From medium to pedagogy: ‘fun and colourful’ lessons as a model for trainee teachers in further education colleges – questioning the postmodernist constructivist approach to classroom practice
Julian Dziubinski, University of London

In this presentation, I shall argue that, although mandatory teaching qualifications have raised FE teachers’ historically low professional status, there is a new problem that threatens to undermine both their value and provision: the postmodernist constructivist approach that is rapidly replacing a tradition of direct instructional guidance. That is, I shall question why FE teachers are being encouraged to accept interactive and student-led tasks as ‘modelling’, when research shows that postmodernist constructivism is not a pedagogy but a medium, and does not automatically lead to higher student achievement. I conclude with an appeal to temper postmodernist constructivist approaches with traditional, didactic instruction.

“Very positive” or “vague and detached”? Unpacking ambiguities in further education teachers’ responses to professional standards in England.
Dr. Jonathan Tummons, Durham University

During the last two decades, a number of successive policy initiatives have attempted to professionalise the further education sector in England: professional qualifications have been rewritten, made compulsory and then returned to voluntary status; professional bodies have been established, briefly promoted, and then neglected; professional licenses have been considered and rejected; and a new professional status has been introduced. This presentation, which combines both theoretical and empirical perspectives, argues that all of these processes of professionalisation are problematic due to the inherent flaws in any set of professional standards, and that the ambiguous manner in which the latest set of professional standards is being read and understood by practitioners within the sector reflects a continuation of a flawed process of professionalisation in further education that has been underway since 1999.

Bedford College Research Network: FE practitioners doing it for themselves!
Sam Jones, Bedford College

In this presentation, I discuss the formation of our research network, the reasons for its inception and our initial hopes for the group. 20 months on from this point I will review the highs and the lows of bringing college based researchers in the sector together; our personal and wider victories and defeats. I will conclude by looking forward to what can realistically be achieved both within the college, and in the wider FE community.

Pre-destined lives, quiet voices: the trajectories and learning identities of level 1 students.
Dr. Liz Atkins, Northumbria University

I discuss the aspirations and learning identities of level 1 students as narratives of the lives of the young participants in a small scale study. Their lives and educational positioning are explored in the context of classed and gendered dispositions. Lifestyle aspirations reflect a heavy celebrity influence and occupational aspirations a dreamlike quality associated with a lack of awareness of the trajectories – and credentials - necessary to achieve these ambitions. They are developing identities in which learning, leisure, work and domesticity are synonymous, but where leisure assumes the greatest importance. This aspect of their lives is significant since it provides an ‘escape’ from the mundane drudgery of a low value vocational programme and the inevitability of a future engaged in low pay, low skill work.