Elaine Battams

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• Background in Childcare & Education
• 21 years as a lecturer at Barnfield College, Luton
• Involved in teacher education for 10 years
• Course Manager for teacher education for 4 years
• Awarded Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) Oct 2018
• Current role: Advanced Learning Practitioner and Course Manager for Cert Ed/PGCE
Action Research Project
Carried out as part of the ATS submission requirements

- A report on the impact of the Advanced Learning Practitioner’s (ALP) role on underperforming staff in a general FE college.
  - What are the college’s expectations on the ALP role?
  - What are staff expectations on the ALP role?
  - What support do the ALPs provide?
  - What is the impact of ALP support within the college?
Rationale

• Review of the Advanced Learning Practitioner (ALP) role in 2015 following an ‘inadequate’ grade by OFSTED in 2014

• 3 year development plan in place to improve practice

• Inconsistent management of the ALPS for some years causing some uncertainty over the role

• Teachers feeling demoralised and threatened by an uncertain future
Literature Review

• There was a lack of literature relating to advanced learning practitioners in FE. Studies in nursing were used for background reading. Research carried out by the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) which was more focussed on education, was highlighted by Tyler et al (2017) and provided some useful information for this research.

• Performance management and ALP support should be separate as this leads to a greater sense of trust and confidence (Tyler et al 2017). Linking lesson observation grades to performance management heightens stress levels (Thompson and Woolstencroft 2014).

• Changes in standards from FENTO (1999) to LLUK (2007) to LSIS/IfL (2013) to ETF/SET (2014) have resulted in the introduction of QTLS, bringing the role of the FE teacher in line with those working in schools, confirming a commitment to the Professional Standards and continuous personal development (ETF 2016).

• In 1997 it was required that FE teachers were qualified. This was then de-regulated in 2013, however many organisations have maintained this as a requirement for teachers.

• Role of the ALP is seen as essential in coaching and mentoring teachers and raising standards, as it is a more developmental, supportive process (Petty 2009, Thompson and Woolstencroft 2014).
Approach

- Interpretivist approach to gain thoughts, feelings and perceptions
- Mixed methods used to gain both qualitative and quantitative data
- Online questionnaire to teaching staff
- Semi-structured interview with Vice Principal for Transforming Curriculum and Learning
Findings

• 110 teaching staff were sent the questionnaire
• 36 responses received (33%)
• Of the 36 responses...
  • 4% teaching staff were not aware of who the ALPs are
  • Only 20% teaching staff could name all 6 ALPs
  • Mixed perceptions on the ALP role and the support that can be provided
  • Of the 58% teachers who had asked for support, 94% found it beneficial
  • 54% given ALP support as new teaching staff
  • 39% allocated ALP support following a lesson observation graded 3 or 4
Recommendations

• ALPs to be more involved in peer observations across the college.
• Case loading of staff to ALPs to allow support for all, not just new and underperforming staff.
• ALP workshops and drop in sessions to be set up to ensure a culture of ‘it’s OK to ask for help’, giving teachers the opportunity to talk about/try out new ideas in a non-threatening manner.
Issues encountered

• Distribution of online questionnaires
• Levels of response
• VP postponed the interview 3 times
• Restructure of teaching staff
• Changes in Principal and senior managers
• Restructure of ALPs
• When writing up the study, there was a loss of focus on looking just at underperforming staff
What’s next?

• All of the recommendations from the research were implemented into the ALP role in Sept 2018
• College merger Feb 2019
• Change in line management of ALPs
• Support of new Principal to review current ALP role through a second cycle of research
References


