

A Tale of missed opportunities: FE teachers' CM exposure/readiness in the UK

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Abstract

This paper reports a study on the preparedness of Further Education (FE) teachers for educational change. Previous studies on changes in the FE sector (Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) 2010; Learning and Skills Council) have shown that change, whether internally or externally induced, can impact on teachers, who are the main fulcrum of educational change. The study examined the extent to which teachers, who are increasingly described in the literature as leaders are equipped with change management (CM) skills and how this may have helped them prepare to cope with, manage and implement change. Essentially a case study, the study draws on a mixed method approach. Data were collected through a survey and interviews with selected teachers from the college which evolved as a result of a merger. A key finding from the study was that majority of teacher leaders had progressed onto leadership and management roles without relevant training in CM which could have enabled them cope with the challenges of change which is rampant in the sector. Furthermore, it was established that knowledge of CM was crucial for coping with, and implementing change. Based on its findings, the paper concludes that, as professionals working in a rapidly changing environment, teachers in the FE sector in the UK would benefit from acquiring 'new knowledge' in CM.

Keywords: Further Education, CM, Teacher Leader, Mergers, Leadership

Introduction

Change impacts on all organisations irrespective of the sector as they reposition and respond to competitive, political, technological and economic pressures (Balogun and Hailey 2008; Boddy 2014; Buchanan and Huyzinski 2012). Rapid response to change has become the norm in the education sector for a range of reasons (Hillier 2006; Chadwick 2007; LSIS 2010; BIS 2014; AoC 2014). Teachers are now presented with the challenge of mediating between a rapidly changing world and equipping learners with the skills needed to work and live in it (LSIS, 2010; CEC, 2007). Yet the professional development of teachers does not equip them with such skills thus leading to vulnerability (Zembylas and Barker 2007). Teachers, increasingly described as leaders, have significant changes to their job roles leading to additional management and leadership responsibilities (Hughes, 1996).

Changes in FE have led to mergers in order to maximise limited income (FE News 2014; FEFC 1998). Such changes may place ill-prepared teachers as key implementers of change initiatives (Fullan and Hargreaves 1992, Orr 2011, Sikes 1992). Given this concern about the level of preparedness of teachers for managing change in the FE sector in the UK, it is logical that questions about their preparedness are asked.

FE tutors usually develop change management skills on the job. However, given that the sector experiences change more consistently than other sectors, it is important that opportunities for gaining this skill including during the teacher training

period be explored. Although various reports have identified gaps in ITT curriculum including ‘in important areas such as subject knowledge development, subject specific pedagogy, assessment, behaviour management and special educational needs and disabilities’ (DFE, 2015, pg1), there have been omissions in terms of gaps that relate to teachers’ roles outside of the classroom. It is on the basis of exploring such opportunities that this study aims to answer three specific research questions. First, to what extent are teachers in leadership and management positions equipped with CM skills? To what extent are teachers in the study assigned CM and implementation roles? And finally, how useful would the incorporation of CM into their training and/or professional development programmes have been in the management and implementation of the change process they were involved in? The expectation is that though this is a relatively small case study, the findings could be extended through experimentation to a much larger group within the sector.

The case study examined a FE college in the South East of England which evolved as a result of a merger. The merger was largely influenced by the proximity between two previously independent colleges. The collaboration was also influenced by the government’s desire and eagerness to stimulate competition and improve provision for students (Panchamia, 2012). The case study was considered appropriate because the previously independent colleges had undergone several strategic and tactical change initiatives including their organisational structures thrice in the two years preceding the merger. As such, the case study provides ample opportunity to engage participants who have been significantly affected by change.

The teacher leader and change

The concept of teacher leader is widely used in educational literature (Katzenmeyer and Moller 2009; Fairman and Mackenzie, 2014; Fullan 2007; Liberman et al. 1989; Sergiovanni 1987) and refers to teachers who develop their own professional learning and have a vision that goes beyond their classroom including to improve their practice and to influence and implement change (Danielson, 2007). Teacher leaders ideally have years of experience and are usually respected by their colleagues (Bond, 2015). Leadership provided by teacher leaders is often referred to as shared and distributed leadership and is acknowledged as contributing to governance and school improvement (Hallinger and Heck 2009). Teacher leadership is not generally associated with superior position in the organisational hierarchy (Delvaney, 1987), but with practice and organisational improvement.

Teachers generally feel uncomfortable with this description (Delvaney, 1987). Two arguments, the gap between reality and rhetoric of teachers’ power (Katzenmeyer and Moller 2009; Lattimer, 2012), and the additional responsibilities such assignments attract, are offered for this discomfiture (Fairman and MacKenzie 2014). The roles and responsibilities of teachers usually include some kind of managerial function, at least in relation to the classroom and curriculum management of their students (Southworth, 2010). Most of these roles are learned (Kimble, Hildreth, and Bourdon 2007). There is an expansion of teacher responsibility including the management of change (Ash and Persall 1999) that enables senior management to ‘concern themselves with strategic planning’ (Gleeson and Shain, 1999, 6), requirement for one to ‘hold the line’ between lecturers and senior managers in brokering change’ (Gleeson and Shain 1999, 9), and the need for staff to ‘mediate tensions and dilemmas often associated with rapid and unpredictable change’ (Clarke and Newman 1997). As a result, teachers in the FE sector have become leaders or managers of departments, course leaders, team leaders, curriculum managers and subject coordinators (Cedefop, 2011) and are, therefore, a part of the emergent leadership stage, who typify what is now generally described as the teacher leader.

Teachers share characteristics of effective change leaders (Scott, 2003), as they work with their learners, identify their potentials and encourage them to achieve.

While these are key leadership and change agent qualities, it is not clear whether these qualities are acknowledged by educational leaders (Bond, 2015). One possible implication of this is that potentially useful leadership qualities of teachers, who are at the heart of change processes, are often ignored. As a result, periods of change are usually associated with stress because teacher leaders are often not allowed to function in their professional roles (Wisse and Sleebos 2016).

Change is an intrinsic feature of a teacher's job (Lieberman and Miller 1990; Bascia and Hargreaves 2000) and manifests within the department or team, across the institution, and beyond the institution (Danielson 2007) even though they are ill-prepared for it (Fullan 1991). Teachers, therefore, need to be exposed to CM skills (Nguyen, 2010) so as to be better prepared (Cranston 2010; Zembylas and Barker 2007, Lu Ly and Orlieb 2009). This can provide a feeling of empowerment to initiate and manage change in their institutions (Atkinson 2000).

Teachers, who are keen to act as change agents, sometimes feel insecure (Fullan, 2003). Teachers' lives are far more likely to be enriched if they have opportunities to develop relevant skills and knowledge which increase their confidence and commitment to the profession (York-Barr and Duke 2004). This development may lead to attitudinal changes, as they become more aware and accept change as an essential feature of their constantly evolving roles. Teachers exposed to CM skills tend to be more receptive to change (Cardoso, 2008).

Teachers can, therefore, be seen as leaders carrying out functions for which they may not have been prepared. Like teachers, leaders have vision, are proactive, value human resources, take risks, are good communicators and value the institution as a learning environment. (Boyd-Dimock and McGree 1995; Leithwood and Seahore-Louis 2011). Therefore, teachers ought to be equipped with relevant CM skills.

Drawing on the ongoing, we make two arguments. First, we contend that there is a link between change and teaching and this highlights the importance of engaging teachers during the entire process of educational change. Second, we argue that because teachers have a role in preparing leaders and managers of the future, it is important that they themselves be adequately prepared for leading and managing change (Geribo, 2011).

Secondly, we suggest that teachers are confronted with a range of roles and responsibilities which demand a myriad of skills. Gaining skills for addressing the various needs cannot be through a single process. Essentially, we argue that gaining these skills could be through both informal and formal processes. This, therefore, opens up a discussion about how teachers are prepared for gaining these skills. It is in this context that the central research question relating to the opportunities for developing some of these skills emerges.

Research methods

While this study has a natural disposition towards an interpretive paradigm because it relies on personal stories, the need to gather information about the frequency of occurrence of views and opinions compels a preference for a mixed method approach. In addition to interpretive methods such as interviews and a survey, the study utilised a statistical tool, SPSS, to identify nuanced variations amongst the participants to achieve a better understanding of the research problem and overcome the intrinsic bias that comes from adopting a single approach (Teddie and Tashakkori 2006; Silverman 2010). The interviews provided an opportunity to gain deeper meaning of the themes that emerged from the initial survey.

60 questionnaires were distributed to all teachers who had retained their roles across the two campuses of the newly created college with (40) 67% responding. The questionnaire included both open ended and closed questions and was designed to capture specific data regarding the management of and the impact of the merger,

teaching experience, knowledge of CM and other variables. The data collected was used to generate frequency of occurrence tables. Descriptive statistics tool was used to establish the relationship between some of these key variables.

Structured interviews were conducted with six teachers. The six respondents were consciously selected to explore views emerging from the survey and to represent management and leadership experience among the sample. The interview themes focused on five main areas: teaching experience, management responsibilities, level of preparedness, perceptions of self as change agents and the place of CM in their professional development.

Interview scripts were read repeatedly to identify patterns and meanings. The emergent patterns were coded with each code associated to key concepts and ideas. Concepts and ideas associated to each code were then categorised and grouped thematically (Braun and Clarke 2013). In this context, we acknowledge the ethical issue relating to positionality and reflexivity of researchers (Collett and Mavin, 2009). In specific terms, we recognise that one of the researchers was employed as an FE tutor who experienced the traumatic change referred to in this study. We recognise that this might induce bias in interpretation of data. To address this, we drew on the injunctions of Collett and Mavin (2019) by distancing the particular researcher from the coding and thematisation process. Further we followed the guidance provided by Haynes (2012) by engaging the researcher in a dialogue on how her professional experience and positioning might affect ‘the choices we make about research topics, questions, approaches, methodologies and outcomes’ (p. 78). By consciously engaging with this process, we were able to eliminate potential bias.

Supplementary secondary data on staff development were obtained from the professional development records of teachers. All of these sources and approaches were explored in a typical mixed method approach to arrive at conclusions.

Findings and discussions

Gender

Table 1 shows the gender distribution with 24 (60%) female teachers and 16 (40%) male teachers. This mostly reflects the gender disparity in further education, with the number of female teachers significantly higher than their male counterparts (Commission for the European Communities, 2007; Mctavish and Miller, 2009).

Table 1: gender distribution of participants

		Frequency	Percent
	Female	24	60.0
	Male	16	40.0
	Total	40	100.0

Our first research question aimed to find out to what extent teachers in leadership and management positions are equipped with CM skills either as a part of their initial teacher education programme or ongoing professional development. In order to answer this question, we confirmed the number of participants in the study who held positions that may involve the management of change. We then sought to establish how many of those in management roles have been exposed to CM training. Table 2 below shows that most of the participants have teaching as well as management or course leadership responsibilities with 20 (50%) holding a combination of teaching and course leadership roles, three (8%) holding team leadership roles, 10 (25%) hold-

ing curriculum coordination role, and seven (18%) holding curriculum management roles.

Table 2: Job Roles and Titles

		Frequency	Percent
	Lecturer /Course Leader	20	50.0
	Curriculum Team Leader	3	7.5
	Curriculum Coordinator	10	25.0
	Curriculum Manager	7	17.5
	Total	40	100.0

In terms of exposure to CM training, very few teachers have had any form of exposure to CM training. Of the 15 participants who do not have management and leadership roles, as shown in table 3 below, 14 out of 15 teachers (93%) have never had any form of CM training or management role. Only one participant (6.66%) among this group had undergone a form of training in CM. Amongst those who have management and leadership roles, 21 out of the 25 teachers (84%) had no training in CM. Four participants out of 25 (16%) with management responsibilities had undergone training in CM as part of their undergraduate or post graduate degrees.

Table 3: Management responsibilities in relation to training

			Any previous training on change management		Total
			No	Yes	
Management responsibilities apart from teaching	N	Count	14	1	15
		% within Management responsibilities apart from teaching	93.3%	6.7%	100.0%
	Y	Count	21	4	25
		% within Management responsibilities apart from teaching	84.0%	16.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	5	40
		% within Management responsibilities apart from teaching	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%

The findings presented above are particularly significant because the expanding role of teachers could mean that most of them are given responsibilities for which they are not prepared (Hall and Wilson 2002). The avenues offered by training and staff development have not been taken in this case. Such readiness has been located in the context of change efficacy (Weiner, 2009) and it is logical to expect that, readiness can be enhanced through the involvement and equipment of a range of developmental en-

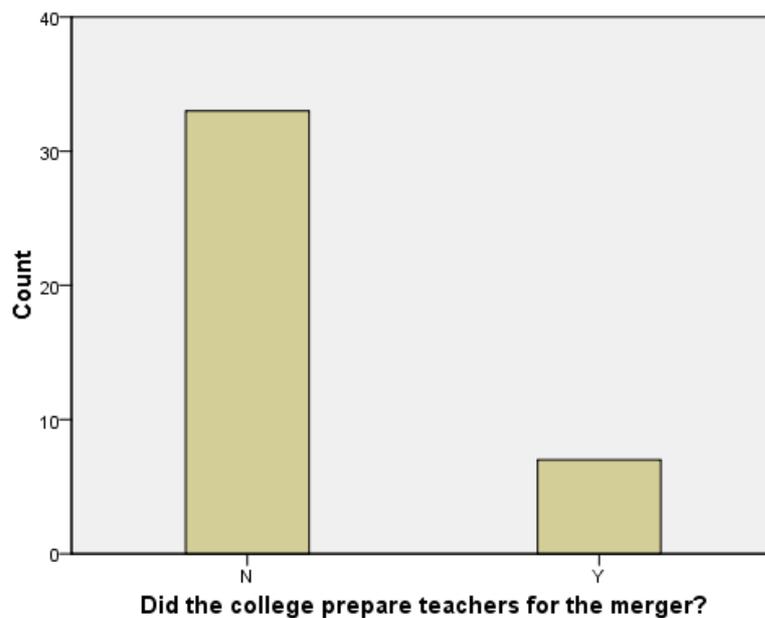
gements. Most of the participants, particularly those in leadership or management positions, may, therefore, have been given management responsibilities which included CM without relevant skills.

In answer to our first and second research questions, therefore, this study shows that most teachers in FE settings, as indicated by this college, have little or no training in areas relating to CM even though they are given responsibilities and roles that are likely to involve CM. Change as a phenomenon can be unpredictable and in most cases, presents challenges both at professional and personal levels. The implication is that those without any training may have dealt with the emotional issues often associated with change without the basic skills and knowledge that could help them in such periods of stress (Veen and Slegers 2006; Zembylas and Barker 2007).

Preparing Teachers for the Merger

A merger is a major change initiative and is known to create uncertainties particularly in FE (Stewart, 2003). To ascertain whether any form of CM training was provided for teachers prior to the merger, participants were asked whether they were prepared for the merger. As shown in figure 1 below, 34 (85%) of the participants felt they were not prepared for this change. Six (15%) of the participants said they were prepared this change as a result of the briefing session they attended prior to the merger.

Figure 1: Preparation of teachers for the merger



The findings presented above suggest that the impact of this particular change on teachers was not considered. This lack of preparation may have presented some challenges. One of the objectives of the merger was to enhance college provision for students, yet those who were expected to drive this vision were not equipped for the change. It seems, therefore, that the college did not recognise the potential contribution that this key human capital could have made in fulfilling this objective. Ignoring the professional input and the emotional impact could be seen as an indication that

change is usually imposed on teachers (McGrath and Morrow 2009; Hargreaves 2004).

Teaching Experience

In recognition of the fact that skills are not necessarily gained through training alone, we further sought to ascertain whether there was a link between teaching experience and specific roles in the college which may have included an opportunity to manage change. In this context, we wanted to establish whether there was a difference in the experience of CM between experienced and less experienced teachers/participants. Teachers as professionals go through various levels of proficiency which range from novice to expert (Berliner, 1994). The objective here was to ascertain whether those who fell into the expert category had been prepared to manage change when compared with others. As shown in Table 4, 21 (53%) of the participants had over 10 years' experience, eight (20%) had over 5-10 years' experience, another eight (20%) had 3-5 years' experience while only three (8%) had 1-3 three years' teaching experience. This means that over half of the sample population had over 10 years' teaching experience.

Table 4 Teaching Experience

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	1-3 years	3	7.5
	3-5 years	8	20.0
	5-10 years	8	20.0
	10 years and above	21	52.5
	Total	40	100.0

We further sought to find out whether there was a difference between teaching experience and training in / knowledge of CM, Table 5 shows that out of three participants with 1-3 years' teaching experience, none had any previous knowledge of CM. Among the eight teachers with 3-5 years' experience, only one had previously received training in the area of CM. Only one teacher with 5-10 years' experience had been trained in CM. Interestingly, even amongst participants with over 10 years' experience, longevity didn't seem to make any significant difference, as only three out of 21 had previous knowledge of CM.

Given the rapid rate of change within the FE sector, this group of teachers who have no knowledge of CM as revealed in Table 5 would have been affected by changes in the college for which they may not have been adequately prepared. Also, the evolution of teachers' roles (Boyd-Dimock and McGree 1995; Gleeson 2001) means that they would have taken on additional responsibilities which may have involved CM, but without relevant training. Key questions therefore emerge from this state of events. Are FE colleges underusing potential resources which are readily available to them? If that was the case, why? There is no doubt that this situation damages both teachers and colleges. For the former, there are emotional issues, feelings of lack of engagement and an ever-dwindling motivation to cope with (Katzenmeyer and Moller 2009). With the latter, there is a clear issue of limited achievement of goals, unnecessary tension amongst the work force, which naturally leads to under-achievement, and the waste of resources (Lopez, 2009). What impact would a team of well-prepared teachers have had on the change process if they had been utilised as change leaders? Conventional wisdom suggests that this would have been positively significant. This opportunity, in our view, has been missed by the colleges involved.

Table 5: Teaching Experience in relation to training

			Any previous training on change management		Total
			No	Yes	
No. of years teaching	1-3 years	Count	3	0	3
		% within No. of years teaching	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	3-5 years	Count	7	1	8
		% within No. of years teaching	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	5-10 years	Count	7	1	8
		% within No. of years teaching	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	10 years and above	Count	18	3	21
		% within No. of years teaching	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	5	40
		% within No. of years teaching	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%

4.4 Teaching Qualifications

CM is an essential feature of other professional training / qualifications such as accountancy, engineering, project management and health care (Iles and Cranfield 2004). We, therefore, wanted to ascertain whether teachers had such opportunities. Exploring this variable was also important because teacher education is more diverse in further education than it is in the primary and secondary sectors (Pring and Pollard 2011). Until 2013, teachers in the sector were expected to hold a formal teaching qualification. As shown in table 6, 30 (75%) hold a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification, while six (15%) hold a Cert Ed. The PGCE is aimed at graduates while the Cert Ed is for those who do not have a degree. Only one (2.5%) teacher holds an introductory qualification, Preparing to Teach in the Life Long Sector. Three (8%) hold a Diploma to Teach in the Life Long Sector awarded by non-university bodies.

A review of the course content for all these awards show that none of them has any element of CM in their contents. As such, we can say confidently that none of the participants had any exposure to CM training as part of their ITE.

Table 6: Teaching Qualifications held by Participants

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	PGCE	30	75.0
	Cert Ed	6	15.0
	PTLLS	1	2.5
	DTLLS	3	7.5
	Total	40	100.0

The fact that none of these qualifications included any aspect of CM is a crucial point, particularly because change is an intrinsic part of a teacher's career (Bascia and Hargreaves 2000; Fullan 2007). This highlights the point made by Danielson (2007, p14) that teaching is a 'flat profession' because teachers do not have the opportunity to exercise greater responsibility compared with other practitioners. It may well be that compared to other professionals, teachers are deliberately confined to the lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, because they are not considered to be professionals. This might well account for the situation in which their training from the inception does not equip them with core leadership skills such as CM.

Exposure to CM as part of teacher development

Our third research question was to find out the views of these teachers on whether CM ought to be included as part of teacher development in order to prepare and cope with change effectively. As shown in table 7 below, 17 (43%) participants agree that CM skills are vital and should be gained while six (15%) strongly agree that CM skills should be acquired. However, 9 participants, (23%) disagreed that gaining CM skills would be beneficial to teachers. 8 (20%) strongly disagreed that gaining the skills would be useful.

Table 7: Incorporating change as part of teacher development

	Frequency	Percent
Agree	17	42.5
strongly agree	6	15.0
Disagree	9	22.5
strongly disagree	8	20.0
Total	40	100.0

The results revealed a nuanced variation between those in favour of developing their competence in managing change and those who did not. The fact that over 50% of the respondents support the idea of incorporating CM into the teaching profession may be an indication that they are willing to engage more in the change process. This is likely to impact positively on teacher attitude to change if they felt that they were being supported and encouraged to partake in the change process. Such an outlook of ownership and voluntary involvement is likely to create a state of readiness during periods of change (Garrett, 2003).

In the context of this case study, it may be concluded that, many teachers believe that gaining CM skills would optimize their knowledge of change and would ultimately favour a more positive attitude to change. If teachers identified CM training as essential to their professional development, surely, FE colleges' management teams need to consider facilitating the provision of CM training as an element of their teachers' professional development. As shown in this study, such training is intrinsically linked to a teacher's job and becomes crucial, as all professionals have a responsibility and right to acquire relevant CPD (Coffield, 2008).

Analysis and discussion of Qualitative Data

Exposure to CM

Our interviews revealed that only two respondents had any kind of training in CM. However, these two participants privately funded their CM training. One other re-

spondent had been trained in CM in his previous role as a Project Manager. Their unique experiences are reflected in the following responses:

I learned about CM as part of a programme that I attended at the Institute of Leadership and Management. I think the training was good, and gave some insight into organisational change, the impact on individual and the organisation as a whole. There were some interesting case studies and examples of why people resist change and suitable strategies to incorporate during the change process. I learned about the CM process, how to adapt, and maybe respond to change better. As teachers, I think change is part of our professional life and we need to know more about it. (Interviewee 2)

CM was properly covered during my MSc Education Management degree and prepared me better than the others to manage and cope with change. I manage a large team and it is imperative to understand the change process and how it can be implemented without causing so much resentment and frustration. (Interviewee 5)

I have been teaching for a while and I don't think CM has ever been offered as training for teachers in the college but I had the training as part of my professional development in my previous job as a project manager. The knowledge that I gained has obviously been useful in my role as a teacher. (Interviewee 6)

The responses above indicate that these participants are convinced that a knowledge of, and exposure to CM skills is likely to have enabled them develop a more proactive and pragmatic attitude to change. As a result, they may have accepted and adapted to change more easily.

Participants, who had not been trained, recognized that such training is crucial. This was articulated in a comment by a respondent:

No, I have never attended any professional development programme on CM, seriously I don't think it has ever been considered for teachers but I have read articles and case studies on how change have been successfully implemented in education. I think it is important to understand these processes. (Interviewee 1)

The above respondent emphasises the need for teachers to be prepared and equipped with the right skills to manage change, as teachers are usually the implementers of educational change and always in the 'firing line' (Smit, 2003) and play a significant role in 'converting paper policies into courses, curricula and purposeful activities in classroom' (Coffield 2008:22). Thus, teachers who manage change that lead to positive outcomes within the learning environment (McGrath and Morrow 2009), need to be effectively prepared in order to achieve the desired outcomes (Maughan, Teeman and Wilson 2012).

Drawing from the foregoing, therefore, we may argue that a significant number of teachers in this study have not been equipped with CM skills irrespective of their position, qualification or experience. If this is applicable to the whole sector, we are likely to be confronted with a huge proportion of teachers in a very volatile sector, who have not been equipped with the required skills for coping with change. In our view, this amounts to a form of missed opportunities, as both mandatory professional training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes offer ample opportunities.

Previous CM Experience

To gain further insight into their unique experiences of managing change, our interviews explored change initiatives that participants may have been involved with. Three respondents had managed change, though on a small scale. They suggested that some day-to-day routine work of teachers are actually elements of CM. This may well be due to their exposure:

I have made changes within the learning environment to suit my learners and I was also part of a team that developed and introduced the new initiative: task-based learning. The change involved the whole team and was planned and anticipated even though the implementation took place within a short period of time. (Interviewee 6)

I have been involved in managing change: Both at my place of work and as a senior examiner for Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) examination board. This includes organisational structure, staff re-skilling/training, managing staff attitude, employment pattern, employment conditions and internal procedures. Currently we are in the middle of Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) changes from predominantly coursework-based to part exam and part coursework (Interviewee 5)

I have made some changes that affected my students. Anything that makes the learning environment more effective for me is change. I think I have been able to do that. In the class room, (micro level) one of the changes I am currently pushing forward is for a more flexible approach in the delivery of our courses particularly through e-learning and, as such, I have developed my knowledge in this field. This will give our students the opportunity to learn in different modes' if change is going to affect other people, then it is only fair that you involve them. I made sure that I kept other teachers involved in the picture. I think CM requires a lot of tact and the ability to convince people why change should be introduced. Once I faced this challenge I was able to go ahead but there were usually challenges. (Interviewee 2)

These three respondents seem to have fully embraced change as a crucial part of their job. It may be argued that their exposure to CM skills/training gave them an advantage over others. One other respondent who had never managed any form of change did not quite see the point of being involved in the process because he is always:

'Told what to do amidst confusion in some cases' (Interviewee 3)

The participant was part of the team of teachers who implemented 'curriculum 2000' in his area of learning. This echoes the point that teachers are given additional responsibility whether or not they have the skills to cope with, or manage the process. In essence, teachers have accepted change as an intrinsic feature of their job. We may, therefore, conclude that teachers, who have been exposed to CM skills through training/experience are more likely to be in a better position to recognise their involvement in CM.

Embedding Change Management as Part of Teacher Development

Our interviews revealed that teachers recognise the benefits of having CM skills either as part of their ITE or CPD for a number of reasons:

I think it is absolutely important for teachers to gain knowledge of CM, but I am not sure what this would entail in this college because CM in my view is a very broad subject. If it is part of teacher education, maybe it will help some of us appreciate change better. (Interviewee 1)

Change is a very complex subject that requires tact and particular skills to manage if results are to be achieved. As agents of change I believe it may be necessary for teachers to gain this type of knowledge as part of their development. Above all, it may help them respond better to change if they have a role in it. (Interviewee 5)

One respondent provided an interesting alternative perspective on the issue of change. He felt that although training teachers in CM was a good idea, it was more important to promote good leadership during periods of change:

Although change is important, teachers need good leadership. Good leaders will explain change clearly to their team, they will be able to sell the idea and steer everyone towards the specific outcome. That is what really matters. (Interviewee 2)

The above respondent has highlighted the importance of leadership in the context of CM. If teachers are to be correctly described as educational leaders (Donaldson 2010; Liberman 1998; Sergiovanni, 1987, Boyd-Dimock and McGree, 1995), they have to be proactive, anticipate and recognise where change is needed within their learning environment. An interviewee with CM skills indicated that although, acquiring knowledge of CM was useful, it may not guarantee a change in attitude.

Training could be part of CPD but it depends on the individual. If we just make an assumption that all teachers need knowledge of CM, then it could be misleading. There are people who do not like change because of the fear and uncertainty usually associated with change. For such people, it doesn't matter if training is provided, their attitude and response to change will not make any difference as they will always find something negative about changing the status quo. (Respondent 4)

Incorporating a more relevant training in CM which empowers teachers in FE will equip them better to manage change and it will also change their attitude to CPD sessions which have been noted as an area for concern (Mather and Seifert 2014) which is widespread problem (EU Maastricht Communiqué 2004)

Mather and Seifert (2014:103) highlighted the fact that FE teachers had a general lack of interest in college-based 'tick box' approach to professional development and most staff did not take those training seriously. This negative view about CPD was reflected in the responses by some of the respondents. One respondent in particular said:

Knowledge of change is good but we are already inundated with too many compulsory training courses, some of which we don't really need for the job. Personally, I am not too keen on more training. (Interviewee 3)

Those who responded positively felt they would be better prepared with the right skills and mind-set, because of the intrinsic feature of CM in their role.

In effect, there might be an incidental value to the introduction of CM training as a CPD component. In addition to improving the state of readiness to cope with change, it might also improve attitudes.

In theory, there are two main reasons for suggesting ITE as an appropriate avenue to provide teachers with CM skills. Firstly, the period of initial teacher educa-

tion and induction initiates trainees' engagement with professional values and expertise of those who might later take up teaching or educational leadership positions (Donaldson 2010). Secondly, documentary evidence (teacher education programmes) shows that relevant policy changes in education are introduced to trainee teachers during their training. It seems rational to embed CM skills in such forums. However, with the short duration of ITE programmes, it may be difficult to include CM. Such training will be more effective, if incorporated into their CPD programmes (Fullan 2007), and is more likely to create a mind-set of 'the learning manager' (Smith, Lynch and Knight 2007).

5. Conclusion

Teachers have been described as leaders and change agents even though there is very little evidence that they are given the opportunity to acquire the essential skills to perform this crucial role. This is particularly problematic for teachers who have progressed onto management and leadership positions and have additional responsibilities of managing performance and motivating others during periods of change.

This paper has examined FE college teachers' readiness and exposure to training in the context of their role as leaders who operationalise educational change. One aim of the study was to establish whether teachers in leadership and management positions were equipped to manage change through training or professional development. Over 50% of the teachers who took part in the study are in management position and had no exposure to CM training despite carrying out duties which involved the management of change. This must have proved challenging, particularly in a job that has already been classified as highly stressful. With regards to the merger, there was no evidence that the college had prepared teachers for change. The crucial question, therefore, is how could this have been avoided? How colleges could have prepared these teachers for what now seems to be the inevitable role of leadership and management of change?

What this study has revealed is that colleges could tap into two possible options. One is to embed the training into teacher training programme and the other is through deliberately planned CPD programmes. Either way, we argue that this has been a case of missed opportunities. If teachers had been exposed in the course of their training to CM skills, it is viable to argue that their level of readiness, and their actual skills in this area would have been enhanced, thus enabling them to better handle the challenges of managing change in stressful times.

Another concern of the study was to establish whether teachers had been assigned responsibilities involving CM wittingly or unwittingly. The findings suggest that over 63% of the teachers had been involved in managing curriculum or change within their learning environment while 37% of the participants had never been involved in any form of CM. For this group of respondents, they might have unconsciously undertaken some responsibilities which involved managing change within their learning environment. This again emphasizes the fact that the demand on and expectations of teachers have continued to grow over the last decade, making their jobs more complex. Drawing from this, therefore, it may be that teachers have often been made to undertake responsibilities which involve managing change as part of their normal duties which in reality, they really had not been prepared for. In our view, this raises questions about the perceptions of professionalism. Are teachers seen as professionals, and developing from this, what type of professional? FE teachers are generally seen as dual professionals, as they combine specialist knowledge in specific areas with expertise in teaching and learning. Although teachers generally agree with this description, they do however perceive a large discrepancy with regard to their working conditions compared to other professionals. Based on this, we may ar-

gue that teachers are probably not trained as professionals. This might account for the limit to the content of their training when compared with say, accountants or lawyers.

A final focus of this study was to establish teachers' views on the need to introduce CM as part of their professional development. 72.5% of the respondents agreed that incorporating change into their professional development will enable them cope and manage change better. This then leaves us with another issue to resolve. Where and how is this development/training to be effected? Two suggestions were dominant amongst participants in this study. The first is that the training could and should be embedded into initial teacher education programmes, while the second was that it should be mandatorily offered as a bespoke CPD package once employed. Such training is believed, can create a positive impact. This is corroborated by the accounts of teachers in this study who had previous knowledge of CM. Teachers with previous knowledge of CM seem to be better prepared to manage and cope with change compared to others without such knowledge. It is inconceivable that colleges do not see the benefit of providing CM for teachers particularly those in leadership and management positions.

So, the question is, why has what appears to be so obvious to teachers not been identified and implemented by senior management teams in colleges? One argument, though uncorroborated, is that providing such training for teachers may place them on equal levels as senior managers in the institution. This again links to the debate on professionalism and who should be classified as one. It might well be argued that teachers are meant to be confined to the lower levels of organisational hierarchy and not necessarily seen and treated as professionals. This is possibly an issue to be further investigated from the viewpoint of both senior management teams and teachers. Nonetheless, what is very clear from some of the findings in this study is that colleges would seem to be missing the opportunity to have ready and prepared teacher-leaders, who are equipped change agents with vital skills required for implementing change, particularly during mergers which are noted for their devastating effect on teachers. Considering that the goal of management teams and policy makers is to ensure a smooth transition during periods of change, it would seem to us that the failure to prepare teachers for contributing to the achievement of this goal amounts to a glaring case of missed opportunities.

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