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An investigation into the complex process of facilitating effective professional learning: CPD tutors' practices under the microscope Makopoulou, Kyriaki

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1	An investigation into the complex process of facilitating effective
2	professional learning: CPD tutors' practices under the microscope
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Abstract

**Background.** Research evidence on what makes CPD effective is accumulating. Yet, fundamental questions about the specific CPD features that lead to programme success remain. Furthermore, very little research investigates the nature and quality of CPD providers' (tutors) practices. Taking a closer look at the 'pedagogy of facilitation' (Poekert, 2011) is therefore an important direction for research in order to offer specific guidance on how to design and deliver future CPD programmes for maximum impact.

24 Purpose. The present study aimed to advance this line of inquiry by seeking to examine 25 tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a short course on Inclusive Physical Education (IPE). Two research questions were addressed: 1) What were the tutors' 26 27 perceptions of effective CPD delivery? And 2) How were these interpretations evidenced 28 in practice? The short course, delivered by 40 different tutors across the country, was 29 part of a National CPD programme which reached and educated over 5000 school staff in England. The scale of this Programme offered an ideal setting in which to address the 30 31 research questions.

Participants and setting. A case study design was adopted where the case was identified at the level of individual courses. A cluster sampling procedure was adopted (one cluster for each of the nine geographical areas in England). Where possible, systematic sampling within the nine clusters was employed (i.e. collect evidence from the first two courses delivered in each cluster each year). A total of 27 courses, delivered by

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20 tutors across eight geographical areas in England were selected as cases and all
 tutors involved in their delivery were invited to participate in the study.

39 **Data collection.** To explore tutors' perceptions of effective CPD delivery (research 40 question 1), qualitative data were collected via an online questionnaire and individual 41 interviews. To examine how these interpretations were *evidenced* in practice (research 42 question 2), both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via systematic 43 observations and ethnographic field notes.

Data analysis. Qualitative data were analysed using a constructivist approach to
 grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Data from the observations was entered into SPSS
 version 21 (IBM Statistics) for analysis.

Findings. Findings suggest that tutors' perceptions and beliefs did not always 47 materialize. Data from the observations suggest variation in the ways tutors structured, 48 49 supported, and facilitated professional learning. This variation was evident not only in the 50 actual time dedicated to practical vs. theoretical activities and active vs. passive learning opportunities but also in tutors' ability to facilitate professional learning. This finding 51 52 suggests that there is a significant set of skills involved in supporting, nurturing, and challenging professional learning in CPD contexts. It is therefore important to consider 53 how tutors can be best supported to develop and implement these skills effectively. 54

55 **Conclusion.** The results consolidate existing understandings about the importance of 56 (inter)active and practical learning opportunities in CPD; but also add nuance and detail 57 on the diverse ways in which tutors engaged participants in the learning process.

58 Findings draw our attention to the important issue of the selection and continuing 59 education of CPD tutors.

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## Keywords

Continuing Professional Development, Short Courses, Tutors' practices, Systematic
 observations, Effective facilitation / facilitators.

63

## Introduction

64 The idea that carefully designed Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes help to raise standards of teaching and learning in schools is widely 65 accepted (Higgins, Cordingley, Greany and Coe, 2016). Although research on what 66 makes CPD effective is accumulating, the evidence base is mixed and inconclusive 67 (Goodyear, 2016). Different CPD forms are rarely compared to yield firm conclusions 68 69 about cost effective forms of provision (Wayne, Suk Yoon, Zhu, Cronen and Garet, 70 2008). Equally, evaluations of individual CPD initiatives often do not 'tease apart' the 71 specific features that lead to programme success (Hill, Beisiegel and Jacob, 2013), 72 whether success is measured against teacher (e.g., improved practice) and/or pupil learning outcomes. Further robust research is thus needed to answer some of the most 73 74 pressing questions about effective CPD.

When external or internal CPD providers are involved (herein also referred to as 'providers', 'tutors' or 'facilitators' interchangeably), they are expected to play a central role (Patton et al., 2012). If what providers do during the CPD is indeed a critical factor determining CPD effectiveness, it is important for research to begin to unpack the complex, multiple and varied ways they support teachers to learn. Once providers' practices are better understood, then questions about the different forms of support (i.e., features of great tutoring) that are most likely to enable teachers to further enhance their practices can be answered. Taking a closer look at the 'pedagogy of facilitation' (Poekert, 2011) is therefore an important direction for research in order to offer specific guidance on how to design and deliver future CPD programmes for maximum impact.

85 The few studies that have started looking at the pedagogy of facilitation examine 86 tutors' thinking and decision making (Fevre and Richardson, 2002), offer insights on the 87 challenges and dilemmas encountered (Poekert, 2011), explore tutors' perceptions of 88 effective CPD facilitation (Patton and Parker, 2014), and compare tutors' and CPD 89 participants' views on the effectiveness of the CPD strategies employed (Patton, Parker 90 and Pratt, 2013). This body of literature expands understandings about the range of CPD strategies *reported* to be employed and *perceived* to be effective. However, although 91 92 significant insights on what works in specific contexts are offered, this evidence is 93 grounded in self-reports and individual evaluations of events. Researchers cannot thus be certain about what learning activities took place, how providers supported professional 94 learning, and what features of their practices were effective. 95

Existing research has also primarily examined the experiences and perspectives of facilitators involved in long-term, sustained CPD programmes (e.g., Patton et al., 2013) but little is known about the practices that are effective and feasible in CPD opportunities of shorter duration. In this context, a more nuanced understanding of not only CPD providers' perceptions (what they say they do) but also the ways they structure and support professional learning (what they actually do) in *various* CPD contexts is required.

Understanding the varied ways tutors support professional learning is an important
 starting point before trying to assess the impact of their practices on teacher (or student)
 outcomes.

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## **Study Purpose**

106 The present study aimed to advance this line of inquiry by seeking to examine tutors' 107 perceptions and practices in the context of a national CPD Programme on Inclusive 108 Physical Education (IPE), delivered in the form of a short, day-long course. Two research 109 questions were addressed: 1) What were the tutors' perceptions of effective CPD 110 delivery? And 2) How were these interpretations evidenced in practice? In order to 111 answer the second question, it was necessary to develop and validate a new systematic 112 observation tool that allowed for the delineation and identification of tutors' practices in a 113 way that has not been attempted previously.

114 From inception through to September 2016, the Programme evaluated, reached and educated over 5000 school staff in England. Relying on a large number of tutors 115 116 implementing courses with diverse participants, the scale of this Programme offered an 117 ideal setting in which to address the research questions. The research reported in this 118 paper was part of a larger, mixed method independent evaluation study, funded by the 119 Youth Sport Trust<sup>1</sup>, which had two broad objectives: (i) to measure the impact of the 120 Programme; and (ii) to examine the quality of CPD implementation in order to provide 121 evidence based recommendations to improve future activities. The present paper is 122 concerned with the second objective and the methods outlined are those that were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Charity in England seeking to support and improve the provision of physical education and school sport (https://www.youthsporttrust.org/)

adopted to answer research questions about *CPD processes* and the quality ofimplementation.

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## Effective professional learning: The role of the provider

In both policy (Department of Education, DoE, 2016) and research (Higgins et al., 2016), 126 127 the value of professional development that is sustained, collaborative and in situ is 128 increasingly recognised. However, teachers rarely have the resources (e.g., time, 129 funding) to pursue the kind of prolonged and intensive professional learning that research 130 suggests has a substantial impact on student learning (Cordingley, Higgins, Greany, 131 Buckler, et al., 2015). The workplace learning literature also highlights the importance of 132 regular access to external expertise in various contexts, as external partners can 133 stimulate new thinking and offer challenge and support to practitioners to improve their 134 practices (Stoll, Harris and Handscomb, 2012).

135 Whilst accessing external expertise is undoubtedly a necessary component of CPD, one-shot opportunities have been criticised for failing to support meaningful and 136 137 deep level change (Higgins et al., 2016). Critics' concerns revolve around the 'artificial 138 separation' of knowledge from practice (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung, 2007); and 139 the passive transmission of intellectually superficial content to large groups of teachers 140 without careful consideration of individual contexts and diverse professional learning 141 needs (Armour and Makopoulou, 2012; Patton et al., 2012). A deficit approach is also 142 frequently reportedly adopted, as effective CPD appears to be primarily about the success of information-giving activities (Armour, Quennerstedt, Chambers and 143 144 Makopoulou, 2017).

145 Despite these concerns, recent studies have found that well designed short courses can bring positive participant outcomes (Lauer, Christopher, Pirpo-Triplett et al., 146 147 2014) and have a 'considerable and lasting impact on teaching and learning' (Cordingley 148 et al., 2015, p. 15). It is also apparent that the quality of provision can vary significantly 149 within and across programmes (DfE 2016; Higgins et al 2016). Therefore, it is erroneous 150 to assume that all courses are ineffective by default. Ensuring 'adequate' or sufficient 151 time for CPD participation does not, on its own, guarantee success. What matters is how 152 the time is used and the extent to which the CPD experience enables teachers to refine 153 ideas, embed approaches and change their practices in ways that benefit pupils (DfE, 154 2016).

How teachers engage in the learning process, and more specifically the 155 156 opportunities they have for active engagement, is a critical programme design feature 157 (Desimore, 2009). Participant-centered CPD (Patton et al., 2012) reflects a constructivist 158 perspective on learning which suggests that learning is neither linear nor straightforward; 159 it rather involves a process of knowledge construction, reconstruction and remaking 160 (Dewey, 1938) and is more likely to occur as a result of meaningful engagement with 161 material and activities (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development -162 OECD, 2007). The implications for CPD are clear. Professional learning is maximised when teachers are treated as knowledge creating professionals rather than passive 163 164 recipients of 'simplistic formulas or cookie-cutter routines' (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 165 5).

166 Contemporary theories of learning (i.e. social constructivism, situated learning) 167 also encourage teachers to access others' 'practical wisdom' (Shulman, 2007) and

168 diverse approaches. Although difficult to monitor and accredit and certainly not a 169 panacea, research shows that when certain conditions are in place, collaborative learning 170 is valued by teachers and can have an impact on their practices (Stoll et al., 2012). 171 Professional learning is also perceived to be effective when professionals have 172 opportunities to construct knowledge through the mediation of a facilitating agent (i.e. 173 tutor; Day, 2015). The notion of social scaffolding (Bruner, 1983) is particularly relevant in 174 the context of this study. To maximise professional learning, it is argued, tutors need to 175 not only provide high quality, innovative and challenging content but also be effective 176 facilitators by creating the right social infrastructures (Wenger, 1998) that support 177 learning in effective ways. What the facilitation process involves can however be 178 interpreted differently by different tutors.

179 Research suggests that one fundamental aspect of effective facilitation involves 180 helping teachers to ground new ideas into existing practices (Patton et al., 2012). 181 Experienced PE-CPD facilitators argue that understanding teachers' contexts, listening to 182 their voices (by creating a safe environment where teachers can voice their thoughts), 183 and making teachers feel valued so that they have the confidence to engage in the 184 process fully is paramount (Patton et al., 2012). Given the diversity of teachers' learning 185 needs and contexts, conscious efforts to diversify the CPD content to make it relevant to 186 its participants should thus be evident in CPD programmes (Higgins et al., 2016). In this 187 context, the need for a personalised and tailored approach to teachers' CPD is widely 188 acknowledged (Louws, Meirik, van Veen and van Driel, 2017).

189 Another important element of effective facilitation is for tutors to not only 'provide 190 structure without dictating' (Patton et al., 2013, p.34) but also support, challenge and

<sup>191</sup> 'push' (Poekert, 2011) teachers to transcend established (and sometimes outdated) <sup>192</sup> understandings and practices. Researchers suggest that tutors need to act as <sup>193</sup> independent honest brokers (Whitehouse, 2011), to offer teachers opportunities to <sup>194</sup> explore alternative modes of teaching (Kennedy, 2016) in meaningful contexts (Hunuk, <sup>195</sup> 2017) and to create opportunities for discussion that are both affirmative and <sup>196</sup> contradictory in order to introduce 'disequilibrium' (Patton et al., 2012, 530).

197 Experienced PE-CPD tutors acknowledge the importance of problematizing aspects of teachers' practice through critical analysis; and argue that when such 198 199 interactions are in place, teachers can experience 'real and 'deep level' changes (Patton 200 and Parker, 2014). Poekert (2011) however also cautions that although tutors are 201 generally effective at providing resources and advice, engaging teachers in self-reflection 202 and critical analysis is a much more challenging task. Achieving the right balance between leading (i.e. providing expert input, resources), listening (i.e. understanding 203 204 teachers' contexts and learning needs) and *challenging* teachers is considered one of the 205 great complexities of tutoring (Higgins et al 2016).

206 In summary, whilst in educational research the quality of teaching appears to be 207 'the single biggest factor determining pupil learning outcomes' (Pianta and Hamre, 2009, 208 p. 1), tutors' practices (i.e., the ways they support or facilitate effective professional 209 learning) are rarely examined in a detailed and systematic way. Research that seeks to examine tutors' practices is therefore an important step in developing a more nuanced 210 211 understanding of aspects of programme delivery that support meaningful and impactful 212 professional learning. Yet, examining specific tutoring practices in the context of 213 evaluation poses a number of challenges as no established, valid and reliable measures

have been reported in the literature. This necessitated the development of an innovative
methodological approach and this is explained and justified in the next section.

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## Methods

## 217 The context

Launched in 2013, the CPD Programme aimed to increase the competence and confidence of primary, secondary, and trainee teachers (as well as other adults involved in the education of children) to deliver high quality Inclusive Physical Education (IPE). The Programme was delivered in the form of a one-off, six-hour course. The 'inclusion spectrum<sup>2</sup>', developed by Black and Stevenson (Stevenson, 2009) in the UK, provided the theoretical framework (or 'theory of instruction', Wayne et al., 2008) for the programme.

The content and structure of the courses were designed and reviewed centrally by experts on inclusion. The delivery was the responsibility of approximately 40 tutors consisting mainly of PE teachers working in secondary or special schools with tutoring experience, or independent consultants. Tutors were invited to participate in 'tutor development days' approximately twice a year, during which course material was presented, explained and debated, practical sessions to illustrate examples of effective course implementation were included, and issues of concern were discussed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>The main principle of the Inclusion Spectrum is that all students can be included and challenged to progress in their learning when teachers design the learning environment by including 'open' (i.e. all learners participate in activities that do not emphasise individual differences), 'modified' (i.e. provide differentiated instruction using the STEP tool), 'parallel' (i.e. ability groups) or 'separate' (i.e. temporary interventions aligned with the learning objectives of the lesson) activities – or through a process called 'reverse integration' where all pupils participate in disability sport (Stevenson, 2009).

232 Although variability in delivery was anticipated, detailed course material for tutors was made available to ensure that the key deliverables were implemented adequately by 233 234 different tutors. Contemporary approaches to CPD design were apparent in the 235 philosophy of the programme in various ways. For example, tutors were expected to 236 facilitate discussions about theoretical and practical issues, provide hands-on and 237 innovative practical activities to explore effective IPE into practice, support participants to 238 develop effective inclusive pedagogies by having opportunities to 'design and modify' 239 activities in practical settings, foster sharing of expertise, and engage participants in 240 'action planning' through reflection. Overall, there was a clear emphasis on practical and 241 interactive professional learning experiences and this shaped the content and purpose of 242 the data collection tools employed in the evaluation research.

## 243 **Research design and sampling**

A case study design (Thomas and Myers, 2015) was adopted where the case was 244 identified at the level of individual courses. To capture the anticipated variation in 245 246 programme implementation, and given the ad hoc nature of course advertising and 247 delivery, a cluster sampling procedure was considered the most appropriate and 248 applicable method. Each of the nine geographical areas in England was identified as a 249 cluster (nine clusters in total). Where possible, systematic sampling within the nine 250 clusters was employed with the aim to collect evidence from the first two courses delivered in each cluster each year. However, this was not always possible in practice 251 252 due to tutor response and availability.

253 Between October 2013 and September 2015, a total of 27 courses, delivered by 20 tutors across eight<sup>3</sup> geographical areas were observed in their entirety (all six hours). 254 255 17 tutors were observed only once whilst 1 and 2 tutors were observed 4 and 3 times 256 each respectively. From this sample, and at the start of each course, all course 257 participants (n= 450, with an average of 20 participants per course) as well as the course 258 tutors were invited to participate in the study. Although course participants engaged in a 259 range of research activities, the purpose and focus of the present paper is on tutors' perceptions and practices. 260

## 261 Data collection tools

To explore tutors' perceptions of effective CPD delivery (research question 1), qualitative data were collected via an online questionnaire and individual interviews. To develop a realistic and contextual understanding of how these interpretations were *evidenced* in practice (research question 2), both quantitative and qualitative data were collected via systematic observations and ethnographic field notes.

## 267 Tutor questionnaire

All tutors involved in the delivery of the programme (n=40) were invited to complete an anonymous online questionnaire at the end of the second year of the evaluation (May 2015). The questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions asking tutors to provide details on the features of their practices that they believed were effective (i.e. supported

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Courses from eight rather than all nine geographic areas in England were observed as, during the timeframe of the research, only a limited number of courses were delivered in one area and observations were not possible due to lack of tutor response.

272 meaningful professional learning with the aim to improve pupils' PE experiences).
273 Eighteen tutors (45% response rate) provided full responses.

## 274 Tutor interviews

275 Each tutor delivering the courses observed (n=20) was invited to and participated in one 276 face-to-face, individual interview that was in most cases conducted informally as the 277 situation allowed (e.g., taking place during breaks or at the end of the courses observed). 278 The aims of these interviews were to explore tutors' views about the features of effective 279 CPD, discuss their reasoning about the strategies they employed during the course of the 280 day, understand some of the challenges they encountered, and to determine how they 281 could be best supported to deliver a high quality CPD experience. The duration of the 282 interviews with each tutor ranged from 10 to 30 minutes and they were conducted by the 283 author, who in most cases made extensive notes of tutors' comments/responses as 284 audio recording the discussions was not a possible option (e.g., noisy environment, tutors 285 on the move).

### 286

## Systematic course observations and ethnographic field notes

Observation is an established research tool in both qualitative and quantitative research. Used well, it has the potential to enable researchers to 'get close to' and develop in-depth understandings of social practices studied (Ohman and Quennerstedt, 2012). While there is little research regarding the use of systematic observation in teachers' CPD settings, there is a long and rich history of systematic observation in education and physical education (Grossman, Loeb, Cohen and Whychoff, 2013; Pianta and Hamre, 2009). In

this evaluation, the work of McKenzie (2012) was drawn upon in order to develop an
 observation tool, called the Observation of Tutors' Practices (or OTP)<sup>4</sup>.

295 Observations can focus on a range of domains but should be carried out with consideration as to what is feasible given the available resources (Schoenfeld, 2014). In 296 297 the context of this study, decisions on the specific domains to be included were grounded in a careful analysis of the programme aims and philosophy. More specifically, particular 298 299 emphasis was placed on how tutors supported participants to engage in 'active 300 professional learning', offered opportunities for practical application, facilitated tasks and 301 interactions, and tailored provision. The observation tool provided space for two types of 302 data to be collected simultaneously: systematic coding of pedagogical practices and 303 ethnographic field notes regarding the nature of those practices.

The first type of data collected involved a detailed coding system which was developed to record systematically (for every one minute interval) tutors' pedagogical practices in terms of the *time* allocated to 'active' or 'passive' opportunities as well as the division between theory and practice. A partial-internal recording (Subramaniam & Wuest, 2017) was adopted; i.e., coding the tutor behaviour that dominated the first thirty seconds of each minute, giving the observer time to code and collect other relevant data (field notes) about the events during the second half of the minute interval.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> A copy of the systematic observation tool and questions that guided the collection of qualitative field notes can be obtained from the author upon request.

311 The domain of 'active' engagement included tutors setting tasks that enabled 312 participants to: (i) engage in discussions about an issue/concept (e.g., the features of 313 learners who make progress in PE); (ii) reflect upon theoretical or practical ideas and 314 elaborate on how these can be used in different contexts; (iii) design, modify, and apply 315 different inclusive activities in small groups; (iv) explain the activities they created verbally 316 or through demonstrations; (v) teach the activities they created to other participants or 317 pupils; and (vi) provide a clear rationale for the perceived effectiveness of their modified 318 activities.

319 The domain of 'passive engagement' was intended to focus on those occasions 320 when tutors delivered material in relation to the theory of instruction (e.g., present the 321 inclusion spectrum and explain its components); offered examples or led practical 322 activities to illustrate the practical application of the model or discuss other effective 323 inclusive practices; or set equipment and tasks. The extent to which tutors offered 324 practical opportunities, and the content and purpose of these opportunities were also 325 captured. For example, different codes were noted when tutors set up equipment and explained a range of progression tasks while participants were watching a demonstration 326 327 as opposed to tutors allocating time for participants to experience vicariously the activity.

The second type of data collected involved taking detailed open-ended field notes on the nature and quality of tasks set by the tutors and their ability to facilitate participant engagement. Informed by theory and research on effective CPD, and guided by a set of questions, the observer examined and monitored the ways in (and extent to) which tutors tailored provision, facilitated discussions, probed participants' thinking and made effective use of questioning and feedback. As an illustration, examples of guiding questions in

relation to 'tailoring provision' included: Did tutors check whether participants were familiar with material presented? Did tutors ask about existing IPE practices (what works – or not – and why)? Did tutors check participants' existing knowledge and did they use this information to shape the content of the course? Did tutors support participants to explore ways to implement new ideas into their PE lessons?

## 339 **Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was established by data triangulation and member reflections (Smith and McGannon, 2017). The collection of evidence using multiple data collection tools ensured that data triangulation was possible; and results are reported accordingly.

344 Member reflections were possible both during and following the end of each tutor interview. During the interviewing process, tutors were probed to elaborate further on the 345 346 issues discussed and sought clarification when required in order to collect rich, detailed 347 and accurate data. At the end of each interview, a summary containing key points from 348 the interview was created by the researcher and discussed in length with the tutors in 349 order to ensure that the researcher's interpretations reflected tutors' perspectives and to, 350 generate additional data (if something was omitted or not extensively discussed 351 previously). The trustworthiness of the results from the field notes was ensured by 352 randomly selecting tutors observed (n=4), developing a course report including a 353 summary of the key points identified, sharing the report with the selected tutors and 354 engaging in discussions with them about their views on the key themes reported.

355 Validity and reliability

356 The systematic observation tool was developed through an extensive partnership-based process between the author and programme designers<sup>5</sup>. Although the results reported in 357 358 this paper derive from observations conducted by the author, the initial reliability of the 359 observation tool was also tested. Two research associates observed two separate 360 courses each, alongside the lead researcher (author). Pearson's correlations and t-tests were conducted to examine the relationships and mean differences between the ratings 361 362 made by the lead researcher and the two research associates. The results revealed the ratings made by the different observers to be strongly positively correlated (r=.0.74) and 363 364 to reflect a good degree of inter-observer reliability (M ICC = 0.93 and 0.91).

365 To test the observation tool's convergent validity, results in relation to the 366 percentage of time allocated to active and passive learning were compared to course participants' responses to the end-of-course questionnaire. All participants attending the 367 368 courses observed completed two items pertaining to their opportunities for active learning at the end of each course<sup>6</sup>. Pearson correlation analyses showed that there were 369 370 significant positive correlations between the data from the observations (percentage of time allocated to active learning) and the participants' perceptions of the opportunities to 371 put ideas forward (construct knowledge) (r = .19, p = .005) and opportunities to share 372 knowledge (r = .26, p < .001). 373

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Initial codes were developed by the author following the observation of four separate courses, which provided a sharper understanding of the diversity of tutor practices. These codes were then piloted during four additional courses. The final codes were reviewed by programme designers to ensure clarity and alignment with programme expectations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> In this course, I had opportunities to 'put ideas forward' and 'share knowledge and ideas with other participants and/or the tutor'. Participants responded to these statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all in agreement*) to 7 (*completely in agreement*).

## **Data analysis**

Qualitative data were analysed using elements of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006). The process of data analysis was *ongoing*; *iterative* (to enable further data collection when required) and *theoretically sensitive* as the researcher acknowledged entering the fieldwork 'cognisant of sensitive concepts that provided a point of departure for data collection' and analysis (Weed, 2017, p. 152).

Once data were available, the researcher engaged in initial coding - an incidentby-incident analysis seeking to describe phenomena and attach names or labels to data extracts. This was supported by memo writing (i.e. initial interpretations of evidence) (Charmaz, 2006) and constant comparisons between codes to decide which belonged together (Harry, Sturges, and Kllinger, 2005). The process was *theoretically sensitive* as codes were developed and compared not just with other codes but also with theory and research to ensure that the results remained grounded (Weed, 2017).

As a result of the constant comparison, categories were developed. For example, codes revolving around the notion of learning with and from other participants (e.g., "share ideas with others in similar positions", "debate teaching approaches", "discuss barriers", "explore realistic ways to include pupils") were grouped under the category of "The importance of interactions". Different categories (e.g., "The importance of interactions"; "Opportunities to construct knowledge") were then clustered together under the relevant themes (e.g., "Engaging participants in 'active' learning").

394 The quantitative data from the observations were entered into SPSS version 21 395 (IBM Statistics) for analysis. Separate percentages were created for the amount of time dedicated to theory vs. practice as well as active vs. passive learning. Descriptive
statistics were conducted to identify mean scores per course. As reported earlier,
Pearson's correlation and t-tests were conducted to test the observation tool's
convergent validity and intra-reliability.

400

## Results

401 Tutors appeared to share some fundamental assumptions about effective CPD 402 implementation, including the importance of affording opportunities for practical 403 experiences (theme 1), tailoring provision (theme 2) and engaging participants in 404 (inter)active learning (theme 3). Course observations however showed a degree of 405 variation in the ways different tutors offered such opportunities and facilitated 406 professional learning (theme 4). In the following section, field notes from observations 407 and quotes from the tutor questionnaire and interviews are identified with the initial 408 capitals (Course - C, Tutor Questionnaire - TQ and Interview - Int) while each tutor or 409 course has been given a unique numerical code (e.g., TQ-4, Int-4, C-4).

## 410 Offering opportunities for practical engagement

When interviewed, all tutors believed that offering practical experiences was one of the most important components of effective delivery. There was consensus that professionals learn by doing and that opportunities for '*hands-on*' experiences were pivotal in supporting participants to develop a '*good understanding*' (TQ-9) of effective IPE and to be '*confident to begin the process of change within their own delivery*' (TQ-14). Evidence from course observations showed that all tutors led practical sessions aimed at enhancing participants' understanding of the application of the inclusion 20 spectrum, through demonstrations and explanations on how this can be applied in
practice. In most cases, these were tutor-led, vicarious experiences with participants
engaging in tasks as learners.

Aligned with the course material, most tutors (with the exception of courses 5, 14 and 26) also encouraged participants to design and modify practical activities using some of the key principles of IPE introduced earlier in the course. Some tutors believed that the practical dimension was strengthened when participants had opportunities to work with and teach '*real pupils*' (C-11) because it is a '*memorable*' experience that '*gives staff confidence to include all* (TQ-2). They, however, acknowledged that this was not always feasible.

428 Despite consensus about the importance of practical opportunities, course 429 observations identified variation in the percentage of time dedicated to theoretical input 430 and opportunities for practical application. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of the theory/practice divide per course. In 55% of the courses observed, tutors dedicated more 431 432 time to theory/discussion than practical application. In four of these courses (9, 14, 15 433 and 16), only 30% of the duration of the course was practical. This finding suggests that 434 tutors made alterations to the suggested course structure with some offering fewer 435 opportunities for practical application than anticipated by programme designers. For 436 example, two tutors (C-9 and C-15) encouraged participants to design activities in a non-437 practical setting (roundtables) with neither access to equipment nor opportunities to 438 demonstrate and analyse the activities they had created / modified.

439 Evidence from field notes suggest that tutors' practices also varied in the ways 440 and extent to which they explained, justified and theorised the tasks they led. More 441 specifically, in most of the tutor-led practical sessions, there was a clear emphasis on the 442 'how' and 'what' of the activity. All tutors shared the rationale of the activity demonstrated 443 and encouraged participants to consider the links between the inclusion spectrum and 444 the activity at hand in order to develop a more in-depth understanding of its practical 445 application. However, only a small number (n=4) encouraged participants to examine the 446 activities presented in a critical and reflective way (e.g., 'Would such an approach be 447 relevant to my pupils, how, and why?' 'Who would benefit if this approach was adopted, and why?' or 'In what ways does this approach deviate from what I currently offer?' 'Can I 448 449 implement this activity with my learners or not and why? What do I need to change to 450 make it feasible in my school context?'). This finding suggests that most tutors missed 451 opportunities to tailor provision and this is an issue expanded upon in the next section.

## 452 **Tailoring provision**

Some tutors argued that effective CPD is evident when participants 'complete [the 453 454 course] with their questions answered' (TQ-21). They talked about the importance of 455 'listening to them [participants] and valuing their experience' (TQ-3); 'identifying what participants' starting points are, just as we would with a class and try to move everybody 456 457 in some way' (TQ-7); and 'using open questions to bring out their understanding' (TQ-458 15). Identifying participants' needs prior to workshop implementation (TQ-3) or through 459 targeted questions at the beginning of the workshop was crucial to these tutors in order to understand what participants were 'hoping to learn' (TQ-2) and consequently enable 460

them to make appropriate adaptations to the content of the workshop 'to tailor [provision]
to the needs of participants' (TQ-4).

A few tutors (n=5) however were not convinced that tailoring provision to this degree and for every participant was possible because of the nature and duration of the course (TQ-14). Limited time was reported to be the main barrier. One tutor strongly believed that the only way to overcome this was to offer '*a different type of CPD experience*', with the provision of a '*longer summer workshop and regular meetings throughout the year*' (Int-6).

469 Other tutors (n=8) meanwhile believed that tailoring provision, one of the most important albeit challenging aspects of their delivery (Int-4), was possible if sufficient time 470 471 for relevant tasks was 'built-in' the course material (TQ-12) and clear guidance was 472 offered on how much time to dedicate on this. As one tutor explained, 'there should be 473 dedicated time on the course for discussion. Barriers [to inclusion] are inputted on one of 474 the tasks but we are advised not to dwell (TQ-18). To be better prepared to respond to 475 participants' questions effectively, one tutor recommended that they should have 476 opportunities to share experiences by 'discuss[ing] questions which arise' (TQ-12) during 477 tutor development days.

Despite their good intentions, evidence from field notes suggested that most tutors made limited (if any) meaningful connections between the CPD experience and participants' existing practices. In most cases, tutors (with the exception of two) allowed insufficient opportunity for participants to talk about their existing practices at the start of the course; to provide examples of what they perceived to be high quality IPE in the

483 context of their school; or to discuss the pedagogical challenges encountered. Most 484 discussions revolved around external barriers to inclusion (e.g., worrying parents, 485 Teaching Assistants who take over pupils' learning, lack of resources and facilities) but little attention was given to pedagogical considerations in relation to inclusive teaching 486 487 and learning. There was also little evidence of in-depth analysis of existing effective or ineffective practices, meaningful discussions on how these related to the model 488 489 presented in the course (as explained at the end of the previous section), or sharing of ideas on ways to overcome real or perceived barriers to embed new knowledge in 490 practice<sup>7</sup>. 491

492 Although some tutors claimed that they made conscious efforts to identify 493 participants' questions and to adapt the content of the course based on these needs, 494 there was little evidence of pedagogical differentiation to ensure that participants with different roles, responsibilities, knowledge, attitudes, and needs or priorities experienced 495 496 a more personalised CPD. Only one out of the three tutors who were observed more than 497 once showed a degree of content diversification and 'on the spot' adaptation based on 498 the background, questions or needs of the participants. In the case of the other two 499 tutors, both the content and delivery mode of the different courses varied very little - if at all. For example, courses 6, 14 and 26 were delivered by the same tutor and had 500 identical content and tasks. This suggests a degree of pre-specification and 501

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> In C3, for example, participants sought the tutor's advice about feasible ways to include elements of the inclusion spectrum in their contexts especially in relation different activity areas (e.g., dance, gymnastics, games) or when the conditions were challenging (e.g., 'very busy class' with some 'very naughty children'). However, the tutor offered very brief responses stressing the importance of effective planning without further investigation of existing practices, specific school cultures or barriers teachers or learners encountered.

standardisation of the IPE course. It could be therefore argued that overall, and despite
their intentions and beliefs, most tutors missed opportunities to offer tailored support.

## 504 Engaging participants in 'active' learning

505 Evidence from tutor interviews and questionnaires suggested that there was an 506 embedded, and to some extent, shared understanding that participants need 507 opportunities to engage actively in learning and to share knowledge and experiences, in 508 order to have '*some ownership of the day*' (TQ-6).

509 Some tutors believed that the development of professional practice should come 510 from the participants themselves. Despite their extensive experience working with pupils 511 with diverse and complex needs, they did not consider themselves as the experts who 512 should merely transmit knowledge. They believed that participants have a 'wealth of 513 experience' (Int-1) and a workable understanding of their learners and practices (Int-7), 514 and this experience needed to be shared in order to maximise learning for all involved. 515 As one tutor put it, 'By sharing challenges and ideas with colleagues in similar positions 516 they will gain more realistic and practical ways to include pupils' (TQ-14). Establishing a 517 'relaxed atmosphere' (Int-10) where people 'move around, interact with others' (Int-4) and 518 feel 'safe to talk, share their views' (Int-8) and 'try out different ideas' (TQ-8) was 519 considered important.

In contrast, a small number of tutors (n=5) described their role as pivotal in providing (delivering) feasible and innovative ideas, including '*practical examples and suggestions*' for '*participants to take away*' and use in their own contexts (TQ-6). In some cases, tutors were concerned that their tutoring style would result in a less engaging and

524 interactive course than desired, planned and anticipated. For example, tutors admitted to 525 the habit of *'talking too much instead of taking a step back'* (Int-4) or feeling under 526 pressure to *'give as much information to participants'* as possible in the short space of 527 time available (Int-14).

528 Some tutors (n=4) however believed that their approach to course delivery was not 529 fixed but dependent on who the participants were and what kinds of support they needed. 530 When participants demonstrated limited subject knowledge (as it was expected when 531 working with primary staff, Int-5) or lacked confidence in teaching PE (Int-9), some tutors 532 believed that a more direct approach in their delivery was preferred.

533 Evidence from course observations identified significant variation in CPD 534 implementation. The means for active and passive learning, as captured by the 535 systematic observations, indicated that in general tutors offered more 'passive' than 536 'active' learning opportunities. A breakdown of the percentage of active/passive divide 537 per course is reported in table 1, showing that although a few tutors (1%) achieved a 538 balance between the two (50/50), in the majority of courses observed (74%), tutors' input 539 appeared to dominate the experience. This was particularly the case for three courses (5, 540 6, 14 and 26). On the other hand, the tutors in courses 11, 20, 21 and 22 offered 541 substantially more and different opportunities for active engagement, including 542 collaborative lesson planning and co-teaching of PE classes. In these instances, 543 participants were encouraged to be actively engaged and to contribute to the workshop 544 experience for more than 60% of the duration of each course.

545 Different tutors also seemed to value (and afford) different professional learning activities. For example, some tutors (n=14) encouraged whole group discussion and 546 547 sharing of ideas following group tasks, whilst others (n=6) did not appear to incorporate 548 such activities in their delivery. In those cases, tutors missed opportunities to engage 549 participants in pedagogical discussions and to share insights generated widely. 550 Furthermore, although some tutors provided opportunities for participants to 'try out' their ideas by teaching children (n=2) or, more frequently, other participants (n=4), this 551 552 pedagogical approach was not embedded in a number of the courses observed (e.g., C-553 23 to C-27). This variation in provision is illustrated in figure 2.

## 554 Facilitating professional learning

555 Field notes suggested that tutors' practices differed not only in the selection of the 556 learning activities but also in the ways in which tutors facilitated participant engagement. 557 Examples of pedagogical strategies identified to facilitate professional learning included tutors clearly demonstrating examples of inclusive teaching (n=15), articulating the 558 559 thoughts and reasons that underpinned activities demonstrated (n=10), making 560 suggestions to allow participants to see other possibilities in the activity they created 561 (n=3), responding and addressing participants' questions and misconceptions (n=5), and 562 asking participants questions that encouraged them to explain and justify the decisions 563 made (n=4). When facilitated skilfully (e.g. C-11, C-13), discussions were linked 564 effectively to the practical or theoretical aspect of the workshop, to the participants' 565 practices, and to a shared vision about outstanding PE; with these opportunities adding an important dimension to the whole experience. 566

567 An illustrative example was evident in course 11 where the tutor asked 568 participants to consider ways to include pupils with Special Educational Needs and 569 Disabilities (SEND) in competitive games activities. The extract below illustrates how this 570 tutor used questions to encourage participants to consider potential barriers to 571 participation, discuss alternative possibilities, and to justify their thinking and decision 572 making:

- 573 Tutor: How can you include SEND participants in invasion games? 574 Participants share ideas – they build upon each others' suggestions
- 575 Tutor: But what can you do to ensure that this disabled child gets the 576 touches....? How can you ensure that this child is truly included and not in 577 the periphery of the game? *Participants hesitate. Two primary teachers* 578 offer some suggestions about zone play and change of rules.
- 579 Tutor: How do you adapt that? *Two participants draw upon the STEP<sup>8</sup> tool* 580 *previously discussed to make adaptations using space and people.*
- 581 Tutor: Which approach is best in that case and why? *One participant offers* 582 *his rationale*.

## 583 Tutor: But then, what can you do to ensure that this student (SEND) is 584 safe?

585 However, in many other courses observed (with the exception of courses 4, 11, 18 and 586 21), field notes suggest that questions were employed as a means to either check

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> All pupils can be included and challenged to progress in their learning if and when their teachers differentiate activities by Space, Task, Equipment or People (STEP)

587 participants' understandings or monitor how the delivery was going as opposed to 588 incorporating questions for their value as a pedagogical tool.

589 Equally, only a few tutors encouraged participants to elaborate on their responses 590 or to explain the rationale that underpinned their modifications (e.g., how and why 591 activities were modified, to what end and for whom) (n=5). Whilst most tutors asked 592 participants to share their ideas with the whole group following group tasks (enhancing 593 opportunities for ideas dissemination between participants) (e.g., C21-15), only a small 594 number commented on participants' suggestions and thoughts (n=3, e.g., C-21). In most 595 of these cases, tutors' comments involved praise ('well done: that is a very good practical 596 illustration', C-26) or merely the reiteration of key points raised by participants' 597 responses. Crucially, there was little scrutiny of the quality, effectiveness and application 598 of the 'end product' (the outcome of group activities), as explained in the extract from the 599 observer's field notes below:

600 When asked to share their activities with the other groups, no discussion on how 601 (and why) they adapted and what worked and did not work occurred at the end of 602 the session. Despite approaching me earlier raising concerns about the uninspired activities developed by participants, and the lack of innovation in their thinking 603 604 around inclusion, the tutor neither provided feedback about the ways participants modified activities (and how it could be improved or applied), nor raised questions 605 606 to make participants think critically about the effectiveness of their ideas (fieldnotes, C-18). 607

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## Discussion

This paper set out to examine CPD tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a 'traditional' day-long course. By exploring tutors' perceptions on effective delivery and by observing them in action, a number of pedagogical strategies reflecting the international CPD literature were identified but also areas for consideration were raised.

613 Most tutors had strong views about the importance of embedding a practical 614 element in the courses they delivered, encouraging participants to experiment with and share their ideas. This is not a surprising finding as it reflects an accumulative body of 615 616 CPD knowledge (e.g., Desimore, 2009; Day, 2015). Data from the observations though 617 suggest variation in the ways tutors structured, supported, and facilitated professional 618 learning. This variation was evident not only in the actual time dedicated to practical vs. 619 theoretical activities and active vs. passive learning opportunities but also in the quality of 620 implementation (i.e., tutors' ability to facilitate professional learning). The variation 621 identified was perhaps anticipated given the large number of tutors involved. Yet, given 622 the limited evidence of pedagogical and content adaptations in the courses in order to 623 address the needs of the participants, this finding draws attention to the important issue 624 of the selection and continuing education of tutors.

625 CPD research suggests that effective professional learning requires some 626 'disequilibrium' as participants' existing theories, beliefs and practices are challenged in a 627 non-threatening way (Higgins et al., 2016). It is argued that activities that foster 628 participants to debate ideas, discuss and rationalise pedagogical decisions, and to draw 629 upon and question existing practices are grounded in and aligned with constructivist 630 understandings of professional learning (Reich, Rooney and Boud, 2015). Although one 631 could contest that the duration of the course posed significant limits to what was feasible, it was nonetheless evident that a small number of tutors offered such learning opportunities and attempted to tailor provision. Most tutors however appeared to lack the conceptual and practical tools to engage in the process effectively. This finding suggests that there is a significant set of skills involved in supporting, nurturing, and challenging professional learning in CPD contexts. It is therefore important to consider how tutors can be best supported to develop and implement these skills effectively.

638 When preparing a large number of tutors to deliver a CPD programme, setting 639 clear expectations about the features of effective implementation is an important first 640 step. In the context of the programme evaluated, there was a consistent effort to do this 641 through tutor development days and the provision of detailed course material. However, 642 evidence suggested that the importance of practical activities was not embedded in all 643 courses observed despite consensus amongst tutors about the importance of experiential 644 learning. Furthermore, it appeared that tutors needed further support in developing an in-645 depth understanding of the multi-layered and complex nature of effective facilitation. 646 More specifically, it is proposed that tutors needed opportunities to closely examine their 647 own practice and assumptions about effective facilitation, consider more deeply what 648 their understanding of active construction of knowledge and sharing of expertise involved, and to reflect upon and question the extent to which they provided high quality 649 650 theoretical or practical experiences and facilitated professional learning in meaningful 651 ways.

652 CPD research suggests that to transform practice in a way that benefits pupils, 653 CPD providers need to ensure that participants have ample opportunities to explore 654 different teaching approaches in a critical way and analyse them in light of their own,

655 'ongoing' and sometimes embedded 'systems of practice' (Kennedy, 2016). Such critical engagement was nevertheless absent from most courses observed. It is therefore 656 657 recommended that at a practical level and in the context of this and similar programmes, 658 tutors need support in developing their understanding of how (and when) to: (i) take a 659 step back, be observant and listen to participants' experiences and questions; (ii) make effective pedagogical interventions to challenge participants' perceptions and existing 660 661 practices: (iii) offer 'vivid portraits of alternative models of teaching' (Kennedy, 1998, 3): and (iv) support participants to not only *experiment* with different ideas/strategies but also 662 articulate their understandings (Michael, 2006), evaluate (scrutinise) their ideas, and 663 664 synthesise new with existing understandings.

665 Meaningful engagement and learning can also be achieved by ensuring that learning activities are rooted in evidence of what and how professionals do (Boud and 666 667 Hager, 2012) so that existing beliefs and practices are shared, articulated, discussed, 668 reflected upon, compared to the new professional learning, and - when required problematized and reviewed (Timplerley et al., 2007). Locating participants' needs and 669 questions centre stage also requires a shift in the ways tutors structure the learning 670 671 environment and highlights the importance of demonstrating the ability to adapt - rather 672 than standardise - CPD content.

673

## Conclusion

The research community is under considerable pressure to improve the precision of studies on the effects of CPD (Day, 2015) in order to offer trustworthy and clear evaluations for its the benefit to policy makers and practitioners. There are many ways to do so. The present study focused on CPD input, namely what happens during the CPD programme, and examined tutors' perceptions and practices in the context of a short course. The results consolidate existing understandings about the perceived importance of (inter)active and practical learning opportunities in CPD; but also add nuance and detail on the diverse ways in which tutors engaged participants in the learning process.

The results suggest that effective tutoring is a dynamic, complex and multidimensional process. Providing a blueprint with a set of fixed skills and knowledge that tutors should display or develop in order to be effective in their delivery might be restrictive and certainly not sufficient in the long term. Rather, it is important that those responsible for the education of CPD providers offer meaningful and sustained support so that tutors develop a nuanced and critical understanding of the relevant literature and their own practices.

689 In the context of the teacher effectiveness literature, the use of lesson observations to evaluate the quality of teaching is growing in popularity (Mashburn et al., 690 691 2014) and this body of literature has an important role to play in delineating the aspects 692 of teaching associated with student learning and achievement. It is argued here that 693 pursuing a similar line of inquiry in CPD research and understanding how tutors facilitate 694 effective professional learning is important for at least two reasons. First, this type of evidence can be used diagnostically (Grossman et al., 2013) informing and shaping the 695 696 way tutors are educated to support professional learning in effective, tailored and 697 innovative ways. Second, making tutors' practices more visible can provide the basis for examining the effects of different approaches to tutoring on both teacher and pupil 698 699 learning outcomes. In this context, the observation tool used in this study needs to be

developed further and applied in different contexts and to different programmes so that
 fruitful comparisons can be made to contribute to the existing knowledge base about the
 specific aspects of CPD implementation that lead to programme success.

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Figure 1 (overleaf): % Time dedicated to 'Theory' vs. 'Practical experiences' per course (courses 1-6 were delivered in 2013, courses 7-16 in 2014 and 17-27 in 2015)



2013	C-1		C-2		C-3		C-4		C-5		C-6	
%	Passive <b>60</b>	Active 40	Passive <b>55</b>	Active 45	Passive 60	Active 40	Passive 64	Active 36	Passive <b>95</b>	Active 5	Passive 90	Active 10
2014	C-7		C-8		C-9		C-10		C-11		C-12	
%	Passive <b>55</b>	Active 45	Passive 65	Active 35	Passive 72	Active 28	Passive 54	Active 46	Passive 36	Active 64	Passive 70	Active <b>30</b>
	C-13		C-14		C-15		C-16					
%	Passive <b>50</b>	Active 50	Passive <b>75</b>	Active 25	Passive <b>55</b>	Active 45	Passive 64	Active 36				
2015	C-17		C-18		C-19		C-20		C-21		C-22	
%	Passive <b>70</b>	Active 30	Passive <b>49</b>	Active 51	Passive 68	Active 32	Passive <b>35</b>	Active 65	Passive <b>20</b>	Active 80	Passive <b>35</b>	Active 65
	C-23		C-24		C-25		C-26		C-27			
%	Passive 60	Active 40	Passive 54	Active 46	Passive 65	Active 35	Passive 94	Active 6	Passive 61	Active <b>39</b>		

Table 1: % Time dedicated to 'Passive' vs. 'Active' learning experiences per course

**Figure 2**: Variation between workshops in terms of the percentage of time allocated to designing activities in practical settings (including developing and modifying activities and working on the scenarios), share outcomes (explain verbally what they've done or through demonstrations) and teach other groups of participants or pupils.



