**SRHE Newer Researcher 2018**

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 and 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.

This study gained a deeper understanding of dual professional as early career academics (ECAs), how their beliefs about university teaching and learning are framed and evolve, and to interrogate their beliefs about being lecturers (Dallí Alba, 2005, Clemans et al. 2010). This study considered what transition means for these dual professionals, how it is experienced, and how the participants perceived institutionally provided professional development contributing to this transition. The studied explored how their prior experience and embedded tacit knowledge (Eraut, 2000) influence these perceptions and attitudes. Given that the participants all have a vast store of tacit knowledge gained from their years of professional practice, the study looked at how this prior experience contributes to their perceptions of and attitudes towards 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 emergence of HE apprenticeships.

# Summary of project aims and objectives

This report leaves aside discussion of the theoretical rationale and underpinning of the study in the interest of space. It focuses instead on the research process, some of the findings arising from the research and my dissemination strategy in the future. A detailed outline of the study's premise and design can be seen in the earlier submitted reports.

This study investigated the transition experiences of professional practitioners in the UK who have current or recent industry/disciplinary expertise and made a mid-career transition to 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.

What aspects of professionalism are important to them.

How they express their professional identity and negotiate it in an academic context.

**The study addressed three questions:**

* What supports and hinders their new identity formation as lecturers?
* How participation in new communities of practice in HE (e.g. professional development, academic discipline, and their HEI) affect their transition, beliefs and self-image?
* Whether 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 or widely held. This frames professional identity, the perception of oneself as a professional and 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

Participants participate in an interview structured around their personal and professional journeys, transition experiences, and teaching practices. The analysis focused on gaining insight into participants' attitudes, feelings, motivations, and experiences of their transition to a lecturer's role concerning their various communities of practice.

Individual interviews were conducted with eight dual professionals in three HEIs (pre/post-1992) who:

* taught in disciplines related to their prior profession
* had 5+ years of professional practice experience

Interviews, typically an hour in length, were conducted in person at the participant's institution. Interviewees represented a range of professions, ethnic groups and ages who had undertaken accredited 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 identified are closely associated and overlap.

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

# Project TimeTable

**Month 1** Notification of the outcome of the SRHE application. Sent to the SRHE committee ethics.

**Months 2-4** Following ethics approval, contacted possible institutions. Data collection started the process of uncovering an understanding of the phenomenon in question. The questioned 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. Analyse data through IPA (coded the first data item, then progressed to developing themes for that item).

**Months 5-7** A preliminary analysis of emerging themes.

**Months 6- 8**. Continue analysis.

**Months 8 -12** Final analysis and presentation at the Society's Annual Newer Researchers Conference.

# Analysis of results

**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 lecturers in this study considered that practical teaching and learning skills were essential to becoming a competent lecturer. The key 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) in all the interviews was due to undertaking a 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. They aided them to know how to adapt their teaching styles to meet the students' learning styles. The constructivist approach helped the lecturers determine what they were required to teach based on their students' existing knowledge and skills. Before undertaking the teaching CPD programmes, the lecturers' views of education was based on their experience when they have had the opportunity to train for their specialism.

The participant's had expected to be provided with the knowledge and practical skills to teach in HE, equivalent to the 'tools of the trade' they had learnt in their previous profession. These 'new' areas of understanding of learning and teaching were 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 and no claims of generalisation are being made, 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 teaching-related CPD, lecturers' 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 their teaching's underpinning principles 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. While not gaining the practical skills they felt essential to becoming a competent lecturer from CPD, participants nevertheless felt their credibility was more secure through applying new pedagogical knowledge to their teaching work. Dashper & Fletcher (2019) found that students from industry backgrounds can be well thought of by students but may experience a lack of 'legitimacy' within academic and social groups.

Findings indicate that initially, lecturers' previous practice context is just as important as their new knowledge and skills. In contrast, 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 completing 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 individual lecturers' responsibilities towards their colleagues and organisations; identifying success depends 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 and no generalisation claims are being made, the model has some resonance and transferability to others in the transition from practice to Higher Education posts. It is recommended that teaching CPD programmes be developed further and specifically targeted to support and enhance dual professionals' transition experiences.

# 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.

* Raise awareness of an under-researched topic
* Explore possible future collaborations
* Communicate findings via events, learning and teaching conferences, networks (SRHE, Centre for the Study of Higher Education).
* Presentations to professional groups, such as SRHE, participating HEIs, SEDA
* A seminar will be organised through the Centre for the Study of Higher Education to publicise the research findings.
* If appropriate, I will submit a project summary for SRHE news.
* Prepare a short article for the SRHE member newsletter, SRHE News.
* 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

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