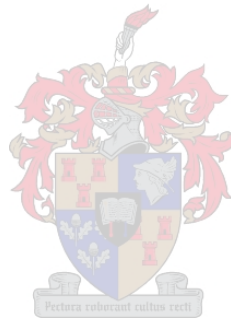# Towards a professional learning framework for academics in a private higher education environment

by

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December 2017

Abstract:

Within the context of re-positioning academic professional development as professional learning to place the focus on what the lecturer *does*, this research tries to understand professional learning practices in a particular South African private higher education environment. Research was conducted on four campuses of one higher education brand of The Independent Institute of Education. Relatively little has been written on academic professional development- and learning in the South African private higher education domain where the incentive of publishing with recognition and additional funding accompanied by such as in the public sphere, is lacking. This dissertation reports on two cycles of action research conducted on these four campuses, culminating in thematically analysed in-depth interviews with the four academic campus managers. Their reflections on professional learning progress on a year's work conclude in finding that proper orientation and introductions can enhance staff cohesion while the role of academic campus managers as engineers of such cohesion and designing custom-made professional learning initiatives on a campus is pivotal. Academic campus managers should spend considerable time and effort on strategising their campus programme while leadership should be decentralised to afford academic campus managers more agency to lead the team. These academic campus managers should hold leeway to award more incentives to individual performers within their teams but that they should be held accountable for actions - or lack thereof, that did not culminate in successful practices. Academic campus managers should be considered a very valuable and unique resource. In order for the role of the academic campus manager to operate optimally, central leadership should take care to appoint the most appropriate person to fit this profile and to deem them directly accountable for the state of academic professional learning on their campus. Central management should also heed the need for resources such as opening up the possibilities of monetary- and other incentives, and open up the possibilities, thereby enabling academic campus managers to use these incentives at their discretion.

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Chapter One: A general introduction to this study

The importance of academic professional development has been well documented (Marshall *et al.*, 2000; Kreber, 2001; Ferman, 2002; Clegg, 2003; McNamee *et al.*, 2004; Dearn, 2005; Knight, Tait and Yorke, 2006; Amundsen and Wilson, 2012; Boud and Brew, 2013). In the spirit of the academic environment as a learning organisation, institutions have been moving away from the traditional view of professional development initiatives, towards continuous professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009).

This dissertation describes research that was undertaken to investigate the area of professional development practices in general, in order to improve such practices within the Vega environment. Action research enabled some practitioners and academic campus managers in particular to engage with continuous reflection of their own practices and how they strategically manage continuous professional learning to flourish in their environments. An iterative process of action research led to some insights that might serve as a basis to a strategy for staff development within this professional domain.

The Vega School of Brand Leadership grew fast during the last few years, with no centralised academic professional development strategy for lecturing staff in place. Although all four campuses were running individual initiatives as they saw fit, none of it was built upon empirical research.

1.1. Previous research

The literature review of this study interrogates the background of professional development and argue the current thinking. In short, academic institutions are currently convinced that academic practitioners should take active ownership of their professional development instead of organisations imposing activities upon them (Webster-Wright, 2010).

The researcher's experience is that such necessary initiatives face additional challenges in the private higher education context since institutions are being run on

a business model with no state funded incentives for academic publishing or other initiatives. The expectation in this academic context for the development as a practicing scholar in both a field of expertise as well as a practicing educator creates a very real perception that institutional expectations are schizophrenic and unrealistic. Within this business environment, full-time practitioners are expected to keep office hours generally with less affordances of academic- and research leave.

An overwhelming majority of lecturers joining these teams are experts in specific fields within their own professional niche industries. They need a good measure- and depth of teaching knowledge acquired with a just-in-time, just-enough approach. Newcomers need to be inducted into the skill of lecturing as well as in the scholarly conversation prevalent within an education environment.

Vega functions as a brand of the Independent Institute of Education (IIE), a private higher education institute. The organisation is highly motivated to uphold and initiate an ethos of scholarly and research practices. The IIE policy explicitly states the importance of building staff capacity and development of members of its community. Academics are encouraged to contribute to debates and research in their fields of expertise. There is a real understanding for supporting teaching and learning initiatives in order to improve curricula and to equip experts to teach more effectively (IIE, 2012).

Although the quality and effectiveness of teaching practice is widely seen as an institutional responsibility (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003; D'Andrea *et al.*, 2005; Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009), literature also shows that practitioners are motivated when they can identify and act upon their own needs within real and practice-based teaching and learning environments (Herman, 2015).

It is important however, to keep in mind that development initiatives are most effective when practitioners' needs are prioritised. Members of staff become demotivated and sceptical when they perceive that an institution acts on its own wellbeing instead of those of its practitioners. The approach also becomes ineffective when it is built upon corrective measures instead of accumulating skills.

There are also many challenges towards replacing perceptions from activities imposed in a top-down manner from management while practitioners desire to get

involved in identifying and driving initiatives for practice development (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005). The professional life of an academic has become increasingly taxing during the last few years because of ever larger student numbers, new technology demanding a re-look at teaching methodology, a greater variety of programmes driven by a global student demand and an ever-increasing sophistication in research activity (Marshall *et al.*, 2000). Global changes towards a bigger focus on student-centered learning, more demand-driven, interdisciplinary training and a sophisticated mix of stakeholder demands are some of the dynamics that foreground the need for professional practice development in the higher education context (Council on Higher Education, 2004). Professional development is however, not perceived as the sole responsibility of the practitioner. The institution also derives benefit from meaningful activities.

Although academic professional development can only be seen as one of the measures to ensure better synergy between academic staff and the institution, a well-designed and concerted effort can greatly assist in fostering trust and motivation of academic practitioners. It should be seen as more than personal up-skilling and training with the emphasis on continuing professional learning, and should be additionally linked to the greater benefit of enabling student learning.

Frick and Kapp emphasise the 'holistic approach to learning, transformation and application' (2006, p. 257) and Challis (in Frick and Kapp, 2006) synthesises various views into three broad purposes for academic professional development namely to update knowledge and skills, to align a practitioner with new roles in the institution and to ensure 'competence in a wider context with benefits to both professional and personal roles' (2006, p. 262).

1.2. The research problem

The challenge is that academic professional learning initiatives can easily be regarded as another negative imposition on an educator's time. Induction into scholarly practice criteria such as 'clear goals, adequate preparation, appropriate methods, significant results, effective presentation and reflective critique' (Glassick, *et al.* in Frick and Kapp, 2006, p. 258) takes them away from scholarly work. It is challenging for a lecturer to see the long-term benefits under such pressure.

Vega School of Brand Leadership under the auspices of the Independent Institute of Education as educational provider has four campuses in the bigger South African cities namely Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria. Lecturers operate in a corporate business environment with relatively little time and opportunity for reflection. The environment resonates with literature arguing that academic professional development needs to happen within the practice framework of the lecturer without taking him- or her out of their own environment (Boud and Brew, 2013), by using the most motivating initiatives situated in formal collaborative settings (Ferman, 2002) for maximum buy-in and advantage.

It is clear however, that the development of a model or framework to aid professional learning and therefore enabling motivation needs careful research and implementation. The body of literature on the implementation and success of academic professional development- and learning initiatives within the private higher education confines are limited and in the South African environment, even scarcer. Therefore, it is here where the research question was found in this context.

1.2.1.   The main research question

For this inquiry, the main research question was posed as follows:

What conditions affect continuous professional learning in a private higher education (PHE) environment?

The action research approach was built upon initiatives to answer this main question by addressing the following two sub-questions:

1. What factors drive professional learning amongst academic practitioners in the private higher education environment?
2. What factors inhibit professional learning amongst academic practitioners in a private higher education environment?

1.3. Research aims

The main aim of the research therefore was to ascertain what measures the school should implement in order to activate an environment that is most conducive to enable continuous professional learning for all its lecturers, both permanent- as well

as independent contractors. A further aim was to identify the pivotal actors and situations that contributed to professional learning in this environment and identified factors and situations that have hampered the efforts of professional development and learning so far.

1.4. Rationale

The intention was that once the factors and dynamics that enable professional learning, and those that inhibit such development were identified, a centralised and cohesive long-term strategy can be crafted in order for staff to feel more enabled and motivated to fulfil their professions. Apart from the personal benefit of lecturers, the organisation will benefit not only by a happier staff component, but also to the eventual benefit of the student- and ultimately, learning.

1.5. Research design

The study was constructed as action research in order for the researcher as the officer tasked to develop a culture of teaching and learning, to reflect on the crucial question: 'How do I improve what I am doing?' (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996, p. 11). McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead argue that action research requires a study to be built on 'praxis rather than practice' by being 'informed because other people's views are taken into account' (1996, p. 8). Continuous reflection benefited the initiative because of the inherent long-term timeline needed for implementing effective professional learning measures. Two distinctive cycles activated the research.

An initial needs assessment workshop was conducted on all four campuses, where academic practitioners were introduced to key research and findings by Ferman (2002), Boud and Brew (2013), Coffey and Gibbs (2000), D'Andrea and Gosling (2005) and Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, Adendorff, Cattell and Herman (2011) on activities proven to benefit lecturing staff in a private higher education environment such as theirs. We unpacked the nature and importance of initiatives ranging from mentorships, peer conversations, reflections of practice, teaching portfolios and efforts generally seen as motivating to professional teaching practice. The

participants identified their own preferences according to what they found motivating and instructive in their own practice.

While the organisation's management is keen to foster a climate of participatory leadership, lecturers complain regularly about a lack of time and empathy. During many conversations and reflections with all academic members of staff, the researcher became convinced that the main problem facing lecturers is a lack of scholarly skills. This dearth impacts on time management, professional confidence and motivation.

In the workshops, practitioners voiced an overwhelming sense of frustration regarding a lack of sufficient time to prepare for teaching, conducting research and general development within areas of expertise, both in their own disciplines as well as scholarly teaching and learning. Lecturers furthermore sometimes perceive leadership as disconnected and communicating poorly. Although workshop attendees varied in experience and discipline, activities chosen spontaneously by participants within these workshops correlate with those in well-known literature described as successful continuous professional learning initiatives in Ferman (2002) and van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011).

The next cycle of the research intervention comprised of the academic campus managers identifying and implementing the instruments and activities of professional development. These activities and instruments were chosen during the needs assessment workshops on every campus. Every academic manager used her own discretion to strategise a particular tailor-made plan. Finally, the researcher conducted interviews with every individual academic campus manager where they reflected on particular successes and failures of the year's work. These interviews with open-ended questions were thematically analysed according to the driving- and inhibiting factors affecting the successful implementation of professional learning initiatives as collated from the body of literature consulted.

The focus of the described action research was continuously on 'individual meaning making' (Amundsen and Wilson, 2012, p. 108) rather than on outcomes, and focussed heavily on encouraging the academic campus managers to design and build continuous professional learning solutions to suit their own campuses. The loop

of long-term reflection in action (Schön in McNiff *et al*., 1996) formed the basis upon which a sustainable professional learning model and outcome of the study were built. The outer loop was being fed and continuously refined by the inner loop of the four academic campus managers as participants' 'self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, planning, etc.' (Griffiths in McNiff *et al*., 1996, p. 22). The empathic resonance-methodology (Whitehead, 2012) for negotiation and analysis formed a close focus in driving as well as analysing these reflections.

Participation by the academic campus managers was key in the process. Their reflection *in action* as described by Schön (in Mcniff *et al*, 1996) enabled wide insight into perceptions regarding the direction that initiatives such as peer reviews, mentorships, teaching portfolios and tool workshops took, as well as the influence that inside- as well as outside factors had on the success of every initiative. The researcher was able to construct reflections on weekly factual accounts by collating and describing dynamics within the academic management meeting, sound records of reflective reports on campus staff meetings and workshops as well as written reflection documents.

1.6.   Key terms

Continuous professional learning: In an attempt to reframe Professional Development, Webster-Wright emphasises the ontological approach to acknowledge 'who the professional is' instead of approaching the issue epistemologically as 'what the professional knows' (2009, p. 726). The plea is thus to understand the learning that a practitioner experiences in a holistic approach (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Andragogical learning in a process model as described by Malcolm Knowles (1973) whereby the professional is actively involved in the process of planning and directing their own learning that leads to engagement and reflection.

The term *independent contractors* refers to lecturers who are teaching on a contract basis and are therefore being paid for the amount of hours and services provided. Australian literature refers to casual members of staff when describing this group of professionals.

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Communities of practice are seen as formally constituted groups of people who share some interest or expertise and working towards a shared goal (Wenger, 2000).

The *Vegamometer* is a student evaluation instrument internally deployed on the four campuses. Lecturers use this instrument with a few questions designed to gauge student engagement in order to track understanding and progress in a closed classroom environment. Results are not intended to benefit anyone else than a lecturer and his- or her own students.

1.7. Limitations of the study

Practical limitations involve time constraints limiting the annual cycles of action research. The landscape is also ever-evolving and organisational change is being made at the time of writing. Two of the academic campus managers are not in the position anymore and have been substituted with new managers who subsequently have initiated new strategies. The research does not claim to be representative of all the brands under the auspices of the IIE, and also not the personal views of individual practitioners.

1.8. Value of the study

This study would be useful for practitioners and leaders of private higher education institutions particularly in South Africa but should also be interesting to a wider audience of private higher education practitioners grappling with time constraints and being governed by a business model.

1.9. Ethical considerations

The researcher indicated to all participants that personal information obtained with this study will remain confidential to the researcher. Participant anonymity was ensured throughout the process and all data will be kept in safe storage with the researcher for an appropriate time. Recorded responses were used in strictly moderated form, with care taken to disguise individual identities and opinions. Personas in the interview data analysis were given pseudonyms and campus locations were not revealed. Participation was presented as being completely voluntary and that a volunteer can withdraw at any time without any consequences

of any kind. Although the answering of questions was voluntary, none of the participants indicated that they wished to defer from answering any questions. Furthermore, participants received no payment or reward for participation.

Permission to conduct the research on IIE sites was granted by the institution through following the permission for ethical clearance procedures as indicated in the IIE policy. The researcher also obtained ethical clearance from the Stellenbosch University through the appropriate platform. Both the certificates for consent and an example of participant agreement are included as addenda to this dissertation.

1.10. Outline of the study

The introductory chapter describes the research problem as explaining current professional development practices particular to private higher education and the need for this current study to investigate the enablers and hindrances to scholarly professional learning practices in this environment.

Chapter Two, the literature review, collates the history of academic professional development, the movement towards continuous professional learning and relays stances about the purpose of academic professional development in higher education and who should ultimately benefit from the exercise. After discussing the strategies proposed in key texts, the chapter discusses the factors that drive academic learning as identified by theorists as well as those factors already discussed in literature, that inhibit such learning. Some discussion on continuous learning tools and activities follow, as well as a section focussing specifically on private higher education and staff development.

Chapter Three explains the research design, methods of data collection and analysis that were employed in this qualitative action research project. Chapter Four relays particular detail around the four interviews and data analysis of those, while Chapter Five discusses the particular findings and conclusions related to the study. This final chapter collates the main findings out of the literature with that of the data analysed and reveals points of similarity and difference.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review initially discusses the origins and motivation for academic professional development and how this concept has evolved into the idea of continuous professional learning, where practitioners are required and motivated to take ownership of their own professional growth. The researcher discusses the general motivation for academic professional development and why this is beneficial for practitioners. Literature pertaining to the driving factors for successful implementation of continuous professional learning activities, and conversely, what the literature report as inhibiting factors are unpacked. These driving- and inhibiting factors are used throughout the dissertation to report on research analyses and findings. The tools and activities generally used to enable professional learning are subsequently discussed, with some reference to the private higher education environment in particular.

2.1. Introducing academic professional development and the movement to continuous professional learning

As discussed in Chapter One, the importance of academic professional development has been well documented (Marshall *et al.*, 2000; Kreber, 2001; Ferman, 2002; Clegg, 2003; McNamee *et al.*, 2004; Dearn, 2005; Knight, Tait and Yorke, 2006; Amundsen and Wilson, 2012; Boud and Brew, 2013). My research has investigated under what conditions academic members of staff take up opportunities for professional learning and which factors enable this uptake. It also investigated inhibiting factors that would result in such initiatives not being conducive to continuous professional learning by practitioners. In order to evaluate these conditions the literature review also deals with types of professional development activities generally used in higher education institutions, and endeavours to pinpoint those activities that are more successful than others. There seems to be a dearth in the literature dealing with continuous professional learning issues within particularly private higher education environments internationally.

The need for academic professional development has originated because practitioners contracted into teaching in the higher education environment are usually highly skilled field experts with little knowledge of the scholarship of teaching

and learning (Cilliers and Herman, 2010). Although enthusiastic about their own expertise, practitioners feel overly taxed when being expected to learn seemingly irrelevant skills. The challenge therefore lies in convincing practitioners firstly that lecturing in higher education contains a dual focus on subject expertise as well as scholarly teaching practice, and secondly, that academic development, although mostly facilitated and driven by the institution, forms part of self-development in the form of continuous professional learning.

The problem is that a 'good academic practitioner' in higher education is described as an academic with 'strong interpersonal relationships, advanced presentation skills, expert subject knowledge, a dynamic personality and the ability to mediate the so-called teaching/research nexus' (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2013, p. 140). Field experts however, are largely not skilled and experienced educators. Academic professional development and communities of inquiry are however, mentioned as one of the top ten key issues of Teaching and Learning for 2016 (Educause, 2016).

The literature review firstly explains the rationale, purpose and the need of professional development also seen in a historical context and then proceeds to argue for repositioning the abovementioned towards continuous professional learning in the higher education field.

The next section collates factors authors mention when discussing the drivers, or motivators evident in an enabling environment. Conversely, some inhibiting factors emerging from the literature, are discussed thereafter. Institutions have been introducing various tools and activities used to directly affect professional development within an enabling environment. The following section discusses literature describing such initiatives. The successes and failures reported on, seem to be closely linked to further the creation of enabling- and inhibiting professional learning environments.

The last section discusses the literature particularly relevant to private higher education and how such tools and activities have reportedly been deployed. Although literature regarding the private sector is limited, existing mentions do reveal trends and how these differ from a public higher education environment.

2.2.   Academic professional learning in higher education

2.2.1.   *General academic professional development*

Although the quality and effectiveness of teaching practice is widely seen as an institutional responsibility (Blackmore and Blackwell 2003; Marshall *et al.* 2000; Kandlbinder 2003; Altbach *et al.* 2009), literature also shows that practitioners are motivated when they can identify and act upon their own needs within real and practice-based teaching and learning environments.

Larger student numbers, new technology demanding different teaching methodologies, a wider variety of programmes driven by a global student demand and an ever increasing sophistication in research activity are challenging academics currently (Marshall *et al.* 2000). Global changes towards a stronger focus on student-centered learning, more demand-driven, interdisciplinary training and a sophisticated mix of stakeholder demands are some of the dynamics that foreground the need for professional practice development in the higher education context (Gillard, 2004).

In Ferman's (2002) research, academic members of staff rated formal participation such as involving educational designers in their professional practice and attending workshops and short courses (Harris and Cullen, 2010) highest amongst meaningful academic professional learning activities. These are seen as adding direct experience to the educators. Other activities high on the list involved attending and presenting at conferences (Putnam and Borko, 2000), formal and informal interactions with peers (Kreber, 2007), formalised mentorships (Healy and Welchert, 2012) within the institution and formal reading circles. Informal reading and personally up-skilling with private reading, were last on the list of importance.

Literature on the actual benefits experienced by practitioners however, are still lacking. Webster-Wright reports in a quantitative review of professional development literature by claiming that 'discourse of PD is focused on the development of professionals through delivering programs rather than understanding more about the experience of [professional learning] PL to support it more effectively' (Webster-Wright, 2009).

Academics also need more agency in their own leadership. With a new focus on customer satisfaction in higher education, also came a flatter leadership structure (Franzsen, 2004) whereby accountability is placed into the hands of academic practitioners themselves.

Although academic professional development can be seen as only one of the measures to ensure better synergy between academic staff and the institution (Herman, 2015), a well-designed and concerted effort can assist in fostering trust and motivation of academic practitioners. It should be seen as more than personal up-skilling and training (education) and thus with a focus on continuing professional learning (Evans, 2011), additionally being linked to the greater benefit of the whole organisation (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003).

While Frick and Kapp call for a broader look at transforming and applying aspects of teaching and learning (2006), Challis (1999) describes the different reasons why there is a need for professional development. Not only should they update their skills, but they should look both in- and outwards by considering their professional industry as well as teaching the student. Webster-Wright identifies a gap in the literature where academic professional development is considered in a holistic fashion: 'Consequently, research often examines a specific factor: the PD activity and its outcomes, the context for learning, the learner and his or her preferences, or professional knowledge per se. Research is required that views the learner, context, and learning as inextricably interrelated rather than acknowledged as related, yet studied separately' (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 11).

2.2.2.   Explaining academic professional development

Staff development, or also referred to by authors as professional learning (Herman, 2015) or academic professional development is seen as 'the broadest possible concept that incorporates both the education and learning that academics as professionals engage in during their transition from novices to experts and continuously throughout their career' (Frick and Kapp, 2009, p. 256). Also referred to educational development, these initiatives concern indirectly improving the 'quality of student learning' (Cilliers and Herman, 2010, p. 253).

Educational practitioners have been developing themselves in various ways, albeit formally or informally, in different degrees (Ferman, 2002). Ferman lists activities such as workshop and conference attendance, keeping teaching portfolios and taking advice from instructional designers in formal ways, and informally by talking to colleagues, mentorships and connecting with like-minded individuals (2002). In a more individual manner, practitioners develop their skills by reading and consulting online support provided by their own institution as well as more widely offered open sources from other institutions.

2.2.3.   *The purpose of academic professional development*

Academic professional development is more than personal up-skilling and training (education), and is additionally linked to the greater benefit of the whole organisation. "A university does not and cannot literally develop people; rather, people are the university, and it is their learning and its influence within a social context that modifies the university's goals, priorities and strategies for action" (James, 1997). Frick and Kapp (2006) also emphasise a holistic approach to learning, transformation and application when describing general trends in the field.

There has been increasing awareness that the quality and effectiveness of teaching is an institutional responsibility (Altbach, Reisberg and Rumbley, 2009). The resultant establishment of teaching and learning centres has also led to a lively development of the field of scholarship of teaching and learning. The four dimensions of scholarship namely discovery, teaching, engagement and integration as defined by Boyer (1991) have been widely used to develop the field of academic professional development (Huber and Clandinin, 2005; Kreber, 2007; Jones, 2012).

Scholarly activity however, need not only be linked to a formal output of work in scholarly peer-reviewed publications. Henderson makes a case for academics doing 'interesting scholarly things' such as reading up on pedagogical principles in their disciplines, peer discussions and 'systematically collecting data on teaching effectiveness' (Henderson, 2009). These activities all aid in developing expertise. Henderson advocates a blurring of lines between scholarliness and scholarship with his concept of 'consumatory scholarship' (Henderson, 2009), describing doing such interesting scholarly things as the above and therefore, ingesting useful scholarly knowledge about teaching. This approach resonates with a private higher

educational context because of the lack of formal focus on publication and becoming a scholar of teaching in the strict sense. As society has become more interdependent on professional services by the end of the 19th century, the need to be accountable for continuing professional education has also increased (Houle, 1981; S. J. Marshall *et al.*, 2000; Scott, Coates and Anderson, 2008).

2.2.4.   *The need for professional development*

Cobb (1999) mentions a few qualities that practicing teaching professionals should own such as pedagogical- and andragogical knowledge, a sound knowledge of disciplinary content and such a professional should have adequate teaching skills to be able to facilitate learning. They should also be good communicators with a sound understanding of academic ethics and a keen attitude towards lifelong learning. Lankard (Frick and Kapp, 2006) adds self-knowledge to this list of attributes.

The need for inter-professional education and practice (Houle, Cyphert and Boggs, 1987; Johnson and Hirt, 2011; Clarke and Reid, 2013) also resonates with the competitive educational environment since it is not only a particular discipline and its knowledge that needs to be imparted but practitioners need to work together in communicating across disciplines while training students within a programme. Inter-professional education and practice leads to solving inherent mistrust and negativity and therefore, create shared understanding and purpose.

Global changes towards a bigger focus on student-centred learning, more demand-driven, interdisciplinary training and a sophisticated mix of stakeholder demands are some of the dynamics that foreground the need for professional practice development in the higher education context (Gillard, 2004).

The professional life of an academic has become increasingly taxing during the last few years because of ever larger student numbers, new technology demanding a re-look at teaching methodologies and strategies, a greater variety of programmes required by a global student demand and an ever increasing sophistication in research activity (Marshall *et al.*, 2000).

The result of such forces is that academics feel ever more time constrained and pressurised. Academic professional development initiatives can easily be regarded

as another tax on this precious resource. Ironically, induction into scholarly practice criteria such as setting goals, learning to prepare adequately, using the right methods to arrive at good results and then being able to reflectively assess their own practice (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff, 1997) takes them away from scholarly work. It is challenging to see and measure the long-term benefits under such pressure.

2.3. Repositioning academic professional development towards continuous professional learning

'The ultimate aim of professional learning is to bring about change in the teaching practices and behaviour of academics for the improvement of the quality of student learning' (Herman, 2015, p. 9).

In order to relocate academic professional development for a learning organisation, it can be positioned as professional practice, collaborative and centred within the needs identified by the academic staff community itself as opposed to concentrating on training and development to suit the institution. Where traditional academic professional development would imply workshop-based training, away from a practitioner's own teaching environment, continuous professional learning refers to 'any experience where professionals consider they have learned' (Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 3).

The above view resonates with the *practice turn* as proposed by Boud and Brew (2013) that moves away from that which the institution needs, to what the practitioner *does* in his or her own practice environment. 'Practice integrates through linking thinking with doing and people with contexts' (Boud and Brew, 2013, p. 212). Such practice-based growth resonates with a private higher education context where lecturers constantly feel pressurised by long teaching hours and fewer perceived incentives for personal growth. Boud and Brew (2012) suggest that six features of practice namely embodiment, material mediation, relationality, situatedness, emergence and co-construction can form a useful framework in which to situate individuals' professional learning.

Referring to Boud and Brew's *embodiment*, one needs to consider a practitioner in a particular discipline who also professionally practice teaching in a specialist field as

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complete personal being with a unique set of emotions, values and desires. Referring to *material mediation* and vocational training particularly (such as within the context of Vega) rely heavily on resources, objects, communication tools and other studio resources that need to be considered in continuous professional learning. *Relationally,* lecturing staff operate intrinsically within communities of practice and specialist networks in order to facilitate learning for students in project-based and constructivist learning environments. These same communities of practice and constructivist learning approaches also require a focus on *situatedness* and the particularities of specific sites of culture, discourses, social- and material conditions (2013).

In the wider continuing professional education context, Mott (2000) concludes that developing such expertise needs to take the constantly changing professional environment into consideration; it should be valid with effective, built-in assessment instruments; that it should be situated within the professional practice to address its inherent complexities; it should be built within a community of practice to be collaborative in nature; and it should be sustainable, enabling future professional developments.

What is important about this approach is that it is moving away from what the institution requires and that which the practitioner might lack (the deficit model) towards what skills and practices academics need to get the job done (Boud and Brew, 2013). Acquiring skills, 'embodied, contextualised activities' (Boud and Brew, 2013, p. 214) related to teaching, research and development will implicitly benefit academic practitioners.

Moving away from such a deficit model also resonates with the concept of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011) when moving from who the student **is**, through what the lecturer does while teaching, to what the student **does**. Therefore, putting our money where our mouths are.

In an attempt to reframe professional development, Webster-Wright (2009) emphasises the ontological approach to acknowledge 'who the professional is' instead of approaching the issue epistemologically as 'what the professional knows'. The plea is thus to understand the learning that a professional would experience in a

holistic approach while also considering andragogical learning in a process model as described by Knowles (1973) whereby the professional is actively involved in the process of planning and directing their own learning leads to engagement and reflection.

In conclusion, Boud and Brew (2013) suggest that continuous professional learning be situated within a practitioner's own practice, done within the context of their own lecturing environment (business as usual) motivated and enabled by teaching and learning practitioners considering tailor-made solutions for individual practitioners and not a blanket solution for the whole teaching contingent.

Borrowing from organisation studies, Boud and Brew (2013) refer to Skule *et al.* (2002) for seven learning conditions that are conducive to work. Such conditions include the high demands of service being made on practitioners by leadership and fellow workers; working environments regarding new approaches and methods that are changing fast; flatter leadership structures implying that professionals should take on more management responsibility; industry-related expertise need to be updated continuously; management needs to be supportive and feedback to outputs and practices need to be provided continuously.

Furthermore, Skule *et al.* (2002, p.1) mention the crucial aspect of rewarding skills with a number of measures such as 'interesting tasks, better career possibilities or better pay'. Ellstrom's aspects (Boud and Brew, 2013) that resonate particularly with academic engagement, namely when tasks are challenging enough to learn from; when staff are rewarded with feedback and evaluation; when the work is somehow formalised; when the organisation is supportive to solve problems that might arise; and when there are 'learning resources' such as time for analysis and reflection. Both quoted studies by Skule, Reichborn and Ellstrom (Boud and Brew, 2013) are highly relevant to private higher education and the Vega environment.

It is important to prioritise areas where academics are prejudiced and those they see initially as most problematic (Boud and Brew, 2013) and to make a visible improvement from the onset. The participative nature for the process here is key. Academics themselves need to recognise problems, feel significantly motivated by the idea that the problem can be solved, as well as feel supported by the institution.

Such a realisation is necessary in order to mobilise change from the inside instead of imposed from management onto members of staff.

It seems important that the placement of development activities also need to reside within the academic (or scholarly) practice, spatially (where), temporally (when), personally (with practitioner's own identity), socially (with whom) and professionally (discipline or professional field) (Boud and Brew, 2013). Situationally, Ferman's research into higher education academic professionals also shows that practitioners prefer formal collaborative initiatives above informal individual developmental acts. This emerges from a survey investigating which staff development initiatives practitioners find valuable (2002). Ferman's study reveals that the particular set of practitioners favour formal collaborations with an education designer above all else. Thereafter, preferences range from formal workshops and short courses, attending and presenting at conferences, peer discussions and mentorships, formalised reading circles and lastly, informal personal reading (Ferman, 2002).

In a qualitative study amongst lecturers in the natural sciences at Stellenbosch University, Frick and Kapp identified six principles that would significantly impact the success of an academic professional development programme at a higher education institution. These include: Professional practice should be integrated by considering both subject knowledge as well as teaching principles; lecturers might not automatically be interested in the theory of teaching and therefore, knowledge acquired needs to be obviously relevant (2006), and I would add, on a just-in-time, just-enough principle.

Experts suggest that knowledge be personally tailor-made to personal practitioners' needs rather than a universal programme (Frick and Kapp, 2009). Practitioners also pride themselves as experts and will find it motivating to impart their own expertise in the process of upskilling the whole group. Elaborating in the latter is that not only are practitioners on different levels of teaching expertise, but various strategies are efficient for different levels of experience and expertise. While less experienced lecturers might benefit from structured group learning activities which is practically orientated towards teaching practice, experienced practitioners might benefit more from self-reflective, theoretical enquiry on a personal level. Frick and Kapp's last principle stresses the importance of negotiation between the needs of the individual

and those of the organisation (2009). This necessary agency is crucial for professionals in an academic environment to be motivated for personal continuous professional learning.

2.3.1. *The ultimate beneficiaries of professional learning*

The ultimate goal of all continuous professional learning should always be to benefit the individual practitioner. Houle *et al.* (1987, p. 91) illustrate:

> The proper evaluation of any learning activity is not the degree of satisfaction of the learner, the extent to which approved procedures of teaching have been used, the length of exposure to instruction, the scores on examinations, or the demonstration of competence.

It is widely maintained (Houston, Meyer and Paewai, 2006; Pask and Joy, 2007; Ntshoe et al., 2008; Cilliers and Herman, 2010; Steyn, 2012) that development should principally benefit the individual although it will favour the institution as well. Therefore practitioners need to sustain their employability, they have to align themselves with new developments in their practice as well as renew enthusiasm by directing creative energy, talents and skills in order to remain relevant in society and continue to be viable in the profession (Frick and Kapp, 2006).

The developmental practice, however, needs to, above all, keep it real. Mott (in Ferman, 2002) emphasises that staff development in teaching practice can only be effective if it considers the practice environment, stays practical, being collaborative with related practitioners and if it benefits in the long-term. I would argue that this applies to the private higher education environment to a large extent because of the historical 'non-focus' on research and publication.

Making choices regarding staff development directly related to personal development is particularly relevant in the private higher education context. From own experience, however, the majority of lecturers are joining the team out of their own industry with no training or experience of the teaching environment. Although many, especially older applicants, state as reasons for 'switching to teaching' the fact that they would like to 'give back to the community', they run the very real risk of becoming disillusioned by the environment of teaching because of insufficient induction into teaching practice. Newcomers therefore, not only need to be inducted in the skill of the lecturing but also in the scholarly conversation happening within the environment

of education.

Ingvarson (1998) describes four components that a standards-guided PD system should address. Firstly, the knowledge component discusses the empirical knowledge that practitioners should possess. The second aspect centres around the type and details around the incentives that professional learning affords academic members of staff. The third issue deals with the issuance of such activities and initiatives and particularly, who is meant to provide such. The last component addresses the governance of these provisions; who sets the goals and provides the resources for the initiatives.

2.3.2.   *Strategies to consider*

It is important to devise an integrated model, incorporating reflection in practicing teaching action, building theory, constructivist knowledge and ultimately, synthesis in problem identification within the professional scholarly teaching domain (Mott, 2000). Houle (in Mott, 2000) stresses that the three modes of learning, namely instruction (passive ingestion of existing knowledge), inquiry (exploring and working with peers) and performance (acting as teaching individual in a class setting, for instance) all need to form part of a continuing professional education (CPE) model. Cervero however, concludes that *in situ* based practice with peers and fellow professionals seems to be the most meaningful for constructing understanding (Mott, 2000). Mott refers to Cervero amongst others who make a strong case for professionals to practice research of personal practice (2000) or in Boyer's terms, becoming scholars of teaching (Glassick, Huber and Maeroff, 1997).

Academic work has come to be accepted as professional practice and therefore, that institutions need to take the responsibility upon themselves for the continuous development of practitioners. Because many industry specialists (especially in a niche field such as those at Vega) enter teaching without an academic background, the institution needs to provide opportunities for these new practitioners to skill themselves in the field of teaching as professional practice. On the other hand, Van Schalkwyk *et al.* refer to the widely acknowledged understanding that the general expectation of academics would be that they should be internally motivated to constantly reflect on their practices and thereby advance their skills and teaching practices (2011). Both parties therefore, recognise the importance of academic

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professional development.

Ultimately it might benefit South African private higher education institutions to require teaching staff to be registered as registered practitioners such as is required in the UK (Brand, 2007).

2.3.3.   Moving away from the deficit model

It is important to reconceptualise professional development away from the discourse of the benefits thereof, towards focusing on the practitioners' experience of learning (Webster-Wright, 2009). If this focus does not shift, there is a very real threat that an academic institution dominates as provider and therefore, departs from a viewpoint of institutional need. Such a deficit model assumes that academic practitioners lack efficiency and therefore needs to be upskilled. This approach implies taking lecturers out of their own teaching environments and therefore, disassociating any intended upskilling from a teaching scholar's real environment (Boud and Brew, 2013).

When initiatives are perceived as being driven with a top-down needs-assessment approach and when they are aligned with policy instead of identifying the needs of individuals within the system, it becomes seemingly inauthentic. The approach also becomes demotivating when it is built upon corrective measures instead of development of skills, meaning that members of staff are lacking skills instead of building upon existing strengths (Boud and Brew, 2013). There are however, many challenges towards replacing perceptions from activities imposed top-down from management, with a real desire of practitioners to get involved in identifying and driving initiatives for practice development (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005). Since the concept of academic professional development implies directly into such a top-down needs-approach, it is necessary to reposition thinking towards the practitioner him- or herself, as an active agent in own learning by re-framing such as continuous professional learning.

2.3.4. Driving factors for the successful implementation of continuous professional learning activities

This current section describes some enablers identified as positive enhancers of the spirit and execution of professional learning in the literature. Although literature argues that the ultimate beneficiaries of continuous professional learning should be the practitioners themselves (Houston, Meyer and Paewai, 2006; Pask and Joy, 2007; Ntshoe *et al.*, 2008; Cilliers and Herman, 2010; Steyn, 2012), Ingvarson (1998) ascribes to a standards-guided professional development system where the teaching profession takes the major responsibility for the development of its members. This therefore, should be the foremost priority for building a productive work team.

As Herman states,

> Both the professional and personal spheres of the life-world of the individual academic contain numerous considerations – some often more intense than others. The complex interplay between these considerations from the personal and professional spheres create situations within the daily reality which the individual academics interpret as part of their decision making about the process of professional learning (Herman, 2015, p. 87).

2.3.4.1. Holistic view needed

Ingvarson (1998) mentions the key components of the standards-guided PD model as discussed previously in this chapter being that teaching standards should be *profession-defined*, while the institution need to provide a substantial *infrastructure* to provide professional learning. Additionally, there should be incentives and recognition as well as credible professional certification (Ingvarson, 1998; Darling-Hammond in Stake et al., 2008). In order to effect such a holistic view, it is essential to consider the role and distribution of leadership within the organisation by broadening teacher leadership roles towards total distributed leadership models (Fullan, 2003), thereby decentralising management to enable the building of self-management capabilities (Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1997). Kelly and Dietrich suggests the building of professional expertise by enabling 'master' teachers to take on additional leadership responsibilities (1995). More important than career ladders, though, should be career development and a system where one uncouples the functions of leadership and positional authority (Ingvarson, 2002).

2.3.4.2.   Situated workplace learning

Situational understanding as seminally defined by Kintsch (1988) refers to the 'combination of explicitly stated information plus the reader's world knowledge and inferences and elaborations generated by the reader' (Yaros, 2006, p. 290). This comprehensive type of understanding becomes necessary in educator reflections because it allows 'engagement, pondering alternatives, drawing inferences and taking diverse perspectives' (Higgins, 2011, p. 583). Practitioners achieve situational understanding of their practice when they reflect and understand evaluating practices and factors that help or hinder their PD goals (Dreyfuss and Dreyfuss, 1986). Such situated workplace learning is essential for continuous professional learning (Webster-Wright, 2009) within a community that supports learning (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Wenger, 1998; Garet *et al.*, 2001; Stoll *et al.*, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009).

2.3.4.3.   Belonging to a Community of Practice (CoP) within enabling environments

For situated learning to be effective, it is essential to create and sustain a strong CoP (Lave and Wenger, 1991) within an enabling environment (EEs) where Teaching and Learning are valued by both peers and leaders (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011). Belonging to a Community of Practice gives lecturers a support base (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011) where they learn through social engagement with members of the community (Hyland, 2005; Oakes, Rogers and Lipton, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009). Trowler *et al.* describe it as 'the most significant aspects of change processes in teaching, learning and assessment involve social interaction at the level of the work group' (2005, p. 435 in Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011). With particular mention of casual staff, Crimmins *et al.* (2017) also identify three categories namely the emotional, informational and the tangible, where support is needed. Support in these three categories do not only fall within the ambit? hands of the CoP, but imply that other leadership levels should be actively involved.

2.3.4.4. *Creating a caring workplace*

Continuous professional learning seems to be effective when there is a reflective process in place. The underlying driving landscape for successful PL in an educational environment starts with the inception and growth of the ethos of *care* as discussed by Noddings (2002), Ruddick (1989) and Gilligan (1982) being a 'holistic, broad, public and political activity' (Bozalek *et al.*, 2014).

Referring to the *Politics of Care*, Bozalek *et al.* describe the 'five integrated moral elements of care – attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness and trust' to be in attendance, using those as a normative evaluative framework (2014, p. 457). Organisations can achieve this by creating a space for reflection, providing the content, methods used to solve, and critical reflection on academic practice (Mezirow, 1991); a space where they can engage directly with the 'discourse of pedagogy' (Leibowitz, Van der Merwe and Van Schalkwyk, 2009).

The concept of *care* in its most basic form, implies the strong link not with sentimental views, but rather with justice and ensuring the 'caring-about' someone, even though they might be removed from our own direct circumstance (Noddings, 2002). Professional learning should also be situated as 'continuing, active, social, and related to practice' (Garet *et al.*, 2001; Wilson 1999 in Webster-Wright, 2009, p. 708). Moreover, continuous professional learning practices need to be contextualised holistically in the whole practice of academic life as described by Boud and Brew when referring to the 'practice turn' (2013, p. 211) and where 'people as the "heart" of business organisations, addressing the problematic nature of work–family balance, giving voice to workers' feelings (Hochschild, 1983; Pocock, 2003; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Herman also calls this a 'care-ful' environment (2015, p. 213) where opportunities for all lecturers, including part-time members of staff to showcase good ideas are created, and to be open to their suggestions for improvement (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017).

2.3.4.5. Additional motivation

While intrinsic motivation (Frick and Kapp, 2006; Fullan, 2007; Leibowitz, Ndebele and Winberg, 2013) is widely seen as one of the rewards in itself, the literature also mentions other incentives regarding appropriate rewards when motivating for certain teaching activities (Theall and Centra, 2001; Wankat, Felder and Smith, 2002; Kreber, 2003; McKinney, 2006; Scott, 2009). Ingvarson (1998) describes pay structures to be potentially rewarding while other authors promote credits for years of experience, extra jobs and evidence of growth or particular particular career stages as discussed by Conley and Odden (1995).

2.3.5. Factors inhibiting the successful implementation of continuous professional learning activities

2.3.5.1. Narrow institutional views

It is important, however, to keep in mind that development initiatives are most effective when practitioners' needs are prioritised. Members of staff become demotivated and sceptical when they perceive that an institution acts in its own wellbeing instead of those of its practitioners. The approach also becomes ineffective when it is built upon corrective measures instead of accumulating skills. There are also many challenges towards replacing perceptions from activities imposed top-down from management, with a real desire of practitioners to get involved in identifying and driving initiatives for practice development (Blackmore and Blackwell, 2003; D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005; Darling-Hammond and Wei, 2009; Mårtensson, Roxå and Olsson, 2011; Steyn, 2012).

Particularly of interest for this study is a factor that might potentially inhibit implementation of activities namely the narrow views that sometimes dominate institutional opinion and administrators (McKinney, 2006). This view also relates to the stand regarding unreceptive institutional cultures that could pose risks for both appointment and promotion (Hutchings and Shulman, 1999). Relevant to private higher education is also the direct influence that rapid economic and social changes might have on the implementation of professional learning activities (Apple, 1999; Fullan, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009). A motivational issue might also arise in the

way change is introduced in change-weary times (Fullan, 2003; Hayward, Priestley and Young, 2004; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Academic leadership that situate and conceptualise professional learning in the wrong way while introducing it to staff also pose the danger of its failure. Referring to philosophical assumptions regarding professional development, Webster-Wright emphasises the importance of departing from the deficit model (2009) as discussed earlier in this chapter. Other weaknesses of current continuous professional learning models also include the lack of clarity and short-term goals, weak incentives and not enough professional control (Ingvarson, 1998). Overall, these fault lines are based institutionally and mostly orchestrated by leadership strategy as discussed in the next section.

2.3.5.2.   *Leadership and managerialist practices*

If leadership is driven by administrator views, academic staff might also get a poor understanding of continuous professional learning and how professionals learn (Webster-Wright, 2009). Relating to the above is that professional development initiatives driven by managerialist practices is also seen as erosive of academic autonomy (D'Andrea et al., 2005), described as a negative 'bureaucratic working context for many professionals', (Sandholtz and Scribner, 2006; Wood, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009) arguably relevant to private higher education, and thereby decontextualising continuous professional learning initiatives (Gravani, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Referring specifically to Communities of Practice, Van Schalkwyk *et al.* also comment on the danger of being side-tracked by other priorities and practices such as managerial concerns (2011). On the other side of the scale, continuous professional learning might be hindered by poor organisational structure and formal support (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017) within an institution.

When administrative and bureaucratic practices overshadow the leadership functions, lecturers can also become frustrated because they might not know, or be introduced to, the appropriate pedagogical discourse (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011).

2.3.5.3. Poor structuring of continuous professional learning activities

In whichever way continuous professional learning activities might be structured, it has to be contextualised in pedagogical discourse as well as situational practice. PD practices have been critiqued as "mired in update and competency approaches" (Wilson, 2000, p. 78 in Webster-Wright, 2009), focussing on a programme instead of the professional learning experience. This also implies that initiatives must not be left entirely up to an informally structured design. Boud *et al.* caution that employing informal conversations at work for professional learning might turn against the cause since 'the meanings and experiences [might] change' (2009, p. 332). Isolating activities and practices of development away from a practitioner's everyday work (Boud and Brew, 2013) also pose a danger of decontextualisation. This is not to say that activities need to be structured at all times. If, however, a mentorship structure has been created, expectations and delivery need to be managed carefully.

Ownership might also follow considered contextualisation. Academics become unresponsive when they do not see the professional development system as their own responsibility, but rather leaving it up to 'management' to implement development standards and opportunities (Ingvarson, 1998). Managers tasked with driving continuous professional learning sometimes also choose monetary rewards to motivate lecturers. Such a strategy might, however, be counterproductive if the rewards are not seen as sufficient (Kreber, 2001).

2.3.5.4. Mentoring dynamics

The literature reports on a reluctance amongst course leaders and senior staff to mentor new ICs (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017). When considering mentorships by permanent and experienced staff, there are thus certain aspects needing consideration such as the time invested by permanent and experienced staff to mentor new Independent Contractors in a high-turnover environment. Such time investment may be detrimental to the motivation of permanent members of staff (May, Strachan and Peetz, 2013). From the casual academics' perspective, some negativity will also arise if the permanent staff who are tasked to supply support to casual academics are seen as inaccessible (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017).

2.3.5.5.   Time pressures and stress management

Sometimes academic staff are also just overloaded with subsequent feelings of stress and time pressure (Hargreaves, 1997; Kasmir and Hochschild, 1999; Webster-Wright, 2009). Workload oversubscription (Dunkin, 2001; May, Strachan and Peetz, 2013) is reported widely in the literature.

2.3.5.6.   Casual academics and accessibility to formal academic professional development

The management and motivation of casual academics warrants additional discussion. In Australia there seems to be a general 'lack of development opportunities, formal and informal' (Anderson, 2007; Knight et al., 2007; Percy and Beaumont, 2008; Ryan, Bhattacharyya and Wales, 2012) for sessional academics.

> [A]cademics are contracted by the hour from semester to semester as tutors, lecturers, or subject coordinators, with no guarantee of further employment. Perhaps most importantly, unlike continuing or full-term academics, casual [sessional] teaching staff are not paid to develop and maintain their knowledge-base, yet are expected to deploy it in the teaching process (Brown, Goodman and Yasukawa, 2010, p. 127).

Ryan, Bhattarcharyya & Wales(2012) argue that these members of staff are further demotivated to pursue professional development opportunities when they are overall underpaid for teaching.

May *et al.* (2013) mention that two-thirds of casual academics responding to their survey, who engaged in professional development initiatives, were not paid for the additional time this entails, even though they expect to be remunerated for their time spent. Such an expectation also resonates with the literature commenting on the effects that poor management of casual academics might have on motivation (Allen, 2001; Ryan, Bhattacharyya and Wales, 2012).

What is detrimental for casual academics is when they are separated and marginalised from permanent staff (Barnes and O'Hara, 1999; Junor, 2003; Jensen et al., 2009; Ryan, Bhattacharyya and Wales, 2012; May, Strachan and Peetz, 2013) instead of considering them to be the 'training ground" for future academic staff' (May *et al.*, 2013, p. 19).

Part-time casual academics are also sometimes excluded from regular teaching discussions (Barnes and O'Hara, 1999; Junor, 2003; Jensen et al., 2009; Ryan, Bhattacharyya and Wales, 2012). Such exclusion is exacerbated when constructive ideas brought to the table by casual staff are ignored (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017), adding to a general feeling of demotivation.

2.3.6.   Three pathways of academic development

Directly related to the drivers and inhibitors mentioned previously, Crimmins *et al.* devised three pathways for professional and career development specifically addressing the needs of casual academic members of staff in Australia. The first pathway involves the introduction and rationale of basic skills to engage students towards active learning skills while the second pathway emphasises academic apprenticeship towards a scholarship of teaching and acts of professional reflection. The third pathway aims to grow practitioners discipline-specific into scholarly researchers with a public profile in their particular field (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017).

2.4.   Continuous professional learning tools and activities

While the previous section discusses the environment and conditions in which professional learning alternatively thrives and struggles, the following section interrogates the literature reporting on practical activities that might be used towards a professional learning goal.

Professional learning is seen as being a social activity situated in a particular social and physical context (Cox, 2009; Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2012; Tseng and Kuo, 2014), and designed (or constructed) to cater for a certain purpose (Hodgkinson and Stewart, 1998; Putnam and Borko, 2000; Wenger and Snyder, 2000; Barge and Shockley-Zalabak, 2008). From a practical perspective Van Schalkwyk *et al.* identify a common thread in academic professional development literature for academics to become reflective of their teaching practices (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011).

The notion of professional learning as being a social activity also gains weight when looking at the organisation embracing an 'ethic of care' as Herman describes it (2015). Considering the daily experience of a practicing academic within the working

environment of teaching 'will undoubtedly add to an approach where individual academics will experience a reality that is more supporting, appreciative and even nurturing, of them as individuals as well as their efforts' (Herman, 2015). In the particular context of a higher education institution as fulfilling the role of a caring organisation it is essential that the environment itself should foster and embrace nurturing its academic professionals as much as what these members deem their own tasks to be: as that of a *care giver* of their own students (Herman, 2015).

2.4.1.   A triangular framework of growth

Aspects of the SoTL framework as developed by Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, Adendorff, Cattell and Herman (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011) were used to describe and motivate staff development in a teaching environment thread through the argument about enabling- and inhibiting factors impacting on continuous professional learning. Three prerequisites namely *Communities of Practice* (CoP), *Enabling Environments* (EE) and *Regard and Reward* (R&R) are mentioned as the main cornerstones upon which meaningful staff development is built (see Figure 2.1).

Firstly, belonging to a Community of Practice (CoP) is key. Such CoP's create shared meaning and motivation for learning and improving practice. Practicing in an enabling environment (EE) is the second aspect to this framework and thirdly, it stresses the importance of recognition, or regard, and offering reward (R&R) for achievement.
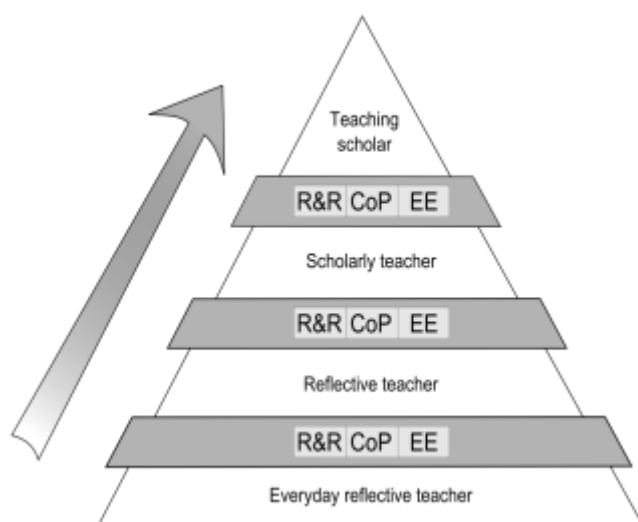
Fig. 2.1: CoP, R&R and EE based development framework (Van Schalkwyk et al 2013: 145).

Built on Boyer's four levels of teaching scholarship namely the practice, debate and discourse of teaching, conducting research, mindful application and integrating the previous four aspects theoretically, Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011) describe the different levels of competence in their SoTL framework as a cyclical process without a clear-cut progression from one to the other. An everyday, non-pedagogical reflection as the lowest level of competence would not necessarily lead to improvement or change of practice (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011). The next level would describe the practices of a reflective teacher who not only thinks about own practice, but it might be happening in a more structured way with a plan to improve or change behaviour, leading to 'new understanding' (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011).

A scholarly teacher who is using assessment techniques in class, collegial discussions and reading Teaching and Learning literature such as what is called scholarly processes by Trigwell and Shale (2004), is operating a level higher, namely level four. When defining scholarly reflection, Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011) refer to Mezirow's three level framework, a 'critical theory of adult learning and adult education' (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 109) as derived from Habermas' three domains of learning. Of the three domains of learning according to Habermas namely the technical, the practical and the emancipatory, the latter resonates with scholarly teaching.

Practitioners move from teaching content by concentrating on the mechanics of teaching content indiscriminately, to process, thinking about methodology, towards a premise reflection referring to the critical enquiry of teaching practice with the improvement of the theoretical practice of teaching. This is the beginning of the scholarship of teaching. Such a reflection becomes meaningful when a practitioner 'begins to interpret new meaning perspectives and meaning schemes, [when] discussion with peers provides an ideal vehicle for learning' (Kitchenham, 2008, p. 113).

Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011) regard the truly teaching scholar not only critically reflects on teaching and learning practices, but also actively enters into a scholarly dialogue with colleagues and theorists. This implies the publication of work in order for it to contribute the bigger debates in the teaching and learning environments for the betterment of general practice.

Van Schalkwyk *et al*. emphasise that their investigations showed that the four levels are not isolated and that practitioners' individual journeys through professional life would involve aspects in every one of the levels in a more- or lesser degree (2011). The usefulness of the framework described above also applies to the Vega environment, namely, that designing an effective combination of enabling environments would ensure lecturers to reflect and think about their practice in such a way that they would find real experiential value towards continuous professional learning on a personal, self-tailored level.

From the literature it is evident that development needs to happen within the practice framework of the lecturer without taking him- or her out of their own environment (Boud and Brew, 2013), by using the most motivating initiatives situated in formal collaborative settings (Ferman, 2002) for maximum buy-in and advantage. Putting theory in practice therefore, also means that the national Teaching and Learning management should step away from fulfilling the role of the sage on the stage for practitioners by enabling constructive learning within a three-pillar approach. The next stage of this investigation will involve tracking longevity and traction of the process.

2.5.   Private higher education and staff development

The private higher education context:

The importance of academic professional development has been well documented (Marshall *et al.,* 2000; Kreber, 2001; Ferman, 2002; Clegg, 2003; McNamee *et al.,* 2004; Dearn, 2005; Knight, Tait and Yorke, 2006; Amundsen and Wilson, 2012; Boud and Brew, 2013). This need is also recognised increasingly by the private higher education sector internationally. Institutions in the UK are enabling opportunities in this field with the introduction of internal units for staff development (Middlehurst, 2004) while facilities for staff development in African private higher education institutions are currently rather limited (Varghese, 2004). In Poland, it was found that private education providers known to be successful and attracting higher student numbers as well as attracting higher-ranked academics, were the institutions that focused on employing independent practitioners with less interests in other institutions. These institutions also fund academic development, and support

academics with good equipment and infrastructure. Overall, they tend to make the teaching environment attractive for both practitioners and students (Duczmal, 2006).

The employment of independent contractors, or educators described to be on a 'casual contract' (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017) is described as becoming an increasingly prominent international phenomenon (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017). Ryan, Bhattacharyya and Wales (in Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017) report on research that show these growing number of independent contractors to derive less satisfaction out of their own level of professional and career development than out of teaching activities, also because they are mostly excluded from formal continuous professional learning drives within institutions. Furthermore, May *et al.* (in Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017) argue that this might be because they are not getting remunerated for time and effort spent on such activities.

South African private higher education has not yet adopted a similar teacher accreditation scheme that was initiated in the 1990's by SEDA, let alone the insistence of teaching staff to have completed a teaching qualification such as required in the UK (Brand, 2007).

Personal experience in a private higher education environment is that such necessary initiatives face additional challenges in this context since institutions are essentially being run on a business model. The expectation in this academic context for the development as a practicing scholar in both a field of expertise as well as a practicing educator creates a very real perception that institutional expectations are schizophrenic and unrealistic.

Academics in private higher education function in a business environment and are expected to keep to office hours with less affordances of academic- and research leave. The tension within the entrepreneurial environment of private higher education that Ballam (2012) refers to, not only applies to academic developers, but to all academic practitioners. Time needs to be divided between attention demanded by students, management and SoTL activities. 'Teaching in these performative academic cultures, means making peace with this searing tension between reflection and action which constantly challenges both the individual's and organisation's integrity' (Ballam, 2012, p. 9).

An overwhelming majority of lecturers joining these teams are experts in specific fields within their own professional industries. They need a good measure and depth of teaching knowledge acquired in a just-in-time, just-enough approach. Newcomers should be inducted in the skill of the lecturing as well as in the scholarly conversation happening within the environment of education. Lecturers need to systematically attain pedagogical content knowledge as described by Henderson as 'the thoughtful combining of knowledge of disciplinary concepts, teaching methods, and creative reflection on how concepts and methods can be interwoven in ways that results in student learning' (Henderson, 2009, p. 15).

It is also common practice for private higher education institutions to rely on independent contractors for a large part of their educator resources (Varghese, 2004).

Of all the reasons for driving academic development quoted by Ballam (2012), the most pertinent would be to create an environment where practitioners can be reflective (Erlandson and Beach, 2008; Webster-Wright, 2009; Boud and Brew, 2013) growing the scholarship of teaching and learning (Webster-Wright, 2009; Healy and Welchert, 2012) and building communities of practice (Viskovic, 2006; Webster-Wright, 2009) within the private higher education environment.

Professional practice as academic development deploys initiatives inside teaching environments where lecturing is happening and within academics' environments of practice. The focus here is on peer learning within a specific context of an area of specialised knowledge sharing (Boud and Brew, 2013). Considering the constant time-deficit challenge (Ferman, 2002) it is essential that learning should happen within their own environment of practice. Additionally, lecturers' motivation should not be tested by the perception that they need to sacrifice valuable preparation- and teaching time to attend training sessions out of their classrooms.

By situating academic professional development in a practice, the focus turns from the practitioner's lack of certain capabilities towards what the training situation requires. Boud and Brew (2013) identify six features of practice namely embodiment, material mediation, relationality, situatedness, emergence and co-construction that may be useful to consider the value of individual academic professional learning

practices. These features are interwoven and implicated throughout exploring the enabling- and inhibiting conditions for professional learning in this study.

2.6.   Potentially relevant professional learning activities

This section discusses a set of professional learning activities viable to introduce in the research domain chosen for this study. The specific selection follows on viability workshops conducted as part of a pilot study. Workshop attendees identified activities being the most meaningful options at that time. They identified peer review conversations, mentorships, teaching portfolios and student evaluations with feedback to be the most meaningful interventions for professional learning in their particular environment. The literature explores the affordances of each chosen activity in greater depth.

2.6.1.   *Peer review conversations*

Peer conversations activate an increased awareness of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL). Gosling describes the role of the peer review in higher education as multifaceted but also contested. He mentions several implementations and uses for this practice such as a way for social groups to evaluate members, used for 'scholarly communication' within a group of peers, creating ways and means to evaluate produced knowledge as well as benchmarking quality assurance in a professional environment (in Sachs and Parsell [Eds.], 2013).

This study particularly explores the role of peer review as an ongoing formative process (Sachs and Parsell, 2013). Peer reviews however, can be contentious. Sachs and Parsell themselves state that '[a]t its best, peer review opens the classroom to review in a safe and supporting way with a focus on improvement and professional learning. At its worst, it becomes a management tool to monitor and control the practices of teachers' (Sachs and Parsell, 2013, p. 2).

Perceptions about peer observation and the power relationship between reviewer and reviewee in its original form intimate an inherently unequal relationship (Gosling, 2002). The implementation of peer reviews can be contentious precisely because of the message of intention used when introducing the instrument. This study will specifically refer to peer review conversations because of misperceptions that

occurred within the institutional landscape used for research in this instance. Therefore I will investigate the approach of peer development (Byrne, Brown and Challen, 2010) instead of peer observation.

The focus of peer development lies in collaboration through dialogue with others (Byrne, Brown and Challen, 2010). This model affords participants to add and omit certain foci from areas of development. Although the IIE process does not allow for other teaching and learning activities such as tutorial support, placement supervision, assessment and course design described by Byrne *et al.* (2010), it does afford colleagues to set their own goals by placing more- or less focus on certain aspects they identify as particular areas of development. Proper implementation of peer development activities also requires that academic members of staff are given adequate time to pay attention to the mutually beneficial liaison with another member of staff (Byrne, Brown and Challen, 2010).

As suggested by Kreber (2001) an emphasis on record keeping is valuable. The activity is situated as a conversation and by involving a peer partner of choice; the review process can be situated as a *developmental*- instead of *evaluative* model (Gosling, 2002) where a new practitioner chooses an experienced practitioner for a partner. The choice of partner is left to the practitioner under review, to facilitate trust and confidence in the process. Byrne reports that the activity of peer development proves to strengthen the collegial bonds and goes a considerable way to create a professional community of practice (2010).

2.6.2.   Mentorship linked to peer partnering

Mentorships have various connotations and definitions in the different environments. While it was traditionally seen as an inherently unequal relationship between a senior, knowledgeable colleague and a new, uninitiated professional, later thinking opines that such a mentorship relationship can also be beneficial to senior 'veteran' colleagues who mentor each other (Danielson, 2002).

Huling-Austin (2000) notes that good mentoring thrives when a few key understandings are in place. Firstly, it needs to guide new lecturers into professional teaching and learning practice while secondly, they also are cognizant to students' ever-changing needs. Perceptions should also favour the usefulness of mentorships

within the continuous professional learning environment while professionals should acknowledge the acquired skill needed to act as mentor. Practitioners must also realise that mentorships require collaboration and finally, that ultimately, mentorships are meant to promote scholarly teaching and learning practices (2000).

Educators are not born with mentoring skills intact. Essential skills to acquire include: the skill of productive observation (to be able to know what to look for, and to comment on it constructively); to possess good communication- and conflict resolution skills; to be a reflective practitioner yourself in order to be a role model; to pose the mentee with constructive challenges; to facilitate professional reflection in a mentee (Huling-Austin, 2000).

Danielson highlights the importance of fostering reflection as a mentorship skill. She refers to Schön (Danielson, 2002) who defined at least three types of reflective behaviour as firstly, thinking on your feet and successfully managing practice as something unforeseen occurs, secondly by recognising the need to change a certain practice when one sees something is not working while doing it; and thirdly by reflection after practice, by analysing the practice by identifying successful- and not so successful events with the student reactions in mind.

Mentorships are motivational and facilitate collaboration between practitioners (Danielson, 2002). Teaching is inherently an isolatory experience since lecturers are each following their own timetable with separate groups of students. It is therefore essential to engineer touchpoints such as mentorships to 'initiate a deeper reflection about practice, offer encouragement that supports ongoing growth, and increase the job satisfaction needed for teachers to move through more mature career stages' (Danielson, 2002).

In this research, lecturing practitioners formalised a mentor relationship with a colleague of choice. This involved the appointment of a mentor for every new lecturer, albeit fulltime or part time. Such a formalisation is key to the successful implementation of the programme. Clark and Reid ((2012) also suggest that sessions should be regular and discipline based, that co-mentoring by an academic developer could also add value, that the programme should be six to 12 months in duration to be able to make a real difference and that the writing of a discipline-

based research report on the teaching practice for publication, would be highly productive. Furthermore, the process should be iterative (Clarke and Reid, 2013).

Mentorships are beneficial for both the mentor and the mentee, thus one needs to connect two peers who can contribute towards each other's practices in a long-term arrangement. In a large quantitative study by Sands *et al.* (1991), four possible types of mentorship were identified, namely the Friend (informal mentorship), the Career Guide (promoting the mentee's professional output to colleagues), the Information Source (assisting with organisational orientation) and the Intellectual Guide (partnering in academic writing and providing intellectual input).

Where mentorships are focused on collegial collaboration, the next aspect is dealing with personal reflection and output. The building of professional teaching portfolios is also experienced as more difficult to establish amongst practitioners (Bitzer, 2004).

2.6.3.   *Teaching portfolios*

Bitzer emphasised the use of professional profiles and its effect in academic professional development (Bitzer, 2004). His experience however, also showed that it is challenging to establish such an approach at an institution. The challenge is to get academics to take ownership and buy into this idea of validation. Bitzer's reflection whether 'higher education indeed [has] become an industry, expecting its institutions to meet economic objectives such as producing human capital, workforce training and economic development' (2004, p. 22) resonates sharply with the private higher education environment.

Seldin comments that "[T]he portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship. It is flexible enough to be used for tenure and promotion decisions or to provide the stimulus and structure for self-reflection about teaching areas in need of improvement' (Seldin, 1999, p. 37).

Redman's five aspects of quality professional portfolio building illustrate a developmental growth potential in creating a professional teaching portfolio. The first aspect illustrates a practitioner's proof of the experience by recording and reflecting in a basic narrative. Active learning follows as the next aspect when the lecturer recognizes patterns, cause and effect of specific designs used. Further practice, or

demonstration, shows in the following aspect where repeated practice illuminates new advances. The fourth aspect describes a practitioner taking ownership by realising that the learning is personal and his- or her own. The last aspect formalises the professional learning when the lecturer gathers evidence as proof of personal learning (in Bitzer, 2004). When applying these aspects to Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning as described by Krathwohl (2002) it is notable that they correspond with the first of Bloom's five levels. The last level, particularly the creation of some result of learning, has the potential to complete the continuum while simultaneously opening the practitioner's path for further learning.

The use of portfolios is contentious. Certain questions are raised regarding the perception of quality in academic work, how such quality should be measured and most relevant to private higher education environments, whether professional portfolios should inform- and be counted into the performance management process of all academic professionals (Bitzer, 2004).

In some environments, also under the auspices of the Independent Institute of Education performance review and evaluation are annually used to directly influence and calculate salary increases. Therefore, would one associate such an external motivational practice where reward is directly monetary to a practice that should be, ideally, part of a continuous professional learning approach and therefore, internally motivational? Pink (2011) makes a convincing case for monetary rewards to be de-motivational for any higher order skill.

The format and guidelines to building a scholarly profile varies in different environments. According to Bitzer (2004) a scholar should show in the portfolio that they have clarified goals as to what skills they identified that would contribute to success, clarify and set out methods as to the means of attaining the skills and show significant results that contribute meaningfully to the scholarly body of knowledge. They should also be able to make strategically meaningful decisions regarding the publishing of these results as well as reflect on the process productively.

2.6.4.   Student evaluations and feedback

The employment of student evaluations at regular intervals during the academic year is a widely implemented measure amongst public as well as private higher education

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institutions (Sok-foon, Sze-yin and Yin-fah, 2012). These evaluations are not only focusing on lecturer characteristics, but also on teaching and learning resources and module content. Sok-foon *et al.* found that students deem the lecturer characteristics the most important aspect of such evaluations (2012).

Spooren *et al.* describe student evaluations as having three main uses namely to improve teaching quality, for institutional evaluations towards performance appraisal of individuals and as a way to prove institutional accountability (2013, p. 599). In this study I am particularly concerned with the former-mentioned: 'In the end, successful teaching is highly dependent on the instructor's theory of how students learn combined with the instructor's beliefs about the teaching behaviors most likely to facilitate student learning based on that theory' (Centra in Beran and Rokosh, 2009, p. 498).

The anonymous gathering of feedback regarding modules, material and teaching is accepted as being a valuable tool towards improving the learning experience (Chalmers, 2008; Stein *et al.*, 2013; Harris, Ingle and Rutledge, 2014; Webb and Barrett, 2014). Although arguably being one of the evaluation practices with the most empirical results and discussions, it remains one of the most contentious issues (Beran and Rokosh, 2009). There are various reasons why lecturing staff criticise the practice despite empirical proof that the initiative strengthens and improves the quality of learning (Stein *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, educators are still reluctant to use this type of evaluation for personal professional learning. Beran and Rokosh (2009) ascribe this disconnect with the negative perception student evaluations hold amongst participants.

Student evaluations is a valid and reliable instrument (Marsh and Roche, 1997) used for various reasons (Beran and Rokosh, 2009). While students sometimes use ratings of lecturers and courses to make academic choices and administrators refer to them when conducting annual performance reviews, more of a third of the respondents in the latter study found student evaluations useful to improve teaching methods and to develop course content (Beran *et al.*, 2005). However, content and timing of deploying evaluation instrumentation have a big influence on lecturers' perception of their validity and effectiveness (Stein *et al.*, 2013).

Stein *et al.* (2013) recommend that institutions should explicitly link the benefits and use of student evaluations to professional development. These initiatives should be 'collaborative and organic, not solitary and isolated' (Stein *et al.*, 2013, p. 901) with the explicit benefit to teaching and learning at the forefront of aim. This recommendation resonates explicitly with a teaching development aid developed within the Vega environment a few years ago.

Concluding the section on particular factors driving- as well as those that limit professional learning in the academic context, it was argued firstly that one of the driving factors for the successful implementation of continuous professional learning activities identified in the literature is that an institution should consider a holistic view when implementing a continuous professional learning programme. This includes a concerted effort to model effective and decentralised leadership, provide incentives and put a focus on expertise instead of seniority.

Other driving factors that are identified in the literature, are the importance of situated workplace learning and placing emphasis on practitioner reflection, as well as belonging to a community of practice. To create a caring workplace is another important driver that implies a sense of justice and acknowledgment of individual needs. Other intrinsically motivational issues such as appropriate pay structures and credits for experience and evidence of growth, also emerge from the literature.

On the other side of the spectrum, authors warn institutions to be aware of factors such as narrow institutional views that would inhibit professional learning. A system built on top-down corrective measures with a focus on practitioner deficits, is unproductive. Ineffective leadership and managerialist practices also hamstrung professional learning and growth. Bureaucratic working conditions stifle and demotivate personal growth.

Professional development activities and programs that are poorly conceived and structured also act as inhibitors for professional learning. When a program is properly contextualised, practitioners find it motivating and take ownership of their own learning. Other inhibiting factors that also play a role is when mentorships are poorly conceived and executed, and when there are unreasonably high time pressures and poor stress management.

2.7.   Conclusions deriving from the literature review

The first section of this literature review discussed academic professional development in higher education in general, and what practitioners find motivating or not. Certain factors such as shifting learner-demand and tighter timeframes also impact on academics' motivation. There are, however, certain professional learning activities that practitioners engage with more readily as discussed by Ferman (2002). The section also discusses the benefits of lecturers' perceptions regarding agency and accountability and the fact that well-organised, holistic initiatives contribute to general feelings of trust and motivation amongst members of staff.

The next part continued to discuss the notion of staff development in higher education and the purpose of academic professional development. James (1997) discusses such development as part of the bigger learning organisation while the broader purpose and responsibilities of academic professional development are probed and the usefulness of removing pressure from academics by allowing them to do more motivational, interesting scholarly things (Henderson, 2009) questioned.

Following hereon, the general need for staff development and what qualities teaching professionals are expected to possess was questioned. Attributes such as accountability, communication skills, inter-professional expertise, technological capabilities and foci on particular kinds of learning were assimilated (Kane, Sandretto and Heath, 2004).

Ultimately, discussions led to the beneficiaries of academic development in general and the reason why practitioners should be convinced that they are the ultimate beneficiaries of their own learning. The argument concluding the section arguing a move from professional development to continuous professional learning also motivates the reason why academic professional development initiatives should be a strong focus within the private higher education domain. The question then emerges as to what the types and focus of activities within the private higher education environment should be.

The next section discussed the strategies and models that might be considered and the reason that the deficit model should be avoided (Webster-Wright, 2009),

motivating the discussion away from an academic professional development initiative towards the concept of continuous professional learning with the inherent power shift implied.

Certain workplace conditions such as the power of communities of practice and collaborations are conducive for personal growth (Mott 2000) and an argument is made for the shift of the organisational culture such as described by Skule *et al.* (Boud and Brew, 2013). When the agency is placed in the practitioner's lap, it is apt to propose the concept of the *practice turn* (Boud and Brew, 2013) where the actions of the lecturer refer to practice-based growth by staff members themselves.

Several researchers emphasise a variety of factors that would impact on the success of continuous professional learning initiatives. The need for active participation, collaboration and practitioners taking ownership of their own development is threading through the literature. Boud and Brew (Boud and Brew, 2013) stress the importance of placement of development activities and Frick and Kapp (Frick and Kapp, 2006) identify principles of integration as key to its success.

The last section of this review focused on continuous professional learning tools and activities described in scholarly literature, and in particular, four activities identified within this particular research environment to be viable options for implementation. Peer development by partnering- and reviews, mentorships, teaching portfolios and student evaluations were discussed in more detail since these are the activities that will be deployed in the first phase of the continuous professional learning movement described in this study. The use of such activities is not new although the approach and repositioning of such as professional learning opportunities for the sake of personal professional learning aims to encourage practitioners to take ownership of their own development.

In the spirit of such change of ownership therefore, the next chapter will deal with research methods used for this particular study. Employing (practitioner) action research through narrative (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007), the researcher relates the development and challenges that initiating continuous professional learning resulted on the four private higher education campuses across South Africa.

Chapter Three: Research design and methods

The following chapter conceptualises the research methods used for the study. The researcher motivates the use of action research within a reasonably complex environment. As the research questions called for quite complex explorations across various sites and times, a cyclical implementation of action research fitted the purpose. Since the researcher is immersed within the situation in her daily function, it also made logical sense that this methodology would complement such an enquiry. The following sections elaborate on conceptualising the methodology as well as to explain the operationalisation of the plan.

3.1.   Conceptualising the research methodology

Action research is effective in social contexts (Blichfeldt and Andersen, 2006) by affecting, and studying change in a certain environment (Hendry, 1996) and expanding the process from a pragmatic view, towards more collaborative and transformational outcomes (Newman *et al.*, 2001). Action research is also viewed as appropriate when considering complex and dynamic social issues while assuming that all role players have enough knowledge to contribute meaningfully to a process solution (Greenwood, 2012).

As a strategy, action research is practical in a cyclical manner and affect change by way of incorporating the participation of active agents concerned with the environment (Denscombe, 2010). It is described to be applicable to any situation where problem solving of people, tasks and procedures is necessary (Cohen *et al.* 2007). The approach was used to investigate the scenario here where various groups of people, led by individuals on every campus, need to be mobilised into a continuous professional learning mind-set.

An action research process should be timeous, reflective and allow the researcher to be immersed throughout. Cunningham states that '… more time is spent in the formative sequences' (Cunningham 1995, p. 516) of such a process when participants are defining their needs and practices in order to formulate the parameters of the action. Furthermore, insider action research allows me as the officer tasked to develop a culture of teaching and learning, to reflect on the crucial

question: 'How do I improve what I am doing?' (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996). Denscombe stresses that the process of research and action is so integrated that the practitioner should be completely incorporated into the process (2010).

Eady, Drew and Smith claim that action research not only activates change, but that it can also lead to rich personal learning by reflection (2015). Reflections about the data might also lead to unanticipated insights by researchers that go further than the obvious findings by unearthing unforeseen implications (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3.2.   Operationalising action research

The study was conducted in a tertiary institution context, applying two main cycles of action research in order to strengthen the role and outcomes of professional development initiatives in a particular private higher education environment.
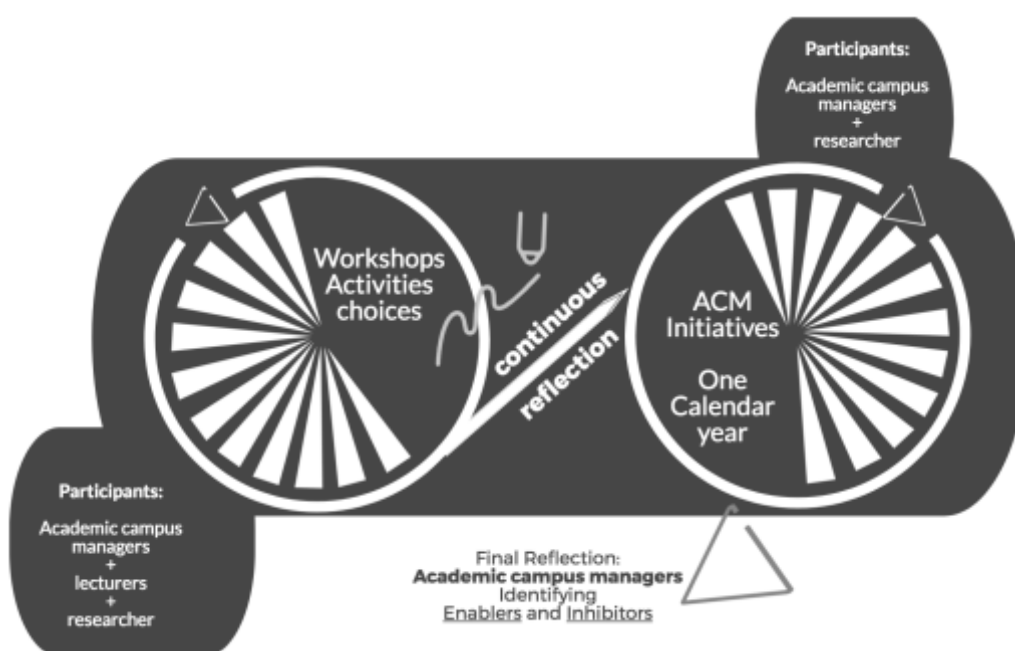
Fig. 3.1. Visualising the action research cycles.

The introductory cycle involved campus workshops with the majority of permanent- as well as temporary members of the teaching staff. They initially reflected on their own capabilities and actions they were taking to develop themselves. Thereafter they were introduced to a range of professional development tools such as teaching portfolios, mentorships, peer reviews, workshops, group reflection, individual reflection and reading, and attending academic conferences and seminars which

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emerge from literature. Every academic campus manager thereafter compiled a strategy for the year which was meant to incorporate the outcome of the campus staff's particular initiatives that emerged from their workshop.

The second cycle was built on academic campus managers' reflection of development tools that were subsequently incorporated into the campus-specific strategies. The researcher heeded Cunningham's (1995) call to take time and care to plan such a process when participants are defining their needs and practices in order to formulate the parameters of the action. The academic campus managers have been driving the initial introduction on each campus following their own pace and management style. After a calendar year, throughout which these managers regularly connected and reflected amongst themselves and their own staff, the researcher conducted in-depth individual interviews to discuss the successes and failures of the year's initiatives.

A narrative action research approach enabled the researcher to relate, reflect and learn from the actions taken (McNiff, 2007) during the introduction and initiation of continuous professional learning- and development activities into the context of the particular higher education school environment. The critical reflection in the form of four interviews where each participant described narratively how the year's professional learning activities unfolded, allowed the thematic condensation of trends that emerged on every individual campus.

The process described here, allowed the researcher to answer the following questions:

What conditions affect continuous professional development in a private higher education (PHE) environment?

The action research was built upon initiatives to answer this main question by addressing the following two sub-questions:

1. What factors drive professional learning in the private higher education environment?
2. What factors inhibit professional learning amongst academic practitioners in a private higher education environment?

Eady, Drew and Smith claim that action research not only activates change, but that it also '… seem[s] that professionals' participation in AR can generate various forms of learning about practice' (2015, p. 107). This is a narrative study. Miles and Huberman claim that data from such a qualitative study enables researchers to find unintended solutions while devising new systemic solutions in the process of implementing the original plan (1994). Such a process-driven plan proved to positively influence not only the initiatives that were envisaged, but also the attitudes and agency with which the role-players approached the activities in the current study.

Situating the study in an interpretive paradigm (McNiff and Whitehead, 2006), the researcher observed lecturer practice on all four campuses and by conducting workshops during the first cycle, formed a good idea of the multi-layered contexts within which these practitioners operate. This also afforded some understanding of their impressions about their own need for professional learning. Campus visits and regular communications during the year of the second cycle created opportunities to communicate with the academic campus managers and their reflections regarding members of staff. The final interviews served as invaluable reflections for both the researcher as well as the academic campus managers who participated in them. As researcher, I was constantly aware that the communication with the managers during this time should serve as catalyst and reminder for their individual reflective practice throughout the time of research. It became evident early on in the process that the makeup and social dynamic of the four campuses differ, therefore each placing different emphases on various aspects of the project.

Action research enabled participants of this study not only to gather useful insights for themselves about themselves, but also enabled the organisation to use situation-specific knowledge to the benefit of all stakeholders concerned. These reflections promise to lead to better professional development practices and contribute to the school as a learning organisation by activating members with the use of action learning (Hodgkinson and Stewart 1998).

3.3. Data production

Four academic managers are each managing a campus. These academic campus managers are responsible for all academically-related activities on a campus. Such a manager would recruit and oversee the academic staff, timetables and teaching and learning development, as well as managing the student support staff and their management of all contact with students. Therefore, the academic campus manager is ultimately responsible for ensuring that academic operations run smoothly to the benefit of both academic staff and students. Their function is complex, with their time sometimes split between operational academic functions on the one hand, and teaching and learning activities on the other.

A needs assessment workshop formed the first cycle for this study. During this needs assessment in October 2014, lecturers were asked to reflect on their individual, informal approaches to professional development currently in place. This personal reflection, produced in the form of lists of favourite motivational activities, was followed up with descriptions and discussions regarding a number of activities described in professional development literature regarding possibilities of academic professional development that would be feasible in the particular private higher education school context.

The workshop concluded with another survey where practitioners revealed their professional learning activity priorities after they were made aware of a number of possibilities. During the conclusion of this first workshop, members of staff actively chose the desired developmental initiatives that resonated best with them. Activities chosen spontaneously by participants within these workshops correlate with the well-known literature describing successful continuous professional learning initiatives (Ferman, 2002). Under the leadership of their academic campus managers, each campus thereafter decided upon a strategy to initiate activities most suitable to their body of academic staff.

The researcher used the framework devised by Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011) as a guide towards articulating an institution's offering of professional learning opportunities. This framework also formed the basis for the initial introduction of tools to the school's members of staff. The table below interrogates the possibilities to

situate the various academic professional learning activities within this private higher education environment by gauging their effectiveness within the three values namely whether the activity is situated in a community of practice (CoP), secondly, whether it is situated in an enabling environment (EE) and thirdly, whether it gives potential to be recognised or rewarded by a community of peers (R&R).

Table 1 (below) ordered the eventual 'wishlists' compiled by lecturers who attended these workshops on all four campuses. The attendees listed and rated their personal preferences for professional development after each event. These quantitatively analysed lists were then used to compile a holistic view of general preferences voiced by these attendees. The quantities are ordered in direct relation to the three aspects of the Framework of Growth (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011) namely *communities of practice* (CoP), *enabling environments* (EE), and *regard and reward* (R&R).

Table 1. Vega academic professional development activities as evaluated in the Framework of Growth (Van Schalkwyk et a.l 2013)

Growth opportunities	CoP	EE	R&R
Peer Review Conversations	x	x	
Participate in formal mentorship programme	x	x	
Student Evaluations		x	
Academic Teaching practice portfolio	x	x	x
'Vegamometer' feedback instrument		x	
Attend half-day T&L workshops by T&L manager	x		
Present at weekly theory-sharing sessions (Thursday Theories)	x	x	x
Attend weekly theory-sharing sessions (Thursday Theories)	x	x	
Present a paper at the IIE Celebrating T&L conference	x	x	x
Attend the IIE Celebrating T&L conference	x	x	
Being awarded the Charles Freysen Award for T&L excellence			x
Receive a monetary grant to attend a field-recognised conference			x
Contribute to the IIE T&L Journal	x	x	x
Attend and produce at the writing workshop	x	x	

Although the data suggested that academic staff preferred similar activities across all four campuses, each academic campus manager led the implementation of

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developmental activities chosen by their own group of lecturing staff. The focus was here on participation by academic campus managers and their interaction with the researcher.

3.3.1.1.   *Academic managers and their participation*

All four academic campus managers who carry the responsibility for academic professional development respectively in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town and Durban agreed to participate, negotiate and workshop the various possibilities for professional development on their respective campuses. These four managers connect bi-weekly in teleconferences to discuss teaching and learning issues, actions and changes as needed. Participation by these academic managers was key in the process. Their reflection enabled wider insight into perceptions on a campus regarding the direction that initiatives were taking.

Ultimately, each academic campus manager followed and encouraged a path that resonated most with their own experience of continuous professional learning. While one academic campus manager has extensive previous experience of building teaching portfolios and therefore encouraged staff to start with this activity, another one proved to be good with motivating peer conversations and mentoring. The focus was here on participation not only by the academic campus managers, but also the lecturing staff in each environment. The data production culminated in four comprehensive interviews in which these academic campus managers reflected on their professional development initiatives and journey across a campus, through the timeframe since the initial introductory workshop was done. The four interviews lasted between an hour- and two hours each.

3.3.1.2.   *The position as an insider-researcher in this study*

The study was constructed as an action research project in order for the researcher, as the officer tasked to develop a culture of teaching and learning, to reflect on the crucial question: "How do I improve what I am doing?" (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996). It is important however, to keep in mind that such a qualitative study aims to gain a holistic picture to initiate a broader understanding of the issue (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and should not be seen as a final word and blueprint on professional learning in such an environment.

An approach of work-based research as utilised in this study places the researcher within the research situation and prompts some reflection on the '… [S]ituatedness [that] arises from the interplay between agent (you, the researcher), situation (the particular set of circumstances and your position within it), and context (where, when and background)' (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p. 2). The insider-researcher has first-hand knowledge and understanding of the complexities within the particular working environment and is able to '… make challenges to the status quo from an informed perspective' (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010, p. 3). Reed and Procter (1995) identify a few aspects inherent in practitioner research that is directly relevant to insider-research such as that it is an educative social practice directly involving fellow workers meant to develop everyone involved whereby the researcher can make a direct change to circumstances. Additionally, the researcher can also identify and address factors within the organisational culture that historically affected practice, as well as use '…the professional imagination and enhance the capacity of participants to interpret everyday action in the work setting' while '… integrat[ing] personal and professional learning' (1995, p. 195). Insights of such research should also be noteworthy to a wider audience (Reed and Procter, 1995).

As this researcher is involved in the environment of the current research, it is important to describe the impact and influence of existing professional values and beliefs as such would directly shape actions and directions of the educational context (Sikes, Nixon and Carr, 2003; Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Komesaroff (in Guillemin and Gillam 2004) unpacks the distinction between the two dimensions of ethics in research namely procedural ethics (completing ethical clearance forms and obtaining institutional go-ahead), and *ethics in practice* or microethics. They argue that procedural ethics cannot be the only consideration when conducting insider-research in qualitative research and therefore, that a researcher should also take on a reflexive attitude towards participants and data produced (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

This constantly reflexive way of analysis and reporting (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004) became a driving reality within this research project because of the potential sensitivity of this researcher's position as part of the national leadership team. Having been an academic campus manager herself, the researcher has some first-

hand knowledge about the position and can identify with these managers' position. Although not directly influential in the day-to-day running of campus-based affairs, there was always the possibility that a break in confidence by disclosing unsolicited information could impact on an individual's professional relationship with direct management and peers.

It is with the above stance in mind, that the researcher consciously and consistently reflected not only about honouring her position of trust that she enjoys from within the community, but also the best way to relay important and crucial findings accurately without compromising individual identities in the process. To accommodate participant anonymity where it was necessary, academic campus managers were assigned pseudonyms and campuses identifications were obscured. Although all four managers were happy that their shared narratives might be identified and traced, the researcher aimed at best not to compromise any professional standing.

3.3.1.3.   The tracking and assessment of campus programs

It is not feasible to draw direct links between staff and student success with any of these professional development activities (Stefani, 2011), but it is important to track and evaluate development programs such as this one because the organisation needs to assess the value of it and act on the evaluation to identify further gaps, pinpoint where the real impact of development lies. Pertinent to this research project was to promote reflection on personal learning amongst academic campus managers as practitioners (Pasmore, 2014). Therefore also, '… when evaluating development programs and whole systems of programs, the real goal is to find a causal link between initiative objectives and behavior change or development' (Allen, 2009, p. 39). For future actions, the proof of success is when such activities are voluntarily replicated elsewhere in the organisational environment (Debowski in Stefani, 2011).

The starting point however, should be that the group defines their goals and evaluation timeframes for achievement (Stefani, 2011). Setting up goals and timeframes for this study were dealt with while initiating each strategy per campus.

3.4.   Analysis and interpretation of data

The final data analysis was done on four in-depth interviews telephonically conducted with the four academic campus managers. These transcribed texts were analysed thematically (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996). The interviewees were encouraged to share their campus related experiences regarding the implementation of the chosen professional development instruments while the interviewer probed views around successes and failures of particular initiatives. Particular probing was done regarding campus movement around personal dynamics, groups that formed as communities of practice and subsequent successes. The researcher took particular trouble to delve into academic campus managers' views regarding their own relationship with leadership in general as well as with their own academic members of staff. The empathic resonance-methodology (Whitehead, 2012) for negotiation and analysis formed a close focus in driving as well as analysing these reflections.

Data analysed for this study is ordered into 'intellectual 'bins' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 18) emerging from the existing literature as well as those concepts that emerged during the execution of this study. Two main themes emerged in the literature: Firstly, driving factors for effective professional learning, and secondly, inhibiting factors for effective professional learning. These themes formed the two main categories in the data analysis. The driving factors encompassed discussions regarding situated workplace learning, institutional structure and leadership, dynamics around communities of practice and incentives. Inhibiting factors were grouped discussions around unreceptive institutional cultures, managerialist practices, poor structure of professional development activities and a particular section discussing casual academics and their specific issues. Data are presented in the form of thematically arranged rich and vivid descriptions and analyses of events in order to convey complexities (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

Measuring the effectiveness and resulting professional learning emanating from these instruments is a difficult task. '[P]rofessional learning embraces reflection, the professional's stance, values, competence and skills, and professional knowledge. It is suggested that these aspects raise particular challenges for those assessing and judging professional learning' (Pilkington, 2013, p. 252).

3.5.   Concluding the research design and methods

This study reports on an action research project where the researcher immersed herself in two cycles of enquiry. The first cycle involved academic campus managers, lecturers and the researcher in getting acquainted with the possibilities of professional learning tools. Each campus reflected and decided on which activities to focus. The second cycle involved academic campus managers working with their teams in implementing chosen tools and activities for a calendar year. In the last reflection of every academic campus manager, the enabling- as well as inhibiting factors for such activities to work towards continuous professional learning, crystallised out of the interviews with the researcher. The cyclical nature also allowed the four academic campus managers as participants to own their own learning in developing a culture of teaching and learning on their respective campuses. Additionally, the research design also intended to unearth situation-specific knowledge that benefited the participants.

The intervention, involving four participants and their feedback, spans a particular period of one year that serves as springboard for a community of practice to form on the four higher education campuses. The following chapter will discuss the data as produced and analysed in more detail.

3.6.   The validity and trustworthiness of the research

The personal experience (McNiff and Whitehead, 2002) and viewpoints shared by four academic campus managers serve as the basis for validity in this study. The second level of validation as discussed by McNiff and Whitehead (2002) deals with the validation of practitioners who understand and share the environment and context that is made by participants. Notable here is that the researcher occupied the position of academic campus manager for five years previously and therefore, empathises and relates with the experiences and statements that the four main participants conveyed. The last four years occupying a national leadership position but still enjoying direct input from the current academic campus managers, provided some distance to contextualise these participants' experiences, and to interpret as well as validate them according to scholarly literature.

Stringer (2007) claims that discussing the validity of action research should refer to the trustworthiness of such a study. Proving the abovementioned involves reference to credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of steps and outcomes in a study.

The trustworthiness of the study can be proven by the confirmability of evidence. All the professional development initiatives and workshops evidence that participants refer to, have been archived on every campus. Such evidence is required for South African higher education accreditation visits. Academic campus managers are also held accountable to national leadership, for teaching and learning strategies. The process generated worksheets and feedback material from the first cycle workshops as well as audio recordings of the in-depth reflective interviews with the four main participants. Dependability is proven in the detailed narrative explanations of participants' reflections and how they directly relate to broader scholarly literature. Credibility of both action cycles as described in this chapter lies in the direct triangulation between the first workshop where practitioners voiced their professional development interests that was directly built upon frameworks in the literature (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011), and the researcher's own previous experience as academic campus manager. The study is built upon prolonged engagement (Stringer, 2007) lasting more than a year, with a final culmination of the analysed interviews.

Chapter Four: Data analysis and findings

4.1. Introducing the context of the interviews

This chapter reports on the analysis of the interviews with the academic co-navigators (academic campus managers) who are leading the academic lecturing team on every campus, is structured according to the themes emerging from the literature in two main sections. The first section reveals those factors that, according to the literature, would drive professional development in an academic environment, and the second, factors that the literature shows, inhibit such development. Within the context of themes emerging from the data, this chapter will unpack the mentions and discussions referring to situated learning in the particular continuous professional learning context such as the contextualisation of learning, crafting learning tasks to be interesting and challenging, using innovative and well-considered learning resources and integrating tailor-made tasks into practitioners' daily lives. Emerging themes regarding the possibilities of professional growth, the ability to enable self-management and to create opportunities for academics to utilise themselves, are also discussed.

Following the above, themes emerged regarding the role of formal institutional structures and management that are impacting on continuous professional learning initiatives, particularly the role of distributed leadership and decentralising of management to enable campus leadership. Incentives such as monetary rewards are discussed. Thereafter the data referring to communities of practice, emotional support and other tangible support conclude the section on the identified themes that seem to drive professional development.

The second part of the chapter highlights emerging factors inhibiting professional development as discussed in the literature. Themes and scenarios are reported under the main headings of unreceptive institutional practices, managerialist practices and instances where the poor structure of continuous professional learning initiatives inhibited practice. The section concludes with a discussion regarding specific scenarios effecting casual academic staff since this is also highlighted in the literature as a scenario with other considerations and needs than permanent members of academic staff.

In the interest of anonymity of participants, the campuses are referred to as Campus A, B, C and D, with participants named as Arlene, Beryl, Cindy and Dorian. To randomise identities further, these names were chosen from the list of tropical hurricane names of the last three years.

4.2. Section 1: Themes that emerged from the data as driving factors

4.2.1. *Situated workplace learning*

> *So, if all the discussions are about self-improvement, then eventually everything connects – Cindy.*

The four campuses studied each has a different culture and identity under the wider Vega School umbrella and academic campus managers are encouraged to foster these identities. Because every academic campus manager might use their agency to highlight and encourage practices in their own environment, it made for some unique situations. One campus used the mentorship programme to a certain extent. While practitioners were not comfortable with others sitting into their classes, they reflected productively in smaller configurations. Another academic campus manager tried actively to encourage situated learning by designing a particular time-based, in-class task to affect the above. While two managers mentioned practices that could be directly linked to this enabling theme, evidence of such situatedness did not emerge from all the datasets.

According to the academic campus manager on Campus A (we will refer to her as Arlene), situational learning is happening there in 'all the classrooms all of the time'. They have been pushing self-reflection as a learning tool throughout the year. The lecturers have also been exploring alternative ways of giving feedback to students. Formal lecturer training focused heavily on the application of techniques to assess for learning and driving lecturing staff away from *talk and chalk* towards more progressive techniques. Arlene devised a drive whereby it was compulsory for each lecturer to choose one 'slide' with a specific teaching focus from a notice board. They would then need to plan and create the week's contact sessions around this particular technique. The aim was to shake lecturers out of their comfort zones and implore them to use alternative teaching practices. Lecturers would gather regularly to discuss and workshop these experiences and what they learnt from them. In this

'space for growth' as described by Arlene, interest sparked discussions about general techniques, especially amongst independent contractors. This has become an ongoing habit of reflection and practice. Lecturers are encouraged to make 'every module as interesting and applied as possible' instead of 'dumping information', and to keep up the effort and energy throughout the semester. Lecturers are also given agency to voice their own desires about training needs that they feel wanting in their own practice. Arlene acts on these *wish lists* in order to work on more training experiences.

> *Of what teaching strategy are you using in your class; what new way are you thinking of transferring information, and I think because it was there and because there were extra slides available. If you were not sure what to do, then we would sit together and figure out what is the best way to reach your class outcomes. It was a space for growth – Arlene.*

Other initiatives on Campus A that Arlene classifies as situational learning include 'Powerpoint-free weeks' and practicing 'positive feedback', highlighting the difference between *giving* feedback and *telling people what to do*. This is particularly useful in the creative programme space. In the abovementioned, emphasis is also put on *process* versus *product* and how to feed back *for* learning instead of assessing a final product. Arlene also emphasise the need for intense planning for teaching sessions and working according to the lesson outcomes; what needs to be achieved and keeping that goal in mind throughout the longer timespan of the semester. Arlene believes that this will drive deeper reflection and introspection amongst lecturers.

> *Like ok, I've got this task and I'm not sure what to do. Then we would sit together and figure out; what is the best way to reach your class outcomes. Because it was not just that product of dumping information; where we were actually forcing in a nice way them to do the work there was a bit of you know, a bit of a brick wall – Arlene.*

Beryl, the academic campus manager on Campus B used their mentorship programme as a way to foster situational learning where lecturers would sit into each other's classes. It is complicated however, because although they are aware of the peer learning benefits that this approach has, practitioners feel insecure with having people sitting in on their classes.

> *So, if someone would sit in their class and give them feedback, they teased each other about how terrible is was – Beryl.*

They would rather reflect in a bigger forum. Lecturers also seem keen to implement teaching tools explained in teaching tool workshops held on a regular basis. From

feedback at these workshops and also from her class visits, the she was surprised to realise that lecturers generally struggle with classroom management. Therefore, she planned to put a specific focus on this area.

The academic campus manager for Campus D, Dorian, does not make it clear how much in situ learning is encouraged. Some exceptions showed that lecturers are following their own initiatives to learn from their situation and their student feedback. One lecturer who has been actively compiling a teaching portfolio showed as example for such reflection, with Dorian explaining the detail of record kept by her. Another lecturer has been conducting a *Vegamometer* (Designed by the national teaching and learning manager as an in-class instrument designed for lecturers to source student feedback, engagement and understanding as a teaching tool) to engage with, and learn from the teaching situation. The efforts, however, do not enjoy Dorian's support, who is of the opinion that the *Vegamometer* produces a skewed reading of student engagement and learning.

> *And yet his vegamometer says everything is cool, it's so hard to have that conversation. –*
> *Dorian*

Keeping in mind that every campus celebrates its own identity within the brand, the approach of the largest- and smallest campuses contrast distinctly. While Arlene fostered the introduction of teaching tools and practical interventions with individual lecturer use onto the smaller Campus A, Beryl opted to introduce one-on-one mentorships amongst her staff. Here, on the bigger Campus B, it seemingly would have connected more people with each other and their practice. At the time of research, Beryl also has the largest component of permanent lecturers of all campuses.

4.2.1.1. Contextualisation

How Beryl identified needs and planned for a programme to roll out, speaks to the enabling abilities of contextualising activities. This campus concentrated on workshops and teaching tools as identified by just-enough, just-in-time needs of its practitioners. Beryl also realised that much of the staff's motivation stems from the way that initiatives are introduced to them. A discussion about key performance areas seemed sensitive as Beryl realised that the team is wary of the key

performance area discussions being linked to other initiatives such as mentorships and workshops.

> *Because the other issue that i have is that it is not really teaching and learning, but in a way it still feeds therein, that the thing of the kpa was to nail you with that which you are not good at, where you need to improve, where the kpa is actually about your professional growth, your personal growth those things – Beryl.*

Beryl's intent was actually about effecting professional growth. This intention seemed to have become undone in the process. After the Beryl explained the motivation, the staff felt that they were glad to have been at the workshops and that they learnt a lot about their teaching practice. The Beryl tries to convey to staff that all these discussions not only with professional growth and personal growth are enhanced by discussing key performance areas (KPA's) and that everything connects eventually.

> *Because I do not trust myself with it, because there is no trust coming from management's side. And I believe if I can change that to 'O, you know, I am actually trusted and appreciated, I know what I am doing and that I am doing good work; I also know I have areas where I can improve but it's all about making me grow at the end of the day'. So, it is just that shift in perception that I need to get – Beryl.*

She started sending out regular emails with information regarding teaching philosophies and how to build it into teaching portfolios, with some independent contractors becoming quite enthusiastic with this initiative. The feedback seemed to motivate Beryl to increase her continuous feed of information via email to all the teaching staff.

Beryl, on this particular campus understood the teaching portfolio as containing the best exemplars of teaching moments showcasing a lecturer's course and communicated it as such to her staff. The staff was directed to show what they perceived to be their best work, as well as what the students produced in terms of good work and to show what they did under the lecturers' tutelage.

Another way to contextualise professional development would be to situate the activities with the goal of learning to teach as a *Navigator*, in a particularly Vega-identified manner. Campus C introduced peer reviews by particularly taking the angle of peer partnering. They initially planned two introductory sessions presented by the teaching and learning manager of the IIE. This initiated the lecturers into the didactics of peer reviews. The focus on peer partnerships also initiated good

conversations. Cindy reported that the initiative 'took flight', when, during the middle of the first term and throughout the third term

> *New guys were teaming up with old guys, old guys were teaming up with cross disciplines, which was nice, so it was 'I want to learn how to teach that way, or I want to learn how to teach like a Veganite, and adapt my teaching style – Cindy.*

A good crossover between staff teaching into various disciplines happened and the emphasis was on teaching in a distinctive Vega style instead of working discipline-specific. Initiatives grew organically. They would formalise visits rather than walking unannounced into each other's classrooms. Staff were directed to have pre-discussions before classroom visits, with reflective conversations afterwards. Working off a template, they covered salient points that touched on areas mentioned by the Cindy and the IIE teaching and learning Manager. Cindy deemed this template to be very important. Two lecturers also produced complete portfolios of evidence while the majority of the rest of the teaching corps managed to start a portfolio of evidence and submit an initial one-pager with a teaching philosophy to underpin future entries. Cindy sees this as a work in progress, adding in context of continuous teaching practices throughout the year. She admits however, that the effort did not take off adequately by the end of the last term.

Campus D was plagued with staff disruptions during the year with several members of the lecturing staff leaving the employ. This impacted on the teaching loads of the rest of the team since the positions that opened up consisted of some scarce-skill lecturing that were not easy to replace.

> *Because on this campus it seems to be if someone is not doing something, it is just getting pushed up onto someone else and the willing person just gets more and more to do – Dorian.*

The turnover to new teaching staff also meant considerable breaks in institutional memory. This occurrence worried Dorian, insofar as that the aspect of continuity became the main driver of all teaching and learning activities.

Dorian reported that she initiated vigorous orientation sessions with lecturers on teaching portfolios but the efforts were hampered with logistical IT issues. She wanted staff to upload these portfolios onto a space in the learning management system, VegaLearn. Uploading however, proved problematic since the internet capability on campus was perceived as being problematic. She does believe,

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however, that the teaching portfolio process needs to be discussed continuously. That several members of staff left during the year made her realise that the teaching portfolio had another role than that of self-reflection. She feels that this portfolio should actually be a record of what has been taught in a certain module so that the material and tools are existing for the next lecturer to take up and continue teaching seamlessly.

> ..[A]nd then if someone is moving I should be able to say to them ok make sure that everything is there, make sure that all are there, make sure that the right stuff has been covered as based on the powerpoints in there, that's how I have used it in the past – Dorian.

Lessons learnt about contextualising activities properly became real when Beryl reflected on her permanent lecturers' reluctance to adopt the creation of teaching portfolios. Because the activity was not consciously divorced from the outcomes of the key performance areas that they are regularly being measured in their capacities of permanent staff, teaching portfolios were perceived as yet another outcome that will be measured, and that could be used as a negative performance tool. Events on Campus D illustrated that contextualising practice is not the guaranteeing factor for the success of a tool such as teaching portfolios, since the initiative fell flat right at the last action, where practitioners needed to save and showcase the body of work. When operational matters such as IT hinder execution, it has the devastating effect of bringing many initiatives to a halt. Cindy seemed to have hit the Goldilocks-zone with the approach on Campus C. The peer reviews were repositioned into peer partnering with adequate introduction and motivation of the practice, simultaneously situating the activity into 'teaching like a Veganite' to become a Navigator instead of lecturer.

4.2.1.2.   *Interesting tasks*

To make tasks interesting, Beryl on Campus B says that it depends on how one introduces and discusses tasks in workshops and meetings. Experience taught this campus that you have to ensure that lecturers understand the relationship between tasks and the key performance area initiative, and that all these tasks are for personal enrichment. Beryl also states that these tasks are received as particularly interesting by independent contractors. They seem to be more open to such tasks than the full-time members of staff. If, for instance, she has not done peer evaluations in a semester following the first one where the peer reviews were

introduced, some independent contractors would enquire when they will be visited in class. Independent contractors would tell her that '*I need some feedback, I crave it*'. They would also comment after such a visit to voice their appreciation for peer reviews and regarding email circulars about new teaching tools. The task following this interview would have been to start working on crafting a teaching philosophy. They have already been instructed to gather their best work for show.

By branding teaching and learning sessions as 'Slipstream sessions' already peaked lecturers' interest on Campus C. Feedback also centered around 'teaching like a Veganite', and that flipped classrooms appealed to the group in general. They also see peer reviewing as engaging because it is flowing reciprocally for members of staff. Permanent lecturers and independent contractors were given the chance to pair up and therefore got a chance to know each other better and learn from each other during this initiative. They are also given the opportunity to teach across disciplines where appropriate.

> *I think only two lecturers opted to change subjects. Just for a simple shake, they didn't want to get complacent. I appreciate that, I am loving that honesty because it means they are thinking about themselves and they also don't want to get bored – Cindy.*

To make it more accessible, the academic campus manager also required portfolios to be brief and to only contain what lecturers are seen as highlights of their teaching sessions. This repository of 'good sh*t' is not only for showcasing yourself but also to use in case of times when one needs to fall back on existing methods and initiatives, when there is an emergency so that one needs to fill a gap. Cindy describes it as 'so that it's your reserve, it's a day you are feeling a schlep to prep; you've got resources', also relating that the act of sharing and showcasing your own teaching skills act as motivation and making stuff interesting for a lecturer.

Dorian is more concerned about the students than 'planning [the] next teaching and learning workshop' on her campus. Although she claims that some members of staff already reflect informally, and that another has been doing a Vegamometer in his class out of own volition, the motivation to present these tasks as interesting, however, is lacking.

It is also important that tasks are perceived as relevant and that they are to the personal benefit of the lecturers. It is not clear why Beryl's independent contractors

identify more with the tasks than the permanent lecturers but it does highlight the fact that the interesting nature of these activities are not the only criterion, and that the context is just as important. Interesting tasks might mean different things for these campuses as four diverse environments. Cindy has been, in the spirit of the school being a place to guide students in principles of brands and branding, workshopped the teaching and learning sessions for the bigger purpose of branding the activity in order to serve the target, in this case being the lecturing staff. This branding exercise has already piqued the interest of the participants and it has provided with their buy-in to the activities. The general trends and activities identified, are regarded as interesting enough by the parties, and therefore, engaging.

4.2.1.3.   Challenging tasks

Beryl did not expect staff to be so challenged by the less-than straight-forward tasks. As identified to be a need from her teaching staff's side, she planned workshops in managing a big class during the beginning of the year. She takes a step-by-step approach to phase all initiatives into the continuous professional learning curriculum. She makes it her business to identify areas that they find challenging, and to unpack the methodology. Staff on this campus also view the various teaching methods of the jigsaw method in theoretical modules to be more difficult than in the creative classes. Focussing on professional and personal growth of every lecturer, the academic campus manager is also emphasising the application of the various teaching methods to suit the different approaches of disciplines. Campus B management concentrates on a student centric- and not lecturer centric approach. Beryl believes that such an approach will correct many issues, and the focus will automatically benefit practitioners' addition to continuous professional learning. They emphasise focus on the way that the issues and topics are holistically discussed in key performance areas and integrated into other aspects of teaching and learning too. Beryl experiences the independent contractors on this campus to be more open to innovation and challenging tasks than the full-time staff. These part-time members regularly request feedback and would like to be plied with more tasks. It seems that they are more self-driven than the permanent staff.

Cindy emphasises the challenge of building a variety of skills that can be used to apply somewhere else in practitioners' processes. The strategy is for lecturers to

become multi-disciplined while they also sit into each other's classes during peer partnering. She also perceived some resistance towards the concept of a portfolio of evidence amongst the staff and therefore tried to phase it in by introducing teaching methods, the use of specific reflective exercises and flipped classroom methodologies. The process was staggered by putting in more boundaries and timelines and thereby making tasks seem more challenging to lecturers. The plan was that the multiple time-based milestones would add up to a full portfolio by the end of the time frame, with a bigger goal not to complete a teaching portfolio, but rather to 'adopt my teaching style to a Veganite's teaching method'. The aim is to create a naturally empowering progression by creating a living document that is in constant use and not only accessed annually to submit to the academic campus manager. Towards the overall goal the next goal is to start

> *..review of the portfolios of evidence now; go back, plaster all the cracks that we are finding might be there – Cindy.*

Finer details are important for Dorian, who mentions the teaching portfolio in this respect. Her staff were guided to include all their teaching material in it and not only the exemplary work. The researcher's impression is that self-development of lecturers is here seen to take second place to the continuity of teaching. She seems to be relatively anxious about people leaving the employ without a contingency in place. Focus and attention is not on keeping people happy to ensure that they rather not leave, but more so to concentrate on the fact that they are bound to leave sooner or later, and that Dorian would want to ensure that the students are served adequately.

Beryl realised that staff find things more challenging than what she envisages them to be.

> *I did not expect that they will struggle so much with classroom management, especially not those experienced lecturers. But class management was rather a big thing, especially the bigger classes – Beryl.*

Therefore, she is trying to be very responsive to their needs, such as additional practical skills to manage a big classroom. She also realised that she needs to steer away from scholarly teaching and learning language as this tends to demotivate them. In contrast, Cindy believes that the creation of the teaching portfolios needed to be made more challenging. The bigger task was broken down into smaller steps,

which require more attention to detail and for practitioners to synthesise material more concisely. Campuses B and C are the only two that seemed to put emphasis on the nature of tasks particularly for personal enrichment. Although Campus A rolled out single tools such as the teaching card system and no-powerpoint weeks, these activities seemed isolated without the bigger goal of professional enrichment of practice.

4.2.1.4. Formalised tasks

In view of the staff turnover and anxiety regarding teaching continuity, specific formalised tasks such as teaching portfolios were put on hold on Campus D, while Campus A held initiatives such as weekly teaching cards to encourage lecturers to pursue a certain skill or practice for a set timeframe. The task was formalised in that it was designed to channel a practitioner's skills into a certain direction and practitioners were also given agency to practice these skills in their own environment.

Taking a holistic approach, the members of Beryl's staff are more comfortable with reflection and relating experiences in small discussion sessions than allowing someone to sit into their classes. This implies a process of mediation and self-mediation before reflection, already a way to formalise reaction and report. Generally, the staff here were not keen on mentorships because it felt too 'exposed'. Preferred formalised activities at that stage referred to workshops about teaching methodology. Reflecting then on their own practice, they are 'keen to discuss the tools with one another, but I think it works because it is not in front of your students'. Showing their best work however, is important. This also implies formally showcasing their students' outcomes in the form of their portfolios, as part of their own good work and as an outflow of their good tuition. All in all, lecturers seemingly are not yet ready to part with their own evidence to make it stand alone as a document, therefore the academic campus manager decided to focus on teaching portfolios where they are taught to build a teaching portfolio before making their own. Beryl generally finds it easier to break up the process into certain steps instead of explaining the whole outcome for the full-time staff. She started concentrating on the teaching philosophy and designing that aspect first.

Having formalised workshops during term times were problematic for Cindy. The campus management felt that this would compromise teaching by taking away valuable time alternative from teaching, or resting during holidays. She did, however, draw the boundaries, giving staff timeframes and deadlines as to when to produce a peer review with a peer partner, and when to produce a portfolio of evidence. Cindy's visits to classrooms were formalised and proactive planning was required. Lecturers received ample warning and times for visits were negotiated with them individually as teaching terms felt short and busy. The portfolio of evidence was not formalised with a template because the belief is that this does not enhance the reflection and the academic campus manager is convinced that one needs to reflect on your own best practice, rather than 'ticking a box'. Only after the review of the portfolios of evidence, lecturers needed to go back to their portfolios and 'plaster all the cracks that we are finding might be there'. The next step on this campus would be to go a multi-disciplinary route, where we'll take 'design; we can take design thinking concepts; innovation concepts, you know, uh where a lecturer must learn to play with those aspects in the teaching of their module'.

Although all four of the academic campus managers have tried to introduce formalised tasks to a certain extent, it is only Beryl and Cindy who seemed to have steered the community into a definitive direction. The difference is that while Beryl relied on lecturers to find their own mentors and mentees, Cindy engineered the process so that it reticulated in a more diverse manner. On Cindy's campus, practitioners were connected particularly with the intention to use the diversity of subjects and disciplines in order to cross-pollinate with ideas.

4.2.1.5.   *Learning resources*

Beryl interpreted the creation of an enabling environment to be that she constantly needs to ensure that she tracks practitioners' challenges. Emerging needs are addressed in regular workshops as well as direct organisation such as creating an open plan environment with the independent contractors. When the latter seemed to be unproductive, further shifts were made to find a solution. Beryl finds it challenging to ensure that staff are afforded time and space for development and orientation activities without encroaching on their private time. Dorian sees the struggle not only as time-based and space-based but also of IT functionality. Campus D is still

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struggling to find a permanent online platform for the hosting of teaching portfolios. This uncertainty creates some stress on the campus and for Dorian personally. Resources on Campus A involve a system with cue cards and direct contact with the academic campus manager. The first half of the year was scarce on formal resources since Arlene was not available and alternative resources and support were not provided.

Cindy referred to the formal workshops organised by Campus C to tap into the resources of the teaching and learning manager of the Independent Institute of Education. This teaching and learning manager also introduced concepts of peer reviews to the group of academic staff on this campus. She helped them to review and reflect on their own teaching practices and gave them a template to start building their portfolios of evidence. Additionally, Arlene also sees the multidisciplinary visits and techniques that practitioners are exposed to, as a way to widen their horizons and capabilities. She also mentions the fact that she actively empowers people to 'fatten up their portfolios of evidence' with continuous discussions and creating an environment for growth.

4.2.1.6. *Tailor-made tasks*

All four campuses show evidence that the academic campus managers try to find tailor-made tasks to suit their own members of staff. Arlene motivated the teaching method cards for a weekly activity but it was not designed as a tailor-made solution. Beryl puts emphasis on the application of various teaching methods and tools, how to amend them for various fields, and to debunk the myth that some practical tools such as the jigsaw method, polling or something *fast chalk* can only be used in the creative- and practical modules and not in the theoretical modules. To make this applicable to every lecturer, Beryl also started with workshops to create teaching portfolios. She takes great care that all discussions should be about self-improvement and application, in order for practitioners to realise the benefit and personal appeal of all tools to their particular disciplines. She believes that 'everything will connect when that link is made' but does however, see differences in the needs of independent contractors versus full time members of staff. The solutions she offers to them are varied too. The independent contractors are receiving more peer review and attention with classroom visits while she takes care

to situate and drive key performance areas and the use of them into a positive space for permanent members of staff.

Campus C received some resistance for the concept of the portfolio of evidence. Therefore, Cindy decided that they needed to use other initiatives. They devised discussion sessions with a strategy in order to keep the focus on teaching and learning, called 'Slipstream sessions'. Additionally, Cindy reported that the teaching team took favourably to the term 'peer partnerships' instead of 'peer reviews', situating the activities to be more collaborative instead of an unequal power situation. The intent was to combine mentorships and peer reviews by letting peers do reviews and mentoring their partners, as one initiative.

The academic campus manager also created flexibility. Rather than submitting a portfolio of evidence, staff was allowed to manoeuvre to suit their own style and initiative. They are all moving in their own time through their learning cycle while creating their own platform for the portfolio of evidence, whether it be a digital- or paper-based file. Cindy also acts as an enabler- or connector, creating opportunities for moments of cross disciplinary work between creatives and commerce staff. Dorian started introducing teaching portfolios on her campus, but was then diverted because of lack of upload. No other tailor-made initiatives were evident.

Beryl acknowledges a difference in attitude and motivation between the fulltime lecturers and the independent contractors on Campus B. In light of this, she is tailor-making all professional learning initiatives in order to fit these two groups. Therefore, the one group gets just-enough-just-in-time training while the other group concentrates more on holistic, big-picture issues. All discussions, however, are focussed on self-improvement. The tailor-made aspect of tasks is less evident on Campuses A and D, while Cindy is moving even closer to individual solutions by acting as an enabler- or connector. She looks at matching individuals with tasks, and not only groups with general interests.

4.2.1.7.   Integrated tasks for professional practice

All academic campus managers are making concerted efforts to integrate expertise into classroom practice. Cindy for instance, puts emphasis on 'how to teach like a Veganite', to cross disciplines while concentrating on flipped classroom techniques and how it is done in the particular Vega environment and stated:

> *Where we'll take design; we can take design thinking concepts; innovation concepts, you know, uh where a lecturer must learn to play with those aspects in the teaching of their module - Cindy.*

4.2.1.8.   Self-management capabilities

Beryl believes that the ability for members of staff to manage themselves hinges on how one discusses key performance areas and workshops with them. They concentrate on a student focused attitude – believing that when you are looking after the student, you will also automatically look after yourself in a positive way.

> *I believe if I can change that to 'O, you know, I am actually trusted and appreciated, I know what I am doing and that I am doing good work; I also know I have areas where I can improve but it's all about making me grow at the end of the day - Beryl.*

For Campus C, Cindy believes one should provide time for staff to reset their batteries and not overload them with workshops and additional tasks during term time. Therefore, workshops and discussions are left to vacation times. This attitude of care is meant to filter through to the staff so that they also act mindful towards their students and one another. Cindy takes mindfulness further in practice by teaming up like-minded lecturers carefully across disciplines. This makes for good cross disciplinary pollination in order to foster enthusiasm to broaden horisons. She also consistently tries to defuse additional fires such as unnecessary stress in order to highlight pure teaching and learning. She claims that this approach is working well and that many members of staff are busy with additional further studying to better themselves. Management supports them in these activities. A staff member who completed a post-graduate qualification gets rewarded with sponsorship to a conference of the member's choice. The aspect of self-management did not come to the fore in the other academic campus manager interviews.

4.2.1.9.   Self-reflection

> *Surely the other thing I need to achieve, is that I am trying I am a great believer in reflection because one gets to know oneself better like that and so. So, um, what I am trying to do is to get them to talk about what they want to achieve out of all this, where do they need to focus and about what do they need to know more about and so on. That one can tie this in with what they are doing in the classroom. – Beryl.*

One of the Arlene's goals was to enable 'deeper reflection' and to connect student output for lecturers directly to their own guidance of students. The academic campus manager directly mentioned self-reflection and a strategy to facilitate this to happen. The teaching card initiative has space where a lecturer should reflect after the exercise on what has worked, and what not. This fosters a broader reflection as well. Beryl reports that many of the staff did not take self-reflection on that campus seriously, and thought her focus on the student was misguided. However, their discussions in communal staff space about teaching methods show that they are reflective as a whole.

> *It is actually to help you and to protect you when necessary. So, when there are, if I can make them understand that it is not about nailing them, I do not try to badmouth people, I am not trying to show up your worst attributes, but I am trying to help you to grow. And it is that shift of 'o hell, you know I am actually not that good. I don't want people to see what I am doing – Beryl.*

Even though the independent contractors and permanent staff are not mixing socially, the independent contractors are enthusiastic about new teaching methods and workshops, especially what can be learnt from peer reviews when the academic campus manager visits classes.

> *Many of them have also come to me who have not done a peer observation yet, and telling me that please, I am struggling with xyz in class so can you please come sit in and look and see what is going on and how I can fix it – Beryl.*

Campus C had cross disciplinary lecturers teaming up to do reflection on their teaching. Cindy facilitated this purposefully so that it could foster reflection in peer partnering groups. She comments that 'reflective exercise [is] about them in their most comfortable space' and getting rid of the fear factor of trying something new. She likes the fact that it makes lecturers think about themselves so that they do not become bored. She also sees teaching portfolios as iterative, that lecturers revisit portfolios of evidence, correcting and adding all the time as they reflect. This reflective stance, she believes, also motivates them to study further towards postgraduate qualifications. Quite a few lecturers on this campus are furthering their

studies. There were no comments about staff reflections evident in the academic campus manager discussion on Campus D, but the fact that one lecturer was trying the *Vegamometer* can be seen as a positive sign. This initiative might have been quashed, however, by Dorian's pessimism and misunderstanding of the tool.

Arlene proved to have a solid focus on individual self-reflection which does not necessarily translate into a group activity and peer learning. In contrast to this stance, Beryl motivated the staff on Campus B to reflect in their community of practice, which enabled seemingly productive peer learning moments. Cindy purposefully paired cross-disciplinary partners to enable not only a group peer learning environment, but also to closely engineer self-reflection on a diverse footing. This insistence does seem to have egged reflection to another level.

4.2.1.10.   *Internal motivation*

On Campus B, lecturers regularly have informal discussions between them, which Beryl perceives as being motivational. The independent contractors however, are seen to be more internally motivated than some of the permanent members of staff. Cindy reports that various people are teaming up with each other out of own volition, with no pressure from the academic campus manager. Apparently, there was no fear factor and the movement was just naturally growing.

Cindy claims is so mainly because these portfolios are seen as works in progress. That took the performance issues out of the equation. Practitioners were not judging each other from different disciplines and this was motivational. Dorian believes the staff on Campus D to be bored with teaching portfolios because of the difficulties to upload it onto a digital platform. Dorian perceives all staff to be 'pretty stretched' and therefore does not expect any motivation from them.

4.2.1.11.   *Opportunity creation*

Cindy creates opportunities on Campus C for cross pollination between disciplines by fostering mentorships and discussions. Additionally, creatives share ideas and mentorships with commerce lecturers. They also apply design thinking principles to all disciplines and start conversations between different groups of people in regular weekly collaborative meetings.

It was reciprocal, it was not one-way, it wasn't only 'I'm peer reviewing and then I give you feedback', it's vice versa. so well, there's mutual respect – Cindy

Mentorship opportunities, where people visit each other's classes, were not received positively on Campus B. Therefore, this initiative was re-worked to incentivise discussions away from classes, in 'safe' spaces. Beryl also tried to create opportunities to share by placing an independent contractor desk with permanent staff in one area. That did not work as the permanent staff did not like it. The open plan office with cross-pollination between permanent members of staff however, works well for discussions. Beryl recalls that 'when they try something new, they immediately discuss it in the office'. It becomes clear that opportunity creation needs to be driven by the academic campus manager continuously. One can see that the campuses where this attitude has been in the foreground, are also the two where the academic campus managers actively elaborated on the process and how amendments to the roll-out were made in order for the activities to be successful.

4.2.2. Institutional structure and leadership (Management, leadership and incentives)

4.2.2.1. Substantial infrastructure

All campuses are equipped with substantial infrastructure, state of the art teaching equipment and optical fibre internet connection. Campus A however, was deprived of the essential human resources infrastructure of the academic campus manager for quite a few months. This left a gap in service delivery on the management side, leaving teaching and learning initiatives to be the first to fall by the wayside. Campus B has been freshly upgraded with new equipment and attractive surrounds. Staff work in an open plan office that is conducive to collaboration.

Cindy has an open-door policy. Therefore, the infrastructure of support is always available and issues are dealt with a relatively short turnaround time. The only critique regarding the infrastructure from her, was about the economic aspect. Cindy comments that the institution needs to remunerate independent contractors for lecturing as well as marking since the belief is that the institution is still under-paying, compared to other institutions. This impacts on people's attitudes whether they would like to stay or not. The bigger turnover results in re-training, eating into infrastructure on a campus.

Campus D was plagued by internet issues, mostly historic in nature. Additionally, the learning management system also did not seem to have capacity to cope with uploading teaching portfolios. This impacted on the general empowerment of lecturers. They also had support staff shortages such as the librarian and receptionist with a ripple effect to all other staff. There was also a staff shortage of scarce skills lecturers, resulting in the existing lecturers to work additional teaching hours to serve students. The academic campus manager notes: 'The whole staff shortage on this campus has been a nightmare this year'.

> *Well it just meant that I was the whole time sorting out problems… It had a ripple effect because we work as a team. if someone is not doing workshops or following up to pick it up – Dorian.*

Since this interview, the campus team has stabilised and management improved while the infrastructure seems to have been upgraded significantly.

It is clear that a stable infrastructure, considering human resources as well as physical structure and IT services, impacts directly on the mental health, motivation and well-being of a body of practitioners on a campus. This is evident when considering the situation on Campus A, where the crucial function of the academic campus management was interrupted, and on Campus D, that struggled not only with human resources constraints, but also an unstable IT supply. According to the academic campus managers, these are the two campuses who seemingly struggled the most to find their professional learning feet during the year in question.

4.2.2.2.   *Distributed leadership*

The academic campus manager leadership role has been split on three of the four campuses to ensure the teaching and learning role to be divided from the operational role. This promises a better focus and distribution of the leadership team. Although the division has taken effect on the biggest campus since holding this interview, the others followed later. There are also a team of senior lecturers, who take the leading roles of disciplinary expertise or master teachers. These 'Senior Navigators' fulfil the role of authoritative figures, tasked to set the pace and direction in their own field of expertise across all campuses.

Arlene expects staff to take ownership of their own environments and give them freedom to plan and structure their own building of teaching portfolios. Many members of this body of staff also teach at other institutions nearby. The academic campus manager proudly acknowledges that this makes them industry relevant.

Beryl, the academic campus manager on Campus B, finds it difficult to convince staff that she is actually acting in their interest and that she is working towards making things smoother and better for them. She reflects though, that she has slowly been earning a position of trust during the last few years. Evidence of distributed leadership here is seen in the democratisation of choices and spaces such as heeding permanent staff's wish to remove the roving independent contractor's desk from the open office for permanent lecturers

Cindy likes to use a push- rather than a pull technique. Staff were expected to perform and make their own decisions. They have to design their own teaching portfolio and platform of presentation. Between guidelines they were expected to deliver something substantial. With management trying to fit into the staff's timetable and by listening to the needs of independent contractors, the management hopes to demonstrate their care and intention for all staff and that they would buy into the broader concept of distributed leadership and its benefits. She comments: 'I want to say, in a professional conduct, to say give me your hours, I'll see how I can fit it, and we will work it that way'.

Campus D's instances of rapid staff turnover for a number of years did not provide fertile ground for distributed leadership to take effect. Additionally, the campus leadership was not always seen as taking up the role of responsible person by the rest of the campus management. Dorian comments that she is tired, mainly because she has been doing so many other jobs and fulfilling responsibilities that should be someone else's job. She was also expected to recruit and interview for a position outside of her own sphere of responsibility. Although this might have been experienced as empowering by other managers in the same situation, Dorian was so change-weary by the time this was required, that the additional responsibility was not received positively. Although comfortable with the general principles of distributed leadership, she feels that there is not enough support by other members who should also take responsibility as part of the distribution.

Distributed leadership evidently plays a prominent role on at least three of the four campuses, with some functions carried by subject experts straddling across all sites. The sense gleaned from all four interviews, however, is that middle management plays a pivotal role in designing and re-designing local initiatives in order for the message of distributed leadership to permeate to all staff. Such an institutional culture also takes its emotional toll on these academic campus managers since they are perceived as the first direct port of call by many of the stakeholders.

4.2.2.3.   *Decentralising management*

Beryl sees herself as 'less pedantic' than her predecessor. She allows all kinds of leeway and leaving things more open which she believes, fosters better participation from all staff. She is also prepared to leave things undecided so that people can make their own choices, to 'get direction from my team, how they comfortably work with It'. She is working hard to convince people that she is on their side and is supporting them instead of overseeing them to spot weak issues. The goal is to enable people to grow in their own positions. Beryl believes that it is not about what kind of initiatives are taken, but how you introduce and explain them to the staff. How they craft and decide on sets of key performance areas are presented by the academic campus manager here as a good example of the above. She also believes that her open-door policy is beginning to produce dividends. In contrast to the beginning of the year, staff now turn to her for help and advice. It is the spirit of enablement that is now driving people to share and ask advice. Members of staff are also actively seeking out peer evaluation via class visits. They are evidently putting more trust in the academic campus manager than previously.

On Campus C, the academic campus manager position changed hands just after the time of this interview. Cindy related that many of the responsibilities reflected here, will be taken over by the two academic campus managers that would have replaced her in this role. She also puts an emphasis on an open-door policy.

> *Just defuse those fires, so that the pure teaching and learning can take place. And I have seen it at Slipstream, at workshops, don't have to beg. I send out an email 'guys, diarise, ' and I get an immediate response. And the guys have shown up for the workshops, you know and I don't pay them for workshops. They're not even, but it's not taxed, it's a perk, here we are taxing the guys, it's a bit frustrating, in that sense, so that's .. if you want to keep the culture of teaching at an all-time high, you've got the retain knowledge – Cindy.*

Regarding decentralising management, she maintains that her component of staff could always decide where they want to position themselves and in which areas they want to teach to explore new lecturing possibilities in relation to their own abilities. With the cross-pollination between the disciplines, she wanted to enable them to broaden horisons and realise the possibilities; to grasp the bigger picture of transferable skillsets through programmes and student years.

Dorian wearily has been doing a lot of interviewing and recruiting new people following the rapid staff turnover during the last few years. This understandably takes precedence over teaching and learning matters. She felt overlooked within the information flow and was not happy with the additional responsibility to help interview the replacement for the head of campus who is viewed as her superior. She relates that she also was only informed that the previous head was leaving after she was asked to sit in on recruitment interviews. A new campus head has been appointed thereafter however, and she reports that this change is already making a positive difference. From her recent recruitment experience on that campus though, her somewhat cynical view is that generally the distribution of responsibilities is seen as 'if someone is not doing something, it is just getting pushed up onto someone else and the willing person just gets more and more to do'.

Management is decentralised into the various campuses by way of the academic campus manager for academic affairs, working closely in the campus management team with the head of campus. This decentralisation seems to work well whenever all structures are in place. The structure fails however, when one of the aspects are not functioning optimally. This is seen on Campus A with the long absence of the academic campus manager during the year looked at, as well as the unstable situation on Campus D, when the head of campus role was not filled appropriately. Because the campus management teams are relatively small, such a caveat manifests in scenarios described by Arlene and Dorian. When management roles are properly fulfilled, as seen on the other two campuses, positive outcomes are more likely to occur.

4.2.3. Incentives

Across the organisation there has generally not been a policy of additional monetary incentives for members of staff. Recognition of exceptional performance is awarded through sponsorships to attend applicable conferences in instances where lecturing staff attain additional qualifications, are awarded with the annual Charles Freysen accolade, or identified as a 'Bright Star Navigator'. These initiatives are not campus specific and lecturing staff are equally incentivised on a national basis.

4.2.3.1. Better pay

Cindy highlights that independent contractors are not getting paid adequately for additional marking tasks and that this is an area that deserves urgent attention. She reflects: 'We have wonderful independent contractor's highly experienced independent contractors but we have lost, and we will continue losing good lecturers if the rates are not within competitive rates of privates, not publics'.

4.2.3.2. Credits for experiences and evidence of growth

Across Vega campuses, full time lecturing staff get rewarded for graduating for attaining post graduate qualifications with a sponsorship to attend a conference of the lecturer's choice during the following year. The offer is keenly taken up by staff when completing a degree and they are celebrated on a national forum.

> *You know, if you don't retain knowledge, then we keep changing staff, all the time, you and I might be doing fantastic, platinum work here, and it would mean s**t because every year we will have to start again from scratch – Cindy.*

4.2.4. Communities of Practice (emotional, informational and tangible support)

4.2.4.1. Emotional support

Evidence of emotional support is shown in sentiments such as that of Beryl, who takes cognizance of the feelings of vulnerability shown by the full time lecturing staff when they do not want to be peer reviewed in front of a full student component. They feel their fellow practitioners will tease them.

> *Like 'you keep on saying 'therefore..' and so on. Stupid things. One is not supposed to take it too seriously but naturally people did. Yes, because they are a sensitive lot – Beryl.*

Apparently, they feel more supported when discussing their class experiences with each other in a neutral space, away from the classroom. She accommodates them in this sentiment. Lecturers do, however, form a strong support base in the open plan office where they discuss things that they try, in a very direct way. It seems that this time-mediated feedback works more positively for lecturers and makes them feel more in control of their own situations.

> *I experience something else in the open plan office as well; when they try something new, they immediately discuss it in the office – Beryl.*

Cindy reports that the group of lecturers on Campus C seems to have formed a strong community. They team up with each other in unexpected partnerships regardless whether people are independent contractors or permanent members of staff. It is important to note that this team does not have one general open plan office for fulltime staff, but rather different offices where people in different disciplines are situated. The independent contractors however, work in a separate office while fulltime members and independent contractors congregate in the staff room which is seen as a neutral and democratic space. Cindy chalks this strong emotional bond up to the effort she made to introduce them to each other and to ensure that they work cross-disciplinary at all times.

Campuses A and D did not particularly allude to emotional support and the nature of practitioners' relationships with each other particularly. They are also the two campuses that went through some leadership turmoil, with the one academic campus manager being absent for a considerable time and the other, struggling to manage the campus in the midst of a greater absence of leadership.

Strong communities of practice have formed on Campuses B and C. This is arguably due to the continuous effort to shape and re-shape activities with the academic campus managers reflect and evaluate outcomes. The disconnect between lecturers and academic campus managers is visible on the other two campuses, where Arlene and Dorian did not place any emphasis on a community of practice that might have formed amongst their members of staff.

4.2.4.2.   Informational support

Campus B experienced a certain closeness that the proximity of the open office allowed. Whenever someone tried and succeeded in a new endeavour, they would spread the word. The conversation would benefit the rest of the members of teaching staff directly. Sadly, since the open office only gave access to permanent members of staff, the rift would still remain. This might explain why the independent contractors rely so heavily on the input of the academic campus manager for feedback on their practice. According to Beryl, the fulltime lecturers also have the benefit of a closer relationship with their students since they are resident on campus. They get continuous feedback and are more inclined to communicate with their students in unscripted and unmediated moments. By getting to know more about their students, their personal lives and student life in general as well, Beryl believes that they are growing faster professionally than the independent contractors.

4.2.4.3.   Tangible support

The fact that permanent lecturing staff can discuss something directly in the open office setup on Campus B means that they also offer each other tangible support where needed. Support between members on Campus C is naturally growing, according to the academic campus manager. Not only are they supporting each other in a community of practice, but by way of the open-door policy, they also feel supported by campus management.

4.3. Section 2: Inhibiting factor themes that emerged from the data

4.3.1.   Unreceptive institutional cultures

Complicated levels of mistrust existed amongst various role players on Campus B. Full-time practitioners and independent contractors experienced a disconnect amongst themselves. The perception is that the institutional culture is generally unsympathetic towards independent contractors and that they are also regarded with mistrust by the full-time lecturers. Issues of trust also come to the fore with the full-time lecturers feeling that Beryl is not 'looking after them'.

> *I must be honest, I think the big thing that I realised is that there is a lack of trust. So, there is a thing that everybody is out to get us – Beryl.*

Meanwhile on Campus C, amidst a 'very difficult induction into the campus management space', Cindy was in a position where she had to action certain business decisions with consolidations regarding time management of fulltime staff. The staff experienced this as being her own initiative instead of general business decisions coming from central management. Cindy recounts that issues such as this made it difficult to gain trust from all parties because it affected their income. She felt more worried about long serving independent contractors because they became distrustful with the new changes. They were also the lecturers who were the most skilled with the knowledge about teaching content in specialised fields. Lecture rates subsequently also became a sensitive issue. Cindy recollects that

> *We have wonderful independent contractors, highly experienced independent contractors but we have lost, and we will continue losing good lecturers if the rates are not within competitive rates of private, not publics. I mean I looked at the public rates, I mean we have a lecturer from the public spaces. Their rates are far below what we offer.*

Dorian's priority was not teaching and learning, but rather to put lecturers in the classroom.

> *It just meant that I was the whole time sorting out problems – Dorian.*

The team is quite small, so that whenever one position was not filled it caused a ripple effect. At a particular stage the full-time team had three people leaving the employ simultaneously. Dorian then also discovered that some of those departing was not so diligent in their duties as she thought they were. She had to make contingency plans, which took some time. To rescue the situation sometimes also meant existing people were teaching more hours than they were supposed to, because of the shortage of specialised lecturers.

4.3.2.   *Managerialist practices*

There was a time on Campus A where the formal support from an academic campus manager was found absent since she was on leave for a few months. Upon her return, she found the fallout of this timeframe frustrating because many of the targets that she set, were not met. There was also no formal plan made for teaching and learning initiatives to activate. She came back to a somewhat informal structure with

a number of unhappy students. The initiatives that she hoped would happen, were left undone.

It would appear that very little guidance had actually been applied to people – Arlene.

This attitude also spilled over into the classrooms, where no formal reflective activities took place. But she felt that she did not emphasise mentorships enough and the lack of structure and loss of priorities impacted on the momentum.

The introduction of mentorships on Campus B might have been introduced incorrectly and therefore, lost its impetus. There was also a lack of formal support which made lecturers not take it seriously. Lecturers teased each other about little habits of speech and made individuals feel vulnerable with these critiques. Some lecturers also misunderstood the messages coming from the academic campus manager because they were not correctly introduced in context of teaching and learning theory. This confused the staff, putting them on the defensive. The previous academic campus manager on Beryl's campus was seen as being more pedantic than her, so it has taken some time for lecturers to adjust to Beryl's style. She perceives the big issue as being a lack of trust, a perception that 'everyone is out to get us', which relates directly to the symptoms of a managerialist leadership style. Staff tells the academic campus manager that 'nobody is standing up for us, and nobody is looking after us'. Beryl finds this to be the biggest challenge – to convince them otherwise. Once they are convinced, she believes, they will be ready to try mentorships again.

It was not only the academic practitioners on Campus C who viewed continuous professional learning initiatives with suspicion. Cindy felt that it was on the one hand, up to her to train staff how to peer review and reflect on their own teaching didactics, but that some support is lacking.

Our academic calendar doesn't support currently the teaching and learning space; it's too, it's very op[eration] driven if you look at the deadlines, the timelines, it's very op driven – Cindy.

She made a principled decision not to run the teaching and learning activities in holiday times in order to give lecturers adequate resting room.

Because if the lecturer doesn't have time to rest, and reset his batteries, or her batteries, they don't go into next term firing with all cylinders – Cindy.

At the same time, she made it clear that these workshops and teaching and learning initiatives were installed to enhance practitioners' own skillsets and therefore, it should not be implied that a lecturer needs to be compensated for attending skills-enrichment events.

Cindy would firmly argue for practitioners to take ownership of their own enrichment:

> *You know and I don't pay them for workshops, you know I said to them I don't hire a plumber to do my plumbing but then I pay for his qualification; so, they grab it with both hands – Cindy.*

Ultimately she aims to let her honesty instil the staff's trust in her so that they leave her with the collective decisions.

Very little teaching and learning initiatives have been happening on Campus D during the year in question since the focus had to fall on human resources (HR) and correcting for the historically poor organisational structure. Dorian perceived national management regarding staff shortages and recruitment unsupportive. This, she claims, impacted on the time that she could have been spent on teaching and learning. Overall, she did not seem to situate herself within her team in order to reflect on their own outcomes of teaching and learning reflections and what is expected as continuous professional learning initiatives.

Throughout the interview Dorian failed to reflect- or emphasise how the teaching staff felt or reacted to teaching and learning activities but rather, how operational matters impacted her time and let her to slip the teaching and learning opportunities because of a lack of time. Emphasis on this campus seems to fall purely on operational efficiency and how issues need to be in place to ensure contingency and effective delivery of material in an operational sense. She claims:

> *So, my priority then about teaching and learning practice was about who to put in the classroom, and to me it is so- students are more important than planning my next teaching and learning shop - Dorian*

She also regards tools such as the teaching portfolios as primarily serving the institution and not serving practitioners. It should exist to ensure that enough material is saved for contingency sake. According to her, initiatives such as the Vegamometer, should not exist for the lecturers' own reflective gain. Rather, it is meant to triangulate with student opinions in order to keep the standards of teaching staff high.

4.3.3. Poor structure of continuous professional learning activities, mentorship dynamics and time pressures

Campus A did not have enough controls in place to steer initiatives while Arlene was absent. Many things were left undone and it seemed that several initiatives needed a fresh start upon her return. The staff then found that there were too many informal initiatives and too much time pressures amongst this relatively small staff component. Mentorships have not taken off because it was not adequately motivated. Formal initiatives were hamstrung further by the varying working times of the fulltime staff- and independent contractors. The two groups were also not getting together because their student contact times were so varied. Arlene admits that she did not initiate and push this to happen strongly enough. Initiatives, she says, were not introduced well enough and people were not paired well enough. She reflects that staff would have adopted it better had it been adequately introduced. She also believes that she was not insistent enough and all initiatives subsequently lost momentum.

On Campus B, practitioners were initially not positive about mentorships. They did not take it seriously with the appropriate academic ownership. Here, this initiative was introduced too informally. Lecturers were expected to initiate their own mentorships. Upon reflection, this partnering should have come from the academic campus manager as leader. When realising the weakness, Beryl returned to the practical tool implementation workshops that seemed to be an easier continuous professional learning option for that time. These reactive workshops were built specifically around teaching shortcomings and how to address them with tools. Activities were built on existing deficits, with Beryl reacting on what feedback people gave in staff meetings. She also based all initiatives on informal discussions with each other and leadership. It seems that the lack of formalised and well-founded initiatives with the lack of clarity as to the goals of the teaching portfolio, resulted in the team still not knowing exactly how to build and apply a teaching portfolio and therefore, not taking academic ownership of their own processes. Beryl is also aware that her plans were too vague at that time, and that she will need to design a detailed instructive process of introduction into teaching portfolios.

This lack of a structured programme resulted in a disconnect between the nature of what the academic campus manager decided to roll out, the reasons and ultimate goal, and how staff perceive it. The understanding regarding what Beryl means when she talks about a student-centered approach and how the staff understood it, is an example here. She remembers: 'So I had many people that got angry with me, saying to me that i am not looking after them'. The big disconnect seem to be that the teaching staff in general is perceived by the academic campus manager as not really understanding the jargon of scholarly teaching and learning.

Additionally, lecturing staff on Campus B seemed to lack the self-confidence to share and expose their own practices because they felt that they would be victimised by their fellow practitioners when they do so. They felt vulnerable and thought that management is out to 'get them'. They also continually regarded being measured to their key performance areas. It seems that too much emphasis, with too little developmental understanding, have been put on the implementation and measurement of key performance areas. An interesting observation is that the independent contractors seem to be more open to involve Beryl in their teaching practice. This might be because they are not required to meet a set of key performance areas.

There was some rift between the permanent members of staff and the independent contractors, with the permanent lecturing staff initially wanting the independent contractors to share an office space with them, and then deciding against it. The permanent staff seemingly feels threatened or alienated with the impermanence of independent contractors and that they are not being properly introduced to the permanent members of staff. This unfamiliarity seems to be driving them further apart. The dilemma is that in order to integrate the independent contractors into the space and to introduce them to the permanent members, they will need to spend more time at the institution. The independent contractors however, are not getting paid for additional hours or training and integration into the fulltime space. The same goes for asking them to attend and present best practice to the teaching and learning community on campus. Since they are not getting paid for the time, they are reluctant to attend. When they do not attend, they are also not part of the team, and are not personally growing as practitioners. The same trend regarding independent

contractors arise across campuses when discussing marking and additional responsibilities. They do not see these tasks as part of their overall teaching load for which they are getting paid. It does not translate into direct hours of work and monetary reward.

On Campus C, Cindy expected some resistance to the concept of a portfolio of evidence and the concept of a peer review did not find favour with the staff either. She therefore gave them flexible timelines. The portfolio work model was also regarded negatively, with some independent contractors seen to get an inordinate amount of work while others were left with less.

The Campus D team has had considerable upsets in staff movement, resulting in shortages of staff during that year. This impacted by taking the focus away from teaching and learning to such an extent that Dorian says that none happened on this campus at all. She reflects that her time and focus was spent on filling positions and operational issues, leaving her personally generally unmotivated.

> *In fact, I had one time in August, I thought I am actually sick of this job, I am not doing anything that I was employed to do, I spend my time sitting checking invoices, trying to follow up on contracts, and advertisements for staff that are wrong – Dorian.*

This put some focus on a deficit model and for the campus to function she had to spend a significant amount of time to ensure that the campus was just producing and delivering at its basic level. The academic campus manager also seems to have a different view on professional development initiatives such as a teaching portfolio. With the only too-near experience of staff shortages and teaching staff leaving with no contingency plan, the focus was on preserving and continuing good teaching material and practice. Smooth handovers became the focus, diverting attention from the personal development of practitioners. Teaching tools that were developed nationally were sometimes interpreted here as an evaluative tool, practically removing it from the personal development domain of the lecturers and placing it with the student evaluation toolkit. These class results were used by the academic campus manager, directly against the spirit of the tool design.

4.3.4. *Casual academic specific issues*

Because of the long absence of Arlene on Campus A, some independent contractors had to work without additional guidance for a considerable time. The insufficient management of independent contractors had some negative effect on morale and levels of expertise of the teaching cohort. Independent contractors were not given the opportunities to meet with each other and form communities of practice. As is the life and timeframes of independent contractors, they were working in different timeframes and did not see each other regularly. Nothing was organised for them to connect. Independent contractors were also overloaded with teaching hours, which added to their sense of alienation and limited time to grow.

Campus B's independent contractors generally crave feedback and would like to connect often with the academic campus manager. They also want to build a constructive relationship with permanent staff. They like to have feedback from students as given to them Beryl, while she regards them as being very perceptive with feedback. They are, however, not fully accepting of formal professional learning initiatives and workshops. Although they would like to share their teaching practice and experience, they feel that they are not getting paid for their efforts and as such, the general feelings to spend their time in the office, are relatively negative. They still do not see it as personal development, but rather that the institution needs them to upskill constantly to benefit the school's own environment. They are also marginalised from communities of practice with the fulltime members of staff not welcoming them into the communal office space. They are therefore immediately excluded from the bigger conversations which the fulltime members of staff thrive upon.

With Cindy joining the team on Campus C at the same time as when the business model changed nationally, she had to de-bunk several myths. Her actions were interpreted as her own initiatives while they were actually national business decisions that she had to effect. This perception put her on the back foot and she experienced difficulty to earn the trust of the whole team. Independent contractors on this campus were negative about not getting paid for continuous professional learning time, nevertheless the academic campus manager seemed to motivate the concept of self-development to them by arguing that 'I don't hire a plumber to do my

plumbing but then I pay for his qualification'. Cindy has however, expressed reservations about the remuneration structure of the independent contractors in general, which she perceives to be uncompetitive compared to the public universities.

> *We need to keep that passion burning. I look at XX. Beautiful lecturer, fantastic. Good with the students, good with the peers, good with the collaborative spaces, always willing to give constructive feedback on both the modules and the students, and the course and the processes and systems, to make it work better, but we will lose her if we are not able to give her a reasonable earning. And so we must investigate that more; that will be the next, cause we are building here – Cindy.*

The issues plaguing independent contractors in the school seem to be prevalent and clear. While their workloads were relatively overloaded on one of the campuses, a general trend of feeling cheated regarding lack of remuneration for professional development time emerged from two of the interviews while one academic campus manager mentioned further the inadequate remuneration for independent contractors, compared to other private higher institutions.

4.4. Concluding the data analysis

This chapter reported on the thematic analysis of interviews with the four academic campus managers situated on the respective sites. The analyses were ordered in the particular rhythm that the aspects were explained as in Chapter Three, the literature review. Every aspect was described following the alphabetic campus order of appearance and is thereafter concluded with similarities and differences noted by the researcher. Wherever a certain aspect was not emerging from the interview, the specific campus was omitted from the particular discussion.

The first section discussed themes that emerged from the interviews, as driving, or motivating factors for professional learning as they emerged. Under the factor referred to as situated workplace learning, it was notable that the smallest campus concentrated on basic teaching tools while the academic campus manager of the largest campus strategised efforts by partnering one-on-one mentorships, although she left it up to individuals to choose their own partners and mentors. The importance of contextualisation of practices was illustrated on one campus, where inadequate introductions resulted in teaching portfolios to be perceived as a performance tool in a negative light, while on the other side of the scale, the proper

introduction proved to be worthless if support structures such as IT frameworks are not in proper working order.

The next criterion for situated learning touched on the aspect of tasks needing to be inherently interesting. It shows whether a task is interesting or not, might be arbitrary and might depend on various cohorts of lecturers. Be it as it may, whether a task is perceived as interesting or not is not the only issue at play here. Additional to interesting, as task also needs to be relevant, therefore in this instance, relevant to a school that teaches branding and related disciplines. Academic campus managers also realised that tasks should not only be challenging, but the challenge should be linked directly with relevance to the overall theme of brands and branding, since this is the overall context of the school. Therefore, the situatedness within a subject- and teaching and learning context is linked closely with relevance to the bigger goal of the school being teaching brand-related content.

Formalising tasks also proved to be important, but it seemed necessary to take this concept further – that the academic campus manager should closely engineer personalities and matches whenever mentorships are initiated, and to strategise proactively with a consideration of personalities, subjects and general interest. In the end, it is the overall mix that would determine the success of the project. It is also clear that it is the manager's responsibility that for these initiatives to be successful, they need to further engineer spaces and opportunities into the correct mix of learning resources. This also implies that tasks need to be tailor-made and suitable for a particular situation and audience, or group of lecturers. Cindy commented on the relevance of a task, and to ensure that all projects are integrated into the bigger theme of 'teaching like a Veganite'.

The next underlying theme across campuses is also that tasks should have self-management capabilities, and ensure that lecturers retain agency and responsibility for their own skills development. This, Beryl maintains, gives them the necessary impetus to own their own learning, and to affirm their worth in the bigger educational environment. Creating mindfulness in this way, Cindy commented, motivate practitioners towards further formal studies and upskilling themselves for their own gain. This aspect also resonates with the importance of self-reflection as a motivational aspect of professional learning. Two academic campus managers

related the reflective nature of peer reviews, mentorships and teaching portfolios as not only being a singular act, but rather, that it should be seen as peer learning in a community of practice, closely associated with self-improvement.

Another set of factors associated with professional learning success relates to general infrastructure and leadership issues. Analysing the data, it became clear that excellent physical infrastructure alone is not enough. IT support and human resources support are equally important in the environment. The two campuses who were challenged with professional learning, both struggled with aspects of these three variables. Closely linked to this success, is the pivotal role that the academic campus managers should play in enabling these aspects to form a solid foundation. The key here seems to be the decentralisation of management, with affording the academic campus management to take ownership of a campus team, allowing them enough leeway to effectively manage the relatively small team.

Incentives including lecturers' awards, better pay and other sorts of experiences and evidence of growth emerge as a caveat in the practitioners' experience at the school. Apart from the wish shared from the independent contractors by two of the managers, no focus on other types of incentives arose.

Regardless of these physical aspects that should motivate, every campus team does speak of the strong bond between practitioners. The two academic campus managers who mentioned communities of practice were also the two who were reflecting actively, moulding the way of working and strategising continuously to suit their initiatives to their lecturers' needs. The two campuses where evidence of communities of practice did not emerge, are, tellingly, the campuses who suffered from leadership and management upsets and absences through the time of reflection.

Section two dealt with the emerging factors inhibited professional learning of practitioners. Some turmoil and miscommunication created mistrust amongst lecturers on the biggest campus, with a perception that the institutional culture is not as receptive as lecturers believe it should be. Some mistrust was also reported on another campus where the academic campus manager had to enforce changes after the business model changed. This circumstance is out of the control of the manager,

although such affects relationships between manager and practitioners. These types of mistrust are also not conducive to create a receptive and motivational culture of personal learning needed for continuous professional learning. The process is also hampered when professional learning activities are not properly structured and communicated. Consequences for poorly motivated activities emerged such as with mentorship activities on Campus A. Considering mentorships, Campus B forms a case in point here. After the process floundered, the academic campus manager realised that the initiative calls for better planning and communication. The chapter concludes with a look at some issues that are pertinent to independent contractors that emerged. They range from an emotional disconnect from the full-time members of staff, to inadequate motivation of these contractors to spend time in professional learning activities because the lack of monetary reward for these.

The final chapter will consider overall findings and conclusions, linking them directly to categories the scholarly literature mentioned in the literature review and the above analysis.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations

5.1. Introduction

After reporting on the data analysis, the following serves to conclude the findings of professional learning initiatives at a particular private higher education school as well as recommend certain actions thematically. The approach of blending findings, recommendations and literature thematically ensures a close reading with informed calls to action. The chapter discusses four interviews conducted with the academic campus managers of each campus, reflecting on their individual experiences and campus progress during 2016 and particularly with the issue of continuous professional learning in mind. The findings and recommendations follow the same organisation of argument presented in the literature review- and thematic data analysis chapters by discussing two main sections.

The first section deals with themes driving professional learning amongst academic practitioners in this environment, particularly mentioning workplace situatedness, institutional structure and leadership, additional incentives such as monetary and other types of credits, and lastly, the role that communities of practice play in areas of emotional, informational and tangible support. The second section discusses the inhibitors of professional learning initiatives such as managerialist practices, structure of development initiatives and some issues particular to casual lecturing staff.

5.2. Section 1: Themes emerging as driving factors from the data

5.2.1. Situated workplace learning

Considering the aspects that Boud and Brew (2013) refer to as the *practice turn*, it becomes important what academic practitioners *do* on the school's four respective campuses. The independent contractors might be more situated when looking at the embodied nature of how they place themselves within their particular discipline as well as professionally practicing teaching of their areas of expertise. While there seemed to be a rift between permanent and casual members of staff on the largest campus that also have the largest component of permanent staff, it is interesting to

note that the permanent lecturers regard the independent contractors with suspicion regarding their motivation and general dedication and ironically, disregarding this very embodied nature of these practitioners who are standing so firmly with both feet in their practice.

The opportunity arises to try harder to incorporate independent practitioners and permanent academics such as on Campus C, where the academic campus manager made a concerted effort to engineer collaboration between the two groups.

The school is endowed with adequate physical resources, objects, communication tools and studio resources necessary to facilitate *material mediation* (Boud and Brew, 2013) of continuous professional learning for professionals. The importance of this aspect however, was highlighted with the failure of IT support on Campus D. Here, the teaching portfolio initiative ground to a halt because of this inadequacy.

Two academic campus managers highlight the importance of communities of practice that exist between their academic members of staff. This is important in the context of the relational importance of the practice turn as described by Boud and Brew (2013). These two managers mention particularly the emotional and informational support that lecturers are providing each other. It is also notable though, that the community of practice on Campus C is a single unit incorporating both permanent academics as well as independent contractors, while the community of practice on Campus B only embraces the permanent members of staff. From the interviews, it is clear why this inclusivity only occurs on this one campus. This academic manager recognised the opportunities for cross-disciplinary and types of practitioners to collaborate, and engineered particular social processes to include them all. Individuals were paired according to skillsets and introduced to each other properly. Notable here is also the strong hand needed by the academic campus manager to engineer the partnerships. Although Beryl considered the opportunities of cross-pollination with mentorships, she left it to practitioners' own devices to choose their partners. Such a voluntary organisation seemed to have been less successful than a more forceful pairing.

5.2.1.1.   Contextualisation

Professional development activities should be contextualised in the wider context (Challis, 1999) of professional practice as well as in the social context (James, 1997) and particularly also in their own practice and that of their academic life (Boud and Brew, 2013). Thorough contextualisation also goes hand in hand with well-structured activities (Wilson, 2000 in Webster-Wright, 2009). It is also important to note however, that adequate contextualisation of an activity would not guarantee its success, as was illustrated on Campus D. Another vital ingredient in the enabling mix fell by the wayside here, when teaching portfolios were properly contextualised, formalised and motivated but could not be uploaded because of IT challenges. Contextualisation within all of the spheres namely professional practice, social context as well as the holistic view, enabled an effective start to teaching portfolios, mentorships and peer reviews on Campus C. The academic campus manager situated them all in the discourse of 'teaching like a Veganite', navigating the teaching space instead of lecturing in a traditional way.

Conversely, when development practices are viewed through a managerialist lens (D'Andrea and Gosling, 2005), it effectively decontextualises it (Gravani, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009) in such a way that it would lose its credibility. The need for contextualising activities is illustrated when considering the perception that the permanent members of staff on Campus B initially had regarding creating teaching portfolios. The activity was immediately seen in a negative managerialist light because of lacking a proper introduction. Lecturers linked the activity to a performance tool, to which they needed to be measured for outcome.

5.2.1.2.   Interesting and challenging tasks

Henderson's (2009) focus on practitioners doing 'interesting things' and concentrating more on scholarly tasks directly related to their own disciplines, is experienced differently by various groups of practitioners. Beryl found the independent contractors in her team interested in all the structured tasks that she introduced to them, which indicates the keen level of engagement that these practitioners wish from lecturing. Cindy's particularly strategic placement and

contextualisation of tasks as interesting within the bigger branding environment, fostered the general participation of her team.

There is a golden mean when one designs tasks to be not only interesting, but also challenging (Boud and Brew, 2013). As with any learning, Beryl realised that her various staff components are on different levels of engagement in certain tasks because of their skillsets and where they situate themselves. She decided to avoid scholarly language and theoretical explanations since a just-in-time-just-enough sharing of knowledge keeps her lecturers more interested in further learning. Cindy also reflected about making tasks challenging, but decided to complicate the seemingly simple task of creating a teaching portfolio by breaking it up into smaller actions so that more focus could be put on finer detail.

5.2.1.3. Formalised tasks

It might be that practitioners situate informal tasks very low on the list of preferences when having to make a decision on continuous professional learning initiatives. Ferman (2002) found that informal tasks such as reading and personal up-skilling rate the lowest on practitioners' lists of priorities. Although Campus A initiated tasks such as the teaching cards and Powerpoint-free weeks, Arlene did not particularly mention how favourable these were rated compared to more informal tasks. Beryl and Cindy both managed a certain level of success when formalising tasks in more detail, but Cindy's engineering actually succeeded better in involving a bigger section of the lecturing community on Campus C. Formalising connections between colleagues by focusing on their diversity were motivating to her lecturers.

5.2.1.4. Learning resources

Supportive learning resources (Boud and Brew, 2013) also involve time for analysis and reflection as well as communication tools and studio resources. This research also adds the time, energy and expertise of the academic campus manager as support, to this body of resources. An insight from this current research would be that not only should time, communication tools and studio resources be directly available to practitioners be deemed resources, but so should reflection time. The strategising ability and independence of the academic campus manager in certain aspects is an important service to academic staff. This overall leadership and

management activation of the teaching space is crucial when leadership is decentralised such as the way with the school's four campuses.

The need of, moreover, the imperative for the academic campus management to have time and agency to strategise in this space is illustrated with the reflection that Beryl shared regarding the enabling environment that she constantly tries to create. She reactively aims to engineer her management in such a way as to create an atmosphere within academic enquiry and professional peer learning can occur. Examples are her efforts to ensure that the permanent staff and independent contractors interact more meaningfully by situating a roving desk in the permanent staff's space. When this invoked negative reactions, she was quick to change the environment to suit practitioners better. To compensate for the lack of peer learning that the independent contractors might benefit from, she spends more time doing class visits for them than for the permanent members because they indicated the need for this.

The most visible success of an academic campus manager as professional learning resource is evident on Campus C, where Cindy proactively integrated activities and paired full-time practitioners with independent contractors according to activities, interests and disciplines instead of leaving them to their own devices. This cross-pollination seems to be more meaningful than the other initiatives.

With Dorian's IT challenges on Campus D, she actively tried to facilitate the improvement of IT delivery while also enquiring about other meaningful solutions to their particular problem. Probably the most visible motivation for an academic campus manager as a resource became evident on Campus A, where Arlene was not available for a part of the year. Although operation management was handled by other role players, the crucial teaching and learning role that the academic manager is mandated to fulfil, was left untouched. There is also no evidence that practitioners used their own personal development initiatives during this time.

5.2.1.5.   Tailor-made tasks

Amongst the three prerequisites for a practitioner's personal development practice, Boud and Brew describe creating groups comprised of individuals with the same interests to enhance personal practice (2013) and Van Schalkwyk *et al.* also mention the creation of communities of practice as one of the three cornerstones for conducting meaningful professional development (2011). Two campuses relate that tailor-making tasks strengthened the formation of certain groups with similar interest. This aspect was not evident on Campus A and D. Arlene designed some initiatives but in context of the literature, they proved to be blunt instruments with no particular outcome. Although designed with the two groups of practitioners in mind, Beryl's roll-out of communal desks and mentorships were slightly more tailored but still not as effective as the personal engineering of personality, discipline and practice partnering that Cindy conducted on Campus C. Subsequently, these tailored tasks and partnering particularly, showed some success here. Once again the pivotal role of leading tailoring tasks by the academic campus manager is highlighted.

5.2.1.6.   Integrated tasks for professional practice

Of the six principles identified by Frick and Kapp for building a successful academic professional development programme, the practice being integrated with both subject knowledge as well as teaching principles (2006) is relevant here. The school is well-known for its lecturing principles with practitioners referred to as *navigators* instead of lecturers. This principle is particularly evident in teaching creative disciplines such as creative brand communication, but has been losing focus in the business- and economics- focussed subjects during the latter few years. It is here where Cindy's design of cross-pollination between disciplines became useful, where the mantra of *Navigating like a Veganite* was revived.

5.2.1.7.   Self-management capabilities

Considering their self-management capabilities, Lankard (in Frick and Kapp, 2006) discusses the importance of self-knowledge as well as the importance of decentralising management to enable practitioners to manage themselves as well (Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1997).

This particular tertiary school environment is specifically designed with an effective combination of enabling contexts that would ensure lecturers to reflect and think about their practice in such a way that they would find real experiential value towards continuous professional learning on a personal, self-tailored level (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011). Academics navigate small classrooms and personalised tuition with particular instruction to ensure that students develop and explore individually instead of ascribing to an empty vessel- way of teaching. Beryl reflected that her student-focused instruction was initially misinterpreted by the body of permanent staff and therefore, it took considerable time to shift the thinking to her initial intention as that student success links directly with a practitioner's own actions. This argument connects directly with Biggs and Tang's rationale of concentrating on what the student does to achieve ultimate professional success (2011).

The importance of self-management capabilities for practitioners also emerge from Cindy's rationale to schedule workshops and additional tasks for professional development when lecturers are more susceptible to these activities. In managing this timing closely, the teaching cohort is kept motivated and refreshed to their own self-improvement. Once again, the academic campus manager plays a pivotal role.

5.2.1.8.   *Self-reflection*

Experienced practitioners benefit from self-reflective, theoretical enquiry on a personal level (Frick and Kapp, 2006). Seldin comments that "[T]he portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship. It is flexible enough to be used for tenure and promotion decisions or to provide the stimulus and structure for self-reflection about teaching areas in need of improvement' (Seldin, 1999, p. 37). In contrast to Arlene's focus on individual improvement, Beryl moved closer to communities of practice while Cindy managed to activated self-reflection as part of the peer partnerships as well as on the individual level, and with a wider teaching staff component that also includes inexperienced lecturers.

5.2.1.9.   Internal motivation

Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2013) claim that academics are generally expected to be internally motivated towards regular internal reflection about their skills and practices and Beryl interprets these discussions she sees as they happen amongst her staff, as motivational and adding to their internal drive. Cindy pointedly does not pressurise her lecturers into discussions amongst each other, but this is happening because of initial partnering. Once again, internal motivation is not evident to Arlene and Dorian for many of the aforementioned turns of events. Staff on Campus D might also have been in a state of inertia because no professional development outcomes were expected of their teaching cohort anyway.

5.2.1.10.   Opportunity creation

There is a general agreement that initiatives to further professional learning are essential in tertiary education (Marshall *et al.*, 2000; Kreber, 2001; Ferman, 2002; Clegg, 2003; McNamee *et al.*, 2004; Dearn, 2005; Knight, Tait and Yorke, 2006; Amundsen and Wilson, 2012; Boud and Brew, 2013). This is just as true for the international domain of private higher education. Internal units for staff development are established in private higher education institutions in the UK (Middlehurst, 2004) although organised instances of staff development in African private higher education institutions are currently rather limited (Varghese, 2004).

That it is an institutional responsibility to provide opportunities for lecturers to upskill themselves in their professional practice is largely accepted (Van Schalkwyk *et al*., 2011). Institutions should create 'care-ful' environments (Herman, 2015 p. 213) where the free sharing of good ideas is encouraged while also ensuring that practitioners feel safe to discuss, critique and suggest improvements (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017). Academics should also own the process as being personal while taking responsibility for their individual professional learning (Ingvarson, 1998). All the above should also apply to independent contractors (Knight, Tait and Yorke, 2006; Anderson, 2007; Percy and Beaumont, 2008; Ryan and Bhattacharyya, 2012).

It is safe to say that all four academic campus managers have been trying to provide opportunities for professional learning practices to take hold. As is evident from the

interviews, some of the academic managers are more reflective and have been trying more consciously to create shared spaces of care. This conscious reflection has proved to be a distinguishing factor between the two campuses who achieved measures of success in contrast to the two who did not make significant headway. Cindy seems to have been the most successful in creating an environment of care and personal responsibility amongst practitioners. It is clear however, that all the best intentions by an academic campus manager are not enough, and that this acknowledgement should be followed up by active social engineering whereby the manager needs to implement custom-made plans to create a conducive environment as well as an atmosphere wherein academics feel compelled to be accountable for their personal professional learning.

True to the school's spirit of navigation, Cindy appeared the most successful with the creation of opportunities for cross-pollination between disciplines by fostering mentorships and discussions. Creatives also share ideas and mentorships with commerce lecturers. They apply design thinking principles to all disciplines and start conversations between different groups of people in regular weekly collaborative meetings. Perhaps because of a less-forceful personality, Beryl's efforts to integrate all academic members of staff into one conversation driven by one physical space, did not succeed. In this process, however, she subconsciously also realised that the two groups of practitioners have different goals. She therefore decided to differentiate by fostering a safe space for internal reflection and negotiation amongst the permanent practitioners while also availing herself to the independent contractors on a more individual basis. In contrast to the two abovementioned, the other two campus managers did not seem to take emotional ownership of the desire to enable professional learning and therefore, did not drive initiatives to significant outcomes.

5.2.2. *Institutional structure and leadership (Management, leadership and incentives)*

5.2.2.1. *Substantial infrastructure*

Ingvarson mentions the key components of the standards-guided professional development model as discussed previously in this chapter as being that teaching standards should be *profession-defined*, while the institution need to provide a substantial *infrastructure* to provide professional learning (1998).

In Poland, it was found that private education providers known to be successful and attracting higher student numbers as well as attracting higher-ranked academics, were the institutions that focused on employing independent practitioners with less interests in other institutions, 'provided additional funds for academic development of [the] faculty, owned the infrastructure and equipment that supported teaching staff, and in general made the academic career more attractive for academics by offering them better payment' (Duczmal, 2006).

Institutions with a substantial infrastructure already base their professional learning in fertile soil, so to speak (Ingvarson, 1998). When considering private higher education in particular, it is also notable that institutions with a properly constituted infrastructure have a better prognosis to succeed with professional learning.

This particular tertiary school finds itself on high ground in this aspect. All campuses are equipped with substantial infrastructure, state of the art teaching equipment and optical fibre internet connection. The only campus who is operating on the back foot in this regard, is Campus D. Although they are supplied with the same IT ability as the other campuses, the province and region where it is seated is suffering with issues out of the institution's control. The general perception of academics is still negative, however, since they are directly affected by the dysfunction. The general condition still hampers the upload of teaching portfolios and affects overall IT effectiveness for staff as well as students.

This research also makes the case for human resources to be as much of an influence as financial- and physical infrastructure. Therefore, the researcher views Campus A to be compromised without an academic campus manager to drive

teaching and learning for a considerable time, to be as much disadvantaged as Campus D where IT services failed them. In contrast to the two challenged campuses, Campus C and B have been freshly equipped and boasts attractive surrounds. As discussed previously, these two campuses are also the two with academic campus managers who are taking more care, and reflecting more proactively, on teaching and learning, and professional learning of academics.

5.2.2.2.   *Distributed leadership*

When considering practitioners who are experts in their fields, the conundrum of creating career paths without losing sight or function of excellence exists. It is essential to consider the role and distribution of leadership within the organisation by broadening teacher leadership roles towards distributed leadership models (Fullan, 2003), and to create ways to decentralise management to enable the building of self-management capabilities (Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1997).

The academic campus manager has a critical function in ensuring the effective strategising and roll-out of professional learning initiatives. The role of these managers resonate closely with the creation of an enabling environment as described by Van Schalkwyk *et al.* (2011). Such an environment enables peer discussion and reflection of pedagogical practices with ample time to acknowledge and argue theoretical points around scholarly teaching practice. When academic campus managers activate such a space, there is an opportunity for some practitioners to move higher up in the SoTL framework (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011) as unpacked in this study's literature review (see 2.4.1. A triangular framework of growth) 'to be recognised by peers as contributing to an important larger enterprise' and where attention is paid to matters such as workload (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011, p. 9).

Future research might be conducted after the academic campus manager's role has been split, as described in the previous chapter. This split between operations, and teaching and learning, promises to enable the roll-out of professional development with great stride. There is also a team of senior lecturers, who take the leading roles of disciplinary expertise, or master teachers. These 'Senior Navigators' fulfil the role

of authoritative figures, tasked to set the pace and direction in their own field of expertise across all campuses.

5.2.2.3.   Decentralising management

Management is decentralised into the various campuses by way of the academic campus manager for academic affairs, working closely in the campus management team with the head of campus. This effectively broadens teacher leadership roles towards total distributed leadership models (Fullan, 2003), with a mostly successful decentralisation when structures are in place. The structure fails however, when one of the aspects are not functioning optimally. Building self-management capabilities (Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1997) has been effective on Campuses B and C. When management roles are properly fulfilled, positive outcomes are more likely to occur.

5.2.3.   Incentives

Across the organisation there has generally not been a policy of additional monetary incentives for members of staff. Recognition of exceptional performance is awarded through sponsorships to attend applicable conferences in instances where lecturing staff attain additional qualifications, are awarded with the annual Charles Freysen accolade, or identified as a 'Bright Star Navigator'. These initiatives are not campus specific and lecturing staff are equally incentivised on a national basis.

The emphasis on personal achievement and growth termed as the *practice turn* proposed by Boud and Brew (2013) resonates with a private higher education context with lecturers feeling pressured by long teaching hours and fewer perceived incentives for personal growth. Considering these views in the literature in context of the current research data, a recommendation might be that the school needs to invest more thought into high-profile ways of reward and celebrating excellence of practitioners in order to motivate members of staff.

5.2.3.1.   Better pay

One such high-profile motivational initiative might be the revision of pay scales. Ingvarson describe pay structures (1998) to be potentially rewarding. Other authors

promote credits for years of experience, extra jobs and evidence of growth (Bacharach, Conley and Shedd, 1990). Polish private education providers target independent contractors who expressly show less interest in other institutions, providing them with better payment and other incentives (Duczmal, 2006). A number of measures can be considered here, such as interesting tasks, overt career possibilities or better remuneration (Skule, Reichborn and Leren, 2002). It might be worthwhile to consider additional pay for marking, as well as for attending teaching and learning initiatives.

5.2.3.2.   Credits for experiences and evidence of growth

Across Vega campuses, full time lecturing staff get rewarded for graduating and for attaining post graduate qualifications with a sponsorship to attend a conference of the lecturer's choice during the following year. This is in line with the views of researchers such as Bacharach, Conley and Shedd (1990), with the offer keenly taken up by staff when completing a degree and being celebrated on a national forum.

5.2.4.   Communities of practice (emotional, informational and tangible support)

Within the categories of emotional, informational and tangible support identified by Crimmins *et al.* (2017), the next section will briefly discuss the role of communities of practice in this regard.

5.2.4.1.   Emotional support

Academic campus managers should arguably be the glue, or cohesive factor, of an academic community on a campus. This assertion is borne out by the data, considering the nature of reflection of these managers on the two campuses with visibly more success, versus the two who have been challenged by various issues during the year of research.

The concept of communities of practice is a requisite to the basic level of competence in the SoTL framework as developed by Van Schalkwyk, Cilliers, Adendorff, Cattell and Herman (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011) and serves as the entry

level for new practitioners moving into teaching and learning. It is therefore safe to say that building and nurturing communities of practice should be one of the crucial responsibilities of an academic campus manager.

It becomes clear that a campus needs an academic campus manager who possesses the ability to proactively plan issues around building communities of practice, reflect on successes and failures, and redirect actions to refine the process of scholarly cohesion and support. During this process, this manager needs a keen sense to read members of staff and their emotional states, relationships between them, and general social temperature. Proof of such success is evident on Campuses B and C, where these managers have shown some progress.

5.2.4.2.   *Informational support*

The need for informational support is particularly prevalent amongst part-time members of staff (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017). In an Australian study with 88 casual academics as respondents, Crimmins *et al.* highlight the need for comprehensive orientation sessions of particularly new part-time academics. Respondents also flagged the need for regular interaction and collaboration with full-time members of staff in both formal as well as informal ways, and to run different levels of training for experienced- and inexperienced staff (2017). Beryl's experiment with the roving independent contractors' desk in the open plan office for full-time academics seemed to have been on the right track here, but considering the comments from Crimmins' study, this might have been inadequate. Following this researcher's findings, Campus B, apart from the desk introduction, might want to initially use a more intensive programme to not only introduce permanent- and casual members of staff, but also to act more firmly with collaborations and participative meetings. Monetary reward for independent contractors to attend such gatherings of introduction and induction would also incentivise and motivate such attendance.

5.2.4.3.   *Tangible support*

Such support goes hand in hand with informational support as discussed above. Orientation will not only aid informational sourcing of material, but would also be useful for physical orientation, and act as roadmap to access tangible support. When

an academic campus manager creates a space where staff can interact physically, it aids in all connected ways within the community of support. Staff would know where, what and how to find all relevant support, particularly useful for new and uninitiated casual members of staff. This movement is evident on Campus C where the community is naturally growing, according to the academic campus manager. Not only are they supporting each other in a community of practice, but they also feel supported by campus management's open-door policy.

5.3. Section 2: Inhibiting factor themes that emerged from the data

5.3.1. *Managerialist practices*

If leadership is driven by administrator views, academic staff might also get a poor understanding of continuous professional learning and how professionals learn (Webster-Wright, 2009). Relating to the above is that professional learning initiatives driven by managerialist practices is also seen as erosive of academic autonomy (D'Andrea *et al.*, 2005), described as a negative 'bureaucratic working context for many professionals', (Sandholtz and Scribner, 2006; Wood, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009) is arguably relevant to private higher education, and thereby decontextualising continuous professional learning initiatives (Gravani, 2007; Webster-Wright, 2009).

Not only does leadership driven by administrator views lead to negative and inaccurate perceptions of academic staff (Webster-Wright, 2009), but merely the *perception* that this might be the case, has the same negative impact. D'Andrea *et al.* (2005) also mention the same negative reactions from academics when managerialist views dominate academic autonomy. Again, the same can be claimed when the perception about administration prescribing professional learning, exists. The current research emphasises the importance of regular, sound and effective communication to relate the motives of professional learning initiatives. There is a common thread through all four of the academic campus managers' interviews pointing to the inefficiency of badly motivated initiatives. The misunderstanding of the meaning-, and the academic campus manager's intention with promoting a student-centered approach, is a good example here. Some lecturers also misunderstood the messages from Cindy because they were not correctly introduced into the contexts

of teaching and learning theory. This confused the staff, putting them on the defensive. She perceives the big issue as being a lack of trust, a perception that 'everyone is out to get us', which relates directly to the symptoms of a managerialist leadership style. Staff tell the academic campus manager that 'nobody is standing up for us, and nobody is looking after us'. This relates directly to the event where administrative and bureaucratic practices overshadow the leadership functions, for lecturers to become frustrated because they might not know, or be introduced to, the appropriate pedagogical discourse (Van Schalkwyk *et al.*, 2011).

Van Schalkwyk *et al.* also warns about the danger of other priorities and practices such as managerial concerns (2011) derailing professional learning projects. On the other side of the scale, continuous professional learning might be hindered by poor organisational structure and formal support (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017) within an institution. This might be a real threat when initiatives are timetabled and driven by a national team instead of tasking campuses with their own program. Cindy personally saw the academic calendar as purely operationally driven and not conducive to teaching and learning initiatives. She made a principled decision not to run the teaching and learning activities in holiday times in order to give lecturers adequate resting room.

5.3.2.   *Poor structure of continuous professional learning activities, mentorship dynamics and time pressures*

Referring specifically to communities of practice, Van Schalkwyk *et al.* also comment on the danger of being side-tracked by other priorities and practices such as managerial concerns (2011). Dorian faced many challenges with staff shortages and managerial upsets during the year in question. Such crisis management averted her attention from meaningful projects of teaching and learning to just basically filling positions to ensure students are served by competent lecturers. The focus on such a deficit model put her on the back foot most of the time, and resulting in her becoming quite anxious about continuity of delivery and content that outgoing staff should leave behind for contingency sake. Consequently, some teaching tools originally designed for personal professional learning were deployed to suit the goal of continuity instead of professional enhancement.

Campus A, on the other side of the scale, was hindered by poor organisational structure and formal support (Crimmins, Oprescu and Nash, 2017). The campus continued to function operationally during Arlene's absence but the teaching and learning focus was left behind. Upon her return, she immediately initiated high-profiled teaching tools and initiatives such as a teaching tip toolbox of cards and Powerpoint-free weeks, but without a long-term vision in place. Arlene admitted that she did not initiate and push theoretical frameworks strongly enough. Initiatives, she said, were not introduced well enough. She reflected that staff would have adopted subsequent plans for mentorships and teaching portfolios better had they been adequately introduced. She also believed that she was not insistent enough and all initiatives subsequently lost momentum.

In whichever way continuous professional learning activities might be structured, it has to be contextualised in pedagogical discourse as well as situational practice. Professional development practices have been critiqued as "mired in update and competency approaches" (Wilson, 2000, p. 78 in Webster-Wright, 2009), focussing on a programme instead of the professional learning experience. Isolating activities and practices of development away from a practitioner's everyday work (Boud and Brew, 2013) also poses a danger of decontextualisation.

Initiatives must not be left entirely up to an informally structured design. Boud *et al.* caution that employing informal conversations at work for professional learning might turn against the cause since 'the meanings and experiences [might] change' (2009, p. 332). On Campus B, practitioners were initially not positive about mentorships. They did not take appropriate academic ownership of these mentorships. Here, this initiative was introduced too informally. Lecturers were expected to initiate their own mentorships. Upon reflection, this partnering should have come from the academic campus manager as leader. Instead, activities were built on existing deficits, with Beryl reacting on what feedback people gave in staff meetings. She also based all initiatives on informal discussions with each other and leadership. It seems that the lack of formalised and well-founded initiatives with the lack of clarity as to the goals of the teaching portfolio, resulted in the team still not knowing exactly how to build and apply a teaching portfolio and therefore, not taking academic ownership of their own processes. Beryl was also aware that her plans were too vague at that time, and

that she would need to design a detailed instructive process of introduction into teaching portfolios.

This lack of a structured programme resulted in a disconnect between the nature of what the academic campus manager decided to roll out, the reasons and ultimate goal, and how staff perceived it. The understanding regarding what Beryl meant when she referred to a student-centered approach and how the staff understood it, is an example here. She remembered: 'So I had many people that got angry with me, saying to me that I am not looking after them'. The big disconnect seemed to be that the teaching staff in general are perceived by the academic campus manager as not really understanding the jargon of scholarly teaching and learning.

Ownership might also follow considered contextualisation. Academics become unresponsive when they do not see the professional learning system as their own responsibility, but rather leaving it up to 'management' to implement development standards and opportunities (Ingvarson, 1998). Managers tasked with driving continuous professional learning sometimes also choose monetary rewards to motivate lecturers. Such a strategy might, however, be counterproductive if the rewards are not seen as sufficient (Kreber, 2001).

Seldin comments that "[T]he portfolio is to teaching what lists of publications, grants, and honors are to research and scholarship. It is flexible enough to be used for tenure and promotion decisions or to provide the stimulus and structure for self-reflection about teaching areas in need of improvement' (Seldin, 1999, p. 37). On Campus C, Cindy expected some resistance to the concept of a portfolio of evidence and the concept of a peer review did not find favour with the staff either. She therefore gave them flexible timelines. The portfolio work model was also regarded negatively, with some independent contractors seen to get an inordinate amount of work while others were left with less.

5.3.3.   *Casual academic specific issues*

An issue relating particularly to independent contractors regarding monetary reward, is also discussed in the literature by various researchers. While Ryan, Bhattarcharyya and Wales argue that casual members of staff are demotivated to pursue professional learning opportunities when they are overall underpaid for

teaching (2012), May *et al.* (2011) claim that two-thirds of these practitioners are not getting remunerated at all, for such activities. Two academic campus managers highlighted this issue as being particularly problematic. While their workloads were relatively fully loaded on one of the campuses, a general trend of feeling cheated regarding lack of remuneration for professional learning time emerged. One manager elaborated that this inadequacy is particularly glaring compared to other private higher institutions.

5.4. Concluding the research findings

Referring to Boud and Brew's *practice turn* (2013), independent contractors across campuses seem to be particularly in tune with their professional-, as well as teaching practice. Although there is a rift between permanent- and casual members of staff on the largest campus, it can be solved by better introduction and motivation. The academic campus managers will need to engineer better introductions and pairing of individuals during more integrated inductions.

Considering material mediation (Boud and Brew, 2013), the school is adequately resourced. The impact of seemingly small issues such as IT provision is clear on campus D, where the whole geographic region is struggling with provision. Concerning the relational importance that Boud and Brew (2013) refer to, these issues emerge very strongly. The capabilities and social engineering that need to be done by an academic campus manager shows up as a pivotal aspect. Considering the concept of resourcing, a major insight was that the academic campus manager should be regarded as a campuses' main resource. This is proved by events such as the lack of teaching and learning events on Campus A with Arlene's absence, and Dorian's focus on human resource issues, diverting her attention away from the teaching and learning facilitation. No initiatives flourished on these two campuses.

Contextualisation also emerged as key in overall motivation. All four participants recalled instances where inadequate contextualisation managed to derail the process of adoption. Hand in hand with the abovementioned follow the introduction of interesting and challenging tasks. While Beryl found the independent contractors more willing to engage in interesting tasks, Cindy located all tasks in the interest of a branding school, which caught the attention of the overall cohort of staff. Tasks

should not only be interesting, but also challenging (Boud and Brew, 2013). Beryl micro-designed tasks further by concentrating on detail in smaller steps, and to put more detail in every bigger task. Not formalising tasks in view of a bigger goal tripped Arlene up with introducing teaching tools, while Beryl and Cindy were more successful by being more strategic in thinking and designing for the bigger goal.

Tailor-made tasks are effective if they are activated in a holistically productive bigger plan. This is why Arlene's loosely structured tools do not impact significantly. Cross-pollination between permanent- and casual members of staff was most effective on Campus C where Cindy strategically and conceptually paired people with the idea of cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Considering the integration of subject knowledge with teaching principles as described by one of Frick and Kapp's six principles of building a successful professional learning programme (2006), Cindy's efforts emerged strongly here. Her design of teaming up lecturers from various disciplines succeeded to not only integrating subject knowledge with teaching principles better, but also spreading the school-specific way of teaching as navigation through a wider group of staff. The literature refers repeatedly to the importance of practitioners to manage themselves (Mohrman, Mohrman and Odden, 1997; Lankard in Frick and Kapp, 2006). Three of the four academic campus managers mention lecturers to be preferably independent and to be able to navigate independently to their students. Cindy and Beryl particularly described how they tried to ensure that lecturers choose their own mentoring partners and conduct their professional development tasks at their own pace.

The individual approach to broader principles became evident with the four academic campus managers' varying approaches to self-reflection. While Arlene encouraged individual reflection, Beryl designed a collective focus on communities of practice and how self-reflection will play out on a broader landscape. Cindy integrated self-reflection to be one of the aspects incorporated in peer partnerships. This aspect did not emerge out of Dorian's interview. Internal motivation was only evident from the interview with Beryl when discussing independent contractors and their need for her to provide them with input after class visits. She also described independent contractors as being highly driven.

All four academic managers have been providing opportunities for professional learning, albeit in different forms and tempos. Clearly, however, good intentions are not the discerning factor for success. All the aspects discussed in this section should be activated together to create a perfect environment for successful professional learning to happen continuously. These personal- and team attributes should be supported by substantial institutional structures. Particular aspects emerging out of these interviews are the human resources infrastructure and support, uninterrupted IT provision and most importantly, the leadership and initiative of the academic campus manager as a pivotal figure to drive continuous professional learning. This critical function should be fully supported on the national level, with enough decentralised agency for this manager to strategise tailor-made solutions for a particular campus's needs. The academic campus manager should be supported not only emotionally by the national leadership, but all incentives such as the possibility for monetary- and other types of rewards should be at their disposal, in order to incentivise particularly casual members of staff.

In conclusion, the adequate empowerment of academic campus managers on campus level will eradicate the inhibiting factors dampening efforts of professional learning such as the perception of managerialist practices, and particularly helicopter-type management from national leadership. These managers, in turn, should be held accountable for a solid structure of continuous professional learning plan conducted on their particular campuses. Individual elements of a complete campus plan need to be properly introduced and contextualised for all staff on every campus.
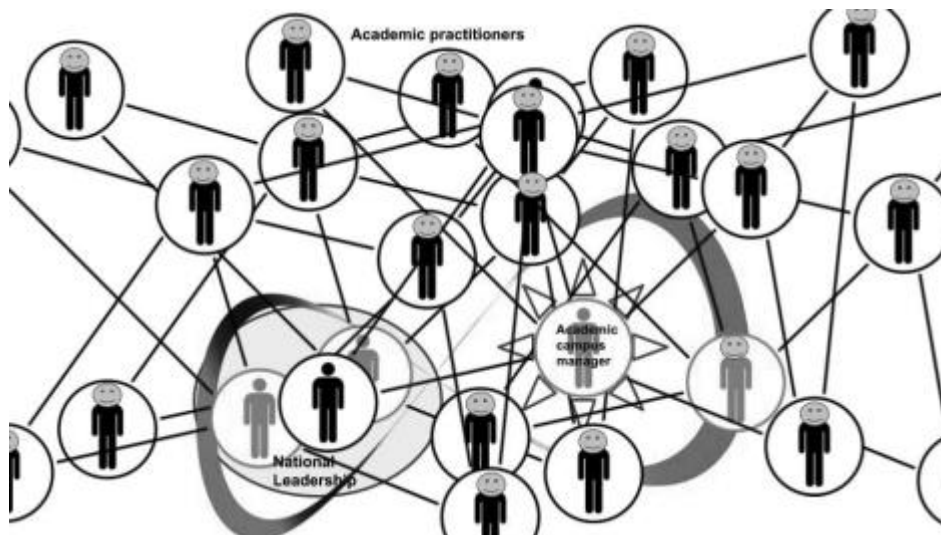
Fig. 5.1. The relationship between the national leadership, academic campus manager and academic practitioners.

Taking into account all abovementioned themes that incentivise- as well as inhibit professional learning amongst academic practitioners, the crucial role that the academic campus manager should play in enabling and fostering these areas of personal growth, is undeniable. Abundantly clear is also the obligation of national leadership in supplying the holistic plan with appropriate incentives and support so that every campus leader can earn his- or her credibility in their space. Equally important is the obligation and responsibility of an academic campus leader to drive excellent communication and collaboration in order to fulfil a finely crafted self-designed professional learning plan on every campus. Therefore, with decentralised leadership also comes the additional responsibility to ensure every success that a campus's academic staff can achieve.

5.5. Further research

After concluding the study, several other questions emerge. While the above allowed the researcher some insights into the perceptions of the academic campus manager regarding the well-being and motivational factors of continuous professional learning initiatives on practitioners, it is still not clear how academic members of staff, particularly independent contractors, might experience such motivators and inhibitors. The motivational effect of expectations and pressure that an academic manager puts on an academic team and whether it drives performance, is an avenue that might be worth exploring. Further research is needed on the views and

expectations from the academic lecturers working in a private higher education environment's perspective. Also intriguing are the experiences of independent contractors who work for more than one higher institution, whether private or public.

The report also touches on the issue of fractioning the resource of one single academic campus manager into two roles; that of fulfilling the operational role as well as leading teaching and learning initiatives. Further research into the state of affairs after the split of the academic campus manager role has taken effect on all four campuses, needs to be conducted as well.

It becomes most pressing to explore initiatives such as incentives and motivation for practitioners in private higher education to publish in peer reviewed and accredited journals and other outlets. Since this aspect of continuous professional learning, namely to produce new knowledge in scholarly discourse is not acknowledged currently, the question calls for further exploration.

5.6.   The final word

Academic practitioners in the South African private higher education sector are occupying a precarious space. While they are seen as highly industry-relevant educators with one foot in their industry, they also need the expertise to effect student learning in their own fast-moving industry space, equally for vocational- as well as theoretical training. Although private institutions have the best intentions to create and enable environments conducive to continuous professional learning, they are bound to a business model with no state funding. Such a scenario calls for particular ingenuity to activate spaces for learning.

An insight from this current research would be that not only should time, communication tools and studios directly available to practitioners be deemed resources, but so be should reflection time, strategising ability and agency of the academic campus manager as a service to academic staff. This overall leadership and management activation of the teaching space is crucial when leadership is decentralised such as the way with the school's four campuses.

This study illuminated the crucial function of the academic campus manager to fulfil the role of professional learning enabler for lecturers, both full-time as well as part-

time practitioners. Academic campus managers are the most direct link between leadership and scholarly practice in this organisation and therefore, should be chosen carefully. Furthermore, it is wise to create ways to afford them enough agency to create teaching and learning programs tailor-made for their campuses. With such a responsibility, these academic leaders should also be held accountable for enabling a climate conducive to continuous professional learning.

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