

Kent Academic Repository

Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Beaton, Fran (2021) How do I know who I am? Academic professional development, peer support, and identity for practitioners who teach. International Journal for Academic Development . ISSN 1360-144X.

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2021.1910953>

Link to record in KAR

<https://kar.kent.ac.uk/84842/>

Document Version

Publisher pdf

Copyright & reuse

Content in the Kent Academic Repository is made available for research purposes. Unless otherwise stated all content is protected by copyright and in the absence of an open licence (eg Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher, author or other copyright holder.

Versions of research

The version in the Kent Academic Repository may differ from the final published version.

Users are advised to check <http://kar.kent.ac.uk> for the status of the paper. **Users should always cite the published version of record.**

Enquiries

For any further enquiries regarding the licence status of this document, please contact:

researchsupport@kent.ac.uk

If you believe this document infringes copyright then please contact the KAR admin team with the take-down information provided at <http://kar.kent.ac.uk/contact.html>

How do I know who I am? Academic professional development, peer support, and identity for practitioners who teach

Fran Beaton

To cite this article: Fran Beaton (2021): How do I know who I am? Academic professional development, peer support, and identity for practitioners who teach, International Journal for Academic Development, DOI: [10.1080/1360144X.2021.1910953](https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2021.1910953)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2021.1910953>



© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 14 Jul 2021.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 238



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

How do I know who I am? Academic professional development, peer support, and identity for practitioners who teach

Fran Beaton 

Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

ABSTRACT

Workplace preparation is increasingly part of university curricula and this has led to the appointment of staff with professional practice expertise being appointed to teach, who are experienced professionals yet HE novices. How do they make sense of HE's expectations and begin to reconcile their identity as educators with the credibility their practice expertise confers? The paper draws on sociocultural perspectives of Communities of Practice, framing identity development as a process of intertwined trajectories between the different communities an individual is involved with. It seeks to illuminate the affective impact of socialisation experiences and implications for academic development.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 21 February 2020

Accepted 5 January 2021

KEYWORDS

Dual professionals; identity; trajectories

Introduction

Increasing numbers of students enrol in occupationally linked programmes (Universities UK, 2015), and a focus on workplace preparation has led to an expansion in HE curricula to include industry experience or workplace-like activities (Blackwell et al., 2001; Jackson, 2015). In the US, Wendler et al. (2012) cite employers' complaints about inadequate graduate preparedness in skills employers valued, such as teamwork and communication skills. Atkinson (2016) notes the rise of work-integrated learning in Australian universities, although MacKenzie (2019, p. 11) claims: 'Australia has never had more graduates than now, yet we have a sluggish economy, stagnant wage movement and low productivity'. South African legislation '... highlights the responsibility of Higher and Further training institutions to ensure the education and training they deliver meet the needs of the economy' (Taylor & Govender, 2013, p. 3).

This focus on workplace preparation has implications for how university teaching is staffed. While specialist and vocationally oriented institutions have long employed practitioners to teach, workplace preparation has generated more widespread appointment of university teachers with workplace expertise. These dual professionals (GuildHE, 2018) are one subset of a growing group of staff with multiple employers, of which US adjunct faculty is another example (Teichler et al., 2013). I will term these staff dual professionals (DP) throughout this paper, defining them as people with an established first career in a practice profession, moving into (or

CONTACT Fran Beaton  franbeaton6@gmail.com

© 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

between) that role and a new role as a university educator. As experienced professionals, yet HE novices, they differ from ‘traditional’ early career academics (ECAs), yet the challenges of the transition between their dual roles have been underexplored. This paper interrogates factors – including academic professional development (APD) – contributing to DPs’ academic socialisation and identity construction and what academic developers believe DPs need. It considers what develops or impedes DPs’ sense of belonging, including academic (Figure 1) developers’ strategic institution-wide role in creating partnerships and networks (Arthur, 2016).

DPs’ growing presence in the academy illustrates ‘the classic conceptualisation of *homo academicus* [*sic*] – the all-round expert in teaching and research across a broad range of disciplines – [is] becoming less relevant to current practices and future needs’. (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2010). Longstanding beliefs about *homo academicus* nevertheless persistently frame many higher education structures and processes, which assume a particular trajectory: first and higher degrees, PhD, post-docs (in the sciences and social sciences), eventually obtaining tenure-track posts. Funding bodies, using the years since PhD completion to define ‘starters, consolidators or advanced’ grant applicants (European Research Council) or Leverhulme’s ‘early career, established or distinguished’ researchers, reinforce this. DPs who enter academia as established professionals, sometimes without a PhD at all, do not fit this mould. They are increasingly differentiated by contract type, such as teaching-focused posts with responsibilities which are not adequately reflected in institutional promotions criteria privileging *homo academicus* activities.

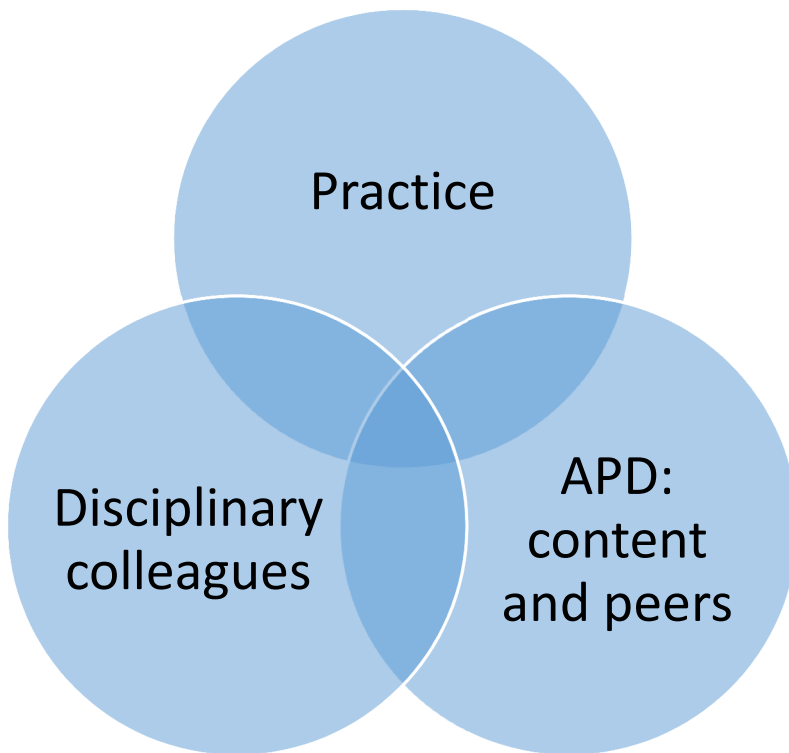


Figure 1. Dual professionals’ potential communities of practice.

These traditional understandings can be experienced as barriers contributing to DPs' 'fluid and unstable identities of self' (Dann et al., 2019, p. 1167), '... in limbo between two social practices' (Shreeve, 2011, p. 79). Changing systems make stable communities hard to establish and maintain, can baffle newcomers and affect individuals' sense of belonging (Bauman, 2007; Boyd & Smith, 2016). This problem is exacerbated when individuals experience multiple competing or conflicting demands (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Shreeve, 2011), seek acceptance into existing teams (Morell-Scott, 2019), experience pressure to conform (Trowler & Bamber, 2005) or if DPs are '... suspicious or dismissive of their academic counterparts, whose work they regard as lofty in theory but useless in practice' (Santoro & Snead, 2012, p. 391).

The research analyses interview data on professional identities, individuals' perceived legitimacy as educators, and factors affecting that process, both through a narrative approach and thematic analysis, illustrated by case studies illuminating the main themes.

Conceptual framework

The research adopts a socio-cultural perspective, drawing on Wenger's notion of Communities of Practice (CoP): '... groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 2011, p. 1). The long-established apprenticeship model (newcomers learning from master practitioners) is central to CoP theory. Three distinct yet interdependent elements characterise a CoP:

- a shared domain of interest
- relationships that promote collective learning
- interests and interactions generating a shared repertoire of resources and strategies for tackling recurrent problems

Wenger posits that both individuals (in a range from novice to expert) and the CoP are shaped by participation. Different CoPs (e.g. workforce, faith settings, sports teams) support different aspects of individual identity. Participation may vary over time but is enabled by individuals' potential to contribute expertise the CoP values, underpinned by beliefs or practices a CoP believes to be normative. Wenger (2010) argues that a CoP's potential to enable powerful learning outweighs the risk of becoming an echo chamber, resisting the interrogation of tacit or explicit assumptions and behaviours.

It is complex for DPs, given their expert status in practice and novice status in academia, to make meaning between potentially contradictory CoPs. Furthermore, traditional ECAs are not novices (Arthur, 2016). Their doctoral route into HE means they start their academic career with acknowledged specialist expertise (the PhD) and some familiarity with the disciplinary CoP. This is rarely the case with DPs. Meaning-making for DPs involves a continuing process of making sense of their situation and navigating multiple CoPs, including APD, here defined as provision aligned to the nationally recognised UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and intended as part of ECAs' academic socialisation process. This research considers the affective impact of these experiences, the notion of legitimacy and implications for individual trajectories (see Table 1).

Table 1. Trajectories and identities.

Trajectory	Characteristic identity
Inbound	Newcomers invest as a future full member
Boundary	Newcomers aim to sustain participation across multiple boundaries
Peripheral	Significant (for identity) but limited (investment of time) participation in a community
Outbound	Directed out of a community but 'seeing the world and oneself in different ways' (Wenger in Jawitz, 2009, p. 243)

Research questions

This study addresses three questions

- (1) What are DPs' various trajectories and identities?
- (2) How does DPs' participation in multiple CoPs affect their identity construction?
- (3) What do academic developers think DPs need?

Personal positioning

I have been an academic developer for over 25 years, for the last 16 in a multi-faculty UK university leading and teaching on cross-disciplinary APD originally designed for traditional ECAs. However, the university appointed increasing numbers of DPs (including journalists, social workers, and accountants) to teach. Working with and researching the experiences of these DPs has been particularly influential in raising my awareness of the issues and pursuing this research.

Methods

This study followed British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines, gaining ethical approval through my Centre's ethics committee. Through searching publicly available webpages, I identified three different types of institutional missions within which to sample: teaching-focused (including vocational teaching), teaching- and-research-focused, and specialist Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) (see [Table 2](#)). Institutions' missions reflect their aspirations and influence individuals' expectations and experiences. I identified five institutions in London or Southern England, running APD aligned to the UKPSF and mandatory for ECA staff on contracts of 0.5 and above.

APD leaders were invited to identify interviewees at their institutions, using two criteria:

Table 2. Institutional pseudonym and mission.

Institution	Mission
RED	Teaching and vocational
GREEN	Teaching
PURPLE	Teaching and research
YELLOW	Teaching and research
BROWN	Specialist

- DPs who had entered HE as academics in the last 5 years from one of these practice fields: Digital Industries, Health, Law, Performing Arts, Social Work, and Visual Arts.
- had completed APD in the last 3 years, meaning their memories would be reasonably fresh, but allowed time to have reflected on its impact.

APD leaders were also invited to interviews about their perception of DPs' needs.

Five programme leaders and 14 DPs agreed to participate. All but one of the interviews were conducted in person at the individuals' home HEI; for logistical reasons, one was conducted by phone. APD leaders were experienced (range 8–21 years) academic developers, and in their current post for between 2 and 10 years (mean 6 years). 13 of 14 DPs had studied at university, predominantly in the UK; 4 had done so more than 10 years previously; 2 were currently registered for a PhD (see [Table 3](#)).

Interview protocol

Semi-structured interview protocols guided interviews, giving interviewees freedom to express themselves as they wished. Prompts below each of the research questions indicate the areas interviews explored. Each interview, lasting around one hour, was recorded and transcribed. Each participant had opportunities to review their transcription for accuracy and to elaborate further on content.

Although the research questions are framed by CoP theory, participants did not necessarily use CoP language. For example, participants often spoke of 'credibility'. Probing revealed that their understanding of credibility accorded with legitimacy.

RQ1. What are the various trajectories and identities of DPs?

- (i) Please tell me about your practice background and what brought you into HE teaching.
- (ii) How do you see the relationship between your practice and your HE teaching?

RQ2. What affects DPs' identity construction?

- (i) Did APD help you think about your role as a university teacher? How?
- (ii) Did other influences (e.g. mentors, immediate colleagues, APD participants) help you think about your role?

RQ3 (APD leaders). What do academic developers think DPs need?

- (i) What do you see as the main aims of the professional development you lead?
- (ii) Are there noticeable challenges for staff from practice backgrounds in understanding their HE role? Does this affect your APD content?

Analysis

The individual narratives generated were first analysed naturalistically: '... rich descriptions of people's stories about significant issues ... data serve as a source to ask: What

Table 3. Dual professionals' profiles.

Institution ^a	Individual ^a	Discipline	Practice experience (yrs)	Academic experience (yrs)	Current HE role	Currently in practice?	Trajectory
RED	Peter	Social Work	15	5	FT Senior Lecturer	PT out of hours cover	Boundary
RED	Frank	Music Tech.	15	9	FT programme leader	'Peripherally'	Inbound
RED	Alison	Clinical education	9	1	0.6 Senior Lecturer	GP educator (0.2) and paramedic	Boundary
RED	Liz	Nursing	15	3	0.6	HE placement link and healthcare trainer	Boundary
RED	Alex	Media	15	4	0.7	Own business	Boundary
GREEN	Sam	Digital Industries	30	4	0.4 (across 3 HEIs) Senior Lecturer	Own business	Boundary
GREEN	Maggie	Visual Arts	15	12	FT	'Impossible ... there's so much crap to do'.	?
GREEN	Sally	Business	10	5	None – freelance	'I describe myself as a part-time academic and recovering civil servant'.	Boundary
GREEN	Julie	Art & Design	15	10	FT Senior Lecturer	'Not much design work at the moment. I'm too busy to fit it round my HE work'.	Boundary
PURPLE	Amy	Law	25	4	FT Lecturer	No	Boundary
PURPLE	Jim	Law	20	9	FT (since 2018) Lecturer	Legal professional	Boundary
YELLOW	Anna	Journalism	5	2	Lecturer	Freelance journalist	Boundary
BROWN	Rebecca	Digital Design	20	9	0.1 Lecturer	Own business	Peripheral
BROWN	Paul	Engineering & Digital Arts	7	5	0.5 Course leader	Own business	Boundary

^aPseudonym.

experiences has this person had? What do these experiences mean to him or her?' (McAlpine, 2016, p. 35).

This process informed the decisions I took during the analysis, based on my interpretation of participants' own accounts of identity development, while allowing for potential overlaps for example, outbound from practice, but inbound to academia. Narrative analysis privileges narrator agency and enables individuals' voices to emerge, articulating the significance of context, the affective impact of experiences, and their personal trajectories.

DP narratives were then coded to identify emerging themes – an important and necessarily iterative process to capture an accurate and complete picture of common themes. One theme from early interviews dealt with institutional induction, but was not generalizable as this did not feature in later interviews. An example of generalizable codes this process generated is DPs learning about HE from *immediate colleagues*, *APD content*, and/or *APD peer interactions*. DP narratives of CoPs are discussed in relation to the CoPs they identified as significant.

Interviews with APD leaders were analysed for two themes: the intentions of APD and programme leaders' perceptions of the role of APD in addressing DPs' particular needs.

Findings

Profiles illustrate findings from DPs' interviews, addressing the first two research questions. Findings from programme leaders' interviews explore the third research question. Finally, I discuss the implications of these findings for APD curricula and practice.

Profile 1. Frank: inbound trajectory (also Alex)

Frank previously worked in research positions in HE, exploring uses of music technology in professional practice (for example, how filmmakers can use technology to manipulate sounds) and sees his role as 'professional but it kind of borders on academic all the time'. He works in a small (<10) team of academic and technical staff, leading and teaching three modules and has launched two new programmes. He has initiated research seminars for staff and students and founded an inhouse music ensemble and record label.

Frank envisages a long-term career as an academic. The most significant elements in his trajectory and identity construction centre on his academic aspirations, maintaining sufficient practice presence (such as using industry experience to found the inhouse record label) to legitimate his work with students. He sees considerable potential in his mandate to create new courses and overhaul a curriculum which was 'a patchwork of things from years gone by' and suffered from recruiting poorly. He aims to prepare students for a portfolio future in a challenging industry: 'That includes being honest . . . we would be doing them a disservice if we weren't telling them the way things are going' and to generate collective purpose among staff. The new degrees, attracting different kinds of students, were co-designed and co-taught by technical and academic staff, with members of both coalescing to create a CoP, working collectively and developing strategies to address common problems: 'We had to be agile . . . which was great but highly stressful'. This nascent CoP was particularly significant for Frank's identity and legitimacy as an educator.

Frank had welcomed APD's academic focus and emphasis on values and appreciated its content, exposing him to 'more generalised ideas about what teaching is and what learning is about . . . and develop strategies, so things don't fall apart' and as a credential, contributing to Frank's intended trajectory. However, APD peers had been insignificant in Frank's academic socialisation. He felt isolated, irritated by people ' . . . who all knew each other and had similar opinions' or appeared reluctant to engage: ' We had to do teaching presentations and looking at some people I thought: "Have you paid attention to anything we've been learning?"'. However, Frank's APD cohort had no other DPs from cognate disciplines, which may have affected his view. By contrast, Alex (in a different cohort): 'It was fun, a great mix of folk and made me feel I was part of the process of being ushered along'.

In summary, those on an inbound trajectory into academia, maintaining peripheral participation in practice, appreciated APD's academic approach. They valued being in a cohort of fellow ECAs, hearing different disciplinary perspectives and engaging with theories and their application to practice. However, it was frustrating if this did not work and there was no evidence that even successful interactions were sustained longer term. Disciplinary colleagues, with whom DPs work more closely and for longer, were much more significant than APD peers in shaping their identity and role as an educator.

Profile 2. Liz: boundary trajectory (also Alison, Sam, Peter, Jim, Amy, and Julie)

Liz worked as a nurse and clinical nurse manager in a National Health Service (NHS) Accident and Emergency department for 15 years, leaving profoundly disillusioned by the workplace environment and the conflict with her own values: 'The lack of resources, lack of beds, lack of care . . . I was finishing shifts feeling utterly exhausted and thankful that no-one had died. I knew if I stayed . . . I would either burn out or become this hard-nosed lack of empathy person, and I wasn't prepared to do that'.

Towards the end of her time in the NHS, she sought out university teaching, first in a fixed-term maternity cover post and for the last three years in a fractional substantive post, created to reflect her skillset. Liz teaches and assesses a range of undergraduate and postgraduate modules, co-leads on clinical skills and simulations and is the university's placement link lecturer with a neighbouring hospital.

Liz's practice experience and her HE educator role are central to her boundary trajectory and identity. She appreciates the opportunities HE has given her and envisages a long-term HE role which enables her to maintain that trajectory. Despite having less agency in HE than she had had in practice: ' . . . I'm always conscious that I'm running things past my colleague and my manager', she finds her HE environment fulfilling and her team supportive: 'The team I work with have stressed this is not just your responsibility, we're all part of the journey for the students'. However, the larger department to which her immediate team belongs distinguishes academics from practitioners and this affects Liz's self-image and positioning: 'I feel very comfortable doing clinical skills, but probably wouldn't be able to run a *proper* (author italics) academic research-based module'.

Liz draws legitimacy from her clinical expertise and growing confidence as an educator, gaining positive feedback from her students: ' . . . a little handclap at the end of a lecture or a note . . . you've made a difference' and appreciating the recognition the

university gives Liz's practice expertise, while enabling her to develop new skills, such as online teaching.

Liz's APD cohort had a high proportion of people from similar (pharmacy, physiotherapy) practice backgrounds. Their shared values '... professional behaviours and accountability' reinforced her boundary identity, but there is no evidence this had helped develop sustained relationships or shared strategies. Furthermore, Liz thinks practicalities (different working patterns, different sites) would have made such relationships difficult to sustain.

APD content appeared irrelevant to Liz's identity as an educator. She had expected a practical focus, but found much of the content 'nebulous and confusing' with limited benefits: 'The one thing we weren't being taught to do was teach!' Compared to Alison, who attended APD with four immediate colleagues: 'At work we spend time talking about what we learned through APD and how we apply it'.

Consequently, Liz prioritised future APD relevant to her clinical practice and identity as an educator, refreshing her practice knowledge through her link lecturer role: 'I'm really looking forward to going back in and seeing how things have changed'.

In summary, a boundary trajectory created opportunities for exchanges of expertise, legitimating individuals in both HE and practice settings. Boundary DPs were uniquely placed to cultivate and use practice networks to inform their teaching, involve other practice experts, arrange workplace visits, and broker student placements. Where practice workplaces were confident about students' commitment and how their HE programme was preparing them for the workplace relationships flourished, which both benefit students and reinforce boundary professionals' identity and legitimacy. Strong practice relationships, supportive disciplinary colleagues, and relationships with students were more significant than APD in identity construction for boundary DPs.

Profile 3. Maggie: a new trajectory?

Maggie had worked, studied and taught in different EU countries for 10 years, building practice experience in Visual Arts and specialising in photography. She had applied for her present post within days of submitting her PhD and was astonished to be invited for an interview, let alone offered the post. She was blunt about her reasons for applying 'I wanted to have an affiliation to have access, to be honest, to a lot of photographic equipment'.

Two themes pervade Maggie's narrative. Firstly, although she had successfully combined her professional practice and academic study, she lacked agency, expressing her career as a series of lucky breaks: 'things come along'. She had envisaged her current role enabling her to combine teaching and practice: '... maybe teach a couple of days a week and the rest of the time develop my photographic practice ... it turned out not to be that way'. Secondly, Maggie laments a lack of time, both her own – for teaching preparation, engaging with APD, and practice work – and that of others (such as her mentor) to support and help her, beyond an initial induction.

APD appeared to have played little part in Maggie's academic socialisation or her identity as an educator. She criticised much of the content, particularly where the focus was on implementing institutional policies rather than pedagogic practices. Maggie identified the action learning sets used during APD as uniquely valuable: '... all the things you can't talk about because you don't have the trust of your colleagues' but

frustrating, as these sets were not sustained longer term. There was no evidence of a potential or emerging CoP with immediate colleagues: 'I talk to my colleagues, but it's about money and workload . . . I tell them it shouldn't be this way'.

Having originally envisaged a boundary trajectory, Maggie concluded that combining practice and university work ' . . . gets you exactly nowhere'. She felt consumed by the demands of her HE work, at odds with the institution, frustrated by time pressures and trapped in a dilemma. The university gave her access to valuable practice facilities, but no time to use them; if she worked offsite to make more time for practice she forfeited the facilities. She could not see how to resolve this, beyond a determination to do something: 'I see I need to fight', or what a good resolution might even look like. She was the only DP who had no idea what she might be doing in the next 3–5 years.

A metaphor for Maggie's situation is a boat with a damaged rudder, unable to steer its own course at sea, tossed around at the whim of tides and winds and liable to end up anywhere. Rudderless could be an apt term for Maggie's uncertain and complex trajectory; if indeed it is a trajectory at all.

Perspectives from APD leaders

APD leaders were unanimous about APD's potential to create opportunities for participants to work with peers across disciplines and gain different perspectives, building individuals' content knowledge about key themes such as learning, teaching, assessment, curriculum design, and potential applications. While APD was framed by the UKPSF, it also responded to local contexts and needs. Specialist and vocational universities used disciplinary challenges and discipline-based literature as a way into the broader context of HE, while research and research-and-teaching HEIs adopted a more holistic approach, addressing different dimensions such as teaching, research, and researcher development. Overall there was no evidence of intentionally creating a CoP of early career academics.

APD leaders identified APD as part of a process of developing academic identity, although they saw this as being primarily enacted through interactions within disciplinary teams, with colleagues and mentors. However 'it's not easy for these staff to come into established disciplinary teams' (APD leader, BROWN), particularly if practitioners' and academics' relative status differs: '[DPs] come into HE with a bit of imposter syndrome and 3 to 4 years later still don't feel part of the guild' (APD leader, PURPLE).

APD leaders highlighted four key differences between DPs and traditional ECAs. They had experienced norms and practices in entirely different types of public and private sector organisations, including starting up and running their own businesses. They had had more (and more varied) life experiences. They had generally not studied recently in HE and were less familiar with its current context and challenges. Finally, DPs were completely unprepared for the expectations and demands of their HE role.

'They are appointed at SL level because of the money, but many have no idea what they're doing in terms of their responsibility' (APD leader, RED). 'Admin, budget, curriculum development, mentoring other staff . . . their professional expert knowledge is lost in their novice HE status' (APD leader, YELLOW).

APD was primarily framed around the role and expectations of traditional ECAs who predominated in most cohorts, assuming an inbound trajectory which DPs did not necessarily share. 'I hadn't really thought about it until you asked . . . I suppose that is

an assumption I make' (APD leader, PURPLE). Even though vocational and specialist universities had a larger proportion of DPs and were more aware of the issues, sustaining a boundary trajectory in these circumstances was difficult: 'People are very committed to being [here], but they want to retain their professional practice and really struggle to do both' (APD leader, GREEN). APD leaders offered little evidence that DPs (or other ECAs) maintained longer-term networks with fellow APD participants: 'They go back to their departments and we don't have a way of tracking what happens' (APD leader, BROWN).

Various initiatives aimed to incorporate content into APD to address DPs' particular challenges and legitimate their typically boundary trajectory: a module on HE leadership, the impact of critical incidents as learners on their approach to teaching, an individual inquiry or portfolio assessment exploring practice and HE roles, enabling individuals to articulate and reflect on the full range of their experiences. Other initiatives included partnerships between centrally located academic developers and disciplinary specialists to embed disciplinary input into central APD (Butcher & Stoncel, 2012).

Discussion

DPs' participation in both academic and practice communities is key to their identity as educators. This identity is built through relationships with staff and students in the discipline, where DPs' practice knowledge, expertise, and networks make them central. The most significant and sustained CoP came from these relationships in immediate academic teams, which was particularly effective when there were shared practice backgrounds, ethos and ways of working and where the team's direction and purpose was clearly articulated and periodically revisited. There was minimal evidence of sustained interactions with APD peers.

Programme leaders identified the challenges DPs experienced in navigating the different practices and expectations of HE. APD created opportunities to interact with and work collaboratively with other ECAs; while some of these interactions had been successful, they rarely created significant or lasting relationships, nor was there an intention to create a CoP. APD's tendency to assume an inbound trajectory made it less suited to DPs' typically boundary trajectories.

RQ1. What are the various trajectories and identities of DPs?

This study illustrates both the significance of trajectory explored in CoP literature and the complexities, which distinguish DPs from traditional ECAs, in terms of reconciling practice and academic work. An inbound trajectory to HE does not necessitate being outbound from practice; even a peripheral relationship with practice legitimates individuals' identity, although the single example in this study suggests that a peripheral trajectory is unusual. The study corroborates socio-cultural perspectives, suggesting that individuals' sense of belonging is fostered particularly within their disciplinary community and helps individuals grappling with their identity make meaningful sense of their situation and intended trajectory.

DPs, whether inbound into academia, boundary, or peripheral, articulate their identity as educators with practice expertise. I suggest this is a positive message, making identities fluid and evolving rather than unstable, and persisting even when DPs' situation as freelance practitioners or on fractional, short-term HE contracts appears precarious.

However the notion of trajectory – presuming intentionality – does not apply to individuals with no sense of direction, identity, and agency. This is highlighted in this study by a conflict between workplace demands and practice identity, generating self-doubt, undermining practice identity and lacking a discernible future direction. Trajectories are valuable in providing a language for DPs to talk about transitions they are making and identities they are forging, but cannot apply when someone is at a loss to know what these might be. An identity of 'rudderless' is therefore more appropriate.

RQ2. How does DPs' participation in multiple CoPs affect their identity construction?

I postulated three potentially significant CoPs: practice, disciplinary colleagues, and APD content and peers. The findings highlight the importance of immediate disciplinary colleagues in academic socialisation through relationships grounded in shared values and practices. This is consistent with extensive literature exploring the significance of the discipline (e.g. Becher, 2001; Jawitz, 2009; Kreber, 2008; Trowler et al., 2012). Staff and students, with whom DPs interact most frequently and meaningfully, value DPs' expertise which makes them central in the university and helps develop their identity.

APD's role in identity construction corroborates Butcher and Stoncel's (2012) findings, particularly the extent to which content can build confidence. DPs' attitude to APD is chiefly affected by the perceived relevance of its content, practical applications, and its contribution to DPs' confidence and identity as educators. Even when DPs build relationships with other ECAs in their cohort, these transient relationships play little part in shaping DP identity. This is consistent with my own experiences of teaching on such programmes. We have already found that longer-lasting relationships are rooted in the immediate disciplinary team. While such relationships are further strengthened if several colleagues undertake APD as a group and subsequently apply their learning in their immediate disciplinary context, team relationships flourish independently of APD.

RQ3. What do academic developers think DPs need?

While APD was framed by national standards, institutional context and mission had some influence on APD content. Where DPs were a significant proportion of the workforce, APD content could discuss issues specific to DPs, as a way into exploring HE learning, teaching and assessment, student support, and curriculum design. It was more difficult where DP numbers were relatively low or where the institutional mission assumed traditional academic roles. Nevertheless, across the study, there was evidence that APD leaders had designed curriculum content and assessment which could both legitimate boundary trajectories characteristic of most DPs and be attractive to some ECAs.

Implications for academic developers

As academic developers, our ‘students’ are typically members of staff in our own institutions; we do not generally recruit or select those engaging in APD. This generates two underlying issues. Firstly, the interdisciplinary nature of APD can be a strength, allowing DPs and ECAs to support and learn from each other, and building capacity to find solutions to common problems. Carefully imagined in-cohort activities such as action learning sets help build a stronger cohort culture and such capacity. Secondly, given the powerful influence of disciplinary and immediate teams in shaping identity and socialisation, is there more we could be doing in our institution-wide role to ‘harness the [disciplinary] CoP in ways which benefit the university’ (Arthur, 2016, p. 239) and potentially build new CoPs: mentors, pedagogic or educational researchers, practice professionals, creating opportunities for practice – in its broadest sense – to be shared?

Conclusion

The growing numbers of students enrolling on courses which demand connections with practice creates opportunities for APD to address the differences between traditional ECAs and mature DPs, whose particular needs and the multiple factors contributing to professional identity and development have been under-researched. The lens of CoP trajectories has helped illuminate two types of DP identity and trajectories, but the research also illustrates the limitations of CoP theory to account for the phenomenon of being without direction or agency. A larger study, focused on DPs in a range of institutions, and at other career stages, might reveal other trajectories or new insights into factors contributing to different trajectories and implications for APD leaders. This paper has highlighted the significance of multiple factors contributing to professional identity and development and has opened a discussion about how academic developers can best support these dual professionals.

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to CSHE colleagues and anonymous reviewers for commenting on earlier versions of this paper.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Fran Beaton was Senior Lecturer in Higher Education, University of Kent, UK and remains Honorary Academic in Kent’s Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE).

ORCID

Fran Beaton  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4111-3020>

References

- Arthur, E. (2016). Communities of practice in higher education: Professional learning in an academic career. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 21(3), 230–241. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2015.1127813>
- Atkinson, G. (2016). *Work-based learning and work-integrated learning: Fostering engagement with employers*. NCVER.
- Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Polity Press.
- Becher, T., & Trowler, P. (2001). *Academic tribes and territories*. Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Blackwell, A., Bowes, L., Harvey, L., Hesketh, A., & Knight, P. (2001). Transforming work experience in higher education. *British Educational Research Journal*, 27(3), 269–285. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920120048304>
- Boyd, P., & Harris, K. (2010). Becoming a university lecturer in teacher education: Expert school teachers reconstructing their pedagogy and identity. *Professional Development in Education*, 36(1–2), 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19415250903454767>
- Boyd, P., & Smith, C. (2016). The contemporary academic: Orientation towards research work and research identity of higher education lecturers in the health professions. *Studies in Higher Education*, 41(4), 678–695. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.043657>
- Butcher, J., & Stoncel, D. (2012). The impact of a postgraduate certificate in teaching in higher education on university lecturers appointed for their professional expertise at a teaching-led university: ‘It’s made me braver’. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 17(2), 149–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2011.620107>
- Coates, H., & Goedegebuure, L. (2010). *The real academic revolution: Why we need to reconceptualise Australia’s future academic workforce and eight possible strategies for how to go about this*. Australian Council for Education Research. <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/51565>
- Dann, R., Basford, J., Booth, C., O’Sullivan, J., Scanlon, J., Woodfine, C., & Wright, P. (2019). The impact of doctoral study on university lecturers’ construction of self within a changing higher education policy context. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44(7), 1166–1182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1421155>
- GuildHE. (2018). *Practice-informed learning: The rise of the dual professional*.
- Jackson, D. (2015). Employability skill development in work-integrated learning: Barriers and best practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, 40(2), 350–367. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.842221>
- Jawitz, J. (2009). Academic identities and communities of practice in a professional discipline. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 14(3), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13562510902898817>
- Kreber, C. (Ed.). (2008). *The university and its disciplines*. Routledge.
- MacKenzie, B. (2019). *Fit for purpose? Reforming tertiary education in Australia*. MacKenzie Research Institute. <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/520343>
- McAlpine, L. (2016). Why might you use narrative methodology? A story about narrative. *Estonian Journal of Education*, 4(1), 32–57. <https://doi.org/10.12697/eha.2016.4.1.02b>
- Morell-Scott, N. (2019). The perceptions of acceptance by new academics to a higher education institution. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 43(3), 305–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2017.1361513>
- Santoro, N., & Snead, S. (2012). “I’m not a real academic”: A career from industry to academe. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 37(3), 384–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2011.645457>
- Shreeve, A. (2011). Being in two camps: Conflicting experiences for practice-based academics. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 33(1), 79–91. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2011.521681>
- Taylor, S., & Govender, C. (2013). *Education and training for the workplace: Workplace-readiness skills*. The Southern African Society for Cooperative Education.
- Teichler, U., Arimoto, A., & Cummings, W. (Eds.). (2013). *The changing academic profession: Major findings of a comparative survey*. Springer Science and Business.

- Trowler, P., & Bamber, V. (2005). Compulsory higher education teacher training: Joined-up policies, institutional architectures and enhancement cultures. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 10(2), 79–93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13601440500281708>
- Trowler, P., Saunders, M., & Bamber, V. (2012). *Tribes and territories in the 21st century*. Routledge.
- Universities UK. (2015). *Patterns and trends in UK higher education*. <http://vocado.edu.au/10707/368581>
- Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: The career of a concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp. 179–198). Springer & Open University.
- Wenger, E. (2011). *Communities of practice: A brief introduction*. National Science Foundation. <http://hdl.handle.net/1794/11736>
- Wendler, C., Bridgeman, B., Markle, R., Cline, F., Bell, N., McAllister, P., & Kent, J. (2012). *Pathways through graduate school and into careers*. NJ Educational Testing Service.