SRHE Final Project Report: Dual Professionals in Higher Education: From Professional Practitioner to Lecturer

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Executive summary

This study investigated the transition experiences of dual professionals' understanding of their new role. It explored how their beliefs about university teaching, learning and becoming a lecturer are framed and evolve; and whether formal professional development enables dual professionals to explore ideas, experience strategies and practices towards creating their own professional identities. The focus of this study is on how dual professionals conceive professionalism and how these beliefs affect their capacity to negotiate themselves in their new HE career. Insight into how these individuals negotiated their professional identities, as they experienced inbound trajectories ranging from peripheral to full membership of a university community is very relevant to those responsible for professional development. The study builds on previous research (e.g. Dreyfus & Dreyfus 1986, Wood, Farmer & Goodall 2016) to explore the complexity of dual professionals' experiences in (re)constructing their identity (Furlong et al. 2000; d'Andrea & Gosling 2005), as they align their previous/concurrent and HE roles.

The findings will aid fellow academics and university management to develop academic development programmes/workshops/initiatives to create a greater sense of HE identity and belonging for dual professionals. The study stimulates interest and further research by offering the views of participants' lived experiences of being dual professionals, building on multiple perspectives and 'voices' from the literature and enabling them to contribute fully to academia. This is timely, given the emergence of new non-traditional academic roles (dual professionals) and visions of the purposes of HE with the development of HE apprenticeships.

Contents

Summary of project aims and objectives

In the interest of space, this report leaves aside discussion of much of theoretical rationale and underpinning of the study and focuses instead on the research process, some of the findings arising from the research and my dissemination strategy going forward. A detailed outline of my premise and design can be seen in the earlier submitted reports. This study investigated the transition experiences of professional practitioners on substantial teaching and scholarship (none REF) contracts, in English universities who have current or recent industry/disciplinary expertise and made a mid-career transition to being academia (Locke & Bennion, 2009).

These professional practitioners (social workers, journalists, art and design) are here termed 'dual professionals', explored were the perceptions of dual professionals, specifically.

1. What aspects of professionalism were important to them in their role?
2. How dual professionals expressed their professional identity and negotiated it within an academic context.

The study addressed three questions:

1. What supports and hinders their new identity formation as new lecturers?
2. How does participation in new communities of practice in HE (e.g. professional development, academic discipline, and their HEI) affect their transition, beliefs and self-image?
3. Do the beliefs of dual professionals' beliefs about teaching and their transition experiences differ by discipline and an institution?

Hoyle & John (1995) and Ingersoll & Merrill (2011), define a professional as an individual who can work autonomously, is responsible for the application of professional judgement and whose work involves a highly complex skills-set, intellectual functioning and knowledge that are neither easily acquired nor widely held.

This frames professional identity, the perception of oneself as a professional and is closely related to the knowledge and skills one has, the work one does, and the work related to significant others (Robson, 1998) and as a 'resource that people use to explain, justify and make sense of themselves in relation to others, and to the world at large'. (MacLure, 1993:311). Numerous studies (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Izadinia, 2012; Fejes and Köpsén, 2014; Köpsén, 2014; Sachs, 2005; Swennen, Jones & Volman, 2010; Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012; Wilkins et al., 2012), have highlighted the

importance of professional identity in lecturer development. This study explored the experiences of dual professionals' involvement in their multiple communities, their participation in formal and informal academic professional development and implications for their beliefs and practices.

Outline of methodology

This study explored the experiences of dual professionals' involvement in their multiple communities, their participation in formal and informal academic, professional development and implications for their beliefs and practices. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was used to:

- explore transformative and situated accounts of self and identity (Smith & Eatough, 2012);
- enable flexible, open-ended inquiry, generating new insights from participants' perspectives;
- enable an ideographic level of analysis, intensively examining individual narratives

My rationale for the use of IPA was to acknowledge that as the researcher my engagement with the participant's text has an interpretative element, in contrast to some other methods (e.g. discourse analysis, DA), it assumes an epistemological stance whereby, through careful and explicit interpretative methodology, it becomes possible to access an individual's cognitive inner world. A principal distinction between IPA and DA is that DA examines the role of language in describing the person's experience, while IPA explores how people ascribe meaning to their experiences in their interactions with the environment (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999).

Participants participated in an interview structured around their personal and professional journeys, their transition experiences, and teaching practices. I recorded the interviews and asked questions to unpack how their professional identity had changed during the transition from a previous career into teaching in higher education, and how they had managed the transitional period.

The transcript analysis focused on gaining insight into participants' attitudes, feelings, motivations and experiences of their transition to the role of a lecturer concerning their various communities of practice. Participants were recruited by email, and each fulfilled three criteria, namely that they were full-time university lecturers, were teaching in curriculum areas related to previous professional discipline and had 5+ years of

professional practice experience. Individual interviews were conducted with eight dual professionals (four male and four females in three HEIs (pre/post-1992). Interviews were typically an hour in length, and held in person at the participant's institution. None of the participants had been awarded a PhD, two where undertaking doctorial study. Interviewees represented a range of professions, ethnic groups and ages who had undertaken accredited continuous professional development (CPD) (just-in-time interventions and formal programmes) to prepare for teaching, at their universities.

Interviews produced some vibrant and revealing data. As this is an emic study using IPA, the themes were identified by considering homogenous samples and looking at divergence and convergence.

Throughout the study, I provided quarterly reports to SRHE and attended meetings of the Research & Development committee. A proposal based on this research was submitted for the Society's Annual Newer Researchers Conference and findings presented in December 2020.

Project Time Table

Month 1	Notification of the outcome of award from the SRHE. Ethics application sent to the CSHE committee ethics.
Months 2-4 the	Following ethics approval, I contacted possible institutions. Data collection started the process of uncovering an understanding of phenomenon in question. The questions were exploratory as the IPA process is dynamic, and what emerges was a co-construction built by the ebb and flow between the participant and the researcher.
Months 3-5	Further literature review. Transcription of interviews. Analysed data.
Months 5-7	A preliminary analysis of emerging themes.
Months 6- 8	Reanalysis of the transcripts and themes.
Months 8 -12 Researchers	Final analysis and presentation at SRHE Annual Newer Conference and Annual Conference.

Analysis of results

IPA is generally illustrated with quotes which are often extended, and show convergence by including several voices for each theme. For this report, I am going to provide a summary of the analysis.

From the analysis of the transcripts using IPA, four themes were identified as shown in the table below:

Theme	Sub-themes
Becoming a university lecturer	Teaching development programmes, A sense of belonging, Being an academic
Influence /credibility	Expertise (both professions), Respect
Network	Interaction with peers (lecturers and members of professional bodies), Balancing practice role and academic role
Independence	Sense of autonomy

The findings show a consistent view of all the participants regarding the teaching development programmes. Many found the learning outcomes useful and relevant but agreed that the course did not provide them with the practical skills to be a lecturer, which was their expectation. This expertise came from support from colleagues in their team. All the participants considered that the practical teaching and learning skills were essential to becoming a competent lecturer. The critical element underlying the concept of intercultural competence is the ability to engage in successful intercultural interactions.

In the case of dual professionals the competency to work successfully within two spaces (to create the 3rd space) was raised in all the interviews, due to undertaking CPD in HE (just in time intervention as well as formal programmes) which aided their transition into the academy. Intercultural competence, unfortunately, does not "just happen" for dual professionals, it must be intentionally addressed through an institutional taught formal teaching qualification. The taught and accredited CPD programmes to prepare for teaching courses they undertook were delivered by staff at their universities.

All the lecturers commented on how beneficial their course was in terms of understanding how students learn. The pedagogical knowledge and skills provided were recognised as useful by all participants and aided them to know how to adapt their teaching styles to meet the learning styles of the students. The constructivist approach helped the lecturers to determine what they were required to teach, based on the existing knowledge and skills of their students. Before undertaking the teaching CPD programmes, the lecturers' views of education were based on their experience when they have had the opportunity to train for their specialism. The participants had expected to be provided with the knowledge and practical skills to teach in a university,

equivalent to the 'tools of the trade' they had learnt in their previous profession. These 'new' areas of understanding of learning and teaching were found to be very beneficial to them and aided their transition in their new roles. However, the perceived gap between what was expected and what was delivered, still existed on completion of the training and this knowledge and these skills had to be found 'on the job'. The potential issue was that there was not any formal guidance on what needed to be learned and when.

The participants all considered the responsibilities of the individual lecturer to their colleagues and organisation as very important and that the team depend upon each other for success. All were aware that they were operating in an environment that is subject to external pressures, but that collegiality helps to support individuals in this environment. While this is a small-scale study, the model has some resonance and transferability to other similar groups, in the transition from practice to Higher Education posts.

The key aspects relating to question 2 were **Influence/credibility and Independence**. Intercultural competence, i.e. dual professionals' ability to engage in successful intercultural interactions, and make links between their practice and HE lives was an overarching theme. Intercultural competence did not "just happen", but occurred through an institutional taught formal teaching qualification. Dual professionals' attributed their competency to work successfully across two spaces to CPD in HE, aiding their transition into the academy. Before engaging with teaching-related CPD, the participants' views of education were based on their experiences as students or informal opportunities to teach/train.

This view, allied to their professional expertise, promoted particular expectations of CPD, based on assumptions of what it means to be a lecturer. All expected to gain knowledge and practical teaching skills from CPD: the 'tools of the trade'. They were not expecting topics such as student-centred learning, learning styles, different cultures and reflective practice while identifying these as highly beneficial in aiding their transition into their new role. Professional development helped them think creatively about their understandings and identities. The pedagogical knowledge and skills provided helped them articulate underpinning principles of their teaching, based on students' learning styles, existing knowledge and skills.

Findings suggest that dual professionals negotiate their own professional identity, partly based on how they are viewed by others but, more importantly, how they see it themselves. Those with the most relevant background and most significant experience to the subject they were teaching positioned themselves initially as 'qualified'. Many participants stressed the relevance of their professional education in affording them a degree of status, confidence and credibility with their students and colleagues, particularly those without their 'professional' background. All identified teaching development programmes as key in their transition to developing credibility, influence and influence as novice university lecturers. Dashper & Fletcher (2019) found that individuals from industry backgrounds can be well thought of by students but may experience a lack of 'legitimacy' within academic, social groups.

Findings indicate that initially, lecturers' previous practice context is just as important as their new knowledge and skills, while progression from the periphery of their new role promoted the development of their lecturer identity. This self-perception and perceived legitimisation by others was important to them and aided their transition. However, the perceived gap between what was expected and what was delivered persisted on completion of CPD; further knowledge and skills had to be found 'on the job' from immediate colleagues and mentors. The lack of formal guidance on what needed to be learned, and when, was a potential issue. All participants attached high importance to the responsibilities of individual lecturers towards their colleagues and organisations, identifying success is depending heavily on effective collegial teamwork. All were aware that they were operating in an environment that is subject to external pressures, but that collegiality helps to support individuals in this environment.

While this is a small-scale study the findings have some resonance and transferability to others in the transition from practice to Higher Education posts. It is recommended that teaching CPD programmes are developed further and specifically targeted to support and enhance the transition experiences of dual professionals.

Key findings

- Maintenance of identity in practice and an academic career
- Immediate disciplinary colleagues in their team were vital in aiding the transition to HE role (Identity as part of a programme/subject team)
- Participants saw professional development as a preparation (academic/practical) for their HE role (Identity as part of HE)

Summary of next steps

I am happy present to a relevant research group or Society Network, contribute to an SRHE Network event and if appropriate prepare a brief article will be developed for SRHE news (the Society's newsletter). A journal article for a leading journal (e.g. Studies in Higher Education, Teaching in Higher Education) will be submitted within 12 months of the final report.

- ➢ Explore possible future collaborations
- ➢ Communicate findings via events, learning and teaching conferences, networks (SRHE, Centre for the Study of Higher Education).
- ➢ A seminar will be organised through the Centre for the Study of Higher Education to publicise the research findings.
- ➢ Submit a paper to Studies in Higher Education and/or the British Educational Research Journal.
- ➢ Submit a paper to a disciplinary professional practice journal, e.g. Journal of Management Education, a paper Dual Professionals in on Higher Education: From Professional Practitioner to Lecturer
- ➢ Offer SRHE - Professional Development Programme network a workshop on IPA

Any plans to continue work or proposals for further research which might complement this project

A book chapter with Fran Beaton for *Impact of the Integrated Practitioner* – Routledge Book to be published in June 2021.   Subtitle: Studies in Third-space Professionalism
Editors: Dr Emily McIntosh (Middlesex University, London), Dr Diane Nutt (Independent Higher Education Consultant). Foreword: Professor Sally Brown.
In summer 2020 a symposium a the University of Kent is planned with Fran Beaton (University of Kent), Dr Emily McIntosh (Middlesex University) and Dr Pauline Judd (Edinburgh Napier University).

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excitement and enthusiasm about university teaching along with their hopes and aspirations for their future.

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