

Where is the knowledge in the wisdom of practice? Locating academic expertise in professional disciplines. (0282)

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Much of the literature on new academics assumes that they have entered the university via the 'traditional route' of the PhD (e.g. Barkhuizen 2002, Knight et al. 2006). It is assumed that as a result, they will be familiar with the conventions of scholarship and research, which is also taken to be the primary source of knowledge for university academics. Consequently, new lecturers' professional development is reduced to 'teaching and learning', as that is the area of academic practice which is new. Many PgCert courses are predicated on these assumptions. It is arguable that this model implicitly positions the research-intensive university as the ideal higher education institution. While these assumptions about expertise and developmental priority may in fact be over-simplistic in the context of the research university, transposed to the very different setting of the 'post 92' or specialist institution they become highly problematic. In 'post-92' universities, many subject areas are vocational, professional, creative and practice-oriented. Expertise derived from practice is emphasised and particularly prized. Lecturers in these contexts are often recruited mid-career on the basis of their professional experience and standing, and may not be required to have postgraduate qualifications or experience of research. The source of their knowledge and expertise is located (at least partly) elsewhere; in the professional or clinical practice, as opposed to solely within the academy.

'Knowledge' is a term which tends to generate associations with post-Enlightenment values of propositional understanding, cognition, fixity, rationality and 'fact'. In contrast, 'wisdom' is a term which is often understood to encompass a broader and more affective set of understandings and ways of being in the world and in relation to others. It has also been associated with a more diverse range of cultural and historical forms of understanding, and with 'women's ways of knowing' (Belenky et al 1986). We argue in this paper that the type of expertise required in practice - contingent, situated, affective, intuitive, gained gradually over time in complex embodied practice with others - encompasses 'wisdom', as well as 'knowledge'. This paper will explore the interplay between wisdom and knowledge for academics coming from practice backgrounds, with reference to the Oxford University 'Preparing for Academic Practice' CETL 'Transitions to the Academic World' project. This study was conducted at two UK institutions, one a 'post-92' university, the other a specialist creative arts university. Eleven lecturers who had entered the institutions from established professional careers were recruited, with two from Engineering, one from a branch of Social Care, four from Healthcare and three from the Creative Arts. Semi-structured interviews were combined with audio-journaling to allow for an in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives on the transition into the new context.

In this paper we focus on three of the themes that emerge from their accounts. The first is that there are *inherent contradictions* in the expectations that institutions convey to these lecturers and in prevalent institutional discourses, particularly in relation to the value placed on practice-derived expertise versus academic research. This echoes Archer's (2008) work on the competing discourses to which new lecturers are subjected. The lecturers were recruited on the basis of their strengths in practice expertise, but were also contractually obliged and apparently expected to engage in research, despite having no background in it. They come from fields where valorised knowledge is traditionally generated from practice, and credibility is seen to reside in highly contextualised expertise. Research is valued in their fields, but is not seen as the sole generator of knowledge. Second, their accounts reveal an absence of *formal development opportunities* around research, and significantly, *a weak informal research culture* which at times seemed to undermine the formal discourse about the desirability of research activity. These conditions lead to a sense of mystery and 'silence' surrounding research practices. Confusion about how to approach research and academic writing was particularly prevalent. This finding raises questions about the applicability of models of learning and transition which rely on the presence of shared, unambiguous and openly observable goals and practices in the workplace, in particular the model of 'Communities of Practice', which does not seem to pertain in these settings to newcomers seeking to engage as novice researchers or academic writers, due to the private, tacit and highly-specialised and contested nature of these practices (Gourlay 2010). Third, some participant accounts reveal stark *mismatches of values* between the previous practice context and that of the university. For example, there was a strong emphasis on teamwork, altruism and care of others in clinical and social care settings that was set in opposition to a highly individualistic (even 'selfish') activity of research. This sense of ideological discomfort appeared to be as much a barrier to participation for these lecturers as the structural issues mentioned above.

In conclusion, our research participants did not, on the whole, conceive research as being central to the knowledge at the heart of their expertise. On the other hand 'Practice wisdom' is not devoid of research and scholarship but encompasses much more. 'Wisdom' can be theorised to include values, ideologies and situated subjectivities, all of which challenge the primacy of research-based knowledge in the traditional sense. The challenge for academic development and for institutions is to find ways, both structurally and affectively, to recognise the complexities and struggles implicated in these experiences. Institutions also need to be cognizant of the ways in which their formal and informal structures perpetuate and exacerbate these struggles. Ashwin (2010) questions the dominance of the notion of 'transition' in studies of the first year student experience, arguing that it implies a relinquishing of previous identities and practices. An equivalent critique is made here, and it seems more productive to refer to an *expansion of repertoires*, as opposed to a 'transition' - a notion which allows for a more inclusive and multiple

understanding of these individuals' career trajectories, and it allows us to recognise the subordinate role of 'knowledge' in the 'wisdom' of practice.

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