

<b>Institution: University of Bedfordshire</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 23 Education</b>		
<b>Title of case study: The impact of leadership on innovation in further education</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2018</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Dr Carol Thompson	<b>Role(s) (e.g., job title):</b> Senior lecturer	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2011
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-2020</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Dr Thompson's research impacted on FE leaders, managers and tutors' understanding of teacher autonomy and its importance in enabling teachers to be creative in their classrooms. It demonstrated the need for teachers to take creative risks and encouraged college principals to reflect on their institution's ability to understand and facilitate creativity in teaching. It has influenced FE leaders' thinking on how classroom creativity can be enhanced and offers ways of reconciling views on teachers' autonomy and professional agency. Overall, it has brought attention to teacher creativity in the FE sector, which has often received less attention than other education areas.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Since 2013 Thompson has researched further education (FE) in England which is an under-studied area. Her work examines the way in which leadership and managers can shape teaching and learning experiences, and how new regimes of assessment and quality measures have affected both FE teachers' autonomy and learners' outcomes [3.1].</p> <p>In 2014, Thompson used semi-structured interviews and lesson observations of 30 FE educators to elicit their understanding of the impact of graded lesson observations. Her work examined whether this is an effective measurement of quality in teaching, and what influence observations have on teaching and student learning [3.2]. Between 2015-2016, she conducted in-depth case studies, comparing a military training setting and a creative arts college. Interview findings with tutors and middle and senior managers responsible for training and staff development, were shared in follow-up forums, which enabled Thompson to develop a picture of FE practice with wide-ranging applications. The research identified the influence of neo-liberal expectations of performativity, which showed teachers performing a version of professional identity for their managers that might not tally with their usual practice. The research illuminated increased bureaucracy and surveillance of professional activity, and its effect on professional role and identity control/development amongst FE managers and teachers [3.2].</p> <p>In 2016 a survey distributed to members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers working in primary, secondary and FE in England yielded 252 responses, and along with six semi-structured interviews, provided comparisons between middle managers employed in education with those in the private sector. The findings highlighted discrepancies between non-education managers having accountability accompanied by autonomy and authority, whereas education managers had accountability but little autonomy and/or authority [3.3, 3.4].</p> <p>In 2018, a £14,000-funded fellowship awarded by the FE Trust for Leadership (FETL), an independent think tank, supported Thompson to build on her research. FETL commissioned the research to foster thinking about innovative leadership and teaching in FE [3.5].</p>		

Thompson's study of 40 FE educators, managers and senior leaders, explored the impact of leadership on FE teaching and learning, and how leadership affected the autonomy teachers have to be creative in constructing their teaching. The focus on teacher agency, autonomy and creativity underpinned an investigation into how FE educators are constrained, empowered or enabled, when developing teaching methods which allowed them to be innovative, take control and take risks in the classroom [3.5]. Importantly, the study asked whether FE institutional structures were flexible enough to allow innovation, or were merely adhering to external guidelines imposed by the inspectorate?

Compared with FE leaders, who saw themselves as having agency, the study found that tutors did not feel the same way, and constraints on teacher autonomy resulted from data driven/systems-led cultures in FE. Factors that enabled teacher autonomy were micro-cultures where tutors were off-site or operating under the radar. Tutors taking control of what they did was beneficial for their students vis-à-vis goals set, qualifications they are aiming for, and other improved student outcomes [3.5]. Thompson's findings thus contained lessons for leadership and practitioners across the sector [3.6].

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[3.1]. Thompson, C. & Wolstencroft, P. (2015) 'Promises and Lies' – An exploration of Curriculum Managers' Experiences in FE, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 39:3, 399-416, DOI: [10.1080/0309877X.2013.858676](https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2013.858676)

[3.2]. Thompson, C. & Wolstencroft, P. (2014) 'Give them the old razzle Dazzle': Surviving the Lesson Observations Process in Further Education, *Journal of Research in Post compulsory Education*, 19 (3): 261-75  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2014.920565>

[3.3]. Thompson, C. & Wolstencroft, P. (2018) No more superheroes ... Only Avatars? Survival Role Play in English Post-Compulsory Education, in, Barbara Merrill, Andrea Galimberti, Adrianna Nizinska and José González-Monteagudo (Eds.) *Continuity and Discontinuity in Learning Careers*, Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Sense, pp. 181-194

[3.4]. Thompson, C. & Wolstencroft, P. (2018) 'Trust into Mistrust – The Uncertain Marriage between Public and Private Sector Practice for Middle Managers in Education, *Journal of Research in Post-Compulsory Education*, 23 (2): 213-230.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13596748.2018.1444372>

[3.5]. Thompson, C. (2018) Finding the Glass Slipper: The Impact of Leadership on innovation in Further education. <http://fetl.org.uk/publications/finding-the-glass-slipper-the-impact-of-leadership-on-innovation-in-further-education.pdf>

[3.6]. Thompson, C. (in press) 'Glass Slippers and Symbols of Hope' in Education as a Resource for resistance and transformation: Voices, learning experiences and identities of student and adult educators

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Thompson's research has helped shape the conversation around teacher autonomy and creativity. Through her collaboration with FETL, her work has had a significant impact on FE leadership, helping to enhance creativity, and has also had an impact on improving classroom practice beyond FE.

#### Enhancing FE leadership creativity

Thompson's work has reached many stakeholders and practitioners. It has been disseminated at national and European conferences, seminars and via national online webinar events designed to influence policy development and institutional practice. These include:

- At the TELL conference, University of Plymouth May 2018, research findings were presented and circulated to 381 TELL members;
- A 50-minute webinar broadcast nationally with audience questions and responses discussed by Thompson, October 2018 – 25 logged into the webinar and 120 watched the interview on YouTube [5.2]. This resulted in a discussion of how to enable risk-taking in initial teacher education (ITE), and of action research, through networks like (LSRN) as well as staff innovation in assessments.

Thompson's research findings have echoed in wider debates. A key finding concerning teacher autonomy was discussed in the Times Educational Supplement [5.1]. Expected to be influential [5.8], the findings were publicised at two FETL Symposia held in Parliament, which received widespread policy attention [5.2, 5.3]. At the Winter Symposium (2018), president of the FETL, Dame Ruth Silver and Baroness Sue Garden of Frognal, considered the challenges and opportunities of FE policy before an audience of over 100 people. The next year, Thompson's research was further publicised at the Spring Symposium, Connecting the Dots: The Role of FE in Local Priorities and National challenges. This event was attended by 100+ people in FE, HE, local government and Members of Parliament (MPs), such as former Skills Minister the Rt Hon. Sir John Hayes CBE MP, Dr Fiona Aldridge, Director of Policy and Research, Learning and Work Institute, Dr Paul Feldman, Chief Executive, Jisc, Emma Jarman, and Vice Principal, City of Bristol College [5.3].

The research has been disseminated to FE leaders and international stakeholders in Europe, Asia, Australia and Canada:

- Events (June and November 2019) at Loughborough College where Thompson's FETL research was presented to and discussed by visiting FE practitioners from China. This led to the college committing to translating the FETL research into Chinese for delivery to future cohorts [5.6];
- Presentation to FE staff: Central Bedfordshire, Bedford College, Barnfield College (September 2019) and ITE trainees at Tresham College (October 2019);
- Presentation at the European Society for the Education of Adults (ESREA) Learning Careers and Identities conference at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, November 2019 to 70 academics from across Europe, Canada and Australia. This presentation culminated in a publication (in press) for ESREA [3.6];
- The research was publicised at University College London Institute for Education following a public lecture by Prof Doel concerning 'The Future of Further Education: Dilemmas, Dualisms and Dialectics' (February 2020);
- Online presentation at the Institute for Research and Continuing Professional Development (November 2020); audience 30+ teachers in Bedfordshire [5.4].

Thompson's research has helped to turn the conversation towards teacher's autonomy to encourage creative practice.

### **Impact on leadership and classroom practice**

The research bolstered recognition of the need for reflection by leaders on how to foster autonomy and innovation. It has particularly impacted on teaching in creative technologies via the Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies (part of Nottingham Trent University (NTU)), with its access to an audience of 2000+ FE/HE (national/international) students. A college principal explained the benefit derived from participation in the study:

*... Anyone involved in the research who read the report probably thinks about the issues differently now. I do. I interviewed several people at Confetti so in a way it is a good reflection*

*of the organization – this potentially makes it more useful to them. [Also] through our relationship with NTU, we've been doing quite a lot of thinking and room designing SCALE-UP principles, kind of a flipped-active learning methodology (Director of Education, 22 July 2019, @confetti.uk.com) [5.5].*

For ITE, the research is invaluable. One ITE mentor writes:

*I watched this webinar live when it was first broadcast and have used the publication since to support delivery with Initial Teacher Trainees. ... The glass slipper metaphor represents the possibilities ahead and the real sense that transformative change is possible, and that we can all be part of it and make a difference. We, the teachers need to embrace creativity as well as being pragmatic. The two are possible together. If teachers look to provide a creative process, the product will look after itself!! [5.7].*

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. 'Put teachers back in control of the classroom' <https://www.tes.com/news/put-teachers-back-control-classroom>

5.2. Research findings disseminated through FETL webinar – Interview with C. Thompson and Peter Mayhew-Smith - <https://youtu.be/gHKgshWvmj8>

5.3. Further Education Trust for Leadership website (<https://fetl.org.uk>)

5.4. Institute for Research and Continuing Professional Development public seminars, flyer *[provided as PDF]*

5.5. Testimonial from the director of Education at Confetti *[provided as PDF]*

5.6. Testimonial from Loughborough College *[provided as PDF]*

5.7. Testimonial from an ITE mentor *[provided as PDF]*

5.8. Letter from Further Education Trust for Leadership President *[provided as PDF]*