



**Becoming Professional:
An Investigation into the Experiences,
Perceptions and Aspirations
of New Institute For Learning Members**

Final Report to the Institute for Learning

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background & aims

The Institute for Learning (IfL) was launched officially as the new professional body for teachers in the Learning and Skills Sector in 2007. The study reported here was commissioned by the IfL and carried out from 2008 to 2009. It aimed to provide in-depth data relating to the experiences and aspirations of new members as they sought to address the CPD requirements and thus to inform the IfL's strategic and operational decisions.

Methodology

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a small group of IfL members at three points during the 2008-2009 academic year. An initial sample of 18 was selected from over 60 volunteers, and a further three were added at the end of the study to replace withdrawals. The sample was chosen to be as representative of the membership as possible. Interviews took place face-to-face or on the telephone, were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed.

Summary of key findings

- Respondents welcome the advent of the IfL, without exception, and their hopes of what it will achieve both for the sector and for its members are high. The organisation is expected to bring enhanced status for Learning and Skills teachers and greater visibility to the sector as a whole.
- Respondents' conceptions of 'professionalism' varied. Some put the emphasis on being up to date, on having recognised qualifications or being 'self-directed'. By the end of the study, most respondents believed that membership of the IfL had enhanced their sense of their professional identity.
- Some individuals are very much enjoying the opportunity to address their specific professional development needs in a formal way. A wide range of activities is being undertaken. Respondents hope for more support and guidance from the IfL in relation to their CPD.
- Some respondents are using 'Reflect' regularly; for others it is a more occasional resource. Several respondents feel that reflection is becoming embedded in their daily practice.
- Teachers on part-time or fractional contracts have much less support and fewer formal opportunities in the workplace for undertaking CPD. They report significant constraints and generally use their own resources and time for these activities.
- In some institutions, it appears that the purpose and activities of the IfL are not well understood, especially by managers.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that employers in all parts of the sector should be further targeted by the IfL in order to raise awareness of the extent to which they are likely to benefit from a workforce that is actively engaged in meeting its professional development needs.
- It is also recommended that, within resources constraints, the IfL gives further consideration to strategies for enhancing support for CPD activities that members are required to undertake and for communication with the membership, especially at local levels. Further regional and/or subject specific networks for sharing knowledge and experience would be welcomed.
- Part-time teachers and those on fractional employment contracts appear to have high levels of commitment to the IfL but receive less support in the workplace. The IfL may wish to consider ways in which they could further support the specific needs of this expanding group.

SECTION 2: BACKGROUND

The new Institute for Learning (IfL) was officially launched in 2007. All teachers working in an FE college were required to register by 31 March 2008, and teachers and trainers in other parts of the learning and skills sector by 30 September 2008.

Those entering teaching in colleges from September 2007 must also gain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) or Associate Teacher Learning and Skills (ATLS) status through the IfL. Those in teaching before that date are encouraged to seek this status. The qualification criteria for Members and Associates are based upon the Full and Associate teachers roles respectively, as defined in the 2007 'Regulations on FE Teachers Qualifications'.

By February 2009, there were over 180,000 IfL members. A survey carried out in July-August 2008 revealed that membership was made up as follows¹:

- 54% FE colleges
- 18% adult & community learning
- 11% work-based learning
- 3% Sixth form colleges
- 2% voluntary sector
- 2% offender learning
- 1% armed forces
- 9% unspecified.

All full members must undertake and record at least 30 hours of CPD in order to continue registration with the professional body. Requirements for associate members are adjusted pro-rata, and relate to number of teaching hours. CPD is broadly defined and refers to both subject updating and the development of teaching skills. Learning must be documented and made explicit. The first statements by members of completed CPD activities are expected to be submitted during 2009.

¹ *The Times Educational Supplement*, 28th November 2008, p.5.

SECTION 3: THE STUDY

This report summarises findings and conclusions from three sets of interviews that were conducted during the 2008-09 academic session with a small sample of IfL members. Two interim reports were submitted to the IfL after each of the first two rounds of interviews (in September 2008 and January 2009) and this final report draws directly on them, as well as on the final round of interviews.

The study was funded by the IfL and intended to underpin and support the organisation in their first year of operation. It aimed to do this by providing in-depth data relating to the experiences and aspirations of new members as they sought to address the CPD requirements. It is hoped that these insights into members' experiences during their first year will inform strategic and operational decisions and will provide additional data to be considered in conjunction with findings from the planned audits of CPD beginning in August 2009.

3.1 The respondents

Over 60 volunteered to take part in the study and the initial sample of 18 (6 male and 12 female) was selected from that group to be as representative of the membership as possible. Towards the end of the study, a further three respondents were selected from a reserve list to replace withdrawals. The majority in the sample are full members, some are associates or fellows. Respondents are geographically spread, covering all the main English regions. Most have varied professional roles, often working in several different institutions in diverse posts, as teachers and trainers. The majority also have additional course leadership, trainer, assessor/verifier or managerial responsibilities.

The self-selecting nature of the sample should be kept in mind when reading this report. The views expressed are those of a small group of IfL 'enthusiasts' who were keen to take part in the study and the views of less enthusiastic members may be under-represented here, as a result. Further, a number of our respondents appeared to have played a key role within their organisations, either officially or unofficially, as advocates for membership or as 'conduits' of IfL related news and information.

Our respondents have all had previous careers. Consequently, most hold a variety of educational and vocational qualifications which are not always related to the subject area in which they now teach or assess. All (except one) have a formal teaching qualification. The most common types of teaching qualification amongst our respondents are the PGCE, Cert. Ed and City & Guilds teaching certificates. Several are also assessors for their subject/s and hold relevant assessor awards. A few have Masters' level qualifications and several have first degree level qualifications.

Respondents teach a wide variety of courses and subjects, ranging from vocational (hairdressing, digital photography, Art & Design) to the more academic (foundation degrees, Access programmes, business studies and A-level politics). They work in diverse settings including prisons, adult and community learning centres, private sector skills and training companies, as well as more traditional FE colleges. Some work independently, on a freelance basis, and seven have more than one employer.

A number changed their employment during the study. Four changed jobs and three others changed their roles slightly. All respondents have been members of the IfL for between one and two years. Further details about the respondents are given below in Table 1.

Gender (Interviewee Number)	Job Title	Location	Age	Time in sector	Working Hours	Highest Qual.	Ethnicity
M (1)	Tutor, Teacher	Sheffield	mid 20s	2-4 yrs	0.9	Masters	White British
F (2)	Lead Tutor, ITC	East Riding of Yorkshire	51	13yrs	0.5	Degree	White British
F (3)	College Lecturer	Huddersfield	40	6yrs	FT	Degree	White British
F (4)	Lecturer	Essex	37	16yrs 8m	FT	HND	White
F (5)	Course leader	Berkshire	43	10yrs	FT	Masters	Black
M (6)	Adult Ed Tutor	Berkshire	41	2yrs 2m	0.8	Masters	British Indian
F (7)	Lecturer	Kent	55	20yrs	0.4	Degree	White British
F (8)	Head of Teaching/ Learning	Essex	NK	16	FT	Masters	White British
F (9)	Director	Hampshire	39	21yrs	FT	Level 4	White British
M (10)	Staff development, media studies teacher	Coventry	27	5yrs 5m	FT	Degree	White British
M (11)	Tutor	London	40	22m	0.6	Degree	White British
F (12)	E- Learning Adviser	Exeter	47	2yrs	FT	Masters	White British
M (13)	Business & management lecturer	London	40	5yrs	FT	Masters	Black British Caribbean
M (14)	ICT Lecturer	London	63	10yrs	FT	Degree	White European
F (15)	Lecturer in Complementary Therapies	London	NK	6yrs	0.2	Degree	Black Caribbean
F (16)	Training officer, construction	Norwich	49	24yrs	0.8	Degree	White British
F (17)	Trainer/ training verifier	Dorset	NK	8 yrs	FT	Degree	White British
F (18)	Basic skills trainer / coordinator	Gateshead	49	8yrs 11m	FT	Degree	White British
F (19)	Basic skills manager	Wiltshire	NK	7yrs	FT	Masters	White British
M (20)	Programme Manager, Assessor, Trainer, Tutor	Staffordshire	42	10yrs	FT	HND	White British
F (21)	Communication trainer	Hampshire	44	5 yrs	0.6	Level 3	White British

* NK = Not known

Table 1: Composition of interview sample

3.2 The interviews

Interviews were conducted at three points during the 2008-2009 academic session. The intention was to capture respondents' experiences over time, and to gain an understanding of the way their thoughts and feelings changed as they engaged increasingly with IfL membership activities.

The first interviews were conducted face-to-face during June and July 2008; the second round of interviews was carried out on the telephone during November 2008, and the third and final round of interviews was conducted either on the telephone or face-to-face, depending on circumstances, during May 2009.

All the interviews were semi-structured (see Appendices 1-3 for schedules). They were audio-recorded and professionally transcribed. The final interview schedule was amended slightly for the three interviewees who joined the study late.

SECTION 4: PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONALISM

4.1 The role of the IfL

Respondents perceived the general role and purpose of the IfL in broadly similar ways.

4.1.1 Some focused on the importance of the organisation in being able to compel its members to keep up to date, in terms of both teaching and subject knowledge. One believed that being an IfL member would mean her students valued her expertise more; others emphasised the confidence they themselves gained from knowing they were ‘on top’ of their own discipline.

4.1.2 The authority of the IfL and its potential to enforce consistent standards was valued. Several respondents felt pleased to be ‘part of a bigger voice’ now, to have an organisation that represented the breadth of the sector and linked everyone together. This was thought likely to give both individuals and the sector more status, more confidence and greater visibility:

*‘I’d like to think they’re there to protect me as well- I don’t know from what? So, lions in the street? (Laughs)
Well, it’s the umbrella.’ (Interviewee no 7)*

4.1.3 Respondents also believed the role of the IfL was to bring increased recognition for work done in FE which would help professionalize the sector and make clear the sector’s core values. It would help achieve parity of esteem with school teachers and give members professional pride. In the early interviews, respondents envisaged the IfL as having a representational role, lobbying on members’ behalf and disseminating relevant information to them.

4.1.4 It was anticipated that the IfL would also provide networking and professional development opportunities, resources and information, and take the lead in championing new ideas about teaching and learning. In addition, some respondents believed it was the role of the IfL to offer more personal support and guidance in relation to meeting CPD requirements (see 6.1.3). In later interviews, these views were reiterated.

4.1.6. Some interviewees were concerned about the resentment and resistance apparently shown by some colleagues and expressed the fear that if the IfL was not seen to be robust and secure, it would lose trust. Managers and employers needed to be targeted and the IfL would need to work closely with other regulatory bodies to avoid being ‘hi-jacked’ by bureaucrats or ‘lost’ in the plethora of existing educational organisations.

4.2 Professional identities

Everyone interviewed said they saw themselves as a ‘professional’, but not all described themselves as teachers. Some preferred to see themselves as trainers, or facilitators and some (with management roles) saw this as their primary identity. Conceptualisations of what ‘professionalism’ meant to them varied.

4.2.1. For many, professionalism was closely tied to CPD (that is, keeping knowledge and skills up to date or ‘upskilling,’ as one interviewee put it). Being a professional, for others, was about managing yourself and your time, being self directed in your work, and having a degree of autonomy. For some ‘professionalism’ arose from having a ‘passion’ for the work that you do, ‘put[ting] a lot of effort into being the best that [you] can be’.

4.2.2 Several mentioned the importance of recognized and standardized qualifications for creating a professional identity, and for maintaining high standards in the sector. Having a permanent full-time position and the opportunity for career progression was also seen by one respondent as integral to feeling professional; however, they also mentioned that full-time posts were hard to come by and that this hindered the development of a professional identity.

4.2.3 For some, professionalism was intricately tied to being a teacher. Teaching was a good way to put your professional skills into practice; having the confidence, capacity and ability to teach others a subject or occupation enhanced your professionalism.

4.2.4 Several respondents talked about how they felt their professionalism was ‘demeaned’ because FE teaching was viewed as lower in status than teaching in other sectors. They believed that their teaching capabilities were just as good as those of school and university teachers. Several felt the stigma of the old adage ‘those who can do, and those who can’t, teach’ and complained that some people thought that FE teachers were people who had not succeeded in their industry.

4.3 The meaning of belonging

4.3.1 Initially, most of our respondents did not see that membership of the IfL would change their professional identity; it was seen just as reinforcing or ‘underlining’ it. Some had no idea what the phrase ‘dual professionalism’ meant but others felt that it aptly applied to them. The latter group felt they had a dual responsibility, as teachers and as subject specialists. Some took this even further and claimed they were ‘multi professional’, for example as teacher, lecturer, manager of people, and business manager. Some felt ‘dual professionalism’ did not really apply to them as they had always been primarily a teacher, a trainer or a manager and did not feel they had another profession.

4.3.2 For some, the ‘next logical step’ in their professional development, following IfL membership, was to seek licensed practitioner status. In contrast, those who were already members of other professional bodies were more ambivalent about

membership of 'another' professional organisation. Some respondents were not aware of what 'licensed practitioner status' meant and were unsure of the requirements.

4.3.3 Respondents also had different ideas about what was meant by 'professional formation'. One saw 'professional formation' as clarifying the role of the FE teacher, and making the training routes more streamlined and tangible. Another saw it as

'forming the teacher', that is, as a process of CPD that takes place after initial qualification. In their final interview, one interviewee noted that the processes of professional formation and accreditation were 'quite...laborious' and could be a disincentive for some. Another interviewee (who was an associate IfL member) felt that his grade of membership had brought few, if any, benefits. He told us that as an associate he felt excluded despite wanting to become involved.

4.3.4 Belonging to the IfL offered some respondents the opportunity to consolidate all their work and 'put everything in one basket'. Membership was thought likely to reduce feelings of isolation and provide an incentive to reflect regularly on teaching.

4.3.5 Membership would also provide more job security, a ready-made C.V. to use in the future for career purposes, and a greater sense of personal direction. Employers would take more notice and individual credibility would be boosted.

4.3.6 In their final interviews, the majority said that IfL membership had enhanced their sense of professional identity. A few did remark that membership had made little or no difference to their professionalism since they had considered themselves professionals already. Some potential drawbacks to membership had been noted, especially in early interviews, and these included the time and resources it might take to complete requirements (particularly for part-timers and agency employees who had significantly less institutional support). For most, however, membership had increased their sense of responsibility and control over their own career development and training, and many told us at the end of the study that they felt more connected, outward looking and recognised within the sector:

'I think I've understood my professional future a bit more. It's always been in the back of my mind ...being a member of IfL has probably given me that badge of authority and it's made me think about what I've done within that sphere of work. I think it's informed how I work with colleges.' (Interviewee 12)

'You see being a member of the IFL has made me think of myself as a professional in isolation of where I am working. I am a professional. If this college does not offer me what I need to develop, what I feel I need to develop, I will have to find it and offer it to myself and that is why I look for the courses.' (Interviewee 5)

SECTION 5: EXPERIENCES OF CPD

Many respondents had already completed the required 30 hours of CPD for the year by the time of their first interview. By the time of their second and third interviews, the majority had completed the requirement in full and some had far exceeded it.

5.1 Initial attitudes to CPD

In their first interviews, attitudes to the CPD requirement varied.

5.1.1 Most respondents found the requirement appropriate, although three mentioned that some colleagues saw it as a burden, as ‘just one more thing’ they had to do. One mentioned feeling slightly resentful at having to record it but they could see the purpose and the benefit. Three respondents believed that some colleagues would ‘invent’ their CPD and that the system may be open to abuse.

5.1.2 Others were enthusiastic about the requirement and the opportunity it presented. There seemed to be a tendency for part-time staff (especially those with more than one employer) to be more positive in their replies, stressing the importance of staying up to date with one’s subject and with the ways in which students themselves change over time. IfL membership gave these staff an opportunity to bring more coherence to their professional lives.

5.1.3 One teacher described herself as ‘incredibly excited’, another as ‘really enthusiastic.’ It was always good to talk to other teachers, in one person’s view; another very much liked thinking about the impact of CPD, and not just about ‘ticking boxes.’ Another believed it would help her and her colleagues to be more critical of organised events and more selective about how to use their time.

5.2 Nature of CPD activities

Members discussed a diverse range of CPD activities that they were engaged in, from completing assessors’ qualifications, to external conferences and workshops, in-house training days (such as on health and safety, ICT or Special Educational Needs, for example), Masters qualifications, teaching qualifications, reading (for example, subject-based journals), being observed teaching and undertaking observations of others, and conducting small pieces of research.

5.3 Collaboration

5.3.1 Some respondents found that collaboration could be particularly useful in helping them to meet their CPD requirements, but that it worked best when it was instigated from the ‘bottom up’ and was voluntary rather than imposed.

5.3.2 Reported examples of successful collaborations included one teacher who asked a colleague to observe and feed back on her teaching; she also actively sought and received ICT support for her classes. Another respondent shared aspects of his portfolio with colleagues who then offered feedback. He, in turn, showed colleagues

how to use 'Reflect.' Another respondent described a course team who had moderated each others' assessments. One respondent undertook a 'Reflect' training course and

now corresponded with colleagues she had met there about CPD. Another had quarterly, one-to-one discussions about CPD within her college.

5.3.3 Isolation was a concern for some respondents, particularly those in small departments or those working across several institutions or on a 'freelance' basis. More opportunities for peer collaboration would therefore be welcomed. As one commented, she would like 'a pair of fresh eyes to look at what I'm doing.'

5.4. Planning

Where respondents were in full-time employment, their planning of CPD was often linked to an existing formal appraisal or staff review process. In this process, targets and activities were routinely agreed. Some respondents had written action plans to follow, one had a mentor and a 'performance management' file. Another respondent did plan the CPD but not in a formal way.

5.5 Recording and reflecting

5.5.1 At the time of their second interviews, finding the time to record and reflect on their CPD was proving difficult for most, owing to the 'sheer volume of work' that already existed and because teaching tended to be prioritised. One respondent commented:

'To be honest, other than keeping a list of what I've been doing, I really haven't had a chance to go and do anything with it.'
(Interviewee 18)

This was the general consensus. It was especially noticeable amongst respondents who had two or more jobs or roles, at two or more organisations, each of which had their own CPD /performance appraisal record systems. Thus, these respondents could find themselves expected to meet several sets of institutional requirements, in addition to those for the IfL.

5.5.2 The majority of respondents had used 'Reflect' if only to upload or log material at this stage. Many had used it, for example, simply to log CPD events, but were 'putting off' actually sitting down and completing it all, until they could find the time. Two respondents had not used it at the time of the second interview. Others had received training as part of a whole team staff development approach in their workplace and several were now engaged in running training sessions for other colleagues. Others had not heard about any training but would like some.

5.5.3 Several respondents found that it was not that easy to learn to use 'Reflect' and by the time of their second interviews, some colleagues were still struggling with it. However, many seemed to like the way in which it was possible to share their 'Reflect' portfolio with other colleagues in their institution and the opportunities it created for sharing good practice more widely. They liked using the online tools provided to record and reflect their CPD:

'It's not on bits of paper here and there. Everything's consolidated and it's there.'(Interviewee 3)

One described the programme as 'a pain' to use since it took a very long time to upload files and another complained that there was no facility to leave your work and return to where you had left off- you had to keep logging back in all over again. The apparent need to log in repeatedly was causing some confusion at the time of the first interviews, too.

5.5.4 Another interviewee expressed concern about the over-reliance on technology in recording CDP and fostering professionalism:

'Much as it pains me...a lot of emphasis on the profession is using technology, I come from that side anyway. But you do have to recognise that there are people who don't like using technology who are made aware of IT internet security issues and don't want to put any personal information anywhere on the Web.'(Interviewee 2)

Table 2 provides a summary of some of the interviewees' practices in relation to their CPD.

Those intending to submit CPD online		How often they use Reflect to log CPD		How often they read <i>Intuition</i>	
Yes	95 %	Always	5%	Always	42%
No	5%	Very Often	23%	Very Often	19%
		Sometimes	43%	Sometimes	19%
		Rarely	19%	Rarely	5%
		Never	10%	Never	5%
				DK	10%

Table 2: Summary of CPD practices amongst interviewees

5.6 Embedding Reflective Practice

5.6.1 In their final interviews, several interviewees told us that one of the key benefits of IfL membership was that it had helped them to embed reflective practice in their daily work and routines:

'I think as a result of the IfL [requirement to undertake] CPD I am reflecting far more on what I do. ... I think it is very much embedded in my practice because it's made me think about how I put together courses, how I put together lessons, how I will get that information back from my students, my learners (...) and [it has] built in that reflective bit for me as well.'
(Interviewee 12)

5.6.2 The requirements had also focused attention on the need to keep records:

'Because I've seen a couple of benefits from doing it [using Reflect to record CPD] even if it's only just filling in job applications, it's made me think, right, I must keep this up, must keep this going. I think it's just kind of embedding it, the self discipline now to keep it going and just doing this has been good, to make me do it, if that makes sense.' (Interviewee 16)

5.6.3 A number also felt their teaching had improved, and this had been evidenced through observation and their own professional judgement. For some, however, time and other work pressures had created significant constraints.

5.7 Reviewing the CPD experience

In their final interviews, several remarked on how the experience of completing their 30hrs CPD had benefited them.

5.7.1 One interviewee was now more discerning about the courses that were on offer:

'I'm much more aware of what I want out of a course now and I do much more delving beforehand whereas before I might have just seen something come through the post and thought -I'll do that. I think for some people it's a ticking box exercise. For me, it's not. For me, it's much more than that. I do actually value what this is all about and I can see the full implications of what we're trying to achieve here.' (Interviewee 3)

5.7.2 A number also mentioned that they had developed a longer term view and a more 'critical' attitude towards in-house CPD provision as a consequence of engaging with the IfL:

'Well, it prompts me to be more aware of the usefulness of what I am doing... I used to just tick boxes to get the piece of paper. ... So yes, it has made me VERY selective, maybe more vocal and maybe I feel a bit more negative. I don't know. I have a feeling that I do. I am a bit more negative now because I see a lot of things as a waste of time but you know the good thing is it still teaches you what is good and what is bad practice.' (Interviewee 5)

5.7.3 Other interviewees had appreciated the opportunities for subject updating:

'I think it has made me more aware of keeping up to date with my own development, having to put it into the CPD- not just put it in, but having to think about how I use it and so that is more beneficial. It means that you are keeping on top of your own discipline and I find that is very good and so that's an advantage.' (Interviewee 7)

SECTION 6: MEMBERS' NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS

6.1 Availability of support

6.1.1 Where respondents were based in a college, their line managers appeared to be reasonably supportive. Some colleges ran compulsory CPD courses in-house, and teaching staff were paid to attend. Some employers were also happy to pay conference or course fees, or allow time off for CPD, or a combination of the two; some employers restricted this entitlement to a set number of hours. In one institution, there was a formal programme in place to assist staff with meeting the IfL requirements. Here, Friday afternoons were set aside for staff to use 'Reflect' and to upload all their CPD. However, some line managers tended to be 'hands off', and although they might ensure that staff knew about the CPD requirement, there was little contact other than in the annual review. Some teachers had monthly meetings with their line managers about CPD.

With regard to funding for CPD activities, this extract from one of the interviews sums up the situation that many appeared to be in:

'If it's something that's essential to the contract, they're prepared to pay for it. If it's something that's free and it's relevant to work, they're quite happy for us to do that; they'll allow us the time off work to go and do it. If there's a big cost involved and they can't see the value of it they're not prepared to fund it.' (Interviewee 18)

6.1.2 Hourly paid, part-time or agency teachers in the sample appeared to be in a much less favourable position and often discussed concerns about their employment rights (for example, unpaid preparation time, lack of sick pay and holiday pay, little security). They also mentioned the lack of space, acknowledgment and time for completing their CPD activities. For these respondents particularly, CPD was becoming a personal or private project. They were spending their own private time on it, or booking annual leave to attend courses or conferences; they were not necessarily sharing their CPD experiences or needs with colleagues or line managers. One respondent commented: 'They never ask me.' Another said: 'I'm obviously doing my own CPD anyway [...] I personally think it is my development. I'll just have a responsibility for it.' A third respondent claimed that CPD was 'something that I've grown up with, a culture of always recording CPD and reflecting on what I've done.'

6.1.3. A number of respondents wanted more support from the IfL in relation to meeting the CPD requirements. Suggestions included email bulletins about possible learning opportunities, the Newsletter in hard copy, and two mentioned that it would have been useful to have some case studies from the IfL of what they expect people's CPD portfolios to look like. Forums and networking events for members to share practice and ideas would also be welcomed. Others wanted to see more regional events, a more interactive website and visits to institutions from IfL representatives, as well as more mechanisms for members to influence decision making processes.

6.2 Wider awareness of the IfL

6.2.1 In the early interviews, there appeared to be varying levels of awareness amongst managers about the IfL and its brief. In one college, it was never mentioned, whereas in another, the requirements were discussed in a staff meeting and circulated on email.

6.2.2 By the time of their final interviews, several respondents believed that their institutions were now more engaged with the IfL's agenda. In particular, some mentioned the way that the IfL had influenced college and employer approaches to CPD:

'Yes, there has been a difference, definitely. It has kind of motivated the institution to recognise professional development more and it motivates the institution in having to develop individuals.' (Interviewee 10)

These shifts in organisational awareness were seen as broadly helpful:

'I think the IfL has kind of sort of made them [the employers] sit up and instead of thinking about just funding, funding, funding – they are now thinking about quality [of CPD].' (Interviewee 5)

'I think the CPD side of things has changed. Everyone's on the ball in terms of logging in their training. ... It was a much more relaxed approach to it but I think having the Institute [for Learning] and the whole drive for CPD, they've really got their act together and it's monitored, it's checked.' (Interviewee 16)

Not all employers were engaged, however, and in some places, by the end of the study, little seemed to have changed:

'[The IfL has had] no impact whatsoever. It's very light touch here, almost non-existent and it doesn't even get discussed in appraisals and things.' (Interviewee 3)

6.2.3 One respondent raised a concern about the possible overlap between institutional CPD requirements and the requirements of the IfL. They believed a distinction should be made between performance management and development for personal growth. This person sought to separate their CPD into institutional roles, personal objectives and even governmental objectives, in order to be clear about the different purposes and drivers for CPD.

6.2.4 Several respondents wondered if the IfL might do more to target employers:

'I'd like to see them communicating more with employers because they can't make a difference to the sector if they're not engaging the employers and getting them involved because all of us, as individuals.... I know their whole idea is they're going to be one voice for us and they can lobby parliament, but if the employers aren't brought on board nothing's going to change and the employer has the capability of making or breaking the

CPD by refusing to fund it or not supporting it or trying to control it so much that people aren't actually benefiting.'
(Interviewee 4)

6.2.5 There was some concern, too, about engagement with the IfL amongst some colleagues in the workplace. As noted earlier, the respondents in this study were not typical and many commented at the end of the study that their colleagues were still not particularly knowledgeable or aware, and had not fully grasped the implications of IfL membership.

6.3 Hopes for the future

Interviewees expressed a range of views on the future direction of the IfL and the ways in which they would like to see it to develop and engage with its membership.

6.3.1 Most believed that the IfL needed to do more to raise awareness of its work, especially amongst employers. Some hoped that the Institute would adopt a political role and lobby for increased salaries, greater coherence in teacher training and for parity with school teachers:

'I think the IfL and the government have got to sit together with the GTC and the TDA and really put on the table who is going to do what, who is going to represent and who is going to dictate, you know, what we should be doing.' (Interviewee 14)

6.3.2 Another mentioned that the IfL should make the case for the more neglected aspects of the sector, such as adult education. In these ways, the sector would gain respect:

'I also think in recognising the work that we do, it will help us...be taken more seriously by the government...and so I think by having the Institute for Learning it will strengthen our position and profile, you know, as a sector, not just as individuals.' (Interviewee 10)

SECTION 7: CONCLUSIONS

- The respondents in this small-scale study have extremely diverse backgrounds. However, without exception, they welcome the advent of the IfL and their hopes of what it will achieve both for the sector and for its members are high. Specifically, they expect the organisation to take the lead in helping to professionalise the workforce and in bringing enhanced status to teachers and greater visibility to the sector as a whole. Part-time members stressed the importance of the IfL to them as an ‘umbrella’ organisation that would help reduce isolation and bring coherence to fragmented working lives.
- Respondents’ conceptions of ‘professionalism’ varied. Some put the emphasis on being up to date, on having recognised qualifications or being ‘self-directed’. Some saw themselves as ‘dual professionals’; others did not. The phrase ‘professional formation’ was not clearly understood by all.
- The findings suggest that some individuals are very much enjoying the opportunity to address their specific professional development needs in a formal way. A wide range of activities is being undertaken and those that are able to collaborate with peers are finding that helpful. Some respondents (particularly those on part-time or fractional contracts) report significant constraints, mainly relating to the time required to reflect or record CPD activities.
- Some respondents are using ‘Reflect’ regularly; for others it is a more occasional resource. Some are comfortable with it, some less so. The requirement to identify the impact of CPD activities has led several respondents to feel that reflection is becoming embedded in their daily practice and that improvements in teaching have resulted. Others have become more discerning about CPD courses on offer, and more focused on using their time effectively.
- Respondents hope for more support and guidance from the IfL in relation to their CPD. They also anticipate that the organisation will provide networking opportunities and promote new ideas about teaching and learning. Part-time teachers appear disadvantaged and have fewer formal opportunities in the workplace to undertake CPD. They generally use their own time and resources.
- In some institutions, it appears that the purpose and activities of the IfL are not well understood. Levels of employer support and awareness vary greatly. Some concern exists about the ‘resistance’ shown by some colleagues and the apparent indifference of some managers. However, in the final interviews, improvements were reported in some places.
- By the end of the study, most of the respondents believed that membership of the IfL had enhanced their sense of their professional identity. They felt more able to take responsibility and control of their own career development and training. They felt able to focus on their own needs and not just those of their employer.

SECTION 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three key recommendations.

- For some respondents, there is a slight tension emerging between employer demands and expectations and those of the IfL. In some organisations, employers appear to have little involvement and no interest in helping staff to address their membership needs. In others, there are deliberate attempts to facilitate activities within the institution that will assist staff with meeting IfL requirements. The recommendation is that employers in all parts of the sector should be further targeted in an attempt to raise awareness of the extent to which they are likely to benefit from a workforce that is actively engaged in meeting its professional development needs.
- Respondents identified a range of ways in which they feel the IfL could further support their CPD activities. They wish to see networking events, email bulletins, case studies, visits to institutions, and so forth. The recommendation is that, within resources constraints, further consideration is given to strategies for enhancing support for and communication with the membership, especially at local levels.
- Members of the IfL that are on part-time, fractional and/or agency contracts and those working across several institutions appear to have the most to gain from membership and are, in many ways, more enthusiastic about the benefits. At the same time, these members are amongst the most vulnerable. They may be outside formal institutional appraisal or review processes. They appear to have less access to in-house training, for example, and less support than most of their full time colleagues. The recommendation is that consideration is given to ways in which the IfL might be able further to support the specific CPD needs of this expanding group.

Appendix 1

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH NEW IfL MEMBERS

Notes: Thanks for agreeing, etc; permission to record; confidentiality assured, etc.

Background

1. Could you please tell me if you hold a teaching qualification? If so, what is it?
2. \What subjects do you teach? What qualifications do you have in your teaching subject?
3. How long have you been teaching? How long have you been in your current post?
4. Which IfL membership grade are you on?
5. Will you be seeking Licensed Practitioner Status? [Why/why not?]

The Institute for Learning

6. What general purpose will the IfL serve, do you think? [For individuals? For the sector? For teachers as a group?]
7. What do you expect the personal benefits of membership to be? What do you think the drawbacks might be? [Will everyone who joins benefit equally? if not, why? Can you see any barriers to active participation in the organisation?]
8. What does it mean to you to be a member of a professional body for FE teachers? [What do you think it means to be a 'professional' teacher? Do you think of yourself in that way? How do you think of your professional identity? Will IfL membership change the way you see yourself?]
9. Has the documentation for members from the IfL been clear? [have you read it? What is helpful/not helpful about it?]
10. What do you think the IfL means when it talks about 'dual professionalism'? [is it a relevant/helpful concept? Is it applicable to you? To your colleagues? Why/why not?]
11. How do you understand the phrase 'professional formation'? [what does it mean to you? What do you think it means/will mean to your colleagues?]

CPD requirements

12. What kinds of CPD do you currently undertake? [Is it required by your current employer? If so, how is it evidenced?]

13. How are you planning to meet the 30 hours CPD requirement for IfL membership? [What sorts of activities will you undertake? Apart from the membership, will the CPD activities bring other benefits/drawbacks? To you/others? What sort of benefits? What sort of drawbacks?]

14. How will you record your CPD? [Are you intending to use 'Reflect'? why/ why not?]

15. What are your impressions of this software? [how easy/difficult is it to use?]

16. How do you feel about the CPD requirement? [Is it appropriate? Do you think it is too flexible or too rigid? Will it help you with your teaching? Or in other ways? Or would you like to see it changed? If so, in what ways?]

17. What kind of support would you like/expect from the IfL in relation to meeting the CPD requirement?

18. Will your employer support you with meeting the CPD requirement? [If so, how do you expect them to do this? If not, do you know why? Do you think they *should* support you?]

The future

19. How would you like to see the IfL develop in the future? [what do you think should be its role 10 years from now? What kind of organisation would you like it to be?]

20. How do you see yourself in 10 years' time? [what sort of job would you like to have? What changes, if any, would you like to make in your professional life? How will you seek to make those changes?]

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME.

Appendix 2

SECOND INTERVIEW WITH NEW IFL MEMBERS

Notes: Thanks for agreeing, etc. permission to record (tell them when you turn the recorder on); confidentiality assured etc. (Keep transcript of their first interview handy for reference.)

Recap

1. Last time we talked, you said.....(*check transcript*)

Has anything changed since then? [e.g. In relation to your employment status?]

CPD requirements

2. Last time we talked, for your CPD, you said you were doing.....(*check transcript*)

Has anything changed since then? [Is this still what you are doing for your CPD? If not, why not?]

3. When are you intending to complete it? [if already completed, when did you do it?]

4. How are you getting on with it? [are you near finished/ finished? How many hours have you done? What things are helping you to complete it? What obstacles are you experiencing?]

5. How did you plan it? [Did you construct an Individual Learning Plan? Did you construct the ILP on your own or was this partly constructed for you?]

6. Did you negotiate your CPD tasks with a manager or were you left to your own devices? [what do you think *should* happen, in this respect?]

7. Did you collaborate with anyone (e.g. colleagues) to complete any of the tasks? (e.g. the reflection on practice?) [If so, who? How did that work? Do you have advice for colleagues about collaboration?]

8. What have been your experiences with recording your CPD activities? [if using Reflect, what has it been like? Are you happy with it?]

9. Do you know how your colleagues are progressing? [Are they getting on better than you? Not so well? Do you know why? Do you talk to colleagues about it?]

10. How does your employer regard your CPD activities? [Are they aware of what you are doing? What support have you had? Have you been obstructed in any way? Has there been any change in your employer's attitude since we last talked?]

Conclusion

11. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your CPD activities?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Appendix 3

THIRD INTERVIEW WITH NEW IfL MEMBERS

Notes: Thanks for agreeing, etc; permission to record; confidentiality assured; this is the final interview in the series, and I'd like to look back over the past year and then forward to the future. (Keep transcripts of their previous two interviews handy, for reference. For new interviewees, adjust questions as necessary.)

Looking back over first year of IfL membership:

1. What are your overall impressions of your first year of IfL membership? [What have been the key benefits? The key drawbacks? What has worked for you/proved useful? What has been less useful?]
2. Has IfL membership impacted on your sense of professionalism? [If so, how? If not, why not?] *Refer back to their first interview as appropriate.*
3. Do you think the advent of the IfL has led to any changes more widely within your institution/workplaces? [e.g. is there more support available for professional development? Is the IfL referred to in college or management communications?]
4. Do you think it has changed the way other people see the sector? [If so how? If not why not?]
5. Has it impacted on colleagues, in your view? [If so, in what ways? why? Do they talk about the IfL? E.g. do they share ideas about CPD?]
6. Thinking about the CPD specifically, now that you are about to submit your CPD declaration, could you say generally what has been useful to you about the process? Why? What has been less useful? Why?
7. Did you use *Reflect*? How did you find the software? [easy? difficult? appropriate? Give reasons.] *Refer to second interview transcript as necessary.*
7. Did you read the CPD Guidelines from the IfL? Did your colleagues read them? [If so, were they helpful? If so, why? If not, why not?]
8. Has the process of reflection on practice become embedded for you now? [Will it stay with you in your day-to-day work, be a tool for future use? If so, why/how? If not, why not?]
9. How did you assess the impact of your CPD activities on your professional development and practice? [How did you measure any change that took place? How successful do you think you have been in assessing the impact of your CPD activities? How might you do this differently another time? What constitutes good practice in this area?]

10. Did you manage to personalise your CPD, and make it relevant to your specific context and needs? Did you manage to resolve any tensions between employer demands and IfL requirements? [If so how? Did your colleagues manage this?]

Looking forward to next year of membership and beyond:

11. Generally, how would you like to see the IfL as an organisation develop over the next few years?

12. How would you like to engage with the IfL in future? [What sorts of activities and links with other members would be beneficial to you? Which of its current activities are most useful to you? Why? Is there anything it currently does that you would like it not to do? Why?]

13. Will you seek QTLS or ATLS? If so why? If not, why not?
Refer to previous interview transcripts as necessary.

14. What are your plans now for your own professional development? Has your IfL membership changed the way you think about your professional future?

15. Would you be interested in closer contacts with the IfL? [e.g. writing for *In Tuition*? Participating actively, e.g. in a special interest group? Becoming more involved locally as a volunteer or in specific communities of practice?]

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME