

EERA Network 22 *Research in higher education*, Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), and Centre for Research and Intervention in Education (CIIE)

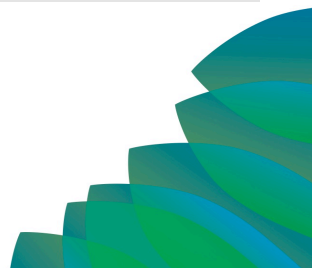
European higher education – exploring effective strategies for turbulent times

Future prospects in higher education for early career researchers

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Overview

- Introductions
- Patrick's presentation / activities
- Liudvika's presentation / activities
- Further discussions.

This is an interactive session: we are seeking to provide some ideas to generate discussions amongst the full group.

Slides / materials will be made available to you by the Network.



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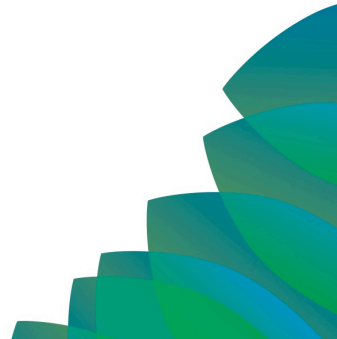
EERA Network 22 *Research in higher education*, Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), and Centre for Research and Intervention in Education (CIIE)

European higher education – exploring effective strategies for turbulent times

Future prospects in higher education for early career researchers *Part 1*

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Structure of first part of session

- Being 'new'
- Things you need to *do* and things you need to *be*
- An overview of a small-scale project about being new in research
- Tips on: careers guidance; sources of support; role of the mentor; networking and conferences
- Confidence and resilience
- Developing the discussions.



A few words about my role...

- Background in psychology and sociology, but I now work in the field of educational development
- Research interests based around assessment practice, educational integrity, sustainability in higher education, and the development of newer researchers
- Former Convenor of the SRHE *Newer Researcher Network*
- Involved in the ECER Conference for the last four years.



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A few words about your roles...

- Which university or organisation are you based at?
- Are you a PhD / Doctoral student?



Being 'new'

'There is no single path to an academic research career, with disciplinary differences being particularly evident' (Bazeley, 2003, p. 261).

- Uncertainty and homelessness (Manathunga, 2007)
- Some may feel marginalised (Lee *et al*, 2008)
- A need to gain understanding of the discourses and debates of the discipline or field (Manathunga, 2009)
- External factors constituting threats and changes to how academics work, and, therefore, academic identities (e.g. Leisyte, 2013; Leisyte & Dee, 2012; Quigley, 2009).



Emerging researchers: a few more perspectives

- Hakala (2009) looked at what motivates emerging researchers, and emerging researcher academic identities. The study raised many issues concerning difficulties associated with short-term contracts and multiplicity of demands
- Other studies (Leisyte & Hosch-Dayican, 2013; Bagilhole, 2002) provide evidence of gender inequalities – that the increase in proportion of female PhD students and doctors is *not* reflected in the proportion of female professors.
- Various authors discuss the emerging or migrating researcher in the context of a specific discipline or field (e.g. Manathunga, 2009).



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Things you need to *do*

Things you need to *be*



Emerging researchers: a recent, small-scale project

- This study focused on a particular group of staff:
newer researchers who research higher education itself
- It formed part of the larger SRHE (UK) Donald Bligh Project
(*‘What does it mean to be a newer researcher investigating higher education?’*)
- It considered impacts and effects of a professional award on the career trajectories of these emerging researchers, in their own interpretations
- Authors: Baughan, Boz & Raddon (2013).



SRHE Prize for Newer Researchers

- Annual award organised by SRHE, co-funded by Taylor & Francis Group
- Application process and selection criteria
- Established in 1995
- Increased applications in recent years.



Design of the project

- 15 former NRHE award winners
- Initial on-line survey
- 8 x follow up interviews
- Narrative approach used for data analysis.



The research questions

What experiences of a professional research award did former winners have of the award process, particularly in terms of what they learned and gained from it?

What impacts has the award had on the subsequent careers of those who won it?



Themes *The importance of professional support*

- The nature and extent of support provided as part of the award featured heavily throughout the responses
- Mentoring has become a formal component of the award and featured in most accounts
- Consensus that support, communication, and the availability of a mentor are very important.

*'...we've spaced it out over the year and it's worked out well...
I think I've caught the right balance and it's been really useful...'*

'I didn't really have much support within my own organisation.'



Themes *Impact on career pathways*

- Participants felt that the award had a positive (often definable) effect on their careers
- These effects were multi-faceted, for example, recognition as a 'bona-fide' researcher, and increased confidence
- Other, less tangible but important effects were also reported: 'esteem', 'honour', 'kudos', 'recognition'.

'It put me on peoples' radar perhaps earlier than I otherwise would have been... I got the prize before I'd actually managed to publish any journal papers... but people still became aware that I was doing research in the area'.



Themes *Engaging with networks and communities*

- The award was seen as an opportunity to network
- Some participants used the award to seek more general career support
- The mentor is perceived to have a key role in facilitating access to new networks
- Many former winners have maintained on-going relationships after the award period.

'I was interested in the more networking opportunities that the prize would give you... I was quite excited about that'.



Themes *Agency and identity*

- Participants spoke of the award providing a sense of agency and independence
- Others spoke of how it confirmed their identity as a higher education researcher.

‘It was an apprenticeship... how to do research in basic terms. I now know how to write a research paper... I gained confidence in becoming a higher education researcher’.

‘I suppose it’s confidence building, you know, getting a prize quite soon after your PhD. It made me think, you know, people recognise the value of the work I’m doing.’



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So what...?



Ideas and implications

- There *are* sources of support out there: mentors, societies and professional bodies, conferences for new researchers, networks, colleagues and institutions – these can and do help and inspire
- It is a good idea to try to identify the sources of support that are available to you; ask around as some may not be known
- Support takes different forms and each person will have different perceptions about what they need
- Resilience and determination are important for emerging researchers: they are *real skills* that need to be developed.



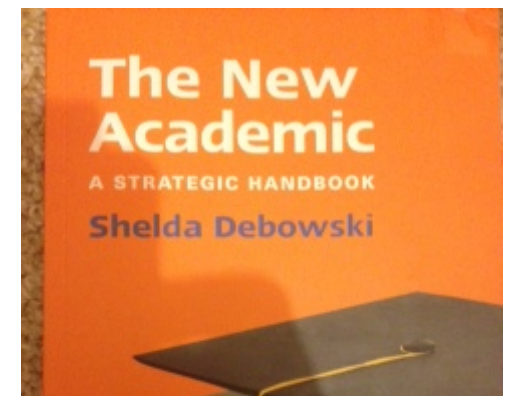
Careers guidance 1

- Web resources - examples – there are many:
 - www.1stacademicjob.co.uk
 - www.vitae.ac.uk
 - www.srhe.ac.uk/networks/newer_researchers.asp
 - www.eera-ecer.de/
 - www.eera-ecer.de/about/promoting-emerging-researchers/
- Higher education press
- Prizes and awards - look around:
 - EERA is a good starting point as it is Europe wide
 - paper and poster prizes at conferences.



Careers guidance 2

- Be aware of peer reviewed journals in your field, including any for emerging researchers – your first publications could be for learning purposes and **do not** have to be ‘top’ journals
- It’s also worth reading some literature *about* emerging researcher experiences as we can all learn can from this (see references)
- Finally, a recommendation for a book which captures it all:
Debowski, S. (2012)
The New Academic: A Strategic Handbook.





Sources of support

- Sources of support may come to you or you may have to look
- The important point is to be active and have an 'enquiring mind'
- Build a Network of Support and document this
- Avoid becoming too institutionalised - don't rely entirely on your own institution for support
- The power of peer support
- Careers change, fragment and migrate, so support needs may change too.



The importance of the mentor

- Hemmings (2003) - a positive mentoring experience is one of the most important sources of research confidence for early career academics

‘Secure a mentor! Life will become much easier if you have a mentor, someone you can emulate and who can guide you through the long process of hunting for an academic job. Perhaps your doctoral supervisor could be your mentor? Perhaps it’s someone else, someone from another school, someone you met at a conference? Successful people generally have had a mentor from whom they’ve received support’.

[Source: <http://1stacademicjob.co.uk/>]

- But if you are not comfortable with a particular mentor, you need to be willing to reflect on this, and possibly seek change.



Networking and conferences

- Those that have networked, recommend networking
- External activities / conferences provide opportunities to network:
 - part of the academic / research career
 - a safer place to 'test' our research and get feedback
 - to develop new ideas
 - to gain confidence
 - to make new contacts
 - to find a 'space'
- Choosing the right conference:
 - is the focus broadly similar to your own interests?
 - do you know anyone else who has attended?
 - is there a stream for newer researchers?
 - is there an associated publication outlet?



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Things you need to *do*

Things you need to *be*



Confidence and resilience

- Note your successes
- Listen to (valid) criticism and ‘take the positives’ from any rejections (e.g. unsuccessful journal article submissions)
- Be patient but persistent
- Seek feedback and support from colleagues
- Confidence comes through positive experience but resilience can be learned.



Activity

Please try to work with someone you don't know.

Each person:

- Say what you do
- Where you want to get to over the next 2-3 years
- What your current challenges and concerns are

Your colleague should offer some advice and ideas.

Please note down the ideas so we can share them...

Then swap round – 5 minutes each.

Total – about 10 minutes.



Questions to start the discussion

Please feel free to raise other issues or questions.

- What are the key issues in higher education in your country?
- How have these affected your career?
- What are the main inhibitors for you as an emerging researcher?
- What's the best piece of advice you have you received that has helped you in your career so far?

Please discuss these at your tables and come up with a small number of 'priority points' to share.



Closing task and discussion

- What will be your three main priorities for your own academic / research development for the next 6 months?
- If you can do 'just one thing' following this workshop, what will it be?

Please work with a neighbour to work out your priorities in response to the two questions above.

Write your responses on a card (provided - one per person).

We'll ask for some examples.

Keep your card for your own records.



Further questions for self-reflection

- Drawing on themes we have discussed, what are your strengths?
- What are your weaker areas?
- Can you consider your weak points and vulnerabilities in relation to 'things you need to do' and 'things you need to be'?
- Have you developed a career plan and where would your own strategy start?



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