, behaviours, feelings, actions and beliefs, are not within the scope of a positivist framework. By contrast, the interpretivist philosophy suggests that 'reality is not simply to be observed, but rather 'interpreted' (Corbetta 2003: 21). Cousin (2009: 8) uses 'this broad term [interpretivist] to embrace any perspective that foregrounds the search for meanings', as in this research where the approach considers human behaviours as resulting from deliberations, planning, reflexivity and attributing particular understandings and values to reality (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 22).

The strong ontological basis of critical realism has been set out in the first chapter of this thesis (pages 21-27). However, with regard to the philosophical underpinnings of this project, the alignment and consistency between ontology, epistemology and methodology are crucial (Scott 2000). Based on this understanding, the research has been conducted within an interpretive framework, using qualitative research methodology to ensure congruence between the principles of critical realism and the project's interpretive approach to investigation. Sayer (1992: 179) confirms, from a critical realist position, that '*qualitative* analysis of objects is required to disclose mechanisms' (italic in original). The qualitative approach aims to elicit rich experiential and interpretive data about continuing professional development within the everyday context of higher education, within which it is negotiated and made meaningful.

Qualitative research has been defined as 'a situated activity that locates the observer in the world ... the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical methods ... that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals', (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3), where 'the emphasis ... is upon words rather than numbers' and 'textual analysis predominates' (Morrison 2002: 19-21). The information sought 'concerns processes, activities, relations and episodes of events' and explores relationships, interdependencies and experiences (Sayer 1992: 242). However, the rigour, validity and reliability of data collected and analysed using qualitative approaches is contested, particularly when contrasted or seen in opposition to quantitative, positivist traditions (Hammersley 2007; Whittemore *et al.* 2001). Scott (2005) deepens this debate through a critical realist approach and proposes that the fundamental issue is that researchers must ensure coherence between epistemology, ontology and methodology. Throughout this research process and strategy, explicit

alignment and consistency to the philosophical underpinnings derive from commitment at the ontological level (Scott 2007).

Following the interpretivist paradigm, this research is not value or bias-free, but has been informed by both my own constructions and beliefs and those of the individuals and organisations who have participated in the research. Thus, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, this research is ‘deeply influenced by [the researcher’s] own positionality’ (Cousin 2009: 32). Inevitably, every element of the research project has involved interpretation which is influenced by values and experience. For that reason, throughout the project, a commitment has been maintained to maximise research objectivity by ensuring clarity in relation to bias and value assumptions and being open to conflicting evidence, alternative views and critique from peers and ‘consumers’ of the research.

Methodology

The research methodology is founded upon the contention that the qualitative, interpretive approach enables credible investigation into ‘things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena [in this case, continuing professional development] in terms of the meanings people bring to them’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 3, content in parentheses added). Through a comparative, multi-case study design ‘a holistic approach to the exploration of real life situations’ (Cousin 2009: 132) can be taken. Case study research provides a ‘comprehensive research strategy’ (Cousin 2009: 14), which involves in-depth inquiry into a small number of defined cases (Scott and Morrison 2006). Further to this, the multi-case study approach adopted allows for ‘the study of a few cases’ in order to ‘collect large amounts of data and study it in depth’ (Scott and Morrison 2006: 17), thus ensuring ‘quality and intensity’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 185) with “thick description”, “experiential understanding” and “multiple

realities” ... expected’ (Stake 1995: 43). Significantly for this study, the principal emphasis of case study research ‘is upon giving the people of the case “a voice”’ (Scott and Morrison 2006: 17) and being ‘grounded in “lived reality”’ (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001: 3). Technically all research is case study research in that there will always be an entity, or ‘case’, about which data is collected and analysed (Gomm *et al.* 2000: 2). However, ‘case study research’ is ‘a specific form of enquiry’ (Gomm *et al.* 2000) or more precisely ‘case study research can be identified as ‘a paradigmatically separate form of research’ (Scott and Usher 1999: 87).

Case study research was particularly applicable for this investigation, as an appreciation of contextual conditions was considered an important aspect (Yin 2003). In order to realise the sampling requirements, detailed later in this chapter, a multi-case study investigation, involving two participant institutions, was considered to be the most appropriate strategy to achieve the aims and questions of this research. The value of case study research has, however, been questioned (Bassey 1999: 34; Gomm *et al.* 2000: 5-7), a particular criticism is that it considers ‘peculiarities rather than regularities’ (Smith 1991, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 183). Whilst it is recognised that the multi-case study approach does not allow for generalisability across all academia, it is asserted that through adherence to disciplined practices of triangulation and analysis (Stake 2005), a multi-case study approach ‘adds *confidence* to findings’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 29, italics in original), has analytical benefits (Yin 2003), and allows for the highest possibility of transferability of findings. The methodological approaches taken promote the validity, transferability and ‘practical adequacy’ (Sayer 1992) of the knowledge resulting from the data, ‘the epistemology of the particular’ (Stake 2005: 454). From a critical realist position, the knowledge gained from this research can claim to provide increasing clarity to current interpretations of reality. Moreover, in order to

enhance comparability, transparency and reliability, and acknowledging the fast changing context of academia, all data for this study, across both case study institutions, was collected within the same academic year, 2007-8. Further rigour was established through a single case pilot study carried out at the start of the same academic year, which forms the subject of the following section of this chapter.

The pilot study

Prior to embarking on the multi-case study project reported in this thesis, a single case pilot study of this research was undertaken. This exploratory stage allowed for the data collection instruments and the research processes to be trialled and tested, with the resultant experience being used to improve and develop them prior to undertaking the main research work in the external institutions. The pilot study, which was part of the overall research strategy planned from the outset of the work, was undertaken during the first term of the academic year 2007-8, yet the process proved to be highly 'formative...providing some conceptual clarification for the research design' (Yin 2003: 79). Qualitative interviews with a range of academics and managers were undertaken within the researcher's employing institution, a 'new' English university; that is, an institution granted university status since the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. The case study institution was selected for the pilot work as it was not only 'geographically convenient' (Yin 2003: 79), but it was also considered that the informants, as colleagues of the researcher, would be 'congenial and accessible' (Yin 2003: 79). A total of 16 academics from across the institution were interviewed, using the narrative interview approach described later in this chapter. A theoretical sampling approach was developed to reflect the aims and purposes of the research, ensuring the participation of those 'who might know' (Pawson and Tilley 1997: 160–1). Five key informants were also interviewed: managers, staff directly involved in the professional

development of academic staff or those who have responsibility for the enhancement of teaching and learning in the institution, thus piloting the semi-structured interview format.

The experience of undertaking this pilot study afforded some useful learning and developments to the project, including some subtle revisions of the research instruments, reflections on the importance of clarity of definition, particularly with regard to describing the sample, and a growing confidence to implement the project within an external institution; these outcomes are reflected throughout this chapter of the thesis. Different aspects of the pilot study, the research strategy and the findings have previously been reported and published (Crawford 2007a; Crawford 2007b; Crawford 2008; Crawford 2009).

Ethical considerations and access

Ethical considerations have been described as ‘a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others’ (Cavan 1977, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 56). In the current study, the researcher was sensitive to her position in the research as a ‘guest[s] in the private spaces of the world’ (Stake 2005: 459). Ethical complexity was compounded as ethical considerations were apparent at two levels, although there was an explicit interface between the two: participation of the case study institutions, and participation of individuals. In essence then, the researcher was a guest in two overlapping worlds.

The University of Lincoln holds the ethical ‘principle of beneficence’ which requires researchers to maximise benefits from research and minimise possible harm to individuals (University of Lincoln undated: 1). With regard to this study, the researcher aimed to ensure that this principle was also applied to both the institutions and the

individuals who participated. This standard is supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), who state that as a principle ‘social science research should be conducted in such a way that it minimises harm or risk’ and ‘research designs should consider potential harm to respondents’ organisations or businesses as a result of the work’ (ESRC, undated: 25).

The significance of context to this study, previously highlighted, meant that it was important to undertake the research with the full knowledge, agreement and participation of each case study institution, rather than, as may have been possible, working with individual academics separately from their employing institutions. Therefore, the first stage in developing the relationship with the two institutions was one of discussion and negotiation in respect of access, with recognition that the whole study was heavily dependent upon their goodwill. This negotiation could only take place within a framework of clarity about expectations and commitments from both parties, particularly related to issues of confidentiality, anonymity, data protection procedures and intellectual property rights. Furthermore, with regard to the interface between negotiation with the institution (or its representative managers) and the individual academic participants, a paramount ethical concern was to ensure that employees experienced ‘freedom from coercion’ (Walliman 2005: 345). Thus, at the institutional level, the researcher visited each institution to present the research proposal, meet with key informants, discuss commitments, and outline the intended research process and ethical procedures. A significant factor here was to address overtly how the research findings would be reported and disseminated, particularly with regard to whether the institutions would be identified within this. The process of ‘access and acceptance’ was a significant stage of the project as it afforded ‘the best opportunity for [the] researcher[s] to present their credentials ... and establish their own ethical position

...’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 53). These meetings culminated in the researcher drafting a letter of agreement that set out the boundaries and commitments of each party in writing (see Appendix B). Each of the participating universities signalled their commitment to the research by signing the letter of agreement, which was then countersigned by the researcher. One institution processed this through their legal department, the other chose to table it for agreement at a formal, university-level committee meeting.

At another level, ethical considerations in respect of participation of individual academics and key informants within the case study institutions largely focussed on the principles of confidentiality and informed consent. At the point of negotiating their involvement, and again one week prior to each arranged interview, participants were provided with an ‘Information Permission Form’ (see Appendix C) that set out in writing information about the research project, issues of confidentiality, information handling and storage, and the rights and responsibilities of both the researcher and the contributing individuals. Within this the researcher also clarified that there could be no expenses or payments made for contributions to the research and that participants could withdraw from participating in the project at any point prior to the publication of the research results. The proforma document was also made publicly available on the project web pages (Crawford, undated). This form, which also incorporated a formal consent document requiring the signatures of both parties, was then discussed and signed before each interview began. As stated, confidentiality was afforded the highest priority throughout the research work, with no individual interviewee being identified or identifiable within the publicly available written materials to anyone other than the researcher, at any stage of the study. Importantly, this is clarified within the agreement forms at both institutional and individual levels.

The pilot study, as described earlier, was undertaken within the researcher's own employing institution and therefore additional ethical issues related to being an 'insider', as discussed in Chapter 1 (pages 27, 33-4), were pertinent. Tickle (2002: 46) describes how the position of the practitioner researcher can both 'open windows and close doors' with the micro-politics and relationships within institutions leading to complexity with issues of access, consent and confidentiality. The researcher's experience in this pilot work could be likened more to 'opening windows', as trust and openness (Tickle 2002) were features of the research interactions throughout. Furthermore, as an 'insider' the researcher experienced a feeling of 'safety' when trying out different approaches during the data collection processes and requesting honest feedback from participants in order to further develop, not only the consent and information documentation, but also the research instruments.

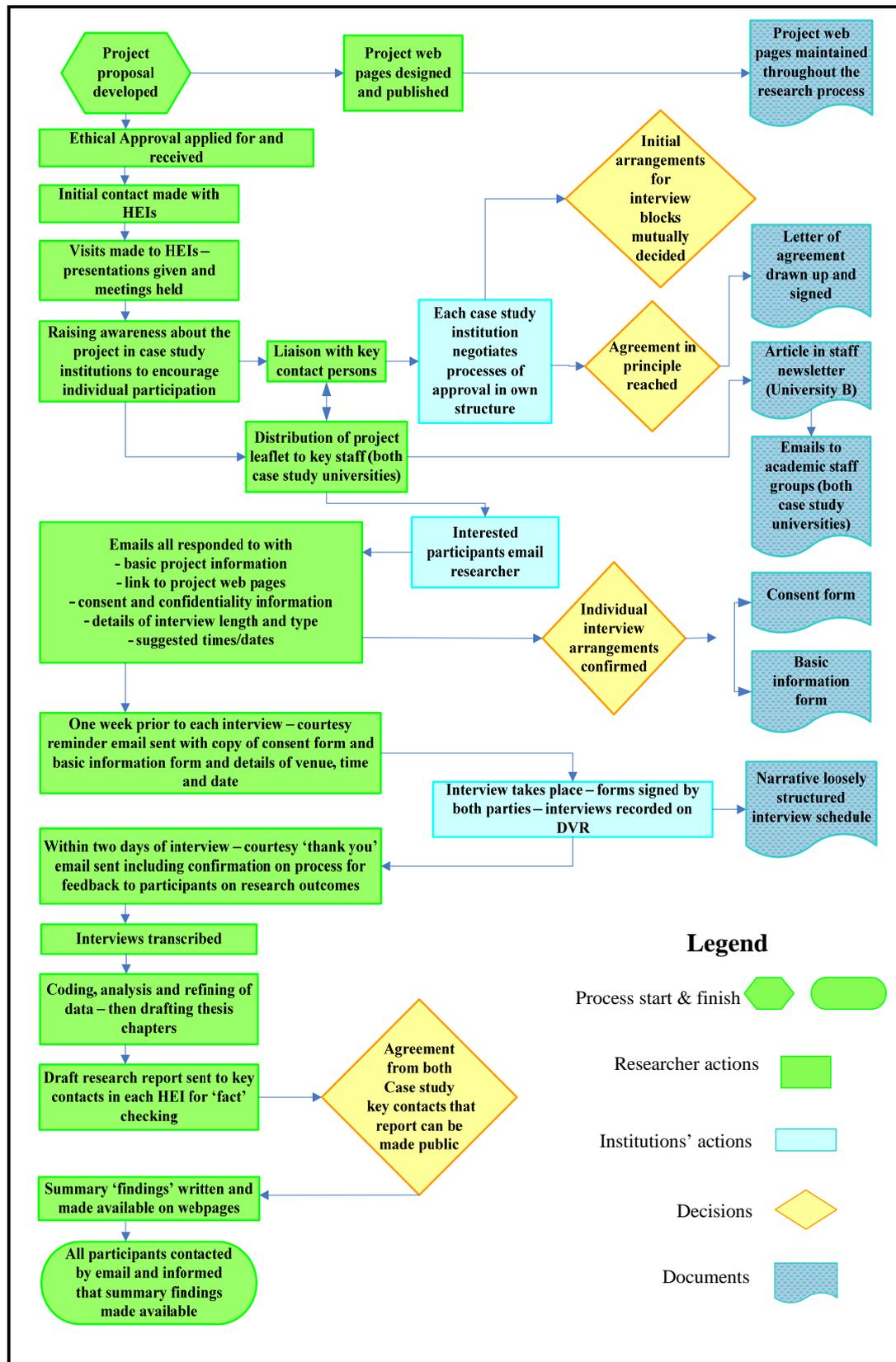
The ethical considerations and processes detailed here were all made explicit at the outset of the study which received formal committee approval to proceed within the auspices and guidelines of the University of Lincoln's ethical research policy (University of Lincoln undated).

The research process

This study, including data collection and analysis, was carried out over an 18-month period commencing in September 2007. In this section of the chapter the processes through which the substantive study progressed over those 18 months (thus not including the detail of the pilot phase), are explained. Figure 3.1 below represents the flow of practical tasks and processes in diagram form.

Following receipt of formal agreement and acceptance of the research proposal and ethical approval, as required by the researcher's employing institution's procedures, the pilot study phase was commenced. During the pilot work, the researcher also established the project web pages (Crawford, undated) and a project leaflet. The leaflet was then distributed at a number of relevant conferences during the first few months of the academic year 2007-8 and proved to be an effective means of providing information about the research and engaging potential case study institutions. Initially, in response to the dissemination of information and researcher networking, four institutions approached the researcher to indicate their interest in participating in the project; however it was only possible, given the scope of the study, to include two case study institutions. Therefore, in order to undertake a cross-case comparative analysis that would further understanding about some of the differences between institutions with diverse histories and cultures, two universities, one from either side of Deem's (1998: 48) 'binary line', were selected.

Figure 3.1 Sequence of research processes and practical tasks



The researcher then negotiated with the person from each institution who had initially expressed interest, to arrange a visit in order to engage more widely in that setting. Each institution was visited, with each visit incorporating two important aspects of the process of relationship building or, using the words of Cohen *et al.* (2000: 54), establishing 'access and acceptance' through 'goodwill and co-operation'. On these visits, the researcher firstly met with the key person as part of a shared preparation process, to establish jointly the desired outcomes, and to agree acceptable processes for negotiation. Secondly, the researcher met with a self-selecting group of staff and, through a presentation and the project leaflet, furnished them with information about the research proposal and methodology. At this time, the researcher also facilitated discussion about potential processes, ethical issues and access within that institution. Furthermore, these meetings offered an opportunity for the researcher to obtain as much contextual information as possible, in order to develop an understanding of the social context of the institution and its priorities. Finally, each visit ended with a closing meeting with the original contact person to agree, in response to the foregoing discussions, the draft of a letter of agreement and to confirm how the institution's participation in the project would be progressed. As detailed in the earlier section of this chapter (page 72), in respect of ethical considerations, both institutions later signed the letter of agreement (Appendix B), which was then countersigned by the researcher.

With ethical and practical agreements in place, the data collection was undertaken concurrently across both of the case study institutions within the 2007-8 academic year. Data collection commenced at both institutions during November 2007, with the last interviews completed at University A in February 2008 and in University B in mid-March 2008. In this way, variation as a result of response or reaction to the ever-changing external policy climate was minimised, in order to maximise comparability.

As part of their commitment to the project, each case study institution agreed to nominate one person through whom the researcher liaised about practical arrangements in respect of time spent in the university, accessing individual participants and carrying out the data collection processes. In University A this person was the director for their postgraduate learning and teaching programme who was based in a central department, whilst University B nominated a senior administrator, also from a central department. These individuals were instrumental in assisting the researcher to engage with individual academics within the case study institutions. However, when considering issues of ‘sampling’, whilst their positions within the establishments were undoubtedly significant factors in the successful recruitment of participants, it is equally important to be aware that their roles, and perceptions of them, may have resulted in some distortion of the sample. This is an issue that is further considered later in this chapter (page 92).

The next practical task was to engage with individual academics to request their involvement in the interview process. In University A the invitations were instigated by the nominated contact person, who, in negotiation with the researcher in order to address the variables identified, targeted an email to certain cohorts of academics known to them. Through this email academics were provided with the link to the project web pages for information and were invited to contact the researcher for more information or to signal their interest. A similar process was followed in University B, although here additional means of contacting potential participants were also employed. The first method of inviting participation from individual academics in University B was through emails directly from the nominated contact person to colleagues known to them. Further to this, project leaflets were distributed at an internal symposium event and a small article was placed in the staff newsletter, again giving the web page link for project information and inviting academics to engage in the interview process. Whilst in

both institutions the nominated contact person initiated these invitations, academics were asked to respond directly to the researcher to express interest in participation, so as not to share academics' contact details and breach data protection protocols. Thus in both case study examples further discussions, negotiation and the practical arrangements for interviews, were undertaken by the researcher, who was then also able to monitor the cumulative sample profile of the characteristics and demographics of those academics coming forward for interview.

The process of identifying the key informants to participate in the semi-structured contextual interviews was less complex, in that the most relevant personnel were largely those present at the initial meetings to discuss the engagement of the institution in the project. Where other individuals were later interviewed, this was as a result of colleagues identifying other key informants within their interviews. One week prior to each interview, the researcher made email contact with the interviewee to confirm practical arrangements. At this time brief project information and the consent documentation was also provided, to allow participants some time to read these materials prior to the interview meeting. Whilst time consuming, this part of the process was also time-saving, as a number of participants who had previously agreed to be interviewed took this opportunity to signal that they, for various reasons, would no longer be participating. Broadly though, the response to the requests for interviewees was very encouraging, with the required sample being attained and interviewed across both establishments within a four-month period.

The interviews were carried out over four data collection periods in each participating institution. These periods comprised typically two or three days of intensive interviewing, allowing the researcher to become briefly immersed in the natural

environment of the case study so as to further reflections and understandings (Stake 2005) of aspects of the intra-institutional context. In both universities, interviews were carried out in central offices that had links to both educational development and the learning and teaching enhancement activities of the institutions. At the start of each interview, the researcher explained the interview process, the format and detailed how issues of confidentiality were to be addressed. Participants were asked to review the Information Permission Form (Appendix C) before signing it to signal their consent; the form was then countersigned by the researcher with both parties being provided with copies as part of the two-way agreement. With the full agreement of each individual interviewee, both academics and key informants, all interviews were digitally audio recorded. The interviews, which are further detailed in the following section of this chapter, took on average one hour to complete. Within two days of each individual interview, the researcher emailed the participant to acknowledge their contribution to the research and to confirm that on completion of the study, summary findings would be made publicly available on the project web pages.

After analysis, as originally agreed in the letter of agreement the nominated individual in each institution was sent a copy of the draft final report of the study. This process was to allow the case study institutions to confirm the accuracy of the general content in respect of factual information in relation to the institution and to verify that issues of anonymity had been addressed. Thus, this was not a research ‘validation’ exercise, rather it was supplementary to the general informal two-way discussions and negotiations that were a feature of the excellent professional relationships that were established throughout the research study. The final project report was then summarised into a ‘summary findings’ document that has been made publicly available from the project web-pages. ‘Publishing’ the findings in this way was the final piece in the

jigsaw of practical arrangements and processes that were engaged in to carry out the research work. The following section of the chapter takes a more detailed exploration into specific pieces of that jigsaw, by evaluating the data collection strategies and the approaches employed within the case study institutions.

Data collection strategies

Following the outline of the practical research processes in the previous section, the purpose of this part of the chapter is to expound the data collection strategies, through an exploration of the research instruments utilised to undertake this investigation.

Case study research allows for multiple approaches to data collection (Yin 2003), particularly, in this study, ‘the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, reflect[ed] an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2005: 5). Accordingly, a range of research tools, taken from the available ‘palette of methods’ (Stake 1995: xii), were employed: semi-structured narrative interviews with academics; semi-structured interviews with key informants; and examination of documents. Through the pilot process it had become apparent that using a range of research tools in this way would allow for a degree of triangulation or ‘comparing [many] sources of evidence’ (Bush 2002: 68). Although the value of collecting data using more than one method may be ‘easy to overestimate’ (McFee 1992, cited in Bush 2002: 70), in this project the multiple sources of evidence enabled the researcher to ‘address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues’ (Yin 2003: 98), giving contextual depth. The following subsections of this chapter commence with a discussion of the sampling strategy employed, before evaluating each of the research instruments used.

Sampling strategy

Case study institutions

The applicability of a multi-case study approach to this investigation has already been established. Academics are practicing and providing higher education in many types of institutions (HEFCE 2005: 2), and there is potentially a contextual difference between the influences on professional development in the original ‘old’ universities, established before 1992 by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament, and influences in ‘new’ universities, former polytechnics or colleges given the status of universities under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Arguably, this ‘binary line’ between the historically different institutions remains applicable to understanding some of the apparent variations in universities (Deem 1998: 48). Adopting a multi-case study approach enabled a cross-case analysis through comparison and illumination of idiosyncratic difference as well as identifying common experiences (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001). Two case study universities were chosen, both in the north of England, representing each side of Deem’s ‘binary line (1998: 4). One was a traditional ‘old university’ and the other a ‘new university’, however, from a critical realist viewpoint, both can be described as ‘open systems’ because they are part of the real world, not artificially conditioned to exclude particular causal mechanisms, being ‘continually in dynamic interaction with their environments’ (Hartwig 2007: 451). The two institutions also provided the ‘boundaries’ (Bassegy 2002: 109), the shape and context through which the characteristics of each case were defined (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 282) and, as such, were the primary units of analysis, and the primary organising variable, for the project.

Before giving some detail about each case study institution, it is important to clarify relevant boundaries to this project; in particular, whilst the research explored

respondents' views on institutional philosophy in relation to professional development for its academic staff, the wider context of each institution's employee relations was not within the scope of this research. At the time of data collection, it was apparent that to differing degrees, both institutions were undergoing change, with University A being at the cusp of particularly widespread structural change; it is acknowledged that change of this type will influence not only attitudes and approaches to professional development, but more fundamentally, attitudes and approaches when responding to research of this type. Thus, where comments directly referring to wider institutional change and employee relations were made, these were as far as is possible, discounted in the research analysis.

Case study University A

University A is a traditional 'old' university having been established by Royal Charter at the beginning of the 20th century. It is a member of the 'Russell Group', an association of leading UK research-intensive universities (The Russell Group, undated). According to statistics available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA 2008) for the academic year prior to the research data collection period, this institution had a total of just over 30,000 students enrolled across all programmes and levels. Academic staffing data collected by the institution for HESA during May 2008 indicate that the institution employs well over 2,000 academic staff on contracts that equate to a total of nearly 2,500 'full-time equivalent' academics.

During the data collection period (academic year 2007-8) University A was in the process of significant change in its academic structure. It is not felt necessary to detail the structure within this thesis as to do so would compromise anonymity of the institution; suffice to say that the revised structure, according to a presentation from a

member of the institution's senior management in 2007, intended to provide more accurate representation of the academic portfolio alongside improved cross-institution activity. The focal point of formal academic development opportunities is a central department, which is one element of the Human Resources department. The department supports a wide range of activity which is explicitly more than staff development: this includes, but is not exclusively, teaching and learning. As is the case in many institutions, the staff development department is embracing the term 'academic practice' with the aim of supporting the development of professional activity across the whole institution.

Case study University B

University B is considered a 'new university', having been established as a university in 1992 following the amalgamation of a number of local colleges and a polytechnic, subsequent to the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992. According to statistics available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA 2008) for the academic year prior to the research data collection period, this institution had a total of just under 30,000 students enrolled across all programmes and levels. Academic staffing data collected by the institution for HESA during May 2008 indicate that the institution employs just over 1,000 academic staff on contracts that equate to a total of 1,026 'full-time equivalent' academics.

The university's academic structure includes nine broad subject areas in designated schools, supported by a range of central services. It is not felt necessary to detail the structure further within this thesis as to do so would compromise anonymity of the institution; suffice to say that the explicit aims of the institution are related to the student experience; innovative high-quality research and enterprise; and meeting the

needs of its learning community. Formal academic development opportunities are largely provided from a range of central functions including the Human Resources Department, Academic Registry and Library services. The institution uses the term 'academic practice' with regard to its own academic staff continuing professional development framework. This institution is also one of 74 universities that successfully bid, in 2005, for five years' funding to run a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL). The CETL initiative had two main aims: to reward excellent teaching practice and to further invest in that practice (HEFCE 2007).

Academic participants

The selection of individual interviewees from within the case study institutions was initially informed by the experience of the pilot project. It had become apparent during the pilot study that the concept of being an 'academic' was a contested notion, with differential understandings and meanings being attributed. Hence, for example, an hourly paid lecturer, from the pilot, whose main responsibilities included direct teaching and marking of summative work did not consider themselves to be 'an academic' as based on the forms of work undertaken, yet other colleagues took the term to apply to anyone on an 'academic contract' of employment. In order, therefore, to clarify who would be included in the sample of 'academics' to participate in the semi-structured, narrative interviews, it was decided to adopt the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) definition of academic staff, which includes academic professionals who are responsible for planning, directing and undertaking academic teaching and research within higher education institutions. This also includes vice-chancellors, medical practitioners, dentists, veterinarians and other health care professionals who undertake lecturing or research activities (HESA 2008).

Fogelman (2002: 98) makes the distinction between ‘probability sampling’ and ‘non-probability sampling’, where the former indicates researcher control over the sample and the latter implies a less systematic approach with no researcher control. Whilst, in this research, control was exercised over the interview sample, it did not strictly adhere to the requirements of ‘probability sampling’ as to do so would require ‘availability and accessibility of a sampling frame’ (Fogelman 2002: 99). According to HESA statistics for 2006/7 (HESA 2008), 169,995 academic staff were working at UK institutions of higher education. An adequate breakdown of these figures, consistently formatted across each of the case study institutions, and therefore a detailed sampling frame, was not available. Pawson and Tilley, in their realist critique of traditional, standard approaches, argue that the ‘data collection priorities are set within theory’ (Pawson and Tilley 1997: 159) and that what matters, as addressed in the pilot study, is ensuring participation of those ‘who might know’ (Pawson and Tilley 1997: 160) and including ‘all the social situations that are relevant to the research, rather than attempting to reproduce the characteristics of the population in full’ (Corbetta 2003: 268).

Therefore, the participation of academics within each case study institution emerged, to some extent, through the qualitative investigative process (Miles and Huberman 1994: 27) and could be described as ‘theoretical sampling’. Theoretical sampling is commonly associated with ‘grounded theory’ studies (Strauss and Corbin 1998); whilst this overall project does not fit within that paradigm, the notion of sampling being ‘sequential’, ‘cumulative’, building-on and evolving from the data collection and analysis processes (Strauss and Corbin 1998) is very applicable. This flexible yet structured method, evolved through learning from the pilot study, allowed the researcher to maximise opportunities to develop and deepen the data available as part of the process of becoming more entrenched in the field (Strauss and Corbin 1998), ‘facilitat[ing] the

exploration of the unexpected and unusual' (Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2001: 5). Thus the variation in the sample is, as far as possible, reflective of the characteristics within the relevant population of academics. For critical realists, 'variables' are themselves conceptual interpretations (Cruickshank 2007), thus the intention here was that attention to key variables would ensure that a '*range* of meanings within the sample will be representative of the *range* of meanings within the population' (Åkerlind 2005: 9 italics in original). Consistency and comparability was assured through adherence to an explicit objective: to include a range of significant variables through the sampling process. Whilst there was no intention to replicate all the features of the academic population (Corbetta 2003) in respect of the academic participants in this project, the following four variables were considered significant were identified:

- gender
- length of academic experience
- disciplinary focus ('pure' or 'applied' subject areas as defined by participants)
- disciplinary professional status in respect of whether the discipline had an external continuing professional development framework to consider.

A further dimension to the selection of academics invited for interview was that the process was mediated, in both case study institutions, through key contact individuals and interviews were held in central offices most commonly associated with activities related to the enhancement of learning and teaching. Through reflections on the interviews themselves and the resultant data it is apparent that, whilst the aim of meeting the range of participant attributes was achieved, both the role of the person that initiated the internal invitation to participate and the location of the interviews were influential. Thus, for example, many of the participant academics from both case study institutions had preconceptions that the interviews were in some way related to a quality

standards-type audit of the in-house formal development provision. Particularly in University A, where the internal contact person was in a senior educational development-type role, it was evident that some interviewees, who were also students on accredited in-house teaching and learning development programs, initially thought that their participation was a requirement of the programme they were studying. Further to this, it is acknowledged that it is likely that those academics who participated in the interviews were those who had an interest in the research area, or perhaps those who saw the research as a vehicle to expose a particular issue. In other words, as stated by Corbetta (2003: 225), 'there are good grounds for claiming that subjects who refuse to respond are different from those who agree to respond'. Nevertheless, it is argued that a range of situationally relevant participant characteristics have been covered and that 'it would prove to be merely fanciful and ... unattainable' (Corbetta 2003: 267) to be more inclusive across the whole academic population. It is with awareness of these potential distortions that it is argued that as far as practicable, key variables of the academic population have been included to capture the range of 'voices from below'.

In total, a purposive sample of 36 interviews with academics were carried out, 18 in each case study institution. The sample size reflects the notion of 'criterion based' and 'representative-based' sampling (Creswell 1998) as discussed above; it is also the result of sampling based on saturation, whereby data collection from that source was considered to be complete when relevant data categories were exhausted (Cousin 2009; Endacott 2005). Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed as part of an on-going process of initial familiarization and identification of emerging themes. Cousin (2009: 37) debates the efficacy of 'the whole transcript approach', outlining note-taking from recordings as an alternative approach, however, for this project with the wealth of material collected it was felt necessary to have ready access to all of the raw data to

allow ease of movement between different aspects during the analysis. The characteristics and pseudonyms of the resultant sample of academic participants from each case study institution are provided in Appendix A. Also included in Appendix A are graphs that show the percentage of participants with each attribute variable.

Key informant participants

The key informants for this part of the data collection were individuals directly involved in strategy or management related to the professional development of academic staff. They were self-identifying in that, as part of the initial process of engagement with the institution, it was these individuals who undertook the negotiation with regard to access for the research. Therefore, as with the academic participants, the objective was to include ‘those who might know’ (Pawson and Tilley (1997: 160). In University A there were six key informants identified, each of whom were either fully engaged in educational development or had some element of their responsibilities linked to the provision of the broader staff development portfolio. However in University B just three key informants were suggested, each having a significant if very different role in the central functions of the institution, with regard to the organisation, management and oversight of educational and staff development. The characteristics and pseudonyms of the resultant sample of academic participants from each case study institution are provided as appendices to this thesis (see Appendix A).

Narrative interviews

Schostak (2006: 10) defines interviews as having the purpose of enabling knowledge to be gained about people’s ‘experiences, concerns, interests, beliefs, values, knowledge and ways of seeing, thinking and acting’, as such, they are considered to be an essential component of case study research (Yin 2003). In this project the primary data was

collected through narrative interviews with academics in each of the case study institutions. Narrative interviews are defined by Reissman (1993: 70) as interviews that enable the 'systematic study of personal experience and meaning'. Indeed, the interviews in this study were designed and conducted with a loosely structured format (see Appendix D), more akin to 'guided conversations' (Yin 2003: 89) that sought to reflect the research aims, empirical elements of the literature review and the theoretical framework. Technically these may be described as semi-structured interviews, having a preset format which could be varied at the discretion of the interviewer, allowing for clarification, further exploration and some flexibility (Corbetta 2003; Freebody 2003; Bell 1999). In other words, following Rubin and Rubin (1995, cited in Yin 2003), the actual flow of questions was changeable, despite adhering to a consistent line of inquiry. This format enabled interviewees to provide the required narrative, whilst also ensuring that all necessary topics were covered (Wragg 2002: 149). However, within this structure, the interviews with academics took a discursive and facilitative style, enabling 'a sense of interchange where ideas among co-equals' were examined (Schostak 2006: 50). Thus the interviews would be more accurately portrayed as semi-structured collegiate dialogue that aimed to 'generate detailed accounts rather than brief answers or general statements' (Reissman 2008: 23). Whilst ever mindful and reflexive of my own positionality (Cousin 2009), discussed earlier in this thesis, it was wholly appropriate that I did not merely discover or extract narratives but was a participant in their creation (Mishler 1991, cited in Reissman 2008). Furthermore, such interactive interviews enable participants to explicate how circumstance and context may be of significance to them (Sayer 1992).

With reference to the theoretical underpinnings of critical realism and the potential influences on responses to continuing professional development, as detailed in the

research question, the narrative interviews facilitated exploration of the interviewees' perceptions, reflexive deliberations (Archer 2003) and experiences of their learning trajectory and practice context. 'Interviews can provide insight into individuals' constructed social worlds and into the ways in which they convey constructions in the particular interactional setting of the interview' (Silverman 1993, cited in Freebody 2003: 137). This approach to data collection, therefore, recognises that different beliefs, perspectives and knowledge will influence the ways in which people behave and act (Gibbs 2002) and will support the researcher's aim of developing an understanding of the conceptual frameworks that influence the respondents' behaviours and attitudes towards their continued professional learning.

Previous research involving participation by academics has, most commonly, been achieved through quantitative attitudinal questionnaire surveys (Åkerlind 2005). This research project aimed to give expression, tone and volume to the 'voices from below' which, the researcher argues, is most effectively achieved where the participants are given the power to determine how they will represent their views, their thinking and behaviours into spoken words. The interview format, as provided in Appendix D, can be seen to reflect Schostak's (2006: 03) moderation of the term 'interview' to 'inter-view', suggesting 'inter-subjectivity' and the process as 'the basis for engagement with others, the openings for dialogue, the modes of drawing out views ... the strategies for representation politically, ethically and textually'.

In the literature, however, interviews are frequently seen as having limitations; in particular concerns about researcher bias and issues of subjectivity are common (Bell 1999; Cohen *et al.* 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Wragg 2002). At all stages of this project, but particularly in the stages of data collection, interpretation and analysis, the

researcher has, as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (1998: 69) ensured explicit reflexivity. This has allowed researcher influence to be probed and enabled the emergence of additional perceptions of the data (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). Additionally experience from the pilot study heightened the researcher's awareness of the complexities of the 'dynamic relationship in which the interview is "constructed" by the interviewer and the respondent together' (Corbetta 2003: 279). Further to this, particularly as a true 'insider' undertaking the pilot narrative interviews, the researcher was able to reflect upon the skills needed to meaningfully engage in the discursive relationship, whilst not influencing the consequent data.

Semi-structured interviews

The interviews with academics, discussed above, were designed to allow exploration and understanding of the '*practice* which gives life to the organisation' (Wenger 1998: 241, italics in original). However, the research questions also indicate a need to examine '*the designed organisation*' (Wenger 1998: 241 italics in original) taking an holistic approach to understanding dynamics across the system. The interview schedule (Appendix D) demonstrates how the process probed into 'institutional norms', organisational rules, structures, procedures, culture and discourse in respect of the continuing professional development of academic staff. Therefore, in addition to the narrative interviews with academics, a small number of semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key informants in each of the case study sites. Commenting on the critical importance of key informants to case study research, Yin states that 'such persons not only provide the case study investigator with insights into a matter but also can suggest sources of corroboratory or contrary evidence – and also initiate the access to such sources' (2003: 90).

The core purpose of the interviews with key informants was to develop the institutional context and to ascertain, or corroborate, certain information that was arising from other aspects of the data collection work. Thus, for example, these more focused interviews developed understanding of institutional priorities, policies, procedures and funding arrangements with regard to supporting academic professional development alongside institutional responses to national initiatives and requirements in this regard. Learning from the pilot project was particularly valuable with regard to the precise wording of some of the questions, as pilot respondents were able to offer advice about terminology that was most likely to be meaningful across case study institutions; in other words ensuring that the researcher avoided terms that were institution-specific. These interviews took a more traditional semi-structured format (see Appendix E), each lasting for approximately one hour, being digitally recorded, and undertaken during the same time period as the narrative interviews with academics. It has to be recognized that although the objective of involving these key informants was to develop a contextual understanding of the organisation, these individuals could only provide a personal perspective on that institution. Their responses, in common with the academics interviewed, were influenced by values, and interpretation; particularly whether they viewed themselves as being required to represent a perceived organisational position. That being said, organisations that offer higher education only have life and existence because of the individual people that they are made up of. It is these individuals that embody the 'institutional norms', culture and discourse and may be 'agents who in some way influence the way others in the organization think, act and learn.' (Marsick and Watkins 1990: 42).

Documentary data

The final research tool was the collection of documentation to enable investigation of the 'given social situation from the standpoint of the material' (Corbetta 2003: 234). The documents collated were exclusively public records, as distinct from personal records (Corbetta 2003: 288), highlighting national policy and institutional responses, and being drawn from the institutions' on-line resources for staff, in-house course information literature and institutional-level policy statements. As such, the documentary data was collected to reflect the institutional position and generative mechanisms of the two case study universities. Therefore, whilst the principal source of data for the research was the interviews, the documentary analysis had a 'subsidiary or complementary role' (Peräkylä 2005: 870). The intention was to investigate how much the documentary data verified information from the interviews, because 'such data can illuminate the stories that people tell, providing additional perspectives on the holistic context in which sense making takes place (Musson 1998: 16-17).

Access to such documentation was unproblematic and unobtrusive as the data was in the public domain and existed outside of the research project, however, the pilot study raised the researcher's awareness that there was a need to be 'time-specific' about the collation of documentary data. The same applied to the collation of any statistical information about the case study institutions. The issue of 'time' arose initially in the pilot study as during the early part of the academic year, a number of key documents were being revised or reviewed and thus several developmental versions were available at different stages in the research process. In order to avoid the complexity of similar issues in the substantive case study work, and to take account of the important time dimension implied by Archer's morphogenetic cycles (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003), a decision was made to collate documentary materials during the exact period that the

interviews took place; only documents in their 'published' final forms were included. Given the 'public' nature of these materials, it could be argued that they were 'independent of the researcher' and accordingly without bias (Cortazzi 2002: 208). However, it is suggested that whilst documents may provide potentially 'factual' data, such data may also be unrepresentative and deceptive (Lincoln and Guba 1985, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 147). Indeed, as discussed earlier in respect of the use of narrative data as being a verbalised, spoken representation, so in a similar way, documents are written representations and are therefore, 'linguistic and symbolic objects' (Freebody 2003: 182) only given meaning by those who read and interpret them, acknowledging the significance of 'the relationship between the 'text' as a social construction and its form or its imputed audience-derived meanings' (Manning and Cullum-Swan 1994: 464).

The various data collection modes were implemented concurrently throughout. It can be seen, therefore, that in executing the multi-case study approach, multiple approaches to the collection of data were employed. The following section of this chapter examines the approach taken to the analysis of the resulting wealth of rich data.

Approach to data analysis

This section of the chapter explores techniques of data analysis employed in the study, and is provided as a separate section for the purposes of structural coherence in this thesis only. In reality, the process of analysis was ongoing throughout all stages of the research (Symon and Cassell 1998), most specifically with 'data gathering and analysis [being] dynamically linked' (Cousin 2009: 31). For example, where decisions were made about sampling, questions and forms of methodology, choices were being made on the basis of judgement, evaluation and interpretation. This reflects the way in which

‘qualitative data analysis is commonly iterative, recursive and dynamic (Gibbs 2002: 2), with the researcher undertaking this study, not feeling ‘constrained to preserve analysis as a separate stage of work that follow[ed] data collection’ (Gibbs 2002).

The first stage of the analysis process was the full transcription of all the digitally recorded oral interview data into written form in order to assist the research analysis process. It is significant to note that, in effect, the oral discourse is ‘translated’ into written text, which in itself changes some of the nuances of the dialogue. For example it is difficult to retain the distinctions in voice inflection or emphasis when moving the spoken into the written. However, as the interviews and analysis were all undertaken by the sole researcher, it can be argued that any reduction in the validity of the data or loss of meaning is minimised. Furthermore, holding the visual written transcript allowed the researcher to gain a greater understanding of the whole interview as it is possible to move more quickly between different elements and themes in order to analyse the emerging discourse. Throughout the process a reflective research diary was maintained to keep notes and developing thoughts arising from the data and the process. The researcher recognised the importance of the ways in which individuals chose to translate and articulate their experiences, behaviours and thoughts into verbal and written forms of communication and how this is dependent upon historical, social and cultural constructions and influences. During the analysis, the terminology that academics and institutions employed when expressing views about continuing professional development was examined to expose how the respondents created meaning and interpreted their perceptions. Additionally, ‘respondent generated metaphors’ (Cousin 2009: 48) were isolated as they provide interesting nuanced descriptions of participants’ views.

The documentary data was incorporated into the analysis process, although the researcher was mindful of ‘the context and circumstances of production’ (Scott and Morrison 2006: 77). In this way, the documents collected offered useful background and contextual knowledge. Transforming qualitative data into meaningful and relevant findings through the processes of analysis is known to be complex, partly due to the ‘multiplicity of data sources and forms’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 55). In order to interpret, structure, synthesise and develop meaning from the significant amount of data collected, it was necessary to iteratively bring together the literature, the research questions, the theoretical framework which underpinned the project from the outset, with the resultant data. A range of analytical strategies, based on work of Kitwood (1977, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 295), were deployed to ensure analytical depth through critical engagement with the emerging discourse.

The analysis of data is ‘inescapably a selective process’ (Miles and Huberman 1994: 55) with coding and classifying being the means by which such selection and data reduction can be effected. In this project, codes were created in three phases: first with reference to the underpinning theoretical basis and literature; second through identification of recurring themes in the pilot work; and finally the classifications were developed further through the processes of analysis, structuring and reduction in the core data. Given the complexity of this reflective, exploratory process the researcher ensured that it was possible to ‘demonstrate rigour and transparency’ throughout (Scott and Morrison 2006: 33). This robustness of the data management processes was achieved through the use of a computer software package that supports the management of unstructured qualitative data.

QSR NVivo7 is a computer software package which supports researchers in managing the processes of qualitative research. The software was a central collection point for all data and source materials throughout the project and thus assisted in the sorting and organising of the data. The NVivo7 package was chosen, partly because of its availability, but also because it is designed to ‘help the analyst examine features and relationships in the texts’ (Gibbs 2002: 11), enabling the analysis to be constructed with a logical and structured technique. The software was found to be particularly helpful as it allowed ideas, reflections, connections and relationships to be incorporated and recorded throughout (Bazeley 2007). The key qualitative research analysis tasks of coding; re-coding; searching; identifying linkages, trends and patterns; locating key words or phrases; sorting and storing information; categorising and classifying data; and making comparisons were all carried out by the researcher in the normal way. Analysis requires interpretation and ‘understanding of the meaning of the texts, and that is something that computers are still a long way from being able to do’ (Gibbs 2002: 10).

Initially, then, the data was scrutinised for ‘patterns of choice’, which identified the frequency with which the themes from the literature and the pilot study were raised. This ‘surface[d] some generalisations’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000: 295) and highlighted additional concepts as a precursor to further more in-depth analysis, after which ‘similarities and differences’ were drawn out. This is a form of analysis which enabled comparative exploration between the case study institutions and between different variants within the sample. Kitwood (1977, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000) also describes a method of analysis, which ‘groups items together’, that are seen to cover similar themes or areas. In this way, the data was reduced and restructured to aid the process of understanding and identifying emerging themes.

Taking a different approach to the material, analysis through ‘categorization of content’ further illuminated trends and commonalities in the data. In this process a particular aspect or question in the data is examined across the entire sample. The emerging information was then examined and compared to the theoretical framework, with new categorisations being developed if necessary. In a similar way, but starting with the category or theme most commonly taken from the initial pilot work, the data was examined for all traces of that theme. This method, according to Cohen *et al.* (2000: 296) ‘transcends the rather artificial boundaries which the items themselves imply.’

Additionally, in order to address the research purposes and questions for this project, as important as the identification of occurring themes, the ‘study of omissions’ (Kitwood 1977, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 296) was undertaken. This stage of analysis required clarity about expectations and anticipations in respect of issues that may emerge. Kitwood (1997, cited in Cohen *et al.* 2000: 296) describes another analytical strategy as ‘generating and testing hypotheses’ which, it could be argued, is interlinked with the other analytical processes. Through iterative engagement with the data and a detailed, recorded process of reflection, the researcher developed provisional propositions at different stages in the research process that allowed for explicit hypothesis testing.

Conclusion

In this chapter a detailed account of the philosophy, strategy, methodology and analytical processes of the research study has been presented. As explicated, in order to address the research questions and achieve the research objectives the study was undertaken through qualitative methods utilising a multi-case study approach, narrative and semi-structured interviews supported by documentary analysis and informed by an

initial pilot study. This chapter has also detailed the practical aspects of carrying out the research process.

Throughout the chapter, the researcher has argued that the methodological approaches chosen for this study are the most appropriate mode to enable the voices of academics to add to the body of knowledge about continuing professional development in academia. Case study research is influential in ‘reflecting on human experience’ with experience being ‘an important basis for refining action options and expectations’ (Stake 2005: 460). Thus, whilst this research does not set out to claim that the findings could be generalised as being applicable across all universities or all academics, the depth of study of each case, the methodological coherence, the multi-case comparative analysis and researcher ‘embeddedness’, enable analytical and theoretical generalisation (Yin 2003: 10). In this way, the research provides ‘learn[ing] about the general from the particular’ (Reissman 1993: 70), giving insight into pertinent, contemporary issues and the implications of continuing professional development in academia. In other words, whilst the findings may not be generalisable in the usual sense of the word, they may be ‘transferable’. In social research of this type ‘knowledge is concerned not with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination’ (Usher, R. 1996).

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS: Understanding professional development

Introduction

This is the first of two chapters that present a comparative analysis across the data collected from both case study institutions. Each chapter sets out to raise the voices of the academics interviewed; this chapter examines specifically their interpretations of continuing professional development and how these have been influenced. The significance of interpretation and meaning as potential influences on individuals' approaches to continuing professional development has been highlighted in the literature and through the discussion in the first two chapters of this thesis. In particular, the complexity of the 'double hermeneutic' or 'double interpretation' (Scott and Morrison 2006: 124) has been raised, but the standpoint of critical realism is that despite the complexities of meta-interpretations, people's concepts influence their practices and are therefore, worthy of exploration (Sayer 1992). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 illustrated the contested nature and variety of permutations of language surrounding the concept of continuing professional development (McWilliam 2002), specifically within the context of higher education (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Clegg 2003). Therefore, the starting point for each interview, both with academics and key informants, was to clarify their understandings and interpretations of the term continuing professional development. This was done with the underpinning theoretical awareness, but without empirical knowledge of academics' understandings of continuing professional development within their working context.

Within this chapter data related to issues of interpretation and meaning from both case study universities is presented and discussed concurrently, in order to highlight

comparisons and to raise correlations from across the range of attribute variables. The discussion therefore compares the similarities and differences in interpretations and understandings of continuing professional development that are apparent between University A and University B. The data will also be examined through the key academic interviewee attribute variables that were identified as potentially significant during the research design phase: gender, length of academic experience, disciplinary focus, and whether the academic’s discipline has a professional development framework. Cruickshank (2007), writing from a non-deterministic, critical realist position is clear that correlations between variables are not explanatory, but are descriptive. Thus, this approach will enable an exploration of whether there are other significant trends across the data that help to describe not only the influences on academics’ understandings of professional development, but also how meaning and interpretation can, in turn, influence academics’ behaviours and attitudes in this regard.

Academics’ interpretations of continuing professional development

‘it’s not a phrase that would automatically come to people’s mind’
(Marie, University A)

‘I think it is a very broad term and I think part of the problem is that everyone defines it slightly differently’
(Hazel, University B)

Hazel’s and Marie’s thoughts above illustrate how the data reveals a common difficulty in both case study institutions: setting out a clear definition of continuing professional development. There was also a common tendency for academic participants to start the interviews by immediately construing continuing professional development as meaning the provision of continuing professional development opportunities for external bodies (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003; Clegg 2003) with little relevance for themselves. Interestingly, Dexter notes that whilst ‘development of others is a key function of the “teacher” role ... we need to examine also how we develop ourselves (Dexter 2007:

22). In his interview Martin (University A), who described his main role as being *'responsible for a programme where all the students are doing continuing professional development'*, found it difficult to articulate the difference between the teaching and development work he does in providing post-qualifying learning for school-based teachers, and his own continuing professional development. Similarly, at the outset of her interview, Patti (University B) saw continuing professional development as something related to those working in the disciplinary practice area, consequently distanced from herself; she does not appear to relate the concept to her own development in any way:

My initial take on it is it's about ... professionals who work in or are preparing for a reformed, modernised public health sector where teamwork ... the interfaces of health, social care and education are critical to government drivers to service development. (Patti, University B)

Another example came from Dieter (University A) who specifically asked during the interview, more than once, *'do you mean my continuing professional development or the continuing professional development we are delivering?'* Similarly, when asked at the start of the interview to explain what continuing professional development meant to him, Dieter referred to 'others', stating that:

It means providing education and training to people usually post qualifying, who are in a point and it's around developing their job role, developing their expertise in specific areas ... so career development and personal development. (Dieter, University A)

It is acknowledged within critical realism that 'when we reflect upon our beliefs and the concepts we use, we often change them in the process: we notice and try to resolve

inconsistencies ...' (Sayer 1992: 39). Indeed it is evident throughout the interviews in both universities, that many of the academics had not previously explicitly thought about their own professional development, with their views and ideas gradually developing as their interview progressed. Diana (University A) for example remarked towards the end of her interview, *'I've learned a lot from this conversation'* and Patti (University B) admitted that she had *'never really organised (her) thoughts around CPD'*. Hence, there was often less clarity at the beginning of the interviews about the understanding of continuing professional development, with some changes in ideas as individuals reflected upon and articulated their thoughts through the interview. There was, however, more evidence of confusion and ambiguity within the data from academics working in University A, this being particularly noticeable where there were contradictions within individual interviews; often the interviewee did not demonstrate any awareness of their fluctuating interpretations of the terminology. However, Diana (University A) and George (University A) articulated clear insight into the way in which the process of the interview had opened their views further:

My view of continuing professional development has been really quite narrow and ... if it was broader, and if I considered my own continuing professional development, when I am doing everything that I would normally do, I might do those things in a different way and the barrier therefore is my own perception of continuing professional development and the narrowness of that and thinking that I have done this, so tick-box that bit, and I don't have to think about it anymore which, of course, is not true. (Diana, University A)

I don't see that [as continuing professional development] but when you look at it now I suppose it is that, what they call continuing professional development, there is attending these courses that assist you in your lecturing, whereas

looking at it now, going outside talking to my governing body that controls my research in the way I practice is continuing professional development as well. I have been enlightened! (George, University A)

The contradictions within interviews and the difficulty that some academics experienced when asked how they would define continuing professional development is further illustrated by this extract from Dieter's interview. Throughout the interview he offered differing thoughts on his understanding of continuing professional development:

DIETER (University A): *Conferences; I wouldn't call that continuing professional development, that's more people's academic work ... [pause] ... is that continuing professional development? [pause] I suppose you could say it was.*

RESEARCHER: This brings us back to your definition of continuing professional development, can you explain further?

DIETER (University A): *...the job of an academic is the job of an academic and you do that by reading and writing and I suppose going to conferences, talking to your peers, but I mean someone can't teach you to be an expert in how single parents cope with poverty for example.*

Whilst these uncertainties in meaning and utilisation within academics' discourse in University A are, to a lesser extent, also reflected in the data from University B, there is evidence in the latter of more consistency in the language used. The data shows that the term 'continuing professional development' is an accepted part of the vocabulary in University B with interviewees, almost without exception, discussing the concept with ease and comfort although, as stated above, not always with agreed clarity of definition.

The reason for this broad sense of familiarity with the term appears in this case to be related to the institution's framework of accredited modules which build into post-graduate awards in Academic Practice. The constituent modules of these awards are known as 'continuing professional development modules' and these emerge through the data to be well established in the consciousness and discourse of the academics who participated in this research. That being said, this entrenched linkage of meaning to the tangible formal programmes has the consequence that some academics, often implicitly, have a narrow conception of professional development as being only that which is related to the programmes. This issue is considered further in the following chapter of this thesis.

In both case study institutions there is evidence of other related terms being used within structural arrangements, in the universities' policies and in information documents. Much as Blackwell and Blackmore (2003) and Zuber-Skerritt (1992) attest, these terms often have similar meanings, but in this instance appear to result in some different understandings. For example, documents from case study University B, examined for this research, show how a specific team within the library structure of the organisation provide a range of learning opportunities for staff that come under the 'umbrella' title of 'staff development'. This includes some teaching and learning related materials and technology-related courses. Additionally, the Human Resources Department publishes a 'Staff Training and Development Programme' that encompasses all the elements outlined above, including the previously described 'continuing professional development modules' within the 'academic practice programme,' which are brought under the heading of 'academic staff development'. Thus is it not surprising that Sandra says:

I suppose because of what I think of as CPD in its generic sense and I think it is a component part, but ... what I have talked about, as I say a raft of things that come under staff development, which I would also see as elements of CPD as well. (Sandra, University B)

Similarly Jakob (University B) describes how he considers continuing professional development to 'have a broad remit' but then states:

[name of team] is part of our library is set for IT, well is it staff development so it runs alongside CPD but slightly different. They give courses on things like Microsoft Office, PowerPoint presentations, so they start running alongside it. (Jakob, University B)

The data from interviews with key informants across both institutions could be seen to confirm this complexity. Thus whilst Christine (University A) confirms that there is an element of common agreement across the university that the term continuing professional development is utilised, she also suggests that the issue of language is not always straightforward in the institution:

Yes, we do [use the term continuing professional development] or some people do, some people just talk about professional development perhaps because they don't like to distinguish continuing professional development from initial development. Some people just talk about training, but we try to avoid using that term because it has particular connotations, but yes, people do talk about continuing professional development fairly broadly I think. (Christine, University A)

It is significant though, when considering the wider range of discourse related to professional development, to remember that in case study University A the notion of developing ‘academic practice’ was being introduced at the time of the data collection. This was an attempt to adopt language that represents more of the breadth of the academic role, defining it as: *‘much broader and ... about supporting students’ learning rather than necessarily teaching because again, that encourages people to see the whole breadth of what they do in terms of working with students’* (Christine, University A). However, taking this further Lindsey, a key informant from University B, confirms how different aspects of the organisation might employ different language and terminology:

There is a statement about the development of individuals in order that they can achieve the clear aspirations, etc. etc. and that fits with HR [human resources] but it does not specifically talk about CPD, it’s about career development, enhancement of the individual etc. etc. (Lindsey, University B)

At this point, whilst considering the influence of institutional language and discourse, it is interesting to note that despite concerns in the literature about increasing managerialism in academia (McWilliam 2002; Cullingford 2002; Davidson 2004) academics responding to this research seldom included mention of managerialism or performance-led approaches within their understandings of continuing professional development. That being said, the evidence suggests that there is a common perception by all interviewees in both universities that even where there is some consistency in terminology, the underlying discourse is not engaged with by academics:

Continuing professional development to me is kind of a term that gets bandied about a lot within the University and it’s something that you feel obliged to do without ever knowing what it might be. (Diana, University A)

Diana's view reflects the literature, wherein it is suggested that 'continuing professional development' is a commonly used, if ill-defined term (Sadler-Smith and Badger 1998; Roscoe 2002). Some of the explanations for this can be found in the data, where Josh (University A), for example, partly attributes this to his view that different industries and professions have adopted different terminology to express similar meaning; this is reflected in the contextual discussion in Chapter 1 (pages 10-14). Speaking from a similar position, but making a strong correlation to his own professional background, Martin (University A) states that he has come *'from a teaching background where continuing professional development is very much part of the culture of teaching'*, and thus the term is familiar and comfortable to him. Nevertheless, he demonstrates less confidence when he raises the rhetorical question about different terms in use in the university, asking *'staff development might not be continuing professional development, I guess?'* Further to this, a key informant from the same institution, Sheila, also expressed a view that for some academics the concept is actually defined beyond the boundaries of the institution because, *'if you are a member of an awarding body there is a very clear structure from that body in terms of what constitutes CPD and what you should do'* (Sheila, University A).

The 'dualism' between allegiance to discipline or organisation (Clegg 2003) was very strongly reflected in the responses from academics in University B, with 50% (n=9) of the academics interviewed in the institution describing, albeit to differing degrees, the importance of externally mandated, discipline-related continuing professional development. This extract from Patrick's interview provides a clear example of this view:

The decisions about my CPD ... my immediate connection is to my professional body, that's exactly what they call it, it's exactly what I have to do, I have to evidence it as a regime covering that, if I was talking about stuff that I did within academia I wouldn't label it CPD, maybe it's just the terminology, I would call it staff development, it comes within staff development appraisal (Patrick, University B).

Interestingly these strong affiliations with external bodies and their professional development policies can also lead to some quite dichotomous interpretations of what professional development might mean to individuals. In particular, very differing versions of the influence and impact of such regulation were recounted. Examples from across the spectrum are Chandra's (University B) view that this equates to '*entitlement*' and Verna's (University B) divergent use of words like '*rules*', '*compliance*' and '*requirements*'. Arguably somewhere in between the two, Vikram (key informant, University A) refers to '*guidelines*' and Sharon (University B) talks of '*professional obligations*'.

Despite these potentially conflicting approaches, what emerges here is the strength of the orientation towards and influence of discipline-related professional bodies on the interpretations and actions of the academics interviewed across both institutions. Whilst the existing literature identifies academics' strong loyalties to their discipline (Clegg 2003), there appears to be no prior empirical understanding of the impact that the policies of such bodies can have on the discourse, meanings and, potentially, approaches that academics may have towards their continuing professional development. Marie (University A), an experienced academic in the psychology department suggests helpfully, much like Blackwell and Blackmore (2003), that '*I don't*

see there being a single definition, I think it means different things to different people' (Marie, University A). If, however, this view is accepted there remains the question of whether consistency of language and terminology used across the institution to denote these concepts is desirable, given that the influence of these different understandings on academics' approaches to professional development appears significant. Furthering the complexity, the data reveals that not only did the participants experience some difficulties in conceptualising and defining the concept, their responses being often fraught with ambiguity and contradiction, but that contrasting viewpoints emerged relating to the purpose, scope, identification and validity of professional development.

The purpose of continuing professional development

The data from across the two institutions suggests there is some consensus about the purpose and scope of professional development, in particular about it being related to the academic's current role, keeping up to date and improving or maintaining skills in that role. Of the 18 academics interviewed in each case study institution, 67% (n = 12) in University A, and 45% (n=8) in University B, representing 56% (n=20) of all the academics interviewed, considered their own professional development as being in some way related to undertaking their present role. Whilst the literature appears to have little to say about this aspect of how continuing professional development is understood, this research illustrates that academics are frequently interpreting professional development as something reactive and related to their current job requirements:

'To keep aware of developments and changes and to make sure that I'm still competent to do my job'
(Martin, University A)

'Anything to enhance [my] knowledge and [my] ability to do [my] job'
(Patrick, University B).

Similarly, Chandra (University B) considers professional development to be a mechanism to *'keep either up to date or in the vanguards in both my subject area but also in a broader academic sense'*. She expresses her view that fundamentally professional development is *'just keeping current and I think education is a world of change and if you can't cope with change, then heaven help you'*. In similar vein, Verna (University B) says of professional development, *'it is updating and I would justify that in saying that it is essential for quality teaching'* and Jennie (University B) adds to this by including the subject area in that *'it's keeping abreast of subject ... technology and trends'*. Hazel (University B) too is unequivocal when she explains that continuing professional development is:

... anything that allows you to gain skills or knowledge or understanding that allows you to engage more fully with your job ... It's very much related to work and the job role that you are in at that time, anyone could go off learn something new but that wouldn't necessarily be CPD that's just knowledge gathering. What makes it CPD for me is where it's focused upon your work and what you need to be able to do within your job or to expand what you do already within your job. (Hazel, University B)

This arguably pragmatic stance is also articulated by Dawn (University A) who, in describing her approach to continuing professional development, explains how after achieving promotion she sought appropriate developmental opportunities:

When I was asked to become [promotional leadership post], I did discuss what skills will I need and when I was appointed, I went to my line manager and said 'what sort of courses should I take now?' (Dawn, University A)

Later in the interview, Dawn reinforces this by stating:

I'm conscious that I've been thrown into this role and I don't have any previous experience of leadership and management and I know I will be learning on the job. (Dawn, University A)

The key informants from University A were also in broad agreement in reflecting a view that the scope of continuing professional development is related to the needs of the individual's current job role. Of the six key informants interviewed in University A, 83% (n=5) concurred; Kristen (University A), for example, simply stating that continuing professional development is '*mainly job related*'. Similarly one of the three key informants at the second case study institution, Lorna (University B) succinctly describes continuing professional development as '*any developmental activity that's related to your job, profession*'. However although Sheila, a key informant (University A), also held this view she went further by stating that continuing professional development should be framed '*in terms of "you're good at this position but you could be better, and you could be at this position"*' (Sheila, University A), thus arguably demonstrating a proactive role for development. Sheila's approach to a more planned, progressive remit for development could be seen to be embracing the wider University A institutional position, which according to the documentary data, views continuing professional development as '*focused on personal competence in a professional role*', but acknowledges that its purpose is also to '*enhance career progression*', so associating professional development with a proactive approach to career development and taking it beyond a reaction to the needs of a current role. The documentary data examined in relation to case study University B does not clarify or attempt to define a position on professional development for academics.

As shown, therefore, the data indicates a strong propensity to view professional development as a reactive approach to the needs of a job role; potentially verging towards a definition that is underpinned by the concept of being ‘remedial’ rather than, as the actual term might suggest, ‘developmental’. However, whilst the data demonstrates this bias, it is important to acknowledge that a wider perspective was expressed by some interviewees. For example, both Phillip (University A) and Verna (University B) suggest that continuing professional development is reactive and proactive:

It means several things ... additional training and development, which helps you do your current job better, or ... which helps you go to a different job in the organisation, like me going from [job title] to something else in the organisation or in fact ... which takes you elsewhere altogether.
(Phillip, University A)

It means all sorts from teaching delivery, preparation, up to date with that, it also means how you feel ongoing career and development.
(Verna, University B)

Jessica (University B) uses the analogy of steps to describe continuing professional development whilst also, perhaps in contrast to the more proactive career-driven approach, suggesting that it is something that is unplanned and spontaneous:

I think it's about going up steps and I think I'm on a step at the moment and because I'm describing it as a step, it's not the top ...

Later in her interview Jessica says professional development is:

not something you have chosen deliberately to do, it happened because of how you feel at the point that you got to. (Jessica, University B)

Across the academic interviews, seven of the 18 participants (39%) interviewed in University A and four of the 18 participants (22%) interviewed in University B, (equivalent to 31% of all academics interviewed) included in their understandings the view that continuing professional development is related to future career progression or, in the same vein, the enhancement of their curriculum vitae (CV). As can be seen, however, a greater proportion of University A academics express this wider perception, which may be as a result of the institutional approach described above.

It is also possible that to some extent University B's strong connections with external discipline-related professional bodies lay behind their academics' concept of continuing professional development being to ensure 'fitness to practise', referred to by Patti, Sharon and Sandra (all University B) in their interviews, this being a term or approach inherent in some of the phraseology employed by external health-related professional bodies. Patti (University B) suggested that this notion should be transferred to academia with consideration being given to individuals' *'fitness to practise as an academic'*. However, as this extract from Patti's interview demonstrates, whilst initially linking her own continuing professional development to her current job, she then adds to this by including aspirations and goals:

PATTI (University B): *Job role has been very influential in the last year and I have been picking out things which have helped me to do the job.*

RESEARCHER: With your current job?

PATTI (University B): *Yes and career aspirations, and personal goals, I was driven with my PhD, it was a personal goal.*

Academics interviewed in both case study institutions exposed a view that professional development is integral to, and embedded in, their normal daily working activities in academia; this was also reflective of the findings of the pilot study (Crawford 2009).

*all part of what you would do
anyway.*
(James, University A)

*... routinely because it's part of the
job.*
(Max, University B)

In the pilot study, for example, one participant used the metaphor of a pizza to describe how she was having difficulty in conceptualizing professional development as separate from her daily work, the pizza being a fusion or blending of constituent parts rather than separate piles of ingredients that you can pick and choose from (Crawford 2009). This may, in part, account for some of the difficulties that academics display with regard to defining the concept of continuing professional development, as they are not distinguishing development activity from day-to-day activity, as was reflected in the extract from Diana's (University A) interview earlier. As a key informant, Sheila (University A) indicates that this variation in interpreting continuing professional development is recognised within the organisation:

I don't think that academics necessarily see attending a conference or speaking at a conference as part of continuing professional development ... my feeling is that academics don't necessarily look at that as being part of professional development, they look at that as being part of their role and I think there is a blurring. (Sheila, University A)

Comparing the data across the two case study institutions, the view that '*for an academic, in a sense, all you are doing is continuing professional development, in one way or another*' (Cameron, University A), is voiced significantly louder from

academics working in University A. Documentary data from this case study institution (University A) can be seen, in part, to support this view in describing professional development as *'an approach or process which should be a normal part of how you plan and manage your whole working life'*. Further to this, it is pertinent to note that only two of the academics interviewed in University A work in a professional area that mandates the meeting of the continuing professional development requirements of an external professional body. One of these participants, Josh (University A) considers that *'it gets a bit fuzzy round the edges'* and goes on to describe an example of his practice whereby he writes an annual report for a national body about the national state of an aspect of his subject area, he then presents this to a panel for incorporation into their annual report. Josh explains:

The institute president put that down as a day's continuing professional development because he thought he learned a lot and I suppose I did but I regarded it as me going to a meeting and making the presentation. I think that shows how different people see the whole continuing professional development issue. I would not record it as a day's continuing professional development but I did learn a lot but I do wonder more about what could and couldn't be described as continuing professional development. (Josh, University A).

By contrast, in University B where over half (55%, n=10) of the academics who participated in this research were working within the continuing professional development policy of an external discipline-related professional body, it is interesting to note that participants were less likely to consider continuing professional development as being integral to the daily job. Indeed, much like Josh (University A) above, Sharon (University B), who also practices in accordance with a subject-related professional framework, is clear that learning opportunities that occur naturally within

her daily academic work are not classifiable as continuing professional development. After describing a range of collegiate work, team sharing of ideas and innovative approaches, Sharon (University B) adds '*but that's not a CPD thing, that's just the way we work*'. It appears, therefore, that there is a relationship between academics' orientation to an external professional body's framework and their locating professional development itself as being separate and external to the academic role. Looking across the data from all academic participants, 43.5% (n=10) of all academics interviewed who do not relate to any professional body framework considered continuing professional development as being integral element of their daily work, whilst only 23% (n=3) of all academic interviewees who do relate to a professional body framework made this same connection. It can be argued, therefore, that external, discipline-specific, professional development frameworks are of more significance in influencing academics' understandings and interpretations of continuing professional development than the context of the case study institution in which they work.

Further to this, however, when analysing the academic interview data across both universities according to gender, there is apparent variance with fewer female academics (20% n=4) than males (56% n=9) considering continuing professional development as integral to their daily work. Given the discussion above, this data was then considered alongside the variable attribute of whether the academic worked to meet the requirements of an external professional body. The findings show that of the female academics who do not work within an external professional body (total number =13) only two interviewees (15%) suggested that they conceive of professional development as being something rooted in their daily activities. This compares with 66% (n=8) of the total of 12 male academics across the institutions who do not align to an external professional body.

Types of activity that constitute valid continuing professional development

The view that professional development is an integral, embedded, constituent, yet unrecognised and undefined element of daily academic working activities leads to consideration about the form of learning that academics consider relevant to their development. By inference it could be suggested that academics are valuing informal workplace learning, much as the literature has shown, in Chapter 2 (page 58), in that a great deal of effective developmental activity in academia is informal and implicit (Knight 2006; Becher 1996). However, the data from this research demonstrates that such a suggestion is not without problems; the contested nature of continuing professional development is indeed further complicated by different views on the validity and value of certain activities and approaches to professional learning. Whilst across both case study institutions there is a strong emphasis on understanding professional development activity as comprising both formal and informal learning, some academic participants express a clear view that is more weighted to one or the other. So for example, from both institutions there are examples of firmly opposing viewpoints:

What springs to mind when someone says continuing professional development ... I would think of the organised training and something that might be recognised and you could say I've been on this course and show that you have.
(Renata, University A)

In terms of my own personal professional development the things I have done have ranged from post-graduate certificate in educational development ... I try to keep up to date by attending staff development sessions...or when I was a programme leader if there was something on being a programme leader ...
(Patti, University B)

... in terms of producing papers, more research, not something structured, not something from say HR [human resources], a course or anything like that ... what I'm doing is researching in an area I'm not familiar with ... so I research and am writing and I will then use the information that I gain in my teaching, that for me is continuous professional development. I know a lot of people think it's qualifications ... the PG Cert, for me that's not, that's a bit more academia, a bit more paper, it's not professional development, professional development should be outside of that.
(Carl, University A)

As an academic I would see CPD would be much more to do with attending conferences in your field, presenting papers possibly, and listening to papers and networking with colleagues in the area in which you at working, studying.
(Sophia, University B)

The literature echoes this broad lack of agreement, both across academics and employing institutions, about whether informal and formal workplace learning are considered to be valid modes of continuing professional development (Clegg 2003; King 2004). However, through raising the voices of academics on this issue the current research, whilst potentially adding to the complexity, makes it possible to delve further into underlying factors that may influence these perspectives. Thus for example interviews with some University A academics indicate that arising from, and potentially as a consequence of, a view that their daily work is all developmental, some academics perceive the only valid continuing professional development activity is that which is

formal and beyond the daily work. Thus Diana describes activities fundamental to her normal daily work as those *'that you might be doing anyway, that you wouldn't consider to be continuing professional development because they're not formally organised ...'* (Diana, University A). Additionally, as shown in the quotations above, some participants, like Renata (University A), are unequivocal in their view that professional development only takes place through the formal provision of and participation in taught courses of study. In a similar way, when asked whether she perceived herself to be *'actively involved in continuing professional development'*, Sharon (University B), said she was and proceeded to list a number of centrally provided formal development sessions or courses that she was booked on or had recently completed.

Arthur (University B), echoing some of the views expressed in the literature (Clegg 2003; King 2004), suggests that the institutional interpretation of continuing professional development is directly related to formal programmes of learning when he states *'... there is a central sort of [pause] we will provide certain training courses, and I think ... having done that that's our responsibility and that's CPD'* (Arthur, University B). This would partially reflect the earlier hypothesis that proposes that University B academics' understandings of the terminology are largely influenced by some of the nomenclature utilised in the institution and related to the relevant formal, accredited programmes. On the other hand, with a view from the same institution, Sophia (University B), as seen earlier, acknowledges that *'there are different perceptions within the University about what is referred to as continual professional development'*, but suggests that whilst the internal programmes might be seen by some as continuing professional development, her perception is that development is a wider term and encompasses informal and external work. Similarly, other academics like Carl

(University A) and Sandra (University B) highlight their views that much of their learning takes place through research, or collegiate activity, yet is not recognised by academics themselves or the institution. Judith (University B) is clear that *'it's not about going to conferences, it's not about having research and scholarly activity'* but on the other hand states that *'it's about my professional reading, my academic reading, peer review, chatting with a colleague'* and so her interpretation of continuing professional development includes informal learning, but is very specific to subject and discipline. This again reflects earlier findings of the heavy emphasis given to development related to professional body requirements.

In exploring a particular academic activity, participating in and attending conferences, divergent views on its validity as continuing professional development were evident, despite 50% (n=18) of all academics interviewed referring to this activity in relation to their development. Thus, as seen earlier, Judith (University B) was clear that her understanding of continuing professional development does not include attendance or participation at conferences. Similarly, Phillip (University A) talks about the team he manages when he states *'they go to conferences, they could be classed as CPD because you are developing, I don't class it as CPD, I see it as part of what you have to do if you are a researcher'*. Yet another interviewee from that institution offers a different view, stating that conferences *'re-charge me in academic professional terms'* Cameron (University A) and similarly Max (University B) includes conference participation as central to his development:

... because I work in an experimental area, I include undertaking experimental work, collating and analysing data, presenting the results at conferences, writing up publications, interacting with the public, students, small research projects, assisting them to get to grips with what it means to be a researcher,

that actually develops me at the same time. It's not a one way ticket. (Max, University B)

However, whilst it is possible to draw dichotomous views about the origins and values of different forms of learning for professional development from the present data, there is also evidence within the interviews of broader interpretations. Interestingly, Norma (University B) introduces the notion of there being '*a sort of continuum of things which people do and in which people engage*'; she also suggests that there is differentiation in perceived status, or value, between formal and informal activities, but adds her view that '*... the informal has as much status as the formal and often the informal has more effect and impact than the formal*' (Norma, University B). Further to this, Jameela (University B) offered a very comprehensive interpretation of continuing professional development, even having her own typology of different elements of development. She talked about '*the requirements of my professional body*' firstly as being prescribed professional development; secondly Jameela referred to '*the managerial side*' of development as being requirements from the institution such as equality and diversity training. Her final aspect of professional development was referred to as '*the more general*' and expanded upon as areas of interest, conferences and '*things that are not part of my job role*'. It can be seen that Jameela has attempted to compartmentalise aspects of development according, broadly, to aspects of her academic role.

Relating continuing professional development to the academic role

The literature discussed in Chapter 2 (page 51) highlighted how the academic role has become increasingly complex and ill-defined (Becher and Trowler 2001; Blackmore and Blackwell 2003), additionally reference is made to 'dual professionals' (Dexter 2007; Jackson 2005, cited in Rothwell 2007) and the ever changing demands of

academic practice (Light and Cox 2001, Blackmore and Blackwell 2003). This multifaceted nature of academic practice, in particular the role divide between research and teaching, can be seen to influence the ways in which academics give meaning to professional development (Barnett 2003, cited in Clegg 2003). Indeed, findings from the academic interview data in this research suggest that the difficulties and inconsistencies in relevant definition and discourse may be a direct consequence of the complexity of the academic role. Illustrating this, Cameron (University A) suggests that to talk about continuing professional development as being for teaching, or research, or management, offers a '*restrictive view*', indeed many of those interviewed tried to account for the complexity by offering very broad, all-encompassing and eclectic interpretations of continuing professional development relevant across the whole academic role; reflections of this type were particularly prevalent in the University B data, where links were also made to the notion of professionalism and professional practice:

I would think that would be pretty broad, the roles that people play as professionals are very complex and I think the CPD reflects that complexity ... You could build an argument for almost anything counting as CPD, as long as you can say this is how it feeds into my professional practice'. (Sven, University B)

Verna (University B) offers a more detailed breakdown of the reality of what she understands as continuing professional development in her practice:

It means all sorts from teaching delivery, preparation, up to date with that, it also means how you feel, ongoing career and development, as an academic it also involves your subject area and knowledge development and any professional capacity as well, being registered as a qualified teacher and also a

practicing [names profession] in terms of what the [professional body] require and also meeting those objectives as well, so it's quite a large chunk. (Verna, University B)

Patrick (University B) also offers a detailed, yet succinct interpretation of his understanding of the concept. Here he links subject-related research, publishing research (as evidence of continuing professional development), teaching, and accredited learning with external recognition (both professional body and Research Assessment Exercise - RAE):

I've developed since coming into academia, it's not something that I had planned to do, but I've enjoyed being able to pursue research, so that's been one of my favourite aspects of the job, along with teaching ... and it's very much practice-based research, linking the professional body in my area and I've done the PhD, but I have also done the RAE for the third time this year, so I've been producing ...' (Patrick, University B).

The complexity of continuing professional development in the academic role was reinforced by Lorna (University B), a key informant to this research, who stated that *'academic CPD is quite complicated, is it about research, is it about developing teaching and learning and your expertise in teaching and learning, it is about your professional practice and maintaining professional accreditation, it's quite complicated'*. Lorna then suggested that as a consequence, individual academics have to make deliberate, planned choices to focus their development activity. The academic voices reported in this research appear to respond to this by portraying a somewhat segmented approach to understanding professional development in academia, with

participants often construing very distinct elements of their practice as being related to continuing professional development.

For some academics professional development is something which is largely related to teaching practice. This viewpoint is reflected in 52% (n=11) of all (academic and key informant) interviews from University B and in 29% (n=7) of all interviews from University A. In University A, continuing professional development was described as being '*to help you in your lecturing or your teaching abilities*' (George, University A) and:

the kinds of things that you could do courses on in [the institution's staff development unit] which is everything from teaching, specific teaching they do things like dealing with dyslexia, supervisions skills, those kinds of things right through to things like management skills, project management. (Pamela, University A)

Within University A, links to teaching practice were often made alongside frequent mention of the institution's Post Graduate Certificate programme. However, as discussed in Chapter 3 (page 86-7), it is possible that both the location of the interviews (the staff development unit) and the role of the intermediary internal contact person (senior educational development-type role) had an impact on the views articulated. Similar influence is possible in the University B data, with understandings of professional development as being significantly related to the teaching aspect of the academic role perhaps being informed by institutional discourse related to the accredited 'continuing professional development modules'. Thus, for example, Jakob (University B) refers to professional development as being about '*gaining the knowledge to teach and learn*' and when Max (University B) talked about institutional

approaches to supporting professional development, he linked this to senior managers *'dealing with learning and teaching, that's where it would come in, it would be in terms of how can we improve learning and teaching'*. Therefore, although there are particularly frequent compartmentalised descriptions of professional development in the University B data this approach is, despite some broader views, starkly apparent across both institutions. In addition, despite many academics associating professional development with teaching and learning practice, very few made mention of consequent associations with being possibly influenced by student need or feedback.

The findings demonstrate however, that whilst professional development is often identified as being related to teaching practice, some academics define professional development as ensuing predominantly from their research work. Comparing findings from the two case study institutions, it is apparent that where research is emphasised, the findings are wholly reversed from those described above in that only 38% (n=8) of all (academic and key informant) interviews from University B consider professional development significantly related to the research aspect of the academic role, yet 50% (n=12) of all (academic and key informant) interviews from University A expressed this view:

Because I'm from a research background, most of my development has been research. So you do your research activity and you do the stuff you need to do and publishing and hoping to get some grants.

(Brandon, University A)

... my ability to engage in scholarship and research so that I can not only function correctly as a university lecturer but that I am abreast with what's in the field and I'm interacting directly with it because if you are not you fail ... my ability to do research is very much a part of my CPD.

(Max, University B)

Patrick (University B) reinforces this position, suggesting however that the research aspect of his academic role is the central impetus to enhance all of his practice:

When I do research it just drives the whole piece, it informs your teaching, you are generating outputs, you are improving your subject knowledge, you are attending events, networking, just part and parcel of it so I just think of doing good research is the main part of that CPD, lifelong learning. (Patrick, University B)

It can be seen therefore that the well-rehearsed debate about the teaching-research nexus (Trigwell and Shale 2004; Clegg 2003) is reflected within academics' constructs of professional development. As discussed earlier, the literature also highlights the perceived loyalties that academics display towards their subject discipline (Clegg 2003) and by inference subject-related research; the findings of this project provide empirical evidence in this respect. Thus, particularly in case study University B, there is substantial prominence given to the role of external subject-related professional bodies influencing, defining and controlling professional development for some academics. This is less evident from University A data, with about one third less of the interviewees making reference to this. Unique to the University B data is discussion of 'mandatory requirements', presumably as a result of the heavy emphasis on external professional continuing professional development frameworks. Sven (University B) outlines the importance of *'the professional project'* as being related to professional survival (McLean 2008), professional identity, and the recognition of professional contribution, status, validity and uniqueness. Sven explains:

I see it [CPD] as very definitely being very much part of the professional project that professions embrace CPD in order to survive ... I think that any profession that wanted to maintain its status, wants to maintain its power base has to

demonstrate to society that they are engaged in a process of development, that their staff are up to date and have contemporary knowledge and that their standing with the public is enhanced with having CPD processes in place ... it's there for survival basically, as a professional that's my take. (Sven, University B)

Conclusion

As the first of two chapters presenting a comparative analysis of the research findings, this chapter has drawn upon data from both case study Universities A and B concurrently. By drawing out comparisons, trends and apparent implications informed by the range of participant characteristics, or attribute variables, the discussion has focussed on how the meanings academics attribute to the concept of continuing professional development are shaped. Communication and ascribed meanings may have significant influences on how activities are approached and actions decided (Wittgenstein 1958, cited in Engeström and Miettinen 1999: 7), with 'systems of meaning' being '*negotiated* by people in the course of social interaction' (Taylor 1976, cited in Sayer 1992, italics in original). Thus it is acknowledged 'that language does not function by describing in a neutral way what is, but is both implicated in the construction of that reality and subject to a variety of micro-political processes' (Scott 2000: 5). Being mindful of the potential 'micro-political processes' and the unavoidable 'double hermeneutic' (Archer 2003) that describes the way interpretations are themselves interpretations, which are then further interpreted by the researcher (Scott and Morrison 2006), it is contended that the process of the research has been able to account for 'imperfectly successful communication' (Archer 2003: 155). Therefore, through the voices of academics, triangulated with findings from interviews with key informants and documentary data, the chapter has explored trends that describe how

academics' approaches to continuing professional development may be influenced by their interpretations and understandings of the concept. Sayer (1992) cautions that whilst practices or actions may be concept-dependent, this does not equate to deterministic cause and effect, but rather, following a critical realist approach, that concepts have the capacity to generate tendencies or causal powers. Very broadly, the findings confirm the data from the literature in that the language used in respect of continuing professional development in higher education is contested (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Clegg 2003; McWilliam 2002) and confusing for the individual. However as elucidated throughout this chapter, the current data has enabled further depth of exploration and description of the multi-layered nature of issues of interpretation and meaning, particularly with regard to the perceived purposes and validity of continuing professional development and its interface with the academic professionalism, identity and role.

At the earliest stages of analysis of the data it became apparent that in both case study universities, the phrase 'continuing professional development' is not always one that participants embrace commonly in their discourse. However, the underlying influences on academics' thinking in this regard are very different in the two institutions. The data from University A confirms the difficulties academics encounter in assigning a clear, consistent definition or meaning to the term continuing professional development. The key informants from this institution agreed that there is, in reality, scant agreement about what continuing professional development means across the institution and little indication that the institution-wide guidance and rhetoric on this is influencing how academics perceive their professional development. Whilst the University A academics are not generally, explicitly articulating issues of professional development, when asked to do so (as in these interviews), they readily express a view that development is

integral to their daily work activities. Conversely though, many participants in University A then suggest that the only valid and true form of professional development is that which is undertaken beyond the normal role, and is formal and tangible.

By contrast, in University B, the notion of continuing professional development is responded to with less hesitation, largely as a consequence of a widely embedded institutional discourse related to specific accredited modules of learning for academic staff. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the institutional language and its application is driving and has become embedded in the interpretations of academics. In University B too, where a high proportion of those interviewed maintained professional recognition from a subject-related body, the data reveals the powerful influence of external professional bodies and their professional development statements and mandates on academics' understandings of and attitudes towards their own development. The data suggests a correlation between academics' orientation to an external professional body's development framework and their locating professional development itself as being separate and external to the academic role and their employing institution. However, such a correlation is, in critical realist terms, merely descriptive, as the variables themselves are contingent upon the effects of underlying causal processes (Cruickshank 2007: 2).

Given that the institution is employing complex permutations of terms with similar meanings (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003; Zuber-Skerritt 1992) and that academics are, by their very nature, connected to many different professional bodies, there result many differences and contradictions in understanding. Significantly, the influences, or causal powers, of both the institutional discourse and professional body allegiance potentially constrain or enable the meaning ascribed and approach towards professional

development. The comparative data suggests that, in this specific respect, either commitment to an external, discipline-specific, continuing professional development framework, or differences in gender are more likely to influence academics' ascribed meanings and approaches towards continuing professional development than the differing context of their employing university backgrounds.

The findings discussed in this chapter also demonstrate divergence of views on the purposes of continuing professional development. There is notable similarity in the data from both case study universities signifying academics' consensual views that development is something pragmatic, reactive and responsive to ensuring ability to undertake their current role. However, it is also apparent that the institutions offer largely formal development that is directly and explicitly related to particular academic jobs or roles. Whilst acknowledging a small number of academics and key informants across the institutions who did make reference to a more proactive understanding, the largely arguably remedial interpretation of professional development begs further questioning. It is unclear, for example, whether such a perception arises as a result of the way in which developmental career pathways and opportunities are made apparent in the institutions and/or the effectiveness of appraisal/development processes. Both of these issues are considered in later chapters of this thesis.

Whilst the findings from both case study universities reflect a commonly held view that professional development in academia is all about ensuring competence to undertake the current role, there is evidence of some difference between the data from University A and University B when the relationship between professional development and detailed elements of the academic role are explored. Whilst the voices of academics from University B portray a broad interpretation of professional development, being

largely inclusive across all aspects of the complex academic role, their counterparts at University A were more likely to disaggregate the relationship to specific parts of the role such as being research or teaching-related. It is evident here, therefore, that the question of how professional development is understood within the context of the academic role varies according to the institution; this may be a sign of different institutional priorities and cultures, or may be reflective of different emphasis on roles in these universities.

There is suggestion both from the literature (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003) and from some participants in this research that variation in understanding is inevitable and potentially tolerable. However, alongside this there is evidence here that discourse and meaning-making have significant impact on perspectives and actions with regard to academics' approaches to professional development; as confirmed by the critical realism, 'the structures, conceptuality and conventions of language, embodied in discourses and texts ... govern what can be known and what can be communicated' (Usher, R. 1996: 27). Therefore a question remains about whether consistency of language, terminology and approaches within institutions (and potentially across professional bodies) is desirable, particularly given the knowledge that these different understandings appear to have a significant influence on academics' attitudes and approaches.

Within the context of this definitional complexity, the next chapter of this thesis further explores the findings from the data with particular regard to extra-institutional and intra-institutional influences on academics' approaches to continuing professional development.

CHAPTER 5 – FINDINGS: Influences on academics' approaches to continuing professional development

Introduction

The preceding chapter presented research data from the two case study institutions that specifically explored how academics interpret and give meaning to professional development. By demonstrating the importance of meaning and understanding in influencing academics' approaches to development, the chapter provided a contextual basis for the presentation of further findings. Thus, with an acknowledgement that language and discourse are value-rich concepts, this chapter presents a comparative analysis of the case study data that addresses the research sub-questions about whether extra-institutional and intra-institutional factors influence academics' attitudes and behaviours in respect of their continuing professional development. From the outset of data collection it was evident that many academics, whilst they may have clear thoughts about professional development as a disciplinary practice (as a nurse or a civil engineer) they had not given much prior thought to their continuing professional development in the context of being an academic in higher education. As a result throughout the interviews participants recounted their reflections of different influences on their practice as an academic but found it more challenging to articulate influences on their approaches to continuing professional development.

The presentation and discussion of data in this chapter predominantly puts the debate about the influences of structure and agency into the context of higher education, in particular the continuing professional development of academics. The critical realist stance embedded in this study proposes that whilst the interplay between structure and agency requires linkage in the analysis, it is a mistake to conflate the two (Danermark *et*

al. 2002; Sayer 1992). Therefore, throughout the chapter the intention is to clearly identify the powers, mechanisms and tendencies emerging from structure (in this case both extra-institutionally and from institutions as structures), thus facilitating logical evaluation of academics' deliberations in response to them. In this way, the collation and presentation of the data demonstrate coherence to the critical realist principles of 'analytical dualism' and the morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1995, cited in Danermark *et al.* 2002). The data is also discussed in conjunction with the wider literature base and critical realist ontology that underpins this study.

The chapter is structured into two parts, the first raising academic voices about the influences of extra-institutional mechanisms, the second presenting the data related to intra-institutional mechanisms. As in Chapter 4, the data from both case study universities is presented and discussed concurrently in order to draw attention to comparisons and enable tentative descriptions to be made from across and within the range of attribute variables. It is intended that this approach will draw out trends across the data that further understanding about how structural causal powers might become constraints and enablements to academics' approaches to continuing professional development.

Extra-institutional influences

The data illustrates that extra-institutional influences are commonly mediated at the institutional level and that it is the response from this level that is seen to constrain or enable academic practice and approaches to professional development. Interviewees from both case study institutions raise concerns about the effect of managerialist agendas (including audit, quality assurance and 'league tables'), but the corresponding matters of academic autonomy (Karran 2009) and self-regulation are not brought up.

Thus the data partially reflects assertions in the literature about increasing managerialism and simultaneous reductions in collegiate governance (Clegg 2009; Davidson 2004; Dill 2005; McWilliam 2002). Phillip's and Patrick's thoughts quoted below broadly summarise the views expressed by academics across both institutions:

... demands on academics are so great these days, constant efficiency, increasing student numbers, decreasing staff numbers, more assessment, more auditing, greater performance management regimes, where do you find time to do any of that [continuing professional development]?
(Phillip, University A)

... quantifying and measuring things that mean that you can then influence quality; people generate numbers, they do what they need to do and tick the box. It only works in some areas, but in teaching it doesn't, particularly not if it's to the detriment of your available time to do the job properly.
(Patrick, University B)

The influence of extra-institutional factors is present across the data from the academic interviews in both case study institutions, a key aspect of this appears to be the increasing 'push ... into market and marketlike behaviors' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 111) and the consequential changing relationship between academics and students. Whilst slightly more emphasis is given to this within the data from University B, acknowledgement of changing relationships is evident across the data:

The fees issue is obviously where our students become more demanding. There is a different relationship certainly, which I try to struggle against, but then I'm a dinosaur! I have never liked the 'customer' terminology for academia.
(Cameron, University A)

Managing student expectation is a big thing, because the students do feel that they are paying clients and a lot of them have an unrealistic expectation. You have this odd marriage, a kind of dependency on what they think they should receive, whereas the strategy for learning and teaching is to create an autonomous learner.
(Jennie, University B)

Exploring this aspect of the data in a different way, through academics' other comparable attributes, raised some additional interesting findings. It is noticeable, for

example, that across all academics interviewed 78% (n=7) of those who described themselves as working in pure subject areas considered the marketisation of higher education to be an influence on their practice, whilst only 25% (n=7) of all those in applied subject areas expressed this view. This disparity is also reflected when the data is examined through the attribute of whether the interviewee works within an external continuing professional development framework or not. Only 18% (n=2) of academics who have an external framework reflected Verna's view that '*it's all about market and consumerism as opposed to education and education*' (Verna, University B), whilst 36% (n=9) of those without an external framework held this view.

Dawn, for example, who does not work within an external framework was unequivocal that:

All our practices are influenced by the notion that higher education is a market now, we talk about customers now ... that's going to affect our practice. (Dawn, University A)

However, given the nature of many applied subject areas it is not surprising that the two variables (subject area and external framework) show similar findings. Furthermore, whilst critical realism guards against conflating correlation with cause (Scott 2000: 15) it is tentatively possible that this would explain what initially appears as a greater influence of managerialist approaches in University B, as being a consequence of more interviewees from that institution aligning with an external professional body. The reasons for the strength of feeling being concentrated in these groupings do not emerge directly from the data. It is likely, however, that many of those working in professional applied subject areas have experience of working in other more managerialist environments before becoming an academic. Patti, University B, states that '*nearly*

everyone in my school is a second career academic, indeed, within Chapter 1 of this thesis (page 27-35), the author's own experiences of moving from an external neo-liberalist environment into academia are reflected.

A particular example of an extra-institutional causal mechanism that interviewees frequently mentioned was the National Student Survey (NSS). However, whilst many of the academics described being aware of '*a lot of fuss*' (Josh, University A) about the survey, the data from across both case study institutions shows that the NSS had limited influence on academics' approaches to their professional development. Interviewees in both institutions often discredited the methodology of the survey and distanced themselves from it. When directly asked during the interviews about whether the outcomes of the survey might help academics identify areas of developmental need, there was overwhelming consensus that the survey results in policy change at institutional level with potentially a few pragmatic procedural changes, but that it would make limited difference to individual's practices. In critical realist terms, whilst the structural causal powers of the NSS are exercised by institutions, they do not appear to be activated by individual agents (academics) and thus are not felt as constraints or enablements to academics' development.

I have heard about it ... but I am not really involved, it is something which is happening ...
(Brandon, University A)

The university has just said you have got to return all essays to students within three weeks and that's the only impact that's had on us.
(Arthur, University B)

Additionally, Dawn (University A), who is an academic with some managerial responsibilities, describes how she '*managed the process*' in respect of the NSS in her area, and yet when directly asked whether the outcomes of the survey might impact on

academics' professional development, she confirms the view that '*No, I wouldn't say that it goes down to an individual level*' (Dawn, University A). Furthermore, the data from the interviews with key informants supports this view from across both institutions. Nigel (key informant, University A) used the example of the survey results related to student assessment feedback when he explained:

the response is to set a much tighter framework for the feedback of comments and marks to the students, the response is not to set up CPD so that academics can learn about how to provide feedback more effectively in a way that will demonstrate the positive and the negative ... (Nigel, University A)

Then, perhaps attempting to explain why the survey does not have this type of impact, Lorna (key informant, University B) argues that:

If you really want CPD to be seen as remedial and if you are going at it that way, ah! the problem has been identified ... it's probably to do with the performance of the staff ... therefore the staff need training ... it's quite a negative way of doing things. (Lorna, University B)

The National Student Survey was one of the specific areas of possible extra-institutional influence, or causal powers that were explored with all interviewees. Another such example is the Higher Education Academy (HEA), in particular, issues of professional recognition, United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF) (HEA 2006) and the Subject Centres network. It is interesting that many of the academic interviewees, when asked a broad question about external influences on their professional development, made no mention of any aspect of the work of the HEA; it was often necessary therefore, to move to some direct questions to ascertain people's views. This is reflective of the interim evaluation

of the HEA that found academic staff were not comprehensively aware of the Academy's strategic and operational activities (Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008: 86). The findings from the subsequent responses go some way in explaining the apparent lack of influence of the Academy, or in critical realist terms, understanding why agents intentionally choose not to exercise this generative mechanism.

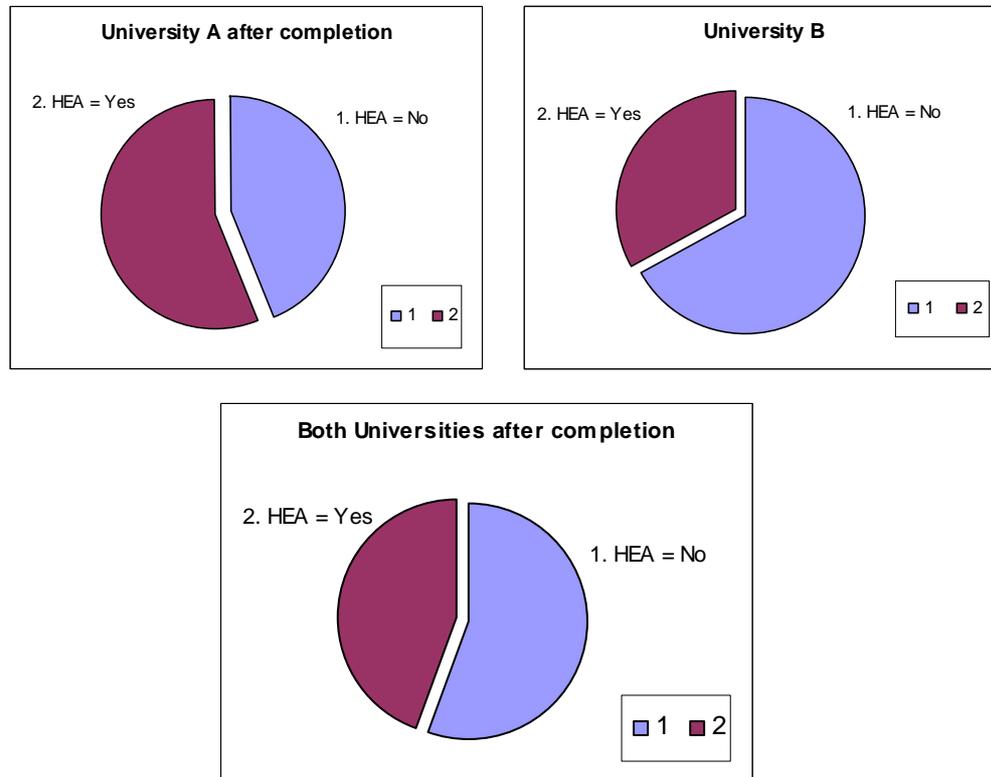
Chapter 1 (page 18) of this thesis outlined the HEA professional recognition scheme that offers three categories of recognition: Associate, Fellow and Senior Fellow (HEA undated). As guided by critical realist approaches to research, this section 'starts in the concrete' (Danermark *et al.* 2002: 109). Statistical data about the sample and their status against the scheme is presented and discussed below in order to give context to the findings on the influence of this scheme on academics' approaches to professional development. Figure 5.1 presents the numbers of academics interviewed who held HEA recognition as Fellows, at the time of the interview, or were working towards this.

Figure 5.1 HEA fellowship amongst the academic interview sample

		University A	University B	Totals
Academics interviewed who did not have professional recognition with the HEA	Number	8	12	20
	Percentage	44%	67%	55%
Academics interviewed who were Fellows of the HEA	Number	3	6	9
	Percentage	17%	33%	25%
Academics interviewed who were working towards recognition of the HEA through completion of a post-graduate award	Number	7	0	7
	Percentage	39%	0%	20%
Totals		18	18	36

It can be seen that a higher percentage of those interviewed in University B were Fellows of the Higher Education Academy, however due to the route of access to interviewees in University A, seven of those interviewed were enrolled on the university's post-graduate teaching programme and were, therefore, working towards HEA fellowship. Whilst there is no assurance that these academics will both complete the award and take up fellowship, if they do so, the overall extent of HEA recognition among interviewees would be as represented in the graphs in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2 HEA fellowship amongst the academic interview sample, assuming completion of related studies and subsequent applications to the scheme



It is evident, therefore, that of the academics interviewed for this research across both institutions, the greater percentage had not engaged with the HEA recognition scheme. It is worthy of note that at the time of the data collection, none of the key informants in either institutions knew with any certainty the numbers of HEA recognised practitioners in their university; furthermore the HEA themselves were unable, at the time of writing, to provide a national breakdown of fellowship data across England.

In the light of this overview of the statistical context and the evaluation of relevant literature from earlier chapters, the qualitative findings presented below may seem broadly predictable. Similarly to the findings relating to the National Student Survey discussed earlier, it is apparent from the data that the academics interviewed largely perceive professional recognition by the HEA as something which influences strategy

and policy at institutional level, but has less influence or bearing on their own behaviours, attitudes and approaches to practice and professional development. Asked broadly about the HEA, Verna (University B) replied '*I haven't got the time to read the e-mails*', similarly Diana explains:

I get regular e-mails from them, I get regular things through the post from the HEA for me to vote on things, that I don't read, I just bin them normally, which is awful but ... (Diana, University A)

The overall picture is no different even where the interviewee holds recognition as a Fellow of the Academy. Linked to this is the concept of professional identity (Clegg 2003; Wenger 1998). Even when holding HEA recognition as a 'Fellow', academics in both institutions are more likely to identify themselves with one particular aspect of their work, either as researchers, or discipline-specific 'educators' rather than having a professional status of 'teacher in higher education'. The Oakleigh Report recounted similar findings in that 'for some practitioners, uncertainty of the value of Fellowship status had generated unease or wider indifference' (Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008: 86).

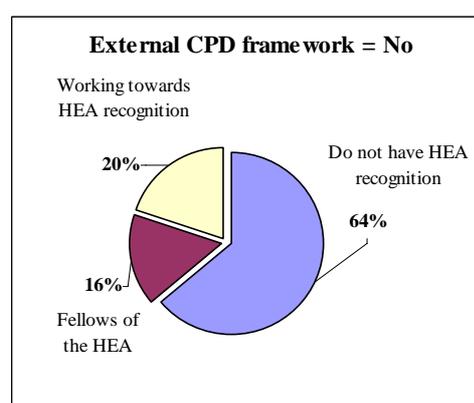
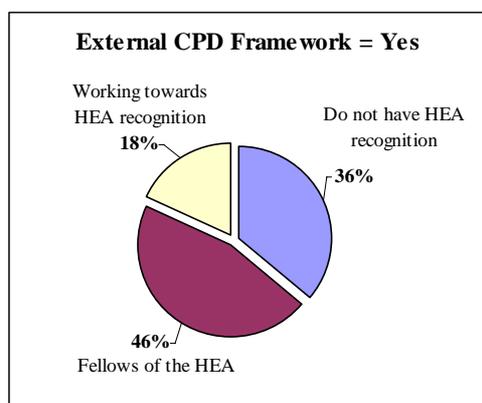
The HEA at a higher level gives me four letters after my name and not a lot else, well I see some vaguely interesting literature now and again that comes out, I feel I have to be a member for the sake of the department.
(Cameron, University A)

Basic reason [for not having applied for recognition] is that I have never had anyone give me a convincing argument to why I should ... given that I'm in regular contact with the subject centre and regularly send them information and receive information, so I feel like I'm a member anyway. Has it had any great impact on my professional practice? I would say any impact of non-membership has not been that significant, from my perspective ... I can't see a negative impact.
(Sven, University B)

The data from key informants suggests a perception that recognition with the HEA may be a more influential driver for those academics who work in a disciplinary area that does not offer them subject-related professional recognition. The voices of academics, however, do not reflect this view; furthermore, returning to the statistical data related to academic interviewees and recognition, the chart and graphical representations at Figure 5.3 below illustrate higher engagement with the scheme by those who already work within an external professional framework.

Figure 5.3 HEA fellowship amongst academic interview sample shown according to whether or not they worked within an external professional body CPD framework

		External CPD framework = Yes	External CPD framework = No	Totals
Academics interviewed who did not have professional recognition with the HEA	Number	4	16	20
	Percentage	36%	64%	55%
Academics interviewed who were Fellows of the HEA	Number	5	4	9
	Percentage	46%	16%	25%
Academics interviewed who were working towards recognition of the HEA through completion of a post-graduate award	Number	2	5	7
	Percentage	18%	20%	20%
Totals		11	25	36



These figures, however, should be considered with caution, following the critical realist view that to make deterministic links between potential correlations and cause would be too simplistic (Scott 2000). The apparent higher levels of engagement with the HEA recognition scheme by academics who also meet the CPD requirements of a discipline-specific professional body, do not necessarily equate to the HEA scheme having more influence on those academics' approaches to their professional development. Whilst it is possible that, with their professional backgrounds, these individuals have a propensity to give more credibility to formalised frameworks of this type, there is no clear evidence of this in the qualitative data. Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from the data, both the statistics and the academic voices in this research, that there is a correlation between engagement with the HEA recognition scheme and engagement with an external subject-related CPD framework. The cause of this and the extent of its influence on individual approaches to professional development, however, remain unclear. Writing as a critical realist, Cruikshank (2007: 2) states that 'correlations are descriptions rather than causal explanations in themselves ... because for critical realists correlations between variables are contingent effects of underlying causal processes'.

It is also noticeable that when discussing professional recognition through the HEA scheme the key informants, working at the centre of these institutions, reflect a different view than the academics interviewed; this is in contrast to their perceptions about the influence of the National Student Survey. So, for example, key informant Julia (University A) suggests that it is believed that academics value the external accreditation to the HEA achieved through completion of the in-house post-graduate teaching qualification more than they value the academic credit points, the award and the learning gained. This view may have developed to reinforce findings arising from

key informant data in University B, that professional recognition with the HEA holds substantial institutional value. Lorna (key informant, University B) was clear that *'the university thinks it's a good thing'* whilst Adrian took this further to explain that various institutional strategies *'promote the Higher Education Academy membership more strongly than engagement'* (Adrian, key informant, University B), this included statements within the institution's teaching and learning strategy. There is however evidence from the University B data that the influence of the HEA at institutional level is quickly diluted and lost through the structure of the organisation, which might be explained by the mediating powers of academics. It may also be linked to different understandings about priorities at institutional and departmental levels. As Sandra (University B) explained, her understanding was that discipline-related recognition was given higher priority by the institution when she stated, *'nobody probably asks that question [whether individuals in the department are fellows of the HEA], they make sure that we keep up to date in terms of our professional registration. The university wants to know'* (Sandra, University B). Therefore, whilst there is some inference in that data that recognition with the HEA may be more attractive to those academics who do not have subject related professional recognition, what is clear is that recognition status for academics is considered to be influential in driving strategy and policy at the institutional level but is attributed with limited value at the individual level. This is supported by the critical realist explanation that *'the causal power of social forms is mediated by social agency'* (Archer 2003: 2).

This same disparity between the institutional response and academic voices is evident when exploring whether the UKPSF (HEA 2006) has an influence on academics' approaches to professional development. Whilst, on the one hand, both of the case study institutions have structured, mapped and accredited their post-graduate teaching

qualification against the standards, the academic participants to this research, including those enrolled on these programmes, showed little awareness or interest in the standards. Only one of the 36 academics interviewed across both institutions showed any awareness of the standards and even then his understanding was limited. Josh (University A), a student on the post-graduate teaching programme, explained that he had heard of the standards *'through the PG Cert, that's the kind of things that would get discussed at teaching committees that I wouldn't understand'* (Josh, University A).

Interestingly, when asked about the possible influence of the UKPSF, academic participants in both institutions who also held a level of managerial responsibility were quick to interpret, or rather misinterpret, these as being something to do with quality assurance:

Yes, yes I am sure it comes down in terms of how teaching is assessed and how quality is assured but it's not something that we talk about on a regular basis.
(Diana, University A)

Not explicitly. I think that we are subject to so many other benchmark standards from professional regulatory bodies as well as QA in its various forms ...
(Patti, University B)

There may, of course, be many reasons for this, including the use of words like 'standards' and their association with quality assurance. However, it is apparent that the standards are not being, in critical realist terms, activated either as enablers or constraints. As noted in Chapter 2 (page 51), the UKPSF (HEA 2006) centres on teaching and learning and does not reflect the breadth of the whole academic role, thus potentially resulting in a lack of awareness or interest. Equally, it is possible that the HEA and institutions have not done enough to ensure awareness and understanding of the standards so that academics have information upon which to form their 'reflexive deliberations' (Archer 2003: 130).

A further similarity in the data across the two case study institutions was that the academic voices reflect a higher level of contact and awareness with the HEA subject centre network than any other aspect of the HEA's work; this is particularly evident from academics working in pure subject areas. In this regard, the findings can be seen to correspond with debates about academics' strong affiliations to their disciplines (Clegg 2003), an issue that is also discussed in the previous chapter.

The subject centre is fantastic, we love the subject centres, we do know about the days that they organise and they are very useful, it also gives you a feel about what is going on at other universities, they are fantastic and they have funded some experimental stuff that we have done. The academy as a whole just doesn't have an impact.
(Pamela, University A)

Some of our discipline areas are linked to the subject centres, so [names subjects] are linked quite closely with theirs; again it's quite variable and its individual members of staff who engage.
(Hazel, University B)

As may be expected the key informants, working at the centre of institutions, reported less interaction with the subject centres. Lorna (key informant, University B) suggests that the HEA is most likely to impact on the professional development of academics:

if they choose to engage with their subject centres ... I would say yes and obviously some do, I think that that is potentially very useful that they can actually talk to, go to events, get publications, which is actually more related to their subject (Lorna, key informant, University B).

Academics and those at the centre of institutions therefore have very different levels of engagement with the Academy or, through the critical realist lens, have different approaches to mediating the structural generative causal powers. This potentially results

in very inconsistent, disparate forms and intensity of influence, or constraints and enablements, from this extra-institutional body.

In presenting the findings related to extra-institutional influences on academics' approaches to continuing professional development, there have, thus far, been few differences between the views raised from each case study institution. The data illustrates however, that there are some extra-institutional factors which have different levels of influence on academics across the two institutions and it is on these that the chapter will now focus. Further to earlier discussions related to engagement with the HEA subject centre network and academics prioritising allegiance to their disciplinary area (Becher and Trowler; 2001, Clegg 2003), there is stark evidence from the data that the weight academics give to being knowledgeable and up-to-date in their subject area can significantly influence their approaches to professional development. Interestingly however, this viewpoint is expressed notably more strongly from academics in University B where, as previously indicated, more of the sample worked in applied subject areas with external subject-related CPD frameworks. As might be expected then, more frequent and emphatic descriptions of the powerful influence of mandatory, discipline-related professional development requirements emerge from participants in University B, as exemplified by Patrick:

*no one else within the university can say 'Patrick have you done your CPD?'
My professional body can say have you done it, and if I have not evidenced it, I
can lose my status. (Patrick, University B)*

Additionally the concept of change within the external environment of their profession or discipline was also reflected, in the University B data, as a significant factor affecting what those academics felt they needed to focus their development on:

For me it's more to do with the national issues driving the professions that we are serving. They are very dominant drivers because most of our business is commissioned, we have hardly any HEFCE funded provision in our school.

(Patti, University B)

However, the broader perspective of professional development as something shaped by external, discipline-related factors is expressed across data from both institutions, indicating a consensus from academic voices that the influence of external networks on both practice and professional development is significant:

'the majority of it [my professional development] happens, putting aside the PG Cert, outside the university.
(Josh, University A)

[My colleagues] would see some of their intellectual stimulation coming from having seminars with people involved from other universities.
(Dieter, University B)

Over 80% (n = 29) of all academics interviewed referred in some way to the importance of networks, most commonly (53%, n = 19) describing discipline and subject-related networks whose influence was not only research-based, but also held important associations with the external environment of the subject, as discussed above. It is noteworthy, however, that none of the key informants to this research made mention of the importance of external networks, either for themselves or for the academic colleagues with whom they work. Returning to the academic voices on this issue, whilst there is similarity evident across the two case study institutions that external networks are *'very important and they're probably stronger ... than the relationships within the university'* (Diana, University A), there is evidence of such networks having very

different influential foci in each institution. In University A, a stronger emphasis was given to external networks that supported and drove research related activities, whilst in University B there was more mention of external networks that were associated with the teaching and learning aspects of the academic role.

We have research collaborations but not teaching collaborations.
(Thomas, University A)

I'm a member of the [discipline association] which has a section devoted to the teaching and learning of [the subject] ... I'm on the mailing list for that, I attend conferences and the meetings ...
(Arthur, University B)

Whilst this broad divergence of emphasis might be expected, given the institutional contexts as outlined in Chapter 3, within each area of focus there are further differences in issues that are given prominence. So, for example, within the data from University A, there is an indication that some academics value external networks because they open possibilities to find out about career opportunities in other institutions and to learn about career pathways from other academics:

You see someone who is a senior professor who has come through a slightly peculiar route the same as you then, that's helpful and how did they get to there? how can I learn from their journey? So I'm always paying attention, as I have not been here for very long but certainly want to get on ... I'm thinking about how do I do that? (Marie, University A)

Additionally, in University A, when referring to the importance of research-related external networks, academics described a difficult balance between collegiate sharing and preserving personal and institutional originality as they felt they had to be 'a bit careful here because we are trying to develop the research here, to keep it a niche, but also keep ideas coming in, keep a little bit for ourselves, you don't really want to sell

the idea to other people' (Brandon, University A). This tension is reflective of 'mixed messages' (Barnett 2003: 85) in higher education, where "competition" rather than "collaboration" has become the dominant cultural imperative' (Deem *et al.* 2008: 4). Conversely, however, neither of these issues was raised in University B, where many of those interviewed stressed the significance of links to employer partners and practice in their disciplinary field with *'very extensive network[s] of partnerships in industry'*, (Jennie, University B). It was also felt that *'some of the best relationships if you like, that we have are those with our external examiners. You know, we've had quite a lot of cross-fertilisation there'* (Chandra University B).

The analysis of the data also highlighted a range of extra-institutional influences on academic practice and actions in respect of academic development which, grouped together, might be referred to as student equality and diversity. In particular, reflected in data from both institutions, were the increasing internationalisation of students and the drive towards widening participation in higher education. That being said, there were again variations in emphasis not only between the data from each case study, but there was also discernable disparity when examining the data through the other comparable attributes.

The impact of working with an increasingly international body of students was expressed more loudly by the voices of academics from University B. Across all the data, a quarter (25%, n = 9) of all academics and a third (33%, n = 3) of all key informants interviewed mention internationalisation as an influence on practice; of this a total of 38% (n = 8) were participants from University B and 17% (n=4) were University A. However, dissecting the data differently revealed that concerns about developmental need related to issues of internationalisation was much more prevalent

from academics who work within the professional requirements of a discipline-related external body and equally was more prevalent from female academics. Whilst the reasons for these differences are not apparent, the influence on academic practice and, for some, their approach to prioritising activity for development, is evident. A particular example mentioned was that of language:

We do get people ... English is not their first language and it's very difficult because none of us are ESL teachers, now, I know about techniques etc, etc, but I'm not a specialist in bilingual learners ...(Chandra, University B)

Adrian also acknowledges the challenges that internationalisation creates:

We talk about internationality on the curriculum, but we don't know what it means yet so ... our UK students find we exist in a bubble and we need to develop far more in the way of exchange opportunities, more kind of global understanding for students who stay at home; so that is the biggie, that is going to need staff to be moved as well (Adrian, key informant, University B).

In a similar vein, participants discussed their experiences of the impact from the Government commitment to widening participation in higher education by increasing the numbers of students from traditionally under-represented groups (DfES 2003; DfES 2006). It is noticeable that, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the data shows evidence of concern about both the constraining influence of neo-liberalist managerial approaches on academic practice and the changing position of the student in relation to the funding of higher education. It is however the issue of widening participation that is considered by many to have more of an influence on their practice and their developmental needs. When directly asked about the impact on the skills needed by staff, Cameron responds, *'some staff have those and some don't, it might well be that we*

have to develop skills in that area to compensate' (Cameron, University A). Indeed, half of all academics interviewed for this research (50%, n = 18) made mention of the influence of widening participation on their approach to professional development. The greater proportion of these (61%, n = 11) were academics working in University B and reflected the view that *'it's a massive a very rapid shift which you have to deal with'* (Hazel, University B). However, the data shows that whilst academics in University A also made mention of this issue, it was largely to reflect that widening participation is not considered to greatly influence them. Some felt that University A *'paid lip service'* (Dieter, University A) to issues of 'widening participation' and so it was not something that confronted them in practice, or in which they needed to develop skills and knowledge. It is evident from the data that in University A additional student needs were most likely to be met by identified other individuals, often employed specifically from Further Education (FE) teaching backgrounds. Some whole programmes where this issue had been raised were now taught in the FE sector. Phillip explains that on one programme they have *'appointed a dedicated teacher to the course who came from the FE sector'* because *'...he comes with a lot of experience in dealing with WP issues and students like that'* (Phillip, University A).

There is less disparity shown in the data when it is examined through the other variables, with the exception of the differentiation between pure and applied subject areas. Here issues of 'widening participation' are more likely to be seen as influencing the CPD needs of academics where they are working with students on professional programmes, in applied subject areas. Jameela explains:

There are issues with dyslexia management in the [...] profession, it's fine in the university where they can have pink or blue paper and they can have special software but in the [practice area] they can't, [pause] I don't want to exclude

people because there are some very good [names profession] but surely if they can't read a [key practice document] they are a liability, should we be putting in so much energy into forcing them out with a [names qualification]? (Jameela, University B)

Returning to the comparison of data from the two case study universities, when talking about structural, extra-institutional influences, interviewees also made frequent reference to the Research Assessment Exercise. In Chapter 1 (page 19), the impact of research funding initiatives to higher education institutions was discussed, in particular the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a UK-wide activity that results in 'quality profiles' for each submission of research activity made by institutions of higher education (Research Assessment Exercise, undated). It is important to note that the data collection period for this research (September 2007 - March 2008) coincided with a critical date for the RAE, as the closing date to make submissions to the RAE 2008 was 30 November 2007. It is therefore not surprising that when talking about extra-institutional influences on their approaches to professional development, academics from both institutions made frequent reference to the influence of the RAE. Dawn (University A) explains *'that in terms of external influences, I would say that the RAE process is a big influence which you cannot ignore'* (Dawn, University A).

The experience of the RAE, however, was recounted differently in the two case study institutions. Data from University A, a member of the Russell Group and therefore recognized as a 'research-intensive university' (The Russell Group, undated), reflects the strength of institutional and managerial response to the exercise, resulting in significant influences on academics' priorities and approaches to professional development at that time. Conversely, data from University B indicates a more varied

and less emphatic response across the institution, with the consequence of a less direct influence being felt by academic interviewees. Key informants from the two institutions confirm these broad positions:

The RAE...cats and pigeons you know, people running around quite hectically trying to ... it's a big exercise and it ultimately determines your funding ... so people get very concerned about that.
(Vikram, key informant, University A)

No great influence, because we're not research intensive, we're not going to get much money out of it ... but we put quite a lot of effort into our submission, not me personally, it's not my territory but ... It's not a big issue for us.
(Adrian, key informant, University B)

This difference is further exposed in individual academics' explanations of how they experience the influence of the RAE on their professional development. Within the University A data, 55% (n = 10) of the academics interviewed agreed that the impetus to meet the requirements of the institution with regard to the RAE, resulted in a 'disastrous process' (Dawn, University A) and was 'very counter-productive' (Marie, University A) with regard to academics' approaches to professional development. Martin (University A) offered the following example:

We write books, or students share [authorship] as part of their CPD; we have been actively discouraged from writing books with students, because they are not research, because they cannot be entered [in the RAE]. So this causes awful tension (Martin University A).

Additionally, some academics described how the process of the RAE led them to fear for the security of their employment as 'if we don't score in the next RAE we will be closed down' (Dieter, University A), and in a similar tone, some of Dieter's colleagues referred to resultant low morale; these views reflect of those of the University and College Union (University and College Union 2008). The experiences and views of

participants in this research can be seen to reflect ‘the negative impacts that the RAE has had on the development and functioning of university departments and academic work, and the development of disciplinary knowledge production’ (Lucas 2006: 35). These negative influences, from a critical realist view, reflect structural causal powers that individuals have activated as constraints. However, there is a significant dimension of power in this instance: ‘the constraining power of master-slave-type relations’ (Hartwig 2007: 80). Indeed, key informants provided evidence of a centrally-developed institutional resource to support academics who had been rejected from the RAE submission in their subject area. Further evidencing the strength of influence that the RAE has on academics’ professional development, Diana (University A) says that ‘*I think now, now it’s done, hopefully it’ll get back to CPD stuff as opposed to output-related stuff*’ (Diana, University A).

By contrast, academics in University B largely reflect little interest or influence in the RAE, whether constraining or enabling. Chandra, Arthur, Judith and Sophia (all University B) stated that the RAE had no impact on them, although Sophia added that she felt that the lack of engagement from her subject area could be detrimental to herself and colleagues if they were looking to develop academic careers in other institutions. Thus, despite the RAE’s apparently low influence on academics’ work in University B, some participants did express negative views about the exercise; Verna (University B) reflected her concern that the exercise devalued her work and her subject area, as it had to ‘*piggyback*’ onto a larger subject, to be recognised in the RAE; Jameela (University B) said ‘*my understanding is that it causes panic, stress and loads of extra work and no one really takes much notice of the output*’ (Jameela, University B).

Reflections on the Research Assessment Exercise as recounted in the data provide a

clear example of an extra-institutional structural causal power. However, it is also apparent that individual concerns and deliberations about the RAE are largely dependent upon the ways in which their employing institution and its management respond to and prioritise, or activate, that power. Thus frequently it is the way in which the institution mediates structural powers that results in institutionally emergent causal powers, which individual academics, in turn, confront and have to mediate. The chapter moves now to focus on the data that addresses the impact of institutional causal powers.

Intra-institutional influences

As shown in the foregoing section of the chapter, the voices of academics in this research indicate that structural causal powers emergent from their employing institution can be significantly influential, either as constraints or enablements, to their approaches to professional development. In order to explore academics' perceptions of the institutional approach to academics' professional development, interviewees were asked about their perceptions of institutional philosophy and strategy related to continuing professional development for academic staff. What emerged from this aspect of the interviews, across both case study institutions, were broadly similar responses. In summary, whilst there was no awareness of written policy statements on academic development, participants focussed on the directly provided formal programmes offered in the institutions, commonly linked to teaching and learning (Åkerlind 2005; Gosling 2008) and described institutional approaches as largely 'supportive' and 'encouraging'. The data indicates broad agreement that institutional strategies, in their widest sense, have limited influence or impact across the academic body; their influence is dependent upon academics being proactive in engaging with the processes and opportunities. In critical realist terms, 'subjects have to respond to these influences by using their own personal powers' (Archer 2007: 12).

It depends on your own initiative, other people are not pushing and encouraging.
(Brandon, University A)

There are opportunities there if people want to take them on, is what I would say. I would say that it was led by the academics, in my experience.
(Imran, University A)

I think that it has [a philosophy for CPD] because I have looked for it and I think there's a difference, I've looked for it for me. I don't know how much they shout about it ... so there is a culture there but you have to look for it and once you find it it's wonderful.
(Jessica, University B)

As stated above, and supported by discussion in the previous chapter, the formal, directly provided programmes, both academically accredited and shorter courses, commonly based on aspects of teaching and learning, are highly influential in shaping academics' concepts of professional development. Indeed, more than this, Clegg contends that 'academic development is a primary site through which the "subject" of "teaching and learning in higher education" has come into being' (2009: 403).

As a consequence, when views are expressed on institutional approaches to professional development, these teaching and learning related programmes became the focus of participants' interpretation of 'institutional approaches'. For example, James (University A) describes the institutional approach as '*kind of like a big CPD buffet, courses are all there you just go and help yourself*' (James, University A). Similarly in University B, Arthur suggests '*in effect it has a central sort of ... "we will provide certain training courses, and I think having done that that's our responsibility and that's CPD"*' (Arthur, University B). Indeed, in University B, it is apparent that academics are very aware of the largely teaching and learning-related provision from the centre and many, like Jakob, '*think that centralisation works very well, because then you have a core team, a lot of them connected to education, but they draw upon expertise from within schools as well*' (Jakob, University B). Conversely, in University

A, there was less knowledge about the central provision and functions, particularly from those academics who were not participants in the University's post-graduate teaching programme at the time. Further to this however many academics, again in both institutions, qualified their perceptions of central functions and approaches by explaining that they experienced the most tangible supportive culture for professional development at departmental, school or team level. Yet, it is apparent that this devolved approach is also seen to result in potential inequalities, leaving academics in some areas feeling less valued, with Sophia's example being expressed in different ways across both institutions:

I think that there are differences between schools depending on how well the schools do financially. I think that my school does well financially and therefore we possibly have more money for academic staff development than other schools. (Sophia, University B)

There is also some indication of disparity within the data from University A, in that academics who have been working in academia longer sense that their experience of institutional support for professional development differs from 'new starters in the last five years' (Pamela, University A). This might be explained, from a critical realist position, by reference to Archer's morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003), outlined in Chapter 1 (pages 24-5), whereby the dimension of time is considered important. The view is that 'the interplay between social structure and agency takes place over time' (Danermark *et al.* 2002: 181) and hence may differentially influence academics with varying lengths of exposure to the structure. Thus Phillip, who has over 21 years' experience, suggests that '*for established staff it's much more difficult*' (Phillip, University A) and George also suggests that institutional emphasis is on newly appointed staff as he feels that '*the university encourages development of staff on*

“probationary level”” (George, University A). Whilst this view is not universally apparent across the data from this institution, it is interesting that Thomas, who has between 6 and 10 years’ academic experience, believes that University A is developing a coherent approach to academic CPD, but that *‘it’s building but it’s building from new staff’* (Thomas, University A).

When referring to institutional approaches to influencing the professional development of new academic staff, interviewees often gave the example of the institution’s post-graduate programme in teaching and learning in higher education, and talked about how this was operationalised in practice. Both of the case study institutions offer post-graduate accredited programmes in teaching and learning in higher education accredited to the Higher Education Academy recognition scheme. In University A attendance and completion of the certificate is not strictly mandatory at institutional level, although a minimum of attendance on the programme is often made a condition of satisfactory completion of probation by the relevant line manager, usually at Head of Department level. Thus Phillip, who holds line management responsibilities, explains:

Academic staff, people who teach and do research, if they are probationary then I require that they do the training course offered through [the institution's staff development section], the PG Cert. Virtually all of the staff have then gone on to the full certificate, but they are required to do the training course as a minimum. That sees them through the first five years of their contract and I class that as their CPD. (Phillip, University A)

Phillip portrays a view here that the post-graduate programme in teaching and learning includes all professional development needs for new academics in their first five years of academic work. It is then not surprising that such centrally-provided, teaching and

learning related programmes can significantly drive perceptions and interpretations of professional development. Further to this, it is evident in the data from this institution that, as a result of differential approaches from managers across the institution, there is a lack of clarity amongst academics about whether the programme is mandatory or not, and if it is, whether this means attendance only or satisfactory completion of the assessed elements. Added to this, the data reveals that academics engage in the programme because they believe it is required of them, and they interpret it as meeting a need of the institution, rather than being personally motivated to participate. Talking about his colleagues, George suggests that *'when they get their PGCert, they sit back and OK that's been done and completed and let's focus on my research, which is what I prefer to do the most'* (George, University A).

In terms of the PG cert that we do, that's more than encouraged, that's pushed hard and you've got to do it, you've got to achieve the taught part of it and the university in terms of the rankings as a department in The Times and The Guardian and so on, one of the things that they look at apparently is the number of the department who are fellows [of the HEA]...so they want you to pass it so their fellowship goes up' (Diana, University A).

University B also offers a post-graduate certificate, a one-year programme related to teaching and learning in higher education, which is one part of a professional development framework that includes a range of modules building to Masters and Doctoral level awards. The data again shows some confusion in the institution about formal requirements with regard to the post-graduate certificate programme, with some academics and key informants stating that completion of the post-graduate certificate is a requirement of probation for new academics who do not have an equivalent teaching

qualification, whilst other key informants and academics said that this was not so. It is clear though that the further modules at Masters and Doctoral level are offered as professional development opportunities. It is interesting that whilst there is a view that academics do not respond favourably to mandatory requirements of this type (see Davidson 2004), where academics did perceive the programme to be compulsory in University B, there were a few positive perceptions of this approach. Patrick says that he was *'pleased'* that he did it and that it was *'really good development, it gave me confidence to experiment, do things differently, try different methods, learn to be a better teacher and it gave credibility as well, getting a qualification'* (Patrick, University B). However, Lorna (key informant, University B) acknowledges that being compulsory *'does give a different flavour to the course'*. The notion of being mandatory and linked to probation also suggests the need for some form of 'policing' and process for addressing non-compliance; interestingly however, none of those who stated that completion of the post-graduate certificate was compulsory, were aware of any ways in which this requirement has been enforced. The data shows, however, that there is some confusion in both case study institutions about whether their post-graduate programmes are mandatory and indeed, how this might then be put into effect. Of particular interest to this research project is that, with the exception of a few responses from University B discussed above, the data indicates that the more mandatory approaches are experienced as constraints, they *'feel like a stick'* (Dawn, University A) and have limited positive influences, or enablements, on academics' approaches to professional development.

However, there is another side to institutional causal powers: those that aim to enable professional development. Both case study institutions offer 'institutional carrots', or rewards, in the form of various non-promotional recognition and reward schemes to encourage academics to engage in professional development. Again, these appear to be

largely linked to excellence in teaching or supporting student learning. It is starkly noticeable from the data that the key informants across both institutions made many references to these schemes, whilst very small numbers of academic interviewees included such schemes as being influential or enabling; those who made mention of them commonly being those who had, at some time, been beneficiaries of them.

The debates about ‘carrots or sticks’ can be seen to run parallel to the debate about trust or mistrust and coercion, which is aired in the literature (Cullingford 2002; Deem *et al.* 2008; Field 2002) and reflected in the critical realist literature within the frame of relationships between causal powers and effects. Thomas, in University A, further links this to the debates about approaches to research and teaching in higher education, for as shown in this section of the chapter and supported by the literature (Åkerlind 2005; Gosling 2008), institutional approaches to continuing professional development for academics are centred almost exclusively on the teaching and learning aspect of the complex academic role. Thus Thomas suggests:

What we should be doing is making sure that you are approaching your teaching in the same way in which you approach your research and for someone to come and tell you about your teaching which is a huge chunk of your professional life, when they trust you to get on with your research ... why do it with your teaching? Then you come to what a lot of people suspect is the real answer, which is the university wants to be able to show the outside world that it has a well-trained and well-skilled workforce and that is their view of continuing professional development. (Thomas, University A)

Thomas implies that institutionally there is a need to evidence the professional credibility of academics. Sven (University B) takes this further to argue that the crux of the issue is not trust or coercion, but:

that professions embrace CPD in order to survive ... Any profession that wants to maintain its status ... its power base, has to demonstrate to society that they are engaged in a process of development, that their staff are up to date and have contemporary knowledge ... On one level CPD is about people developing ... but if you look at the profession as a body, I think CPD is there for another purpose, it's there for survival basically, as a professional, that's my take.

(Sven, University B)

Sven's view is reflective of the work of Rothwell and Arnold (2005), who suggest that where it is perceived that a profession has less robust foundations, it is more likely that vigorous, explicit, professional development policies will be implemented.

The chapter will now consider some institutionally-emergent policies that the interviewees considered to be potentially significant (and thus structural causal powers). Findings from the research will be examined that reveal whether these policies are influential as constraints or enablements to individuals' approaches to their development.

The data from across both case study institutions illustrates that there are certain policies and processes that were commonly associated with intra-institutional influences on academic professional development. Terminology for these processes often differed between the two institutions, therefore to ensure anonymity and aid coherence one term has been adopted throughout this thesis. The processes given most emphasis in the data

were: induction and probation, academic appraisal, peer observation, mentoring, allocations of scholarly activity time, and career progression. It is necessary to be cautious about drawing conclusions from the data because, much as Archer found in her research, ‘the one result that is rarely, if ever, found is a complete uniformity of response on behalf of every person who encounters the same constraint or the same enablement’ (2007: 12). However, the data suggests broadly that across all of these policy-driven areas, academics commonly experience very limited influence on their approaches to professional development, with some aspects resulting in constraints for some individuals. That being said, where aspects of mentoring, observation and appraisal are experienced positively, strong enablement factors and a feeling of being valued by the institution are expressed. Some examples of academics’ voices about these institutional processes are discussed below.

Across both institutions, induction is implemented at two levels, with a brief university-wide formal event and then the remainder of the introductory learning needs of the newly-employed academic being identified and largely met at the level of the department or team. Equally, both case study institutions implement a probationary period for new staff, although participants largely only referred to this when talking about connected requirements to engage in the University’s post-graduate teaching programme, as discussed earlier. The result is that whilst reported experiences vary, there is very little evidence that any elements of induction processes become enablers or constraints to the individual’s future approaches to their professional development. This may not be surprising as many participants, like Diana, experience induction as being about the immediacy of practical issues:

My induction was 'there's the toilet, here's the coffee room, there's the photocopier, there's the person to ask if you have any questions', that kind of thing... that was basically it. (Diana, University A)

Or Pamela, who after some laughter, describes the university-wide event:

Induction was in a lecture theatre with a load of people from the admin centre, and it was about how lucky we were to be here and how the finance system worked. (Pamela, University A)

Data from University B illustrates intentions to enhance induction processes, as Hazel (University B) explains:

We need to sort our induction ... because I think it should be more CPD than it is, it's only a checklist at the moment. So we really need to up the relevance and the content on that. University level induction is broader and I'm not sure that many people go on it. (Hazel, University B)

For the purposes of addressing the research questions set out for this project, however, it is not possible from either the more positive experiences of induction or those that are less constructive, to deduce that induction processes have any influence on the individual's ongoing approaches and attitudes towards their professional development.

Despite being known by different terms in each university, there is similarly little discernable difference between academics' experiences and expressed influences from 'academic appraisal' in the two institutions. That being said, an additional complicating causal power emergent from some departments in University A, and experienced by academics as a constraint to professional development, was described as follows by

Cameron:

With the research assessment coming up, my school and its constituent departments instigated a six-monthly performance monitoring research review and I didn't like it, my reason for not liking it was because it wasn't clearly distinguished from appraisal, the two got horribly mixed up, which was unfortunate ... (Cameron, University A)

In both institutions, however, there appears to be very variable practice in terms of how, by whom and how often academic appraisal is carried out, but more importantly for this research, the outcomes are often experienced as either having very little influence on professional development, or as negative and constraining. Most commonly, across both institutions, academics reflect a view that appraisal is '*a box ticking exercise*' (Josh, University A), where the degree or form of influence is highly dependent on the relationship with the appraiser and their style, as '*there is a lot of variance between different managers*' (Verna, University B). Additionally it is apparent that due to very varied practices, the appraisal systems provide little opportunity for academics to influence institutional processes. Drawing on Archer's critical realism-based morphogenetic cycle (Figure 1.1, page 25) it can be seen that between T2 to T3 (the socio-cultural interaction of the appraisal process) and T4 (structural elaboration where structural properties might be reshaped or preserved) there is no evidence that, from the institution, the causal powers of agents are being exercised (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003). In other words, academics do not sense any opportunities to use the appraisal process to shape institutional processes so that these may, in turn, be experienced as enablements. Key informants to this research, again across both case study institutions, agree that the appraisal activity is variable and that there are limited ways in which the outcomes of

the process are able to influence the institution's or central department's further responses to academic development.

In this section of the chapter the focus, to this point, has been on the macro intra-institutional mechanisms that might influence academics' professional development. In the latter part of the section, the findings related to what might be conceived as micro intra-institutional, or internal networks, teams or 'communities of practice' (Wenger 1998) are considered. The strength of the influence of membership of professional and external communities has already been considered; further to this, it is evident from the data that academics are members of constellations of communities of practice and that, as argued by Wenger, these may often have 'structural interdependences' (Wenger 1998: 219), which may explain why Naomi (University A) stated that *'it's kind of hard to define the team at the moment'*. Wenger also argues that such networks 'are privileged locus for the *creation* of knowledge' (Wenger 1998: 214, italics in original), but for critical realists, these networks, teams or groups of like-minded academics can themselves become micro structures capable of generating causal powers, which then may or may not be exercised and experienced as constraints or enablements. Indeed, findings from the data indicate that intra-institutional networks have a significant influence on learning and development for some and little influence others; there is no evidence of a uniform or common view (Archer 2007). There are however some trends that emerge from the data with regard to localised team working and its influence on academics' approaches to professional development. As might be expected, teams are most frequently subject or discipline based, yet within this there are three aspects of interest that are apparent in the data: first, that networks are teaching or research related and the approach within them then varies; second, that team working has different meanings and potentially different influences for academics with differing levels of

experience; and thirdly that informal, small networks are felt to be more enabling than formalised, often larger networks.

The first of these trends is that internal faculty, school or departmental teams, whilst discipline related, are commonly research or teaching focussed and appear to reflect the recognised differential status accorded to each activity (Barnett 2003; Malcolm and Zukas 2001; Trigwell and Shale 2004: 523). This is evident across both institutions, despite the acknowledged strong research focus of University A. The data also reveals that those networks focussing on teaching are referred to as being very pragmatic, business and organisation led, whilst research related communities are considered to be collegiate and discursive.

<p><i>It's about who's going to teach what, what's the syllabus on this module going to be, is it going to change, have we lost somebody and particularly if staff are teaching other modules would they want to change the syllabus. It tends to be dominated by things like that.</i> (Josh, University A)</p>	<p><i>It's about the organisation but it's essential because if that's not done then sometimes sessions are not covered. There are many members of staff; delivering lectures, seminars and tutorials to groups and it's extremely complicated so we do need to sit down as a group and go through the timetable to make sure.</i> (Verna, University B)</p>
<p><i>It's highly collaborative; so we have a team approach and it's common for us. What you have to recognise is that we are a research-led university and it's research with a very big bold capital R that tends to dominate most discussions.</i> (Phillip, University A)</p>	<p><i>We have lunchtime research presentations where people are invited and discussion flows off the back of that ... we are in research groups...</i> (Patrick, University B)</p>

Further to this, there is evidence that for newer members of academic staff, particularly those with fewer than ten years' experience, working with others has more significance for their professional development. For example Diana (University A), an academic with between 6 and 10 years' experience, states that:

It's mainly the younger staff who perhaps have been more sort of encouraged to think about these things and having courses and been the person who is being reviewed quite a lot of the time ... so we talk amongst ourselves about teaching methods, assessment methods, doing bizarre things in lectures and so on and ways to get attention and trying out new things, using on-line resources and so on but our more senior colleagues don't do but I imagine that's partly a function of the fact that so much of their job is management and they haven't got time.

(Diana, University A)

Diana offers an explanation related to seniority of role and work pressures, however, it may also be that from a critical realist view, the issue of time also relates to the individual's current location on the morphogenetic cycle, (see Figure 1.1, page 25). Those newer into academia are nearer T1-T2 and those with more experience will be at the T3-T4 phase of the cycle and thus responding to both the micro and macro structural causal powers in different ways (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003).

Diana also alludes to the efficacy of informal networks and her view is reflected further in the data, which shows that informal and *ad hoc* networking of this type is seen as influential and enabling, particularly where a sense of friendship and like-mindedness are also felt. It appears that such groups are most effective when they are small and come together naturally (often linked to the working environment) in collegiate, joint spaces, for discussion and the sharing of good practice.

There are two or three of us who do sometimes get together when something needs sorting out... but it doesn't happen that much and it doesn't involve all the people involved ... it's people who you get on with and like working with.
(Renata, University A)

I'm very lucky really because I work with three other full time people in one office ... and it's great because we've got our individual desks but we've got a big table as well so we certainly work together, we help and support each other, we, yes, you feel very you know, you feel very well supported.
(Chandra, University B)

As can be seen, academic participants readily explained how they felt different internal networks, teams or groups of like-minded colleagues were experienced, but they found it more difficult to answer whether participation in such networks was influential to their approach to professional development. Indeed many interviewees appeared surprised when directly asked whether the team working they had described had an impact on their professional development. It appears, therefore, that academics may not be distinguishing between the everyday procedural knowledge that they often report these groups to be enabling, and the professional developmental knowledge which is of interest to this research.

Conclusion

This second of two chapters presenting the comparative research findings has drawn on the data to address the research sub-questions that probe the ways in which structural causal mechanisms might influence academics' approaches to professional development. The findings in this chapter are presented within the context, developed through Chapter 4, of the value-laden discourse with which professional development is interpreted and given meaning by academics, and centrally within the two case study institutions.

The data presented in Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that despite some apparent idiosyncratic differences in how academics' responses to professional development are influenced in University A and University B, these tend to be particular examples resulting from broader common influences. These common influences include how terminology, meanings and interpretations have a significant influence on academics' subsequent conception of, and actions in relation to, professional development. Professional disciplinary status, external recognition in the subject area and issues of career progression and mobility are also perceived of as significant enablements. Additionally networks, both informal small groups and larger, often external, associations were considered influential and supportive. Within their employing institutions, academics felt constrained by workload and time pressures, mandated development and institutional priorities that were experienced as misaligned to their own needs. However, feeling valued by the institution, through clear paths for progression, recognised space and time for development, and appropriate support and guidance were ways in which institutional mechanisms were perceived as aligned to their own concerns and consequently as enablements for professional development.

Further to the exploration of extra- and intra-institutional factors and as a way of reviewing and indicating closure when undertaking the interviews with academics, each person was asked to summarise the issues that most significantly influenced their approach to professional development and to convey any further concerns or influences that might make a difference. Many participants then stressed the influence of the immediacy of addressing their needs to perform well in their current role or to maintain 'performative competence' (Archer 2000: 198). As discussed in Chapter 4 (pages 110-113), this is further reflective of academics' interpretations of professional development as something reactive to the needs of their job role. Alongside and within all of these

influences, a range of very personal, less tangible, value-based concerns also emerged, for example personal circumstances, health and family background.

Strongly evident throughout the data are the ways in which academics use their own personal powers to mediate structural influences and make decisions on intent and future actions. This is explained from a critical realist position by the mechanisms that occur between T2 and T3 of the morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003) (Figure 1.1, page 25) which not only rests upon analytic dualism, but also proposes the temporal sequence of mediation between structure and agency (Archer 2003, cited in Danermark *et al.* 2002), or in other words, the ways in which, at the point of socio-cultural interaction, 'by their nature, humans have degrees of freedom in determining their own courses of action' (Archer 2003: 7).

The data findings have highlighted the powers of both structure and agency in influencing academics' approaches to development through extra- and intra-institutional generative mechanisms and the ways in which individuals mediate such causal powers. Set within the principles and ontological frame of critical realism, the approach in this chapter has been one of 'analytical dualism', in that structure and agency have been shown to be 'analytically separable' (Hartwig 2007: 319). In order to facilitate logical structural analysis, this chapter has therefore provided 'conceptual abstraction' (Danermark *et al.* 2002: 41) of the extra-institutional and intra-institutional mechanisms. The next chapter moves from this abstraction to develop a thematic analysis that draws upon the findings presented here and in Chapter 4, the theoretical explanations and relevant literature.

CHAPTER 6 – Thesis conclusion

Introduction

The research reported in this thesis set out to explore what academics consider to be the main influences on their understandings, behaviours and attitudes with regard to their continuing professional development in the context of higher education in England. Four significant influences or, in critical realist terms ‘activated causal powers’, emerge from the voices of the academic participants as themes in this qualitative cross-case study comparison:

- the influence of how academics understand continuing professional development
- the significance of professionalism and values in academia
- the influence of incompatible initiatives and priorities
- the influence of supportive networks.

Each theme is discussed separately in this chapter, with the latter part of the chapter drawing out the significance of agency as a particularly important finding integral throughout the themes. The influential processes that emerge from this thematic analysis are then represented diagrammatically through a development of the relevant aspects of the morphogenetic cycle (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003).

The emergent themes are common influences on academics’ approaches to professional development across both case study institutions. The project adopted a comparative, multi-case study approach in recognition of the two different types of institutions that characterise the English system of higher education, ‘old’ universities and ‘new’ universities. The divide between these historically different institutions remains apparent, despite the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 removing the division between polytechnics and universities, enabling them all to hold university status

(Ashwin 2006; Deem 1998). These two universities with very different histories therefore became the primary units of analysis and organising variable for this research. However, the analysis of the data showed that an institution's historical context is not necessarily a significant influence. Indeed other variables such as professional background and allegiance to subject-related professional bodies become evident as having potentially more dominance and power in influencing faculty academics' understandings, behaviours and attitudes to professional development.

Institutional context does become relevant, though, in relation to how each institution responds, or activates, extra-institutional initiatives in setting its values and priorities. The two institutions have different priorities and approaches, and accordingly mediate extra-institutional drivers differently; examples that are evident from the data are the impact of the Research Assessment Exercise and widening participation (DfES 2006). However, the ways in which the specific institutional responses influence academics' attitudes and behaviours towards professional development can be seen as indicative symptoms of the four broader themes, which are experienced in common across both institutions.

This research can be seen to offer an explanation of the interplay between structure and agency in the context of academics' professional development in higher education institutions. Whilst structural properties, such as the extra-institutional context of higher education, are shown to have generative causal powers that 'might impede or facilitate' action (Archer 2003: 7), these are mediated at the intra-institutional level. They then only become realised or 'activated' when academics respond to them. The 'reflexive, agential deliberations' (Archer 2003: 130) of the 'voices from below' confirm that 'for anything to exert the power of a constraint or an enablement, it has to stand in a

relationship such that it obstructs or aids the achievement of some specific agential enterprise' (Archer 2003: 5, italics in original).

This 'intensive' research design (Danermark *et al.* 2002; Sayer 1992) has been underpinned throughout by critical realist ontology. It can be seen as heuristic, as it has generated further understanding of individuals' perspectives in their current context, with 'the primary questions concern[ing] how some causal process works out in a particular case or limited number of cases' (Sayer 1992: 242). Tentative explanations have been reached through iterative engagement with qualitative data collection and analysis, the theoretical explanations and the literature. This concluding chapter presents those explanations as a thematic causal analysis.

The influence of meaning

Chapter 4 of this thesis presented the research findings relating to the significance and implications of how academics understand continuing professional development in academia. The data shows that the meanings academics attributed to the concept were influential on their attitude towards it, and that the 'language [was] a meaning-constituting system' (Usher, R. 1996: 27). In particular it was evident that the value-laden interpretations that individuals attached to the term 'continuing professional development' at the start of the interview were reflected in their responses throughout. Thus, for example, where an interviewee held a clear view that continuing professional development was akin to formal provision of courses, usually provided by their institution, they might reflect a significant influence as being, relevance and availability of such courses. Whilst this is a relatively unsophisticated example, it demonstrates how meaning and terminology significantly influence academics' attitudes and views about

their professional development as they lead to ‘conventions according to which actions of individuals can be related’ (Sayer 1992: 21).

This data adds to the findings of the literature review in providing empirical evidence, from the voices of faculty-based academics, of a range of competing meanings, tensions and complexities in communication related to professional development in academia (Blackwell and Blackmore 2003). Some of these were fundamental differences in interpretation, such as whether professional development refers to proactive, planned preparation for future roles and career progression or whether it exclusively is about a reactive, opportunistic approach to developmental needs related to the academic’s current role. The research participants’ views indicate that this is perhaps not a dichotomy, but more akin to the two ends of a continuum, potentially and controversially associated with issues of performance management at one end and development at the other, or in more colloquial terms ‘carrot and stick’. McWilliam’s (2002) critique of the term ‘development’ has been aired in Chapter 2 (page 39), yet from this aspect of the data there is an emergent dualism between ‘carrots’ and ‘sticks’, with development perceived as an enabling ‘carrot’, against the ‘sticks’ of what is potentially ‘academic performance management’ (Deem *et al.* 2008: 42). The data also illustrated differing views on the scope of professional development in terms of the types of learning that might be relevant, and some views that learning and development are integral to the academic role, with the implicit consequence that no further action is necessary.

The findings of this research could be seen to suggest that explicit clarity of definition and consistency of approach and terminology is desirable. There is some evidence in the documentary data and from key informants in University A of a move towards using

common terminology, but this research shows there is no evidence of this having had an influence on academics' understandings. In University B a range of terms is in use and whilst this appears to cause few difficulties, some of the understandings are clearly driven by the institutionally-determined language, with a subsequent narrowing of definition and meaning being attributed. However, common language does not necessarily equate to common understanding and, furthermore, common understanding cannot be taken to imply agreement (Sayer 1992). Importantly, though, 'language gives rather than reflects meaning' (Usher, R. 1996: 27) and as such is not only a causal mechanism, but is one that mediates practice, values and ideology.

The influence of professionalism and values in academia

The voices of academics raised through this research indicate concerns and confusions about their professional status. These 'constellations of concerns' have significance for defining action and determining practices (Archer 2007: 17) related to continuing professional development. The data from University B, where a higher number of participants were members of external subject-related professional bodies, raises questions about what it means to be 'professional'. This reflects debates in the literature about the relationship between development and professionalism (Friedman *et al.* 2008), professional identity, status, license to practice, professional registration and accreditation (Rothwell and Arnold 2005). Thus the findings of this research and the underpinning literature raise a challenging debate for academia: the concept of professionalism (Light and Cox 2001; McLean 2008; Rothwell and Arnold 2005; Watkins 1999), which itself cannot be neutral, being socially constructed and mediated (McLean 2008). When referring to professionalism, the academic voices reflected it within a frame of esteem and dignity, despite a view espoused in the literature that the 'idea of being a "professional" is regarded with some antagonism by academics'

(McLean 2008: 123), as it holds connotations of 'service' and is a deskilling process (Macfarlane 2001: 142).

The research findings indicate the tendency for academics' allegiances to disciplinary professional bodies to result in both constraints and enablements to professional development. Using the explanatory frame of critical realism, the structural causal powers of such bodies are mediated by academics seeking 'self-worth' (Archer 2000: 199); through professional development requirements, these bodies are confirming professional status and identity, thus securing the foundations of professionalism (Rothwell and Arnold 2005). Professional identity, the need for recognition of professional contribution, status, validity and uniqueness can be seen as a causal mechanism or power that is indicative of the social relations without which the agent or structure (in this case, the academic, or the institution), would fail to exist (Danermark *et al.* 2002).

This pursuit of professional survival through increasingly formal and accountable approaches to professional development is evident in the researcher's original disciplinary area of social work, where frameworks, registration and mandatory post-qualifying standards dominate. For academics, the challenge of professional survival is positioned between the tensions of a 'government-imposed form of "expert professionalism" which is focused on skill and standards' (McLean 2008: 124), and the concepts of academic autonomy and critical social engagement. In a similar way, as discussed in Chapter 2 (page 53), Clegg differentiates between professional development practices that are focussed on 'domestication' or compliance to institutional need and those that are more emancipatory (Clegg 2003).

The data reveals that some academic participants consider being 'professional' to involve taking individual responsibility for professional development. Simultaneously, however, being 'professional' was a status conferred by recognised bodies which also required commitment to codes of conduct or codes of ethics, which in turn influence professional behaviours and commonly professional development activity. There is acknowledgement in the literature that the concept of professionalism is related to a concern for ethics (Macfarlane 2001), and also having a shared set of values (Nixon *et al.* 2001). Yet, despite mention of ethics, professionalism and the importance of skills and knowledge, very few of the research participants went further to include values and philosophy as influences on their understandings or behaviours in respect of professional development. This apparent omission indicates that academics' values are 'held only tacitly, not being brought out into the open' (Barnett 2003: 119). It is possible that the 'technical-rationality' of the current managerialist environment in higher education constrains the development of an explicit critical core value-base (McLean 2008: 17). The discussion about a professional value-base also arises from the findings that demonstrate the powerful supporting and directing influence that discipline-related professional bodies have on academics' attitudes toward professional development. However, this drive for professional status may be linked to a need for academic credibility and survival within academia, rather than to the survival of the profession more widely (Becher and Trowler 2001). It is therefore pertinent to consider the research findings with regard to the role and influence of the Higher Education Academy.

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) recognition scheme, and the UK Professional Standards for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (UKPSF) (HEA undated; HEA 2006) have very limited influence either on academic practice or approaches to

professional development, according to both the demographic and interview data from the academic participants in both case study institutions. Yet from both the position of key informants and the documentary data these national initiatives can be seen to be influencing policy and procedure at institutional level in both case study universities. The interim evaluation on the work of the HEA, in reporting findings related to the fellowship scheme, alludes both to the need to address the concerns of academics, but also the importance of the relationship between the priorities and needs of different stakeholders:

Clearly, to be of value, recognition as an Academy Fellow needs to have credence that it represents something of value to the individual, their discipline and the institution in which they work. In this regard, its relationship to the course of an individual's professional development is necessarily important, as is the official position adopted by their institution. (Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008: 23)

This raises the debate about the role of the HEA in setting out to 'lead, support and inform the professional development and recognition of staff in higher education' (HEA, cited in Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008: 17). Recommendations from the interim evaluation of the HEA suggest that, at a minimum, it should promote knowledge about its work to other disciplinary professional bodies (HEA, cited in Oakleigh Consulting Ltd. 2008: 87), perhaps laying the ground for the 'synergies' that, according to its strategic plan, the HEA sets out to develop (HEA 2008). There is an unmistakable opportunity here for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and higher education institutions to open a transparent dialogue with academics to debate understandings of academic development about professional, institutional and individual values, and ethical practice. This would enable academics to re-define professionalism (Nixon *et al.*

2001) and clarify the purpose, focus and scope of professional development in academia. It would also address some of concerns about the professional status of academic practice. However, the current research indicates that it could be relevant to consider whether the Higher Education Academy, in particular its recognition scheme, would be more efficacious if it took on the role of a national professional body, making continuous professional development more prominent in academic careers.

Further to discussions about professionalism, the academic voices in this research also raise the debate about mandatory and non-mandatory approaches to professional development. It is evident that there is again an element of divide between those who work within the mandatory requirements of an external, professional body and those who do not. The concerns raised by academics, link back to discussions about professionalism, professional credibility, and more specifically from Chapter 2 (page 48), trust and coercion. Clegg (2009) argues that institutional approaches to academic development are a consequence of the inherent mistrust of academics as professionals. Indeed, whilst not expressed in those terms, the data provides evidence that some academics feel mandatory requirements often do not meet their needs, are experienced as constraints and therefore negatively influence their approaches to professional development. In balance however other voices, particularly clearly expressed by those who work within an external framework, were more tolerant of such approaches and expressed contrasting views. This raises the importance of listening to the views and needs of all parties when making decisions about academic development, whilst reflecting on the issues surrounding professional status and the efficacy of coercion. Although not referring to academia specifically, research undertaken by the Institute of Continuing Professional Development into the regulation of professional development found that:

Because of the real problems of resources and the reliance ultimately on the co-operation, goodwill and responsibility of individual professionals, [there is] a requirement for a system of incentive that enables both effective monitoring of CPD activity and engages, rather than alienates, members of professional bodies. Encouraging and rewarding voluntary CPD activity, over and above any necessary and existing level of compulsion, is the most effective means of propagating good practice. (ICPD 2006: 4)

The influence of incompatible initiatives and priorities

The negative influence that misalignment of policies and priorities can have on academics' attitudes and behaviours in respect of their continuing professional development is demonstrated by the data from this research. The way in which the disjointed, contradictory, UK higher education teaching and learning policy initiatives impede change and development has been acknowledged (Trowler *et al.* 2005). This research reveals that this issue is not only relevant to teaching and learning, but that the discrepancy between extra- and intra-institutional initiatives impacts across the academic role, and pertinently, on approaches to professional development. Even more significant however is the perceived incompatibility and lack of correlation between institutional and individual academic's priorities. The apparent contradictions are considered by critical realism to form structural constraints; conversely 'when congruence prevails, it represents structural enablement' (Archer 2007: 12).

Further to the debate about professional bodies, this research demonstrates that there is little coherence, despite universities gradually working more closely with employers and external professional occupations (Parker 2003). Universities could do more to support academics' professional development by overtly embracing the external

environment of professional development. Such action would need to be undertaken with caution, though, as Scott warns that ‘a form of professional development can take place in an entrepreneurial institution, but that it is likely to be superficially conceived, concerned with career advancement and the enhancement of personal esteem and ultimately inefficient’ (Scott 2000: 60). The needs of the external environment, the individual and their employing university may be addressed simultaneously by moves towards greater correspondence and compatibility between external and internal policies and drivers. Although potentially complex, such moves may harness the causal powers of the current external influences.

At the very least it would not invite academics to leave aspects of their identity at the door when they become engaged in thinking about their practice as teachers, and not involve leaving teaching identities behind when engaging in scholarship and research. (Clegg 2003: 46)

Academics also report very little influence from, or engagement with higher education-specific strategies, whether national or institutionally-led. Some even expressed surprise that this research would explore such possibilities. This viewpoint might be expected, given the findings of a recent detailed critical discourse analysis of learning and teaching strategies where the ‘results show[ed] a set of highly impersonalized texts, where staff are largely absent and students are objectified’ (Smith 2008: 395). That being said, academics’ approaches to professional development were more likely to be influenced by their institution’s response or approach to extra-institutional policies, strategies or causal powers. Although initiatives such as the National Student Survey (NSS) have some impact on academics’ practice or on day-to-day work pressures, while appearing to have little or no influence on their approach to professional development. This can be understood through the critical realist explanation of the importance of

agential deliberations in constituting ‘the mediatory process between ‘structure and agency’’ (Archer, 2003: 130). Thus in the critical realist frame, the causal mechanism of the NSS might be interpreted as having a tendency to constrain or enable practice. With specific regard to professional development, however, it is often not activated. Another example is the government strategy to widen participation of underrepresented groups in higher education (DfES 2006). Many academics reported this initiative to be a constraint to their daily practice, but as so many identified related developmental needs it is potentially an enablement to their professional development. From a critical realist stance this strategy could be described as an emergent causal mechanism which generates particular events or uncontrollable variables that are characteristic of open systems like universities, and shape the situations that individuals find themselves in.

Another case in point was the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), a national initiative to determine research funding allocations. As universities are independent, self-governing bodies, the responses of the two case study institutions differed. However, incompatibility between institutional and individual academic priorities is evident in both situations. Academics from University A experienced the RAE as substantially influential on their practice and approaches to professional development at the time, but it was perceived as a constraining influence, being negative and destructive, with institutional and individual priorities not being easily matched. In University B a different institutional approach resulted in academics largely reporting limited influence from the RAE in any aspect of their practice. Thus, whilst exploring the interplay between structure and agency, of significance here is the interplay between two related structures, the extra-institutional and the institutional levels, which, following the critical realist approach, have been abstracted for analytical purposes in this project (Sayer 1992). The RAE ‘must be understood in relation to the changes

associated with wider processes of globalization, marketization and managerialism in higher education' (Lucas 2006: 38), particularly in that it provides an example of how the position of the institution, with its structural powers and emergent generative causal powers of constraint and enablement, permit it to 'shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily' (Archer 2007: 17). It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the data shows discrepancy between the perceptions of key informants, representing an institutional, management position, and the experience of academics in this regard. Academics perceive their employers as having, at best, different priorities and, at worst, competing priorities.

In contrast to the variable influence of institutional response to extra-institutional initiatives, this research indicates that many of the formal intra-institutional policies and procedures which might be associated with academic development have very little meaningful influence on academics' attitudes and behaviours; these include induction, probationary periods, academic appraisal and peer observation. For most of the participant academics, opportunities and information on career planning and development were accessed through external bodies, external networks or through the guidance and support of an informal mentor; there was little evidence of formal, institutionally-driven, planned career development activity. It was evident that academic appraisal (or the equivalent process in each institution) had limited influence or effect in this area. Opportunities did exist, but proactive forward planning, or even in human resource language 'succession planning,' was not readily apparent.

The research data indicates that academics are more likely to be influenced by evidence of the institution giving value to professional development, through the provision of tangible, practical and relevant resources. It could be argued that the implementation of

many of the policies discussed provides evidence of institutional and managerial support. Participants, however, highlighted other areas of importance such as financial resources, time allocation and the availability of appropriate, knowledgeable guidance and support. There is evidence that in both case study institutions these tangible resources are often being made available at institutional level. However, it appears either that academics are not always aware of the opportunities, or that the related policies are differentially interpreted and implemented at faculty, department or school level.

A further mismatch between institutions' and academics' approaches to professional development is encapsulated in the difficulties expressed by academics in obtaining support with development to enable them to address their needs coherently across the whole range of the complex academic role (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003). Whilst there is much rhetoric in institutions and in the literature about bridging the research-teaching divide (Barnett 2003; Malcolm and Zukas 2001; Trigwell and Shale 2004), the issue here is even wider. The academic role is more complex than the 'dual professionalism' debate might infer (Dexter 2007; Jackson 2005, cited in Rothwell 2007; Crawford 2009) and as the research data shows, it includes teaching, developing increasingly diverse teaching materials, research, administration, leadership, pastoral work, financial management, networking and subject development.

This felt incoherence may in part be explained by the way in which, in both case study institutions, the visible structures and provision from the institutional centres largely focussed on only one aspect of the academic role: teaching and supporting learning, including the use of technologies to support this (Åkerlind 2005; McWilliam 2002). Encouragement, support and guidance related to the academic's discipline is sometimes

found within the local work environment of the faculty, department or school, but is then often related to informal, more *ad hoc* arrangements and occasionally to identifiable communities of practice (Wenger 1998). This provides another possible explanation for the more outward-facing approach that academics adopt towards professional development. It is important to note that the data presented in the two preceding chapters provides strong evidence that whilst institutional approaches may have limited influence on how academics approach their development, the formal accredited programmes in particular do influence the discourse and, in some aspects, academics' perceptions of the concept. There is, therefore, a potential opportunity to embrace the common commitments to knowledge creation, avoiding the conflicting cultures of research and teaching, by taking an holistic view of academic practice and as a consequence, academic development. It may not be enough however, as in the case of University A, to change the name of the central development unit. It is more likely that along with engaging with the external professional environment as discussed earlier, it would be beneficial to all parties to align internal provision and support to provide a comprehensive support structure that mirrors the actual work that academics are involved in.

Linked to this discussion is the issue of responsibility for professional development. Many participants believed that their professional credibility, future career prospects and status hinge on recognition in their subject area, whether that be formally within the frameworks of a professional body, or less tangibly in the wider networks of their subject. They simultaneously held a view that their employing institution should provide the resources, in terms of time and funding, to enable them to fulfil and maintain these commitments. Whilst the universities clearly value subject expertise and benefit from it, there is limited explicitly visible recognition or perception of how such

expertise is valued and how its continuing development is supported, either within documentation or within the data from key informants; other than vague references to faculty, department or school level responsibilities. The research findings indicate that, despite some tensions, there is a broad view that professional development is a shared responsibility between a range of stakeholders. If such shared responsibility is mutually accepted then it would be desirable to move away from the 'top-down' method that Clegg (2003: 42) describes towards the integration of a more engaging, collaborative approach to academic development, based on dialogue, listening and responding to all the relevant voices.

The influence of supportive networks

The data shows that whilst academics respond favourably to having individual control over their professional development, there was a clear view that support, guidance and clarity at institutional and extra-institutional levels could be enabling and influential. Indeed where academics had experienced supportive, encouraging and often empowering relationships, commonly through informal, *ad hoc* mentoring-type alliances, they felt these had been significantly influential not only to their career planning, but in their approach to practice and their continuing professional development. Within both case study institutions however the approach to and the experience of such networks or mentoring was inconsistent, even where there were stated policies linked to induction, probation periods and/or the post-graduate programme in teaching in higher education. Indeed, it is significant that at the end of some interviews, the participants stated that never before had someone spent an hour listening to their thoughts about their professional development. Cousin (2009: 77) considers how the interview process can 'give voice' to participants and, much as Cousin describes, it was evident during the interviews for this research that there was a

risk of 'straying into a therapeutic domain' particularly given the researcher's background and skills in the health and social care therapeutic environment.

Support and guidance were also discussed in the context of wider intra-institutional network relationships. These are commonly different forms of team meeting, usually at the lowest level of practice but again, the data across both institutions showed differential practice, with some common tensions. Most significant, cutting across the emergent trends, was the enablement experienced from participation in small, informal collegiate groups. The academic voices mirrored Hargreaves and Dawe's (1990: 227) description of collaborative cultures that 'comprise evolutionary relationships of openness, trust, and support ... where they define and develop their own purposes as a community.' Furthermore, it is acknowledged that 'the collegial approach where groups speak a common language can aid reflective practice and individual and group development' (Chivers 2003, cited in Dexter 2007: 26). Conversely, as discussed earlier, structured institutionally-driven processes such as peer-observation and mentoring as part of probation or formal accredited programmes, were more likely to be conceived as akin to Hargreaves and Dawe's 'contrived collegiality [which] enhances administrative control' (Hargreaves and Dawe 1990). It can be detected, though, that smaller, focussed, informal networking is enabling, empowering and influential to professional development for some academics. In her research, Archer (2007: 167) found that some individuals are what she describes as, 'communicative reflexives'; these are people who are 'open to dialogical influences of those with whom they share their concerns'. In other words, whilst these academics are individual powerful agents, their practice is to externalise their 'internal deliberations' through discussion and sharing as part of the mediating process. There is, therefore, potentially an opportunity for institutions to utilise their causal powers to facilitate and enable the development

and maintenance of such networks through for example, the provision of staff social spaces, whilst avoiding the risk of establishing further ‘contrived collegiality’ (Hargreaves and Dawe 1990: 227).

Interviewees furthermore described being highly motivated to develop, maintain and grow external subject-related networks to support a range of academic endeavours, including professional development and career progression. They also saw ‘externality’ as being achieved through allegiance to their discipline-related professional body and were enthused when describing how subject-related conference participation provided inspiration and motivation. This is illustrated by academics demonstrating significantly more awareness and interaction with the Higher Education Academy’s network of subject centres, in contrast to low levels of engagement with the Higher Education Academy schemes. It is also pertinent to mention here, the correlation that academics report between the notions of external recognition, status and credibility with future career opportunities. This might be explained in critical realist terms as being the result of more than one causal mechanism operating at a one time (Houston 2001), where sometimes two tendencies can work against, modify or, conversely, support each other (Danermark *et al.* 2002). The next section of the chapter discusses the ways in which academics’ behaviours, in respect of professional development, are influenced by a focus on enhancing their curriculum vitae (CV).

The significance of agency

Individual, sometimes very personal, concerns can be seen to be a significant influence on how academics respond to professional development. Specific examples that arise from the data and are further explored here include career progression, performative competence and personal circumstance. ‘Individuals reflect upon their social situations

in the light of their personal concerns – asking themselves “what should I do?” and answering their own question.’ (Archer 2003: foreword). A significant recurrent finding that emerges within the themes discussed in this chapter is the way in which individual academics, subjectively by agency, mediate the powers of constraint and enablement that are generated by the structural context of higher education both extra- and intra-institutionally. In other words ‘individuals’ thoughts and decisions are more significant than the structures they operate within’ (Trowler *et al.* 2005: 434). This raises apparent tensions or challenges with regard to the personal and professional context of professional development in academia, as the research illustrates that ‘ultimately, the precise outcome varies with subjects’ personal concerns, degrees of commitment and with the costs different agents will pay to see their projects through in the face of structural hindrances’ (Archer 2007: 12).

Academics place much importance on developing their CV so as to facilitate career progression and mobility; this is a key priority mediating their behaviours towards developmental activity. However, for many of those interviewed, the driver was not necessarily to develop towards careers beyond their current employing institution, but was related to progression with the same employer; loyalty to their employer was clearly evident. Yet it was apparent that career pathways, opportunities and information about how to develop towards them were not always made obvious and available. Only a small number of those interviewed demonstrated awareness and pro-active planning in their approach to personal career development, with the majority speaking of uncertainty and an element of luck and chance showing that ‘academic careers are subject to a range of causal factors, none of which can be shown as predominant in every case’ (Becher and Trowler 2001: 132). These perceptions were likely to have been impacted upon by institutional change at the time of the interviews, however there

appeared to be a missed opportunity for institutions to support and influence academics' approaches to professional development through the explicit provision of information about career pathways that could form the basis of supportive appraisal and mentoring relationships. This is, again, also related to issues of compatibility, alignment and harnessing the powers of causal mechanisms at the institutional level, which were discussed earlier in this chapter.

Another specific concern that appears to drive academics' approaches to professional development arises from their perceptions of their own needs in relation to 'doing the job better', or 'keeping up to date'. Performative competence or 'performative concerns are unavoidably part of our inevitable practical engagement with the world of material culture' (Archer 2000: 198). This correlates with many participants' interpretations of professional development as a concept framed in the needs of the present, something reactive and related to maintaining their ability in their current role. In some aspects the case study institutions could be seen to adopt a similar approach in that much of the centrally-provided development activity in both institutions could be described as being in some way role-related, both in terms of content and target 'audience'. There is a tension or potential contradiction here that needs to be recognised, in that the empirical data from this research and the literature raised academics' concerns about performativity and performance-led management approaches (McWilliam 2002), yet the data also shows performative competence to be an important influential driver to academic development activity. The difference is undoubtedly related to agential control, with the individual academic demonstrating the value they attribute to their personal mediating powers, in identifying their own development needs or concerns and responding to them as they feel appropriate.

The voices of academics participating in this research reveal all of the complexities of human deliberations and decision making (Archer 2003: 6), 'using their own descriptions' (Archer 2007: 12) that result in intentions and expectations. Thus when, at the end of the interviews, they summarised their thoughts on the most significant influences on their professional development, academics commonly included a range of less tangible, more emotional, often value-based, very personal influences. These included being interested, or stimulated, having a particular personal philosophy that values professional development, being able to see a 'fit' with personal circumstances and feeling in control, and being able to make autonomous decisions about the direction of their professional development. An individual's concerns act as a conduit to the influences on their approaches to professional development. The importance of these concerns - or in this instance the importance of the things that matter to academics - cannot be understated. Critical realism bestows causal power on agents, or individuals, and states that these are exercised through practical interaction and relationship in the social environment (Archer 2000). Furthermore, Archer (2003: 15) argues that 'the reflexive deliberations of human agents' are the mediating mechanism between structure and agency. Archer's notion of the internal conversation is one which firmly establishes and grants personal powers to the agential, or individual subject, in relation to their aims and actions (Archer 2003, cited in Clegg 2009). The data from the academics in both case study institutions indicates that through their 'internal conversations', academics deliberate about the extra- and intra-institutional context of their practice, alongside their personal circumstances and goals, and then, using reason, intentionally commit themselves to particular courses of action, or professional development, that they deem worthwhile. As discussed earlier in this chapter, academics talked about areas of policy and procedure, or potential structural constraints and enablements, stating that whilst some impacted on their daily practice, these causal powers often made little or no

difference to their approaches to professional development. Whilst not suggesting a deterministic approach, it is possible that this is evidence of academics responding to, or exercising, the enablement of Karran's 'academic freedom [being] acknowledged as vital to the proper functioning of universities' (2009: 17), whilst leaving inactivated the perceived constraint of the 'destabilizing patterns of university professional work' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997: 208) that results from the market-driven aspects of new managerialism (Deem 1998, Deem *et al.* 2008).

An overview of the thematic analysis presented in this chapter can be effectively illustrated by returning to Archer's morphogenetic approach, first introduced in abstract in Chapter 1, (Figure 1.1 page 25) of this thesis (Archer 1982; 1995; 2003). The interactions between T1 and T3 in the morphogenetic cycle have been the focus of the research questions and hence the investigation and analysis of this project. Figure 6.1 below, therefore, expands on the T1 to T3 aspect of the cycle, taking it beyond the abstract into the specific practice context of professional development in academia, using examples from this research. This shows therefore the process by which, 'in the light of their objective circumstances' (Archer 2003: 5), academics perceive and respond to constraints and enablements to continuing professional development.

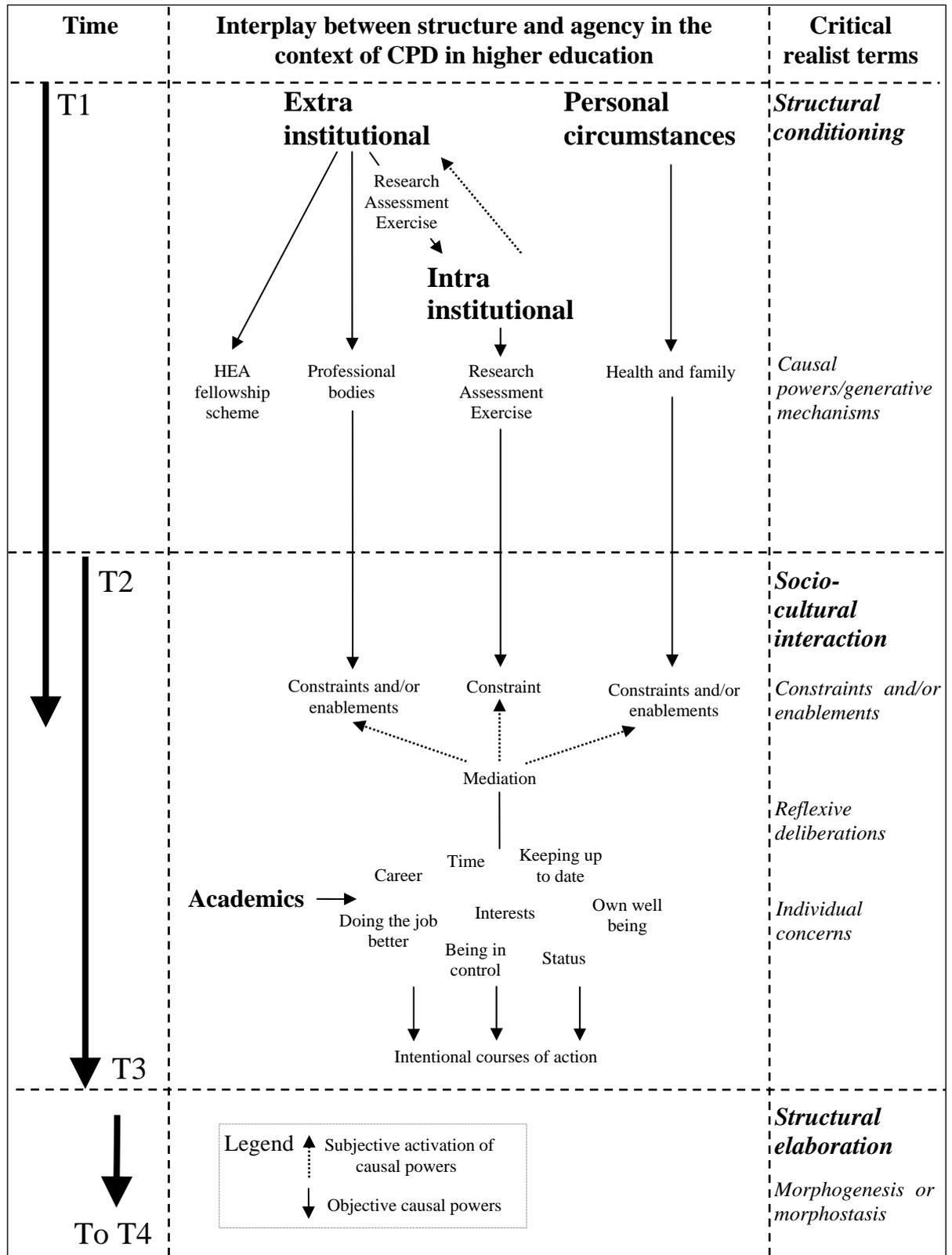
Four elements have been chosen to exemplify structural causal powers in the cycle: the HEA fellowship; the powers of professional disciplinary bodies; the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE); and personal concerns. The RAE is illustrated as an example of a causal power mediated both at the stratified structural levels and by individual academics. At the T2-T3 point of socio-cultural interaction, the diagram shows, crudely, how the HEA fellowship scheme remains a causal mechanism that is not activated, whilst academics, following reflexive deliberation on their individual

concerns, mediate the other example causal powers, resulting in constraints and/or enablements. The outcomes of the process are individual agential decisions about intentional courses of action with regard to their continuing professional development. As stated, the diagram elaborates the elements of the morphogenetic cycle that are of particular relevance to this research, it should be noted therefore, that this is only one part of a cycle whereby the individual courses of action lead to structural elaboration and at T4, there is the potential to reshape (morphogenesis) or preserve (morphostasis) the situation that agents confront.

The diagram is, by its very nature, illustrative and could be accused of over-simplifying a complex set of events that take place in a complex context as ‘on the concrete level, many mechanisms may be concurrently active’ (Danermark *et al.* 2002: 70). Barnett (2003: 33), describing the concept of a university system, suggests that complexity is ‘a situation where things can never be fully unravelled’, the intention here is not to try to ‘fully unravel’, but to enable further understanding through tentative explanations that emerge from this research data.

Figure 6.1 The morphogenesis of continuing professional development in academia

(developed from Archer 1982; 1995; 2003)



Conclusion

‘The problem of continuing professional development ... of professionals in higher education is that it operates around a series of unresolved tensions’ (Clegg 2003: 37). In investigating what academics consider to be the main influences on their understandings, behaviours and attitudes with regard to their continuing professional development, this research has enabled new themes and areas for reflection to emerge, bringing a number of such tensions to the surface. In particular, the thematic analysis in this final chapter focussed on four emerging tensions or themes; the influence of meaning; professionalism and values; incompatible initiatives and priorities; and supportive networks. The individualist nature and power of the reflexive deliberations of academics were highlighted in the latter part of this chapter, which reinforced the fundamental significance of their subjective personal concerns and interests in mediating the causal powers of structure.

The research indicates that it may be possible to facilitate a more inclusive, holistic and responsive approach to academics’ continuing professional development in higher education by attending to the concerns of academics and engaging them in a construction of academic professionalism. It is also evident that many of these concerns are influenced by a range of constraints and enablements, some of which arise from extra-institutional factors, others from within the academic’s employing institution and others that are very personal and intangible. Therefore, whilst critical realism argues that individuals have the power to mediate between structure and agency, it is also clear that it is not possible to predict the outcome. It has been suggested that in contemporary higher education ‘a key question has become: “and what is in it for me?”’ (Barnett 2003: 125), however it would be deterministic to contend that outcomes or actions can somehow be reduced to a notion of vested interests (Archer 2007). This research

suggests that it is possible for structural causal powers, in the form of extra- and intra-institutional approaches, to be more facilitative, aligned and responsive in order to generate enablements wherever possible.

It is apparent that not only are academics' views about their continuing professional development under-represented in the literature, but their voices are generally not being raised, heard or responded to across the extra- or intra-institutional context of higher education. There is an analogy that helps to describe the apparent current interplay between structure and agency in the context of continuing professional development in academia; Mazrui's 'dialogue of the deaf' (Adebajo and Scanlon 2006). Mazrui coined the phrase to describe the relationship between America and the Third World, noting that whilst Americans were gifted communicators, he felt that they were poor listeners (Adebajo and Scanlon 2006). This is perhaps reflective of the relationship in higher education, where managers and central university functions appear to be good communicators: academics are very aware about institutional priorities and 'causal powers', and yet there seems to be less effective listening. The data collection processes demonstrated that commonly academics had not explicitly considered what might be influencing their professional development, for whilst they could articulate constraints and enablements to practice, they found it difficult to relate this directly to their approaches to professional development. It is likely, therefore, that promoting the articulation of the views and concerns of academics as powerful agents would be experienced as enabling. Further to this, wholly omitted from the data was mention of students, undergraduate and post-graduate, as partners in the academic enterprise and stakeholders in its development. As part of inclusivity, opening the dialogue and broadening the scope of academic development, there is an opportunity to harness the experience of students in informing and participating in decisions that are made.

The drive for inclusivity is embedded in the researcher's own values and philosophy developed through professional experiences and learning. As outlined in chapter 1 (from page 27), this included extensive experience in the context of health and social care setting within which effective practice and its development is underpinned by a strong commitment to engaging, listening and responding to the voices of all stakeholders, including practitioners and those who use services. Yet these values can be challenged by strongly managerialist, new public management cultures, where 'top down' approaches hinder participation and are experienced as oppressive. There are opportunities in higher education to challenge non-participatory approaches so that inclusive, facilitative, dialogical cultures might flourish and encourage more 'communicative reflexivity' (Archer 2003: 167) to raise awareness and enable proactive interactions. 'Participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do' (Wenger 1998: 4); engagement itself furthers development and learning (Wenger 1998).

Implicit here are notions of inclusion, contribution, social engagement and community, all of which resonate with 'professionalism'. The challenge of professionalism in academia was coined by one of the academic participants in this research as '*the professional project*', arguably being a project in which academics need to 'embrace the notion of 'professional', a concept that is acknowledged as being 'value-laden ... implying obligation and responsibility as well as knowledge, expertise, respect and reward' (Dexter 2007: 21). Additionally, being a 'professional' suggests status which 'needs to be earned' and includes 'responsibility' (McLean 2008: 125). Therefore whilst proposing, on the one hand, the right to participate and be listened to, there is a corresponding obligation to engage. The implications of what might be termed

‘academic citizenship’ (Macfarlane 2007) would include responsibilities related to one’s own and others’ professional development through overt engagement, articulation, supportive and sharing practice, and mentoring. Whilst there is concern that increasing performance management and efficiency drives in higher education may undermine academic citizenship (Macfarlane 2007), ‘eschew[ing] managerial and technical versions [of professionalism] for a construction that includes acting expertly, critically, morally and responsibly in respect of *all* the functions of the university ... could lead to involvement in shaping the future’ (McLean 2008: 125, italics in original).

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

The following is an alphabetical list of abbreviations and terms referred to throughout this research project.

‘Applied’ subject area

Those subject areas in Higher Education that may lead to specific stated employment possibilities. These subjects are likely to include clear links to employment practice, possibly with practice placements as part of the learning programme. Examples include; nursing, social work, teaching. In this project, research participants were asked to define their own disciplinary area as either an ‘applied’ or ‘pure’ subject; also see note on ‘pure’ subject area, below.

Causal Powers (and generative mechanisms)

These are critical realist concepts. Structures generate causal powers or generative mechanisms, which are things that can cause something to happen. They only operate when they are ‘triggered’, exercised or activated. Danermark *et al.* (2002: 55-6) offer the metaphor of a match, which has the ‘causal power’ to flame if it is struck, but caution that there are many powers or mechanisms that remain inactivated and that the activation of a causal power is commonly dependent on a number of circumstances; in the case of the match, that it is not damp, that there is oxygen available and so on.

CETL – Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Funded through HEFCE resources, the CETL initiative had two main aims: to reward excellent teaching practice and to further invest in that practice. 74 universities were successful in bidding to receive funding to run CETLs for five years (2005-2010). (www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/tinits/cetl/)

CPD – Continuing Professional Development

CR – Critical Realism

A social science based meta-theory, associated commonly with the works of Roy Bhaskar and more latterly Margaret Archer (both referred to in this research work). The aspects of critical realism of particular value to this research are summarised in Chapter 1 (pages 21-26) of the thesis.

DfES - Department for Education and Skills

Government department replaced by The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) (see below) in June 2007.

DIUS - Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills

Government department with responsibility for post-19 learning, including further and higher education, science, technology. www.dius.gov.uk

Generative Mechanisms

See ‘causal powers’ above

HE - Higher Education**HEA - Higher Education Academy**

The HEA has a focus on enhancing teaching, learning and students’ experiences in higher education in the UK. Areas of work covered include: informing policy, supporting institutions, research and evaluation, supporting learning, development and recognition, and disciplines and networks. www.heacademy.ac.uk

HEFCE - Higher Education Funding Council for England

HEFCE distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. In doing so, it aims to promote high quality education and research, within a financially healthy sector. www.hefce.ac.uk

HEI - Higher Education Institution

HESA - Higher Education Statistics Agency

The Higher Education Statistics Agency is the official agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education. www.hesa.ac.uk

LSC - Learning and Skills Council

The LSC is responsible for planning and funding high quality education and training for everyone in England other than those in universities. <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/>

Morphogenetic Cycle (or approach)

Based on the work of Margaret Archer, this critical realist concept refers to stages in the interplay between structure and agency. It is based on the principle that structure and agency operate over different time periods and are analytically separable (analytical dualism) (Hartwig 2007).

‘New’ Universities and ‘Old’ Universities

‘New universities’ are former polytechnics or colleges of higher education that were given the status of universities by the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992 or colleges that have been granted university status since then. ‘Old universities’ had this status prior to the Act.

NSS - National Student Survey

The National Student Survey, which has been conducted since 2005, is a survey targeted mainly at final year undergraduates and an opportunity for them to feed back on their academic experience. The results are used to help future students to choose courses that best suit their needs and interests. <http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/>

Open System

A term used in critical realism to describe when different generative mechanisms operate dynamically in combination with each other; these interactions are not artificially conditioned to exclude particular causal mechanisms (Hartwig 2007).

Peer Observation Scheme

Peer Observation Schemes (or Systems) are commonly in place in universities and may have one or more of the following purposes: individual and team development (linked to CPD), improving the student learning experience, the development of innovative and effective teaching, dissemination of good practice, performance management, and evidence of quality enhancement.

PGCE - Post-graduate Certificate in Education

The PGCE is a professional qualification at Masters level study. Courses leading to this qualification commonly focus primarily on teaching and learning, and not on the specific subject or disciplinary area.

‘Pure’ subject area

Those subject areas in Higher Education that may lead to a wide application of employment possibilities. These subjects are likely to be highly theoretical, with broad and general principles. Examples include: mathematics, chemistry, and languages. In this project, research participants were asked to define their own disciplinary area as either an ‘pure’ or ‘applied’ subject; also see note on ‘applied’ subject area, above.

QA - Quality Assurance

QAA - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The QAA is a UK-wide independent body, funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies. The QAA ensures that universities maintain their own academic standards and quality. Through reviews, reports and guidelines identifying good practice they help institutions to develop effective quality systems
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/>

QE - Quality Enhancement

RAE - Research Assessment Exercise

The Research Assessment Exercise is conducted jointly by the four UK Higher Education Funding Councils. The primary purpose of the RAE 2008 was to produce

quality profiles for each submission of research activity made by institutions; these profiles then determine research grants. <http://www.rae.ac.uk/>

SEDA - Staff and Educational Development Association

SEDA is the professional association for staff and educational developers in the UK, promoting innovation and good practice in higher education. www.seda.ac.uk

UCU - University and College Union

Trade union and professional association for academics, lecturers, trainers, researchers and academic-related staff working in further and higher education throughout the UK. www.ucu.org.uk

UKPSF – United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

The UKPSF was launched in February 2006 and offers a flexible framework which uses a descriptor-based approach to professional standards. <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk>

Appendices

- A) Research participants' characteristics and attribute variable data from both case study institutions
- B) Letter of agreement
- C) Information permission form
- D) Interview schedule – Academics
- E) Interview schedule – Key informants

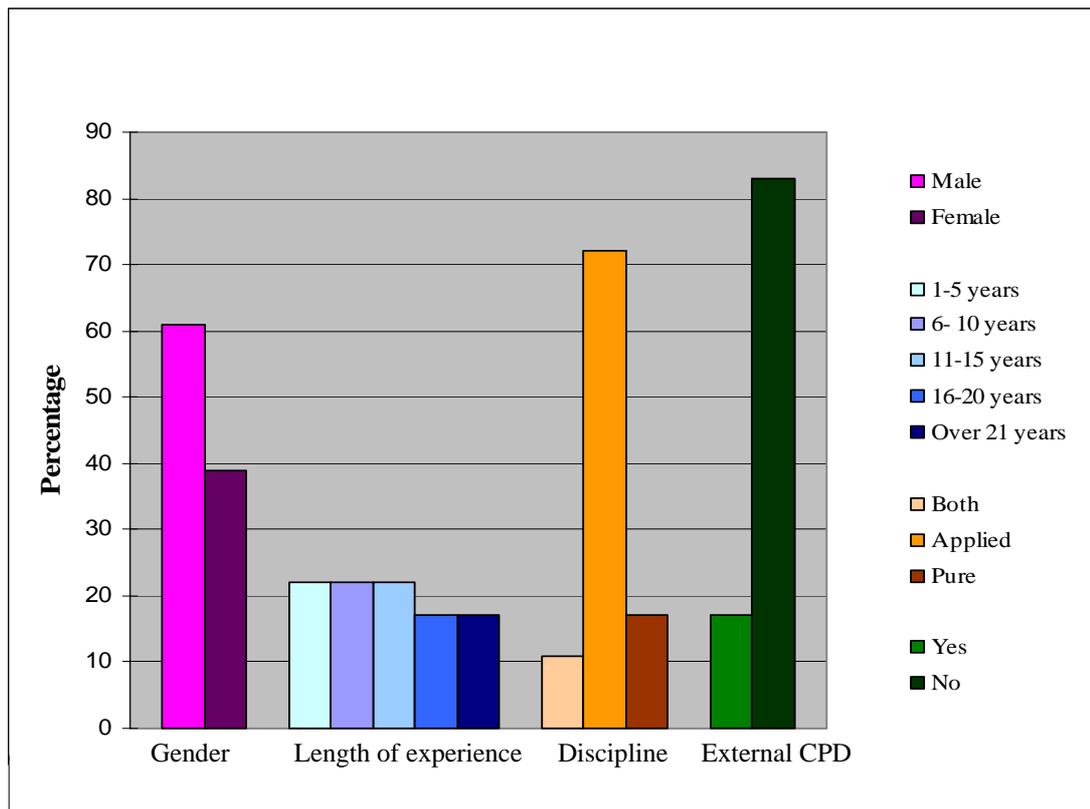
Appendix A) Research participants' characteristics and attribute variable data from both case study institutions

University A – Attribute variables of academic participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Length of experience as an academic	Disciplinary focus ('pure' or 'applied')	Main subject area	Is required to comply with a subject related professional CPD framework?
Brandon	M	1 - 5 years	Both	Biology	No
Cameron	M	21 years +	Applied	Engineering	No
Carl	M	6 - 10 years	Applied	Design and Media	No
Dawn	F	16 - 20 years	Pure	International Political Economy	No
Diana	F	6 - 10 years	Both	Geography	No
Dieter	M	11 - 15 years	Applied	Social Work	No
George	M	6 - 10 years	Applied	Chemical Engineering	Yes
Imran	M	21 years +	Applied	Education	No
Josh	M	1 - 5 years	Applied	Civil Engineering	Yes
James	M	1 - 5 years	Applied	Medical Ethics	No
Marie	F	16 - 20 years	Applied	Physiology	No
Martin	M	11 - 15 years	Applied	Education	No
Naomi	F	16 - 20 years	Applied	Marketing	No
Phillip	M	21 years +	Pure	Chemistry	No
Pamela	F	11 - 15 years	Pure	Medieval English	No
Renata	F	1 - 5 years	Applied	Geography	No
Sarita	F	11 - 15 years	Applied	Marketing	No
Thomas	M	6 - 10 years	Applied	Electrical Engineering	No

Academic attribute variable data from University A is also illustrated in the following graph, shown as percentage of whole number of academic interviews from this institution.

University A – Academic Interviewees’ Attributes

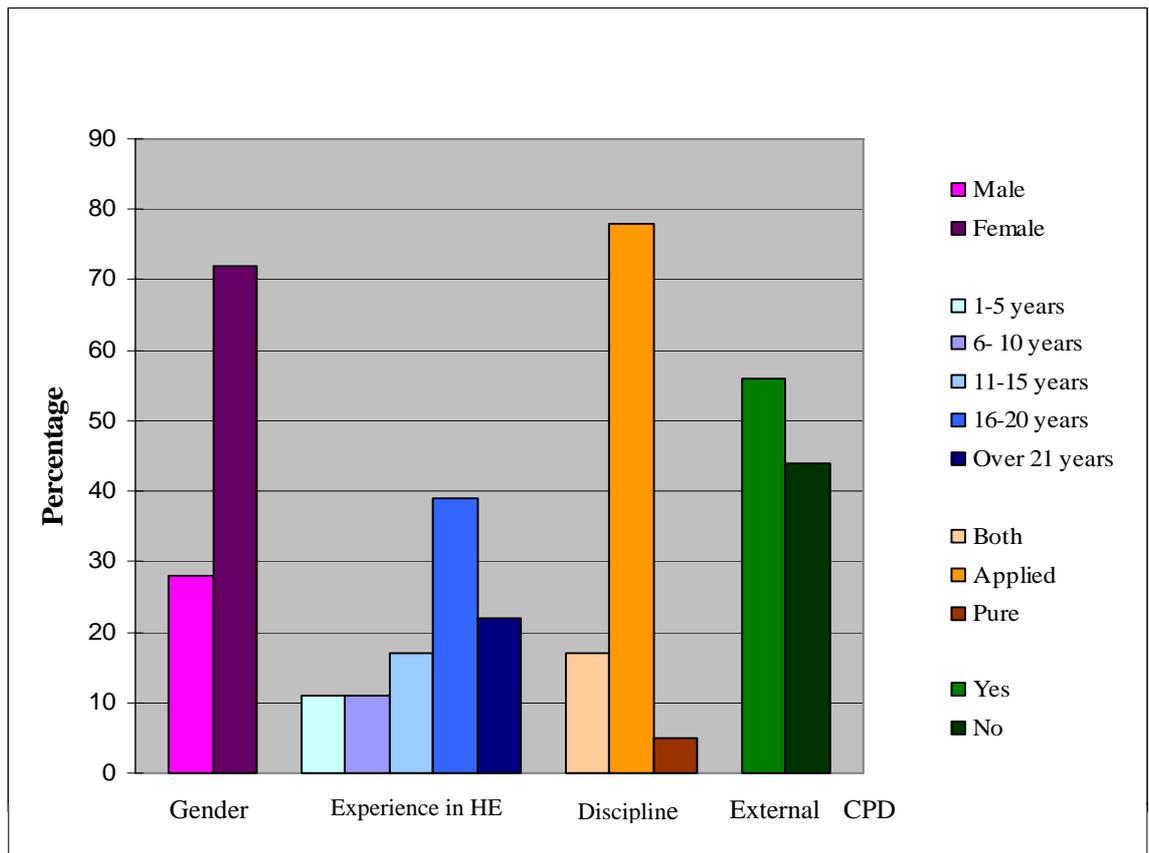


University B – Attribute variables of academic participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Length of experience as an academic	Disciplinary focus ('pure' or 'applied')	Main subject area	Is required to comply with a subject related professional CPD framework?
Arthur	M	6 - 10 years	Pure	English Language	Yes
Chandra	F	1 - 5 years	Applied	Pedagogy	Yes
Hazel	F	11 - 15 years	Applied	Environmental Management	No
Jessica	F	16 - 20 years	Applied	Computing Information Systems	No
Judith	F	6 - 10 years	Applied	Health	Yes
Jameela	F	11 - 15 years	Applied	Health	Yes
Jennie	F	21 years +	Applied	Design, Textiles and Fashion	No
Jakob	M	1 - 5 years	Applied	English and History	No
Max	M	21 years +	Both	Chemistry	No
Norma	F	16 - 20 years	Applied	Education	No
Patti	F	16 - 20 years	Applied	Health	Yes
Patrick	M	16 - 20 years	Applied	Real Estate Management	Yes
Phillippa	F	21 years +	Applied	Pedagogical Research	No
Sandra	F	21 years +	Applied	Education	Yes
Sharon	F	11 - 15 years	Applied	Health	Yes
Sophia	F	16 - 20 years	Both	Law	No
Sven	M	16 - 20 years	Applied	Education	Yes
Verna	F	16 - 20 years	Both	Health	Yes

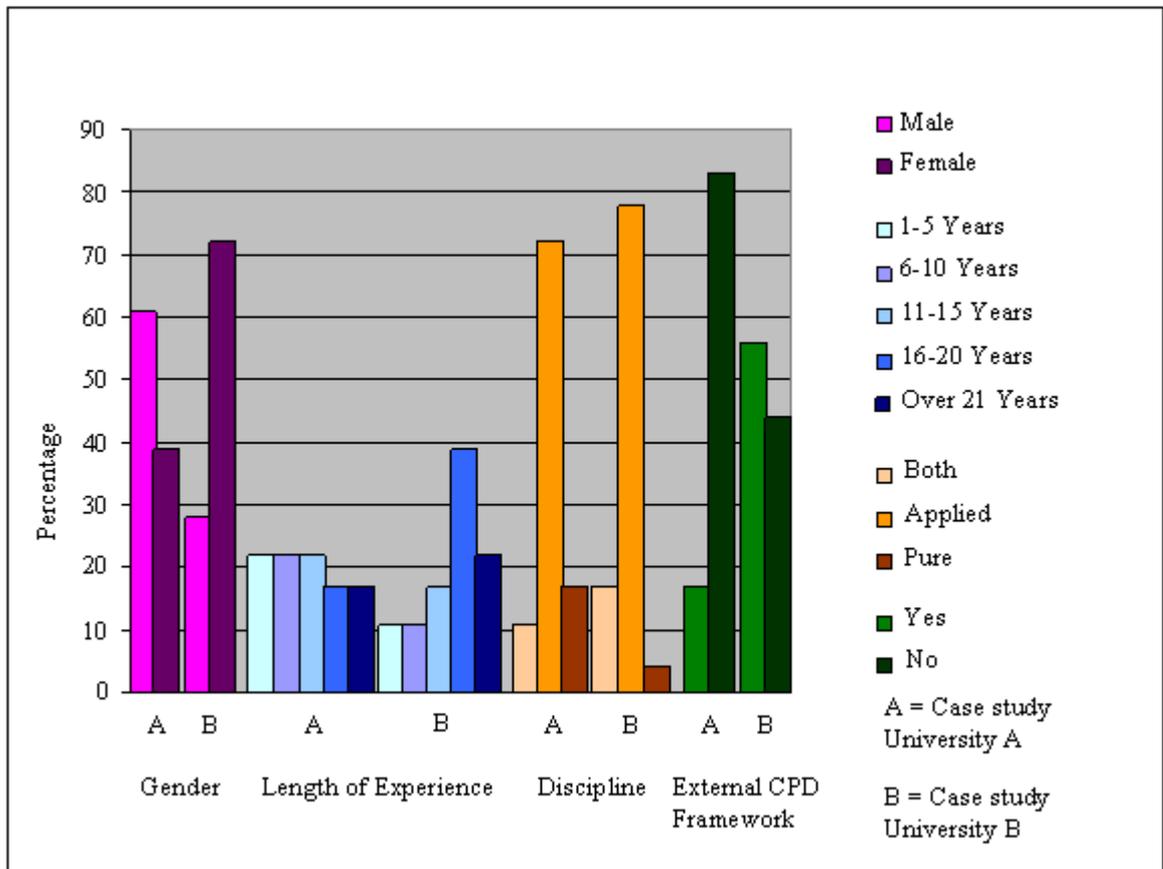
Academic attribute variable data from University B is also illustrated in the following graph, shown as percentage of whole number of academic interviews from this institution.

University B – Academic Interviewees’ Attributes



The following graph enables comparison of the academic attribute variables across the academic interviews for both participating case study institutions.

Comparison of academics' attributes across Universities A and B



University A – Attributes of key informant participants

Pseudonym	Job role	Key responsibilities							Length of experience in current university	
		Strategy implementation	Managing people	Budget management	Delivering training	Research	Strategy development	Teaching	In current university	In higher education
Christine	Responsible for academic development	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	N	11 - 15 yrs	11 - 15 yrs
Julia	Responsible for academic development	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Under 1 year	6 - 10 years
Kristen	Responsible for academic development	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	1 - 5 years	1 - 5 years
Nigel	Managerial	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	6 - 10 years	16 - 20 years
Sheila	Managerial	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	1 - 5 years	1 - 5 years
Vikram	Responsible for academic development	Y	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	1 - 5 years	1 - 5 years

University B – Attributes of key informant participants

Pseudonym	Job role	Key responsibilities							Length of experience in current university	
		Strategy implementation	Managing people	Budget management	Delivering training	Research	Strategy development	Teaching	In current university	In higher education
Adrian	Responsible for academic development	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	21 years +	21 years +
Lindsey	Managerial	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	N	1 – 5 years	1 – 5 years
Lorna	Managerial	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	21 years +	21 years +

Appendix B) Letter of agreement

To Whom It May Concern

Date:

This letter of agreement sets out the agreed arrangements between [*name of case study university*] and Karin Crawford. These arrangements are agreed in order to facilitate the undertaking of a research project wherein [*name of case study university*] are participants and Karin Crawford is the researcher. The research project is titled 'Continuing Professional Development in Higher Education: voices from below' – the objectives, methods and timescales are all detailed on the project web pages at <http://webpages.lincoln.ac.uk/kcrawford>. This letter of agreement confirms, below, the agreed commitments of each party.

Over the time of the project, KARIN CRAWFORD will;

- Ensure that all ethical issues are formally addressed through the University of Lincoln ethical approvals processes;
- Provide a project leaflet giving project information and complete a consent letter for each individual interview participant;
- Ensure that no individual interview participants are identified or identifiable to anyone other than the researcher at any stage in the research project;
- Ensure that the institutions who participate are able to identify their own data. However participating institutions will not be identified or identifiable within the research report;

- Maintain a project website with up-to-date information on progress throughout project;
- Be available and contactable easily at all times through email and telephone. Karin will also ensure that the key contact person within [name of case study university] has advance notification of any periods of non-availability, due for example to annual leave;
- Be available to do 'presentations' to any groups of staff of the participating university at any stage of the project, given reasonable notice; e.g. introducing the project – through to – presenting the findings;
- Seek out opportunities to publish various aspects of this research, including journal articles and conference contributions which involve communications to third parties. At all times, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity detailed in other parts of this letter will be adhered to. The intellectual property that arises from this research work is solely owned by the researcher;
- Provide one nominated person with a final draft of the full report document before it is finalised. This process allows for general approval of content in respect of factual information in relation to the HEI and to check issues of anonymity. (This would not be a research 'validation' exercise). This stage of the process is in addition to general informal two-way discussions and negotiations throughout the research exercise;

- Provide, at the end of the project, a full and detailed report with comparisons across the participant case studies, however, no one institution will be identified or identifiable
- Provide, at the end of the project, a summary findings document with key findings and recommendations – this will also be downloadable from the project web-pages

Over the time of the project [*name of case study university*] will;

- Nominate one person through which the researcher can
 - maintain contact;
 - make any practical arrangements;
 - liaise in respect of time spent in the university, data collection processes and meetings etc;
 - provide information to; and
 - seek information from.
- Facilitate access, for the researcher, to the institution's relevant policies, procedures and statistical data; for example, the numbers of academics employed; the structure of university faculties/services, including how staff development fits within this and existing relevant policies; academic appraisal; induction etc.
- Facilitate access, for the researcher, to relevant staff/faculty/department to administer data collection instruments. This will include academic staff (exact sample details to be discussed) and key informants such as managers and those responsible for staff development work.

- Engage with the research project, its aims and objectives to ensure the research is useful, informative and meaningful for [name of case study university] as well as the wider HE community

Signed by Karin Crawford.....

Date

Agreed by (*print name*)

Job title

Signature.....on behalf of [*name of case study university*]

Date

Appendix C) Information permission form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. This information sheet will give you information about the research and your rights in relation to the data you provide. I will ask you to sign two copies of this form: one of the sheets will be retained by you, the other I will keep. I will also sign the form and in doing so, agree to be bound by the conditions it specifies.

The research, your rights and my responsibilities

I am a part-time doctoral student undertaking the Doctor of Education – Education Leadership and Management (EdD) programme at the University of Lincoln. I am also an employee of the University of Lincoln and this research project is being supported through the University's Teaching Fellowship Scheme. Additionally, I am a registered practitioner of the Higher Education Academy and a registered social worker.

This qualitative research project will be exploring, via documentary-analysis and digitally-recorded interviews, CPD practices and perspectives in academia.

It is important to note that this research has not been commissioned by any organisation or agency. No organisations, institutions or managers will be given access to any of the raw data, or information on any research contributors. Indeed, 'raw data' – for example; your name, contact details, personal communication, completed questionnaire and interview transcript will not be shared with any other person nor will any other person have access to this information. Information will be stored in locked cabinets and on IT hardware protected with the highest quality security software. At the time of disposal all digital files will be completely erased and destroyed and documents shredded. Your rights and my responsibilities are enshrined in the Data Protection Act 1998.

The final thesis and any significant key findings that emerge will be published and therefore accessible to any reader. A summary research findings document will also be produced and made publicly available via electronic download. Confidentiality is of the highest priority and the greatest care will be taken to ensure that no respondent is identified or identifiable in this work. Similarly case-study departments and institutions will not be named.

It is anticipated that your participation will take no more than approximately 1.5 hours. This would include the completion of a very short form, giving some basic information about yourself and an interview, at a place, time and location of your choosing. Please note that no expenses can be paid for contributions to the research. You may withdraw from this research at any point prior to publication of research results.

If you feel that I have acted unethically during the course of this research, you may contact the University of Lincoln Ethics Committee and raise a concern following which, my conduct as researcher will be investigated. Contact: Professor Mike Neary,

Dean of Teaching and Learning, University of Lincoln, Brayford Pool, Lincoln. LN6 7TS mneary@lincoln.ac.uk

If you require any further information on this project prior to consenting to participation, please contact me. Additionally, further information is available on the project website at <http://webpages.lincoln.ac.uk/kcrawford>

My contact details

Karin Crawford

Phone: 01482 311234

Email: kcrawford@lincoln.ac.uk

Permission

I understand my rights in relation to my participation in this research and agree to participate. I understand that I may withdraw from the research at any time prior to the publication of the research findings.

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....

I agree to protect the rights and confidentiality of contributors to this research.

Karin Crawford

Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix D) Interview schedule - Academics

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) IN HE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE - ACADEMICS

This interview is being recorded – it will only be heard by myself – all materials will be kept confidential as per the consent agreement.

For the purposes of the digital recording.....

Date – Time

University

Name and Job Title

- This interview should take between 1 and 1.5 hours.
 - The interview is semi-structured and informal – basically I want it to be a conversation – for you to have the opportunity to tell me what you want me to know about your views of CPD in academia. However, I do have some key issues that I hope we will cover, so I will check my prompts occasionally to make sure we are more-or-less on track.
 - This interview has five parts;
 - A) exploring how CPD is understood
 - B) about you as an academic
 - C) your views on how national issues may influence your CPD
 - D) the institutional context and its influence on your CPD
 - E) about your team, discipline and how it influences your CPD
-

SECTION A: Definition and understanding

Firstly though.....

To confirm understanding at the outset of the interview, how do you define continuing professional development? What does it mean to you?

- Is it a good thing – or are there problems with it?
 - What sorts of activities, learning would you include or exclude?
-

Section B: About your professional self

B1 Please tell me about your career history – how did you get to be a

NEED TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED ...

B2 Learning career.....

B3 How has your experience of CPD contributed to the development of your career?

B4 What are your views on your role and responsibilities as an academic? What are the various things you are involved with? What does this mean for CPD?

B5 Are you actively engaged in CPD? If not, why not? If so, what are you doing, what is your focus and why?

- Teaching and learning?
- Subject/disciplinary knowledge?
- Approaches to research?
- Something else?

B7 What are your learning, development and career aspirations or plans?

B8 Tell me about the types of support that you get for your own CPD? (from whom, when, how and how affective?)

Section C: About the National /International context.....

C1 The many changes in the context of HE nationally and internationally are well recorded – what is your experience of working in this changing environment?

- working in Higher Education in the context of national – European - International
- political and policy drivers
- how do they impact upon your role, your needs and behaviours in respect of CPD?

C2 Having talked broadly about the wider context of HE, are there particular national / international issues that impact upon you because of your disciplinary or subject focus?

NEED TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED...

Examples include:-

- Higher Education Academy
 - National Standards Framework
 - Registered Practitioner Status (Are you registered?)
 - National Student Survey
 - Market forces in HE
 - Widening participation
 - Internationalisation
 - RAE
 - Legislation/policy – national, European, international
 - HE Funding issues
 - Expectations of HE
-

Section D: About the institutional context....

D1 I am interested to know more about your views on how the University of Influence your approach to CPD.....

NEED TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED...

D2 Induction

D3 Appraisal

D4 Peer observation

D5 Mentoring

D6 In-house provision – practical/physical resources

D7 External provision – practical/physical resources

D8 Expectations of management – institution

D9 Institutional strategy - philosophy

D10 Institutional culture

Section E: About the ‘Communities of Practice’ that you work in.....your team; your department; your faculty; your discipline.....

E1 Please tell me about where your role fits within the structure of the University...

E2 In what ways do your professional relationships within the University impact on your development and professional learning?

E3 In what ways do your professional relationships external to the University impact on your development and professional learning?

NEED TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED...

Disciplinary difference;

Informal – formal learning

Professional bodies – mandatory external requirements as applicable

Overall final question:

In summary then

The overall purposes of this research is to highlight academics views on what influences their understandings, behaviours and attitudes in respect of CPD.....so

.....what are the key things that make a difference to what you do in respect of your own continuing professional development?

Finally

- Thank you for your help and time.
- If you think of anything else, or have any queries, please contact me – details on back of leaflet.
- According to current plans, the final research report should be completed in 2009. I also plan to do a summary ‘Findings’ document. This will be accessible to you via the web pages.

Appendix E) Interview schedule – Key Informants

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) IN HE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE – KEY INFORMANTS

This interview is being recorded – it will only be heard by myself – all materials will be kept confidential as per the consent agreement.

For the purposes of the digital recording.....

Date – Time

University

Name and Job Title

- This interview should take between 1 and 1.5 hours.
 - The interview is semi-structured and informal – basically I am hoping to find out about the context and culture, in respect of the continuing professional development of academics, at this University.
 - This interview has essentially four parts;
 - A) about your job role
 - B) about academics' CPD in this institution
 - C) about this University's response to relevant national issues
 - D) Finally about your views on the key issues that influence academics in respect of decisions made about continuing professional development.
-

Section A: About your job role

A1 Please tell me about your job role – key responsibilities – particularly in respect to CPD in the institution.

A2 I want to understand the purpose of your role.....so why does this University need a.....or a Department of.....how does this role and/or department influence academics' professional development?

A3 Please help me to understand the structure of this institution.....

A4 Please tell me about where your role fits within the structure of the University...

Section B: About academics' CPD in this institution

B1 Does this institution have an agreed, explicit understanding of what is meant by CPD? – or is another term used and agreed?

B2 If so – what and where is it?

B3 Is there an overall institutional philosophy about CPD in the institution?

B4 Is there a strategy for CPD? – or is it encompassed in several strategies? Can you indentify them for me?

B5 What are the objectives of this institutions' approach to CPD for academics? What are you trying to achieve?

B6 Is there a plan for how those objectives will be met/achieved?

B7 What sorts of activities, learning, development would the institution recognise as CPD?

B8 Where/how is CPD for academics placed – accessed - supported within the institutional structure?

B9 I am interested to know more about the University policies that support, encourage, influence, enable CPD.....for example induction; appraisal; peer observation, mentoring.....how do they influence CPD? What do they set out to achieve? (Need to ensure the following are considered: induction, appraisal, peer observation, appraisal)

B10 Does the University measure the success of its approach to CPD? If so how?

B11 Are the formal CPD activities of individuals recorded and monitored centrally?

B12 Do students of the University influence academic development in any way?

B13 CPD has a cost implication, how is the (or are the) budgets for CPD allocated and to whom?

B14 Does the institution undertake any workforce planning/profiling in relation to the academic population (in respect of experience, qualifications etc)? If so, does this work impact upon the way CPD is offered/delivered?

B15 What would you say are the main achievements/successes in the institution in respect of CPD?

B16 What would you say are the key challenges for the institution in respect of CPD?

Section C: About this University's response to the National/International context

C1 The many changes in the context of HE nationally and internationally are well recorded – please tell me about the ways in which this institution's approach to CPD is driven by the national agenda's, policies and requirements – the national context?

NEED TO ENSURE THE FOLLOWING ARE CONSIDERED...

Examples include:-

- Higher Education Academy
 - National Standards Framework
 - Registered Practitioner Status (Are you registered?)
- National Student Survey
- Market forces in HE
- Widening participation
- Internationalisation
- RAE
- Legislation/policy – national, European, international
- HE Funding issues
- Expectations of HE

Section D: The key issues that influence academics in respect of decisions made about continuing professional development.

D1 This research focuses on identifying academics' views on what influences their approaches to continuing professional development. However, I am interested to hear, from your perspective, what do you think are the key issues that impact on academics' behaviours, attitudes and decisions in this regard?

Overall final question:

In summary then – how would you (in a nutshell) describe this University's approach to CPD?

Finally

- Thank you for your help and time.
- If you think of anything else, or have any queries, please contact me – details on back of leaflet.
- According to current plans, the final research report should be completed in 2009. I also plan to do a summary 'Findings' document. This will be accessible to you via the web pages.