

**The influences on early career academics
which affect their career paths
in a post-1992 university**

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Declaration

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The influences on early career academics which affect their career paths in a post-1992 university

This thesis looks at the influences on the academic career paths of new lecturers over a period of their first five years of employment in higher education. It is based in one single post-1992 university. An analysis of fifty-three critical incidents articulated by seventeen early career academics reveals an individualised lived experience, showing the influence of teaching, the post-graduate certificate in learning and teaching, peers, research and publishing, and the institution to varying degrees. These five influences are linked to three role identities: the teacher, the educationalist and the academic. It is suggested that for these early career academics, there is little evidence of strong collegial and disciplinary structures and that relations with students and the teaching arena are much more central in defining the academic's everyday existence. It is also suggested that there is no automatic assumption of an academic role identity and that the transition from appointed lecturer to 'academic' is a step change rather than a progression.

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Abbreviations

CIT	-	Critical Incident Technique
DfES	-	Department for Education and Science
HE	-	Higher Education
HEA	-	Higher Education Academy
KTP	-	Knowledge Transfer Partnership
PG Cert	-	Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education
QAA	-	Quality Assurance Agency

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis started from two significant personal experiences, which turned into one management question and then into a research question.

The first experience comes from joining higher education relatively late in a professional career in education and finding myself, within eighteen months of arriving in this post-1992, student-centred institution, as an acting Dean of the university. This was a strange experience of joining what seemed to be a very 'elite' group of academic staff, yet personally having no previous experience of working in the sector, let alone at this level of participation. My previous experience of university and academics had been as a student – thirty years previously.

My only hope of survival was to lie low, speak little and listen a lot. I hoped that by doing this I would be able to identify the salient characteristics of this animal, the 'academic', and be able to imitate these in my own practice, in order not to be exposed as a 'fraud' (Seymour, 2006). So the first question was, "What is an (established) academic?" and the second, "How do I become one of them?" After this there were a great number of subsidiary questions that I asked or internal conversations that I had with myself: "Who do I ask? What do I ask? How am I meant to know? Where is the instructional manual for this career? Am I qualified to do this job?" This was despite previously defining myself as a senior manager in education.

The next major experience, separate but linked, arose from leading the institutional Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PG Cert). This mandatory qualification required participation from all new academics appointed to a teaching role in this university. However, once staff had 'graduated' from this one year, part-time course, there was no further programme of support or development. The PG Cert worked with the participants to discover what it meant to be a teacher in higher education, but not apparently to be an 'academic'. So my next questions became, "What is an 'academic'?" and "How do I, in my professional role, support new members of staff in acquiring the appropriate awareness, knowledge, confidence and competences (and whatever else is necessary) for this role?"

One year, I attempted to institute a 'Green L plates' programme for staff who had completed their second year of employment. It was a one day event including discussion of critical incidents that had happened during the past year, outlining of updated pedagogical research, signposting to possible funding sources and case studies of ethical issues that I felt had not been investigated in enough depth in the PG Cert. It was passable, but not an outstanding success. As a teacher, the content of the event seemed sound, but as an educational developer the context of this one-off event did not really align with the problem I thought I had identified, which now seemed to be something about academic practice and identity in the longer term.

This question of support for new staff, however, was a management question rather than a research question. It took another two years of study and discussion with colleagues to turn this question round and realise that before I could put together any programme to support these new members of staff I needed to know more about the current early career academic in my institution, from the point of their lived experience. Knowing that my own experience now appeared somewhat serendipitous, I was suspicious of being able to elicit practical early career influences from established academics reflecting back on a whole career. So the focus of my enquiry was narrowed to those who had been in the university for five years or less. My own experience had no centrality in an academic discipline, but did have a continuous theme of teaching. So the target group was those staff for whom teaching was their predominant responsibility.

My initial reading suggested that I should be looking at 'communities of practice' and 'zones of proximal participation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Trowler & Knight, 2000). However, my actual discussions with new academics suggested something much more individually negotiated and idiosyncratic and based on the immediacy of experience and survival rather than any long term career view or disciplinary grouping. As I explained to a colleague, this was less about tribes and more about tribulations.

As a senior manager, it also appeared to me that 'the university' was continually influenced by benchmarks, targets, league tables and external and internal quality measures in its day to day behaviour; and an economic pressure to diversify from its

current basic teaching function with a heavy dependence on direct government funding in the wider context. In order to deliver on these targets it was obviously necessary to rely on staff who were continually being asked to extend their skills and views of themselves into something that they either had not trained for, or did not perceive themselves to be in their current role. There was no systematic support to develop these perceptions or skills. The notion of 'academic freedom' for individuals seemed to have become distorted into a 'sink or swim' philosophy for the institution. As managers we gave a great deal of thought and planning to 'repositioning the university', but very little, in a positive or creative sense, to 'repositioning the academic'.

My research question and methodology were beginning to form, although possibly by a process of exclusion rather than inclusion. There was no obvious hypothesis offered by the literature or emerging out of individual conversations about the directions of an early academic identity, or potential categories of influence or modes of support. Each story I heard prior to this doctoral research seemed just that – an individual story. There appeared to be no patterns or leads to be followed up. The question, and likewise the methodology, had to be something more open ended, but as a pragmatist wanting at least some clues to answering my management question, the methods had to be focused.

The question started as, "What influences new academics?" and after going through several iterations became, "**What are the significant influences on academics which affect their career paths in a new university in the first few years of their academic careers?**" The central method became an articulation of 'critical incidents'. The mode of data analysis became grounded theory.

I fully intend to go back to the senior management team of the university in which this research was conducted and to the wider educational development community and share with them the process, the findings and some tentative conclusions and recommendations about the experiences of early career academics.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The research question as outlined in the Introduction is: 'What are the **significant influences** (4*) on academics which affect their **career paths** (2*) within a **post-1992 university** (1*) in the **first few years** (3*) of their academic careers?'

[the numbers represent the order in which the issues will be outlined in this literature review.]*

Given the question above, it might seem logical to look at literature around the notion of academic careers, which Tight suggests contains the 'how to', the auto / biographical and research-based strands (Tight, 2003, 157).

However, the major criticism of the literature around academic careers is that it generally assumes that higher education is a homogenous sector and modelled on the older universities. Although it is acknowledged that academics may differ in the relative emphasis that they give to different strands of their role, or the way in which they operationalise their role, the literature does not suggest that the specific institutional context plays a major part in framing this role. In particular there does not appear to be any suggestion that the differential recruitment of vocational staff and the foregrounded teaching context of academics' daily existence in post-1992 universities, may result in the experience of different influences which produce or reinforce a different kind of academic identity and academic career path from that previously outlined in the literature.

In an attempt to illuminate this different kind of academic, the research question does not focus primarily on the 'career paths' which these new academics have taken, but on the influences which may affect their career direction in the early years. The choice of the term 'career path' rather than 'career' or 'career direction', is intended to suggest that although there is a biographical continuity, in that it refers to the same person, there is no overall directional continuity. The word 'career' has been used as the accepted term of understanding in the literature, but a 'career path' is not seen as a direct road to be travelled, albeit at various speeds. This term contains the notion of an individual walk within general parameters, but which might be partially signposted or obscured at any time. It is the actual influences on direction, the small points of

apparent dilemma and the way in which the future direction is influenced by an internal reflection which does not appear to have been investigated. The participants here are new academics who do not yet have fully developed career patterns, for whom there may be no identified directions, but a series of unconnected responses to specific occasions and so the focus is on the incidents which have influenced them so far and why they think these influences are important. It is the alleged 'signposts' and the reflection on them rather than the path itself which is the focus of this research.

Given the framework of individual contextual incidents and personal influences, the question is not just about general perceptions of 'being an academic', but about the apparently neglected area of the dynamics of the specific academic context in which the academics are working. This framework leads to literatures around the contested notion of academic identity.

The following research is carried out from a personal pragmatist framework that the assumption and ongoing development of an identity is continually influenced by the practical day-to-day experience of academic life in a particular institution. That being so, the pragmatic view is overlaid by a realist perspective that it is the actual continually trialed and embedded, conflicting or reinforced knowledge of the reality of the ongoing personal experience which affects the future approach and behaviour of individuals. Academic identity is therefore formed by the specificity of the context of the particular institution and the precise context of the lived experience of each member of the academy. The research question and the later actual interview questions do not therefore ask about the way in which influences contribute to 'identity', but about the contribution to a career path as this was the grounded in experience question.

So, to break the research question into its constituent parts, and bearing in mind the stated importance of context, the literature review will start from the current higher education context (1 - the new university), then look at the individual institutional role content (2 - the career path), followed by the conceptions and perceptions associated with being an academic (3 - the first few years) and finally at the actual process of

identity formation (4 - the significant influences). Although literature is to be found in all these areas, there is a gap in the last category where there does not appear to be a literature which discusses the actual influences on the career directions of new academics.

Surrounding this focused literature is the much larger debate around structure and agency and a rejection of the concept of communities of practice as a useful analytical model for this research. Within the ideas of structure and agency, this thesis will investigate and discuss actual instances of the role and influence of the 'internal conversation' (Archer, 2003).

A. Context of academic identity

The context of academic identity can itself be broken into three categories, each becoming increasingly focussed on the individual.

Changing national context of academic identity in higher education

The overarching framework of the current higher education context is within a society which is increasingly defined as 'supercomplex' (Barnett, 2000a, 2000b; Trowler, 2004), having limited linear progression routes, few robust hierarchies and even fewer direct causal relationships. This is a world of reduced certainties, where concepts are challenged and frameworks are at best flexible and sometimes unstable and precarious. Within this context, some researchers suggest that previously uncontested academic ideologies are increasingly in competition with managerialism, corporateness and neo-liberalism (Davies, 2005b; Henkel, 2004; Mann, 2008).

The debate regarding the changing nature of universities at the national level (Barlow & Antoinou, 2007) focuses around the relationship between universities and the wider economy, which is increasingly defined as a 'knowledge economy' (Canaan, 2008; Harman, 2002; Karran, 2009; Usher, 2002). There is an developing convergent overview where government, funding bodies, industry and universities agree that the relationship exists and should exist (CBI, 2009; HEFCE, 2009; UUK, 2009) although there are differences in the nature of the controlling direction of this relationship.

McNay (2005a, 10) argues that changes in academic identity are taking place at an even wider level, when he refers to the growing influence of European and global dimensions as a 'demand on (academics') identity' as part of the Bologna process. The increasing recognition of the value of knowledge to local, national and international economies (Jauhiainen, 2009; Henkel, 2000) has determined that universities and academic staff have been mobilized into ever more direct relationships with the economic agendas and priorities of government. Education is seen as a form of knowledge capital which has meant that applied knowledge, in particular that which is deemed socially relevant, has increased in importance as the kind of university activity which government is prepared to sponsor (Harris, 2005). There is an increasingly pronounced premise (both written and unwritten) that the overall purpose of higher education is to produce growth and wealth for the larger economy (Attwood, 2007; Mandelson, 2009; Rowland, 2002). This redefinition of higher education in relation to production has led to the encapsulation of other ideas within that same 'production' framework. Hence a university, and the departments within it, are increasingly affected by 'marketisation' (Beck & Young, 2005), and the need to define their 'product' and to attach a monetary and output value to it (HEFCE, 2009; Newman, 2009b). For academic staff, this has implications in being encouraged or directed to divert from traditional academic activity and expand into third stream activity (Newman, 2009a; PACEC, 2009).

In terms of academic identity, it is argued that this economic focus has resulted in an increased emphasis in higher education on 'performativity' (Barnett, 2001; Lyotard, 1984). The emphasis on performativity in the institution means that new academics are increasingly measured by, and measure themselves by, specific performance criteria required by the management of a university. Beck and Young (2005) argue specifically that as a result of direct and indirect market forces academic practice is being radically restructured, resulting in significant changes in the way in which an academic might view their relationship to knowledge, to students and to their institution. However, this research is mainly theoretical and conceptual and there does not appear to be significant research which looks at these relationships within a specific context and a precise location.

Another part of this economic argument is that if universities are now a significant part of a knowledge economy, it is important that a higher percentage of the population is capable of being involved in this. The logic of this has been a move to a higher education widening participation agenda (Mayhew et al, 2004). Universities are no longer completely autonomous elite institutions serving elite populations, but part of a movement – to greater or lesser extent – influenced by a government agenda and responsible for delivering government targets of widening participation (McNay, 2005a). So, another way of looking at the changes in the overall HE context has been described as a move towards being a service provider (Mann, 2008), where the academic might be regarded as a civil servant responsible for the successful achievement of government policy.

Overall, the sector is seen to be moving from one of individual autonomous entities with internal accountability towards becoming institutions which are accountable to many diverse stakeholders (Bromage, 2006; Leitch, 2006). It is suggested (Harris, 2005) that there may be a parallel move within academic identity, from individual self-regulated autonomy to visible, external and pressured multiple accountabilities. This might particularly be the case for individuals working in institutions with less historical status or economic independence, which would be more susceptible to these external pressures. This research is based in a post -1992 university where these multiple accountabilities might be expected to be more foregrounded.

This overall sectoral economic focus has also changed some emphases in the terrain and direction of the higher education curriculum, particularly in the post-1992 institutions, with the growth of vocational disciplinary and interdisciplinary areas, increased emphasis on student employability and the development of work-based learning (Symes & McIntyre, 2000). It would appear that staff are therefore pressured by both external and internal forces which could influence a reconfiguration of a previous more stable academic identity. Bernstein phrases these pressures on identity within a knowledge economy in a different way (and talking about a different educational sector) when he refers to increased government control of both 'inputs' and 'outputs' (Bernstein, 2000, 68). While this control is not evident across all curricula in the higher education sector, it can be increasingly seen in those

vocational areas such as education or nursing in control of the curriculum and the number of student places.

Another way in which the national higher education vista is changing, as a logical concomitant of the 'performativity' culture, is in the increase of an audit culture, where 'product' and 'performance' are internally and externally subject to quantitative output, performance, and system measures. Universities whose previous performance measures and agendas were decided and directed by internal self-regulating bodies, are now subject to procedures and processes resulting in the publication of external reports and league tables (Henkel, 2000). In terms of the effect on academic identity, Barnett argues that one ideology, that of academic competence, is being displaced with another ideology, that of operational competence (Barnett, 1994a). Strathern (2000) argues that this is not just a replacement, as this increased visibility of performance measures does not necessarily mean increased transparency of equability in their implementation, which results in increasing individualisation of contextual targets. It may be argued that visibility is not necessarily transparency or equity and that what appears to be a more open and reasonable system is actually being used for purposes of control and that these changes would be reflected in tensions in the academic identity of new academics.

A significant aspect for this research regarding the question of identity in the national context of a market ideology, which does not appear to have fully surfaced in the literature, is the attempt by universities to establish differential group HE identities within the sector, which the Times Higher Education refers to as 'mission groups' (Corbyn & Attwood, 2009). There is recognition that there are many different kinds of universities (Brennan et al, 2007; Ramsden, 2005; 2006), via acknowledgement of labels such as the Russell Group, 1994 Group, Million Plus and resistance to the totally individual and privatised institution. It is this identity by 'type' of institution, which has led the research question to be specifically situated in a post-1992 university. Research questioning a range of academics across the sector representing different types of institutions has been deemed to be outside the scope of this study, but the chosen focus on a post-1992 university is deliberate and conditioned by my personal work location, in order to suggest that the influences on

academic identity may be more specifically contextualised than is evident from the literature.

The literature in this section suggests that the marketisation of higher education has resulted in a diminution of the autonomy of the academic, which is a factor which may emerge in the analysis of 'critical incidents' experienced by new academics. At a national contextual level, there seems to be agreement about the predominance of external frameworks as influencing academic identity. One article that has actually directly researched the influences on academic identity (Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006), suggests this is not necessarily the experience of individual academics; that is, that academic identity is more likely to be influenced by internal factors.

This thesis is not about the structure or strength of a sector identity, but about the influences on individuals and as such, the only general researched conclusion at sector level could be that such ideological contextual changes may underpin a lack of stability about academic identity particularly amongst younger staff (Archer, 2008a; 2008b).

Changing institutional context of academic identity

The literature which investigates the institutional context of academic identities seems to parallel the national context. That is, the marketisation which has affected the external relationship of the university to the wider society is also evident in the internal structuring of the university. In the same way in which the university sector is increasingly diversified, so is the internal organisation of the university. This section of the literature seems to show that universities, particularly the post-1992 institutions, are becoming simultaneously more corporate and more fragmented.

The literature focuses on the cultural context of the institution and the opportunities and roles which may be available to staff in particular contexts. Several established authors outline the increasing growth of individual universities as corporate enterprises with corporate styles of management (Barnett, 2000a; Henkel, 2000; McNay, 1995) leading to increasing impositions of centralised systems and structures and managerialist modes of operation (Blackmore, 2007b; Churchman & King, 2009).

In an institution such as the one in which this research is based, where the culture could be characterised as corporate bureaucracy, the institutional identity of dependency, centralization and low risk (McNay, 2005) could be paralleled by identities which are influenced by conformity, compliance and control. The language of much of the literature on academic identity in the institutional context is phrased in terms such as 'tensions' and 'pressures' on individuals to bring their own pursuits and constructions of academic identity into line with the corporate identity as distinct from a 'collegium of academics' (Harris, 2005; Henkel, 2002, 252). However, this is outlined in general terms, rather than with specific institutional examples. The identity of an individual academic has always been associated with their institutional affiliation. There is undoubtedly reflected glory and status in being employed by wealthier and more prestigious institutions. What seems to be different now is an individually experienced pressure by some corporate institutions to ensure individual conformity of academic identity within the institutional model and image.

As well as the growth of corporateness and the construction of a central identity, there seems to be a simultaneous move in the opposite direction with an increasing fragmentation of roles within the institution. Some years ago, Becher and Trowler noted the 'diversification of the academic profession into even smaller and more different worlds than was previously the case' (2001, 17). This appears to be happening with increasing frequency, experienced in terms of a number of 'fractures', creating spaces and divisions particularly between academic staff and managers as well as the more expected bifurcation of teaching and research roles (Rowland, 2002; Barnett, 2005). Several writers see the predominance of professional managers as the major manifestation of institutional role division with the corporate leadership forming a separate class of academics. These managers, despite being mainly recruited from the operational workforce of academic ranks, are separated from them by having no direct day-to-day relationship with teaching or research (McNay, 2005; McWilliam, 2004). Some evidence is offered that there are not only structural divisions, but there is a deliberate distancing by academics from management, sometimes in the language of their discipline, as a way of consolidating their professional identity (Henkel, 2004; Clegg 2008).

A wide variety of departments and units are now being constructed which do not follow any disciplinary boundaries, but can be cross university in terms of modes of delivery such as 'Continuing Professional Development' or 'Lifelong Learning'. There has also been large growth in terms of support operations, such as I.T. Services or Quality Assurance Departments, Libraries and Student Services leading to increasing structural complexity and the growth of differentiated spaces (Clegg, 2008) which might influence the identity of a new academic. Less than half of all staff in higher education are defined as academics (HESA, 2010). In this kind of context, it is possible that an institutional identity is superseding that of the discipline as the point of primary identification (Henkel, 2004). It is the actual influences and the relative strengths of these influences on the primary identification of new academics which does not appear to have yet been investigated.

The fragmentation (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006) of the overall role of the academic into separate areas of research and teaching is also mirrored in the institutional identity. Where this has previously been the case of an individually negotiated balance of priorities, in the context of widening participation and the massification of higher education, there has been debate about a 'teaching-only' or 'research only' university (Fearn, 2008). While this kind of division of universities has been resisted at a national level, within the university these divisions exist. Within the current UK higher education sector, one in four UK academics is now labelled as 'teaching-only'; the actual number of which has increased by 37.87 per cent since 2003, compared with rises of 2.85 per cent and 3.08 per cent for teaching and research and research-only respectively (Oxford, 2008). In a different angle on this debate, Rowland argues that this emphasis on the differences between teaching and research emerges from an increasing view of research as a quantifiable output (Rowland, 2002) and so is linked to the growth of performativity and the audit culture mentioned in the section on national context. This division of roles, or pressure to balance roles, between teacher and researcher is another major influence on academic identity. The day-to-day lived experience which influences academics as they attempt to balance these roles in a particular institutional context is the identified focus which deserves further research.

The growth of an audit culture at sectoral level is also reflected at institutional level, resulting not just in a newer variety of academic roles and responses (Becher & Trowler, 2001), but a changing discourse of indicators, targets and outcomes which might frame academic identity (Strathern, 2000). The quality of academic work on which identity has been based is becoming not so much a matter of collegial reputation, but a statistical measurement related to explicit internal and external performance targets (Henkel, 2000; McNay, 2005) which have to be achieved by the 'visualisation of work' (Henkel, 2002, 139).

There is a strand in the literature emanating from the critical realist stance about resistances to this move which might be an potential response to identity challenge. Harris concludes that 'the language of accountability has taken over from that of trust' (Harris, 2005, 425) and Davies and Petersen suggest that the reason that there has not been more overt challenging of this performativity change to academic roles and identities is due to the way in which the audit culture has been implemented, so that individual academics have been persuaded to 'treat the effects of neo-liberalism as personal successes, responsibilities and failings rather than as a form of institutional practice in need of critique and transformation'(2005b, 77).

It is noted that the development of an identity within an institution is not seen as itself being a direct linear progression within a general move to corporateness. The relationship between institution and identity is one which is continually formed and reformed (Henkel, 2000), but limited by the institution through which the identity is built (Ashwin, 2009). Depending on the view of the researcher, the institution, or the individual, this might be seen as either a context of growing insecurity or the development of a more flexible labour force (Henkel, 2004). How much any university is owning and directing this move to create a flexible workforce or how much is happening in response to outside influences seems up for debate. Therefore the research question about influences on this question of identity may shed more light on the direction of this move.

In a different angle on the apparent contradiction between increasing corporateness and increasing fragmentation, Baruch and Hall (2004) suggest (in the American context) that the current lack of an obvious linear career structure, difficulties of

tenure, growth of temporary contracts and the increasing portfolio career might actually be a move towards the traditional view of the academic as an autonomous professional. It is possible that the 'flexibility' which is viewed as a threat by some new academics is viewed as a liberation by others (Kolsaker, 2008).

The nature of personal academic identity to be researched is located within this institutional corporateness and performativity context, with the suggestion that newer universities, where the disciplinary and research context is less delineated, where the autonomy of the subjects and disciplines are not so strongly defined and where the audit culture may be stronger, may be an important site for investigating these tensions and fragmentations (Clegg, 2008; Harris, 2005) identified above.

Changing immediate context of academic identity

The repeating theme of corporateness and fragmentation (Rowland, 2002; Henkel, 2002) is also to be found at the level of the immediate context. The sheer size of a modern university means that it is inevitable that there will be multiple departments and sections within departments; each one developing practices and ways of viewing and interpreting everyday existence resulting in increasing multiple internal cultures (Alvesson, 2002) and identities (Trowler, 2004).

It is not just the increasing fragmentation which is evidenced, but the increasing speed with which this fragmentation is taking place as project groups or teams are being formed and reformed, although Tight (2003, 159) believes the impact of this change could be overstated. Viewed from the individual situation, as evidenced by a small sample of academics in the LTA assignment, the situation of a new academic in a post-1992 university, seems to be much more fluid than 'tribes and territories' would have us believe. Earlier studies which stressed the strength of the subject or discipline identity (Becher, 1994; Becher, 1999; Becher & Trowler, 2001) are being superseded by studies which suggest that subject identity is only one of many influences (Clegg, 2008; Henkel, 2005; Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006). At an individual level, the boundaries between communities are not as rigid as an organisational diagram might suggest and within disciplines, subjects and project groups there is a significant variability in the ways in which individual members view the university and

their influential communities of practice. This thesis investigates the 'many influences' which the later research suggests exist and, within one particular institution, attempts to give more precision to the general finding above, by investigating exactly what these influences are and how they are experienced.

Rowland (2002) suggests that some of this increasing movement is due to the way in which the nature of knowledge itself is becoming fragmented. Bernstein (2000, 55) links the importance of situational factors to the question of identity by stating that 'the future of the context will regulate identity and the volatility of the context will control the nature of ... the projected identity.' So the identity of an academic which was previously seen within comparatively stable and historical disciplinary boundaries will become more challenged and fragmented as the subject boundaries themselves become less stable. In the university which is the focus of this research, the Built Environment, currently in the School of Engineering, has increasing overlaps with Design, currently in the School of Art and Design. The newer subject of Digital Animation has overlaps between the School of Art and Design and the School of Computing, which itself did not exist ten years ago. The School of Law, previously a completely separate School, has recently been subsumed within a School of Social Science and Communications. Barnett (2000) concurs with this analysis of instability in the notion of academic identity in relation to subject areas, noting that identity is not a given, but 'a matter of dynamic relationships between social and epistemological interests and structures' (256). In an increasingly complex picture, it would appear that it is not the discipline per se which is the deciding factor in the creation and maintenance of academic identity, but the relationship of the individual to that discipline in a particular context.

Henkel (2004) also supports the idea that the formation of an academic identity as a linear induction into an identifiable culture by the absorption of tacit knowledge is increasingly invalid and Blackmore concurs that, 'disciplinarity is only one social and cultural factor amongst many' (Blackmore, 2007b, 227). The growth in interdisciplinarity (Rowland, 2002) and domain-driven research (Henkel, 2002) means that for a new academic, she or he could be appointed to an area in which there is no history of a subject identity, and so the personal identity, from the very start of a career in higher education involves membership of overlapping

communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and the associated tensions of competing power relations (Bernstein, 2000). While the research above identifies general changes in ideas about the formation of academic identity, it does not use the actual lived experience of new academics to more closely identify the general influences noted within particular contexts.

Although it has been noted for some time (Blaxter et al, 1998; Knight 2002a) that there is an absence of linearity and security in career progression, newer studies focusing on individual academics are quite clear that academic identity is no longer synonymous with discipline (Clegg, 2008). With regard to new academics who have not yet built networks with colleagues across the sector, the immediate context of identity is likely to be more dependent on the institutional frameworks, so that the School or the Faculty rather than the discipline will provide the initial boundaries (Henkel, 2000).

This picture of the increasing fragmentation of knowledge, paralleled by an increasing fragmentation of departmental organisation, is further compounded by the transient nature of the higher education taught curriculum. So although, 'every curriculum will exhibit some form or even forms of hybridity' (Barnett, 2000, 260), the constant fracturing of knowledge is reflected in the day to day subject areas which a new academic is asked to teach and possibly research. What might have been the speciality of a new academic at PhD level is not necessarily the speciality that they will be required to teach. In older universities, the curriculum within a discipline is often initiated or formed around the expertise of the academic. In newer universities, the curriculum may have a resilience and internal coherence which cannot be altered by an individual and into which a new academic, especially if young and lacking experience, has to fit. The modular system, overlaid by semesterisation, also serves to further fragment the day-to-day academic existence.

In addition to the fragmentation of knowledge within disciplines, Beck and Young (2005) point to the growth of 'genericism'. As well as the basic concepts of their subject matter, staff are being asked to identify core skills required by students in the employment market and develop technological methods of delivery and assessment. So the 'performativity' required by staff in their academic roles is paralleled by a

requirement on staff to demonstrate the 'use-value' of their discipline (Barnett, 2000, 257). This means that the actual 'knowledge' that staff demonstrated in order to achieve their initial job and on which they expected to build their self definition as academics is changing. The subject expertise of an academic is not built incrementally year on year, but is constantly being redefined. The research in this thesis does not expect to contradict ideas of performativity or genericism, but intends to provide evidence of the way in which this self definition is constructed by focusing on the particular contextual incidents which seem personally important in this construction.

Another aspect of this instability in the immediate context relates back to the wider national context of the knowledge economy and the increasing intrusiveness of government agendas, so that national and institutional agendas such as 'student retention' or 'employability' may override personal strengths in particular areas of academic knowledge as the content and structure of the curriculum is externally determined. Academics who may not see the skills agenda as part of their role or career, nor as part of their expertise, may find that a new role expectation such as having responsibility for 'employability', conflicts with their projected identity as an 'academic'. The development of the skills and technology curriculum suggests 'the inevitable obsolescence of accumulated knowledge' and the need, particularly for new academics to 'prioritize the skills and flexibility to acquire and put to use whatever is needed next' (Beck & Young, 2005, 191). To an individual, this could look and feel like the downgrading of professional knowledge and a challenge to academic identity. For many higher education lecturers, their belief in themselves as an expert in their field, which contributed to their PhD and to their appointment, is severely challenged when they are asked to teach areas in which they feel they do not have the expertise.

The gap which this thesis intends to investigate is about the kind of influences which contribute to this acknowledged instability of individual academic identity. The research is specifically located amongst recent entrants to the academic profession, who although they may not be those who articulate most strongly a 'narrative of loss', and may be those who embrace new thinking about learning and teaching and take accountability for granted (Henkel, 2004, 29), they are likely to be those for whom an

academic identity has not yet achieved any kind of stability and are more likely to identify significant influences on this continual redefinition of identity. There appears to be little research in this area about the influences on new professional tensions and instabilities (Beck & Young, 2005).

B. Content of Academic Identity

The second major division of the literature focuses on the nature of academic identity by function as distinct from identity by departmental divisions and labels. The everyday view that an academic's life is divided between tasks of teaching and research (Seymour, 2006) or teaching, research and administration has also begun to show increased fragmentation leading to increased tensions. Blaxter et al (1998) suggest that there are actually five distinctive areas of academic work, adding 'writing' and 'networking' to those mentioned above. Lea and Steirer (2009) argue that a focus just on one of those aspects, that of the teaching role, requires a more situated and pluralistic view than the monolithic category of the 'teacher' in higher education indicates.

There is an important recognition, that in the reality of experience and identity, it is not just a question of the number of roles, but the actual differential weighting of these areas of responsibility (Cuthbert, 1996; Blaxter et al, 1998) for an individual within a particular department or section at a particular time. The cultural identity of the institution is likely to influence this weighting. Strathern (2000, 2) argues that in the 'audit culture' referred to in previous sections, 'only certain operations will count', so that identity could be not just a numerical weighting of hours spent on the varying roles, but the status (Jauhiainen et al, 2009) which is attached to each. McNay (2005b) suggests that the increased expectations that academics will pursue diversified roles, possibly with conflicting priorities embodied in these expectations, is a source of tension and stress about academic career directions.

Some authors argue that it is research that has become the dominant part of an academic role and so is central to defining professional identity (Barnett, 2005; Harris 2005; Lucas, 2007). In the corporate, teaching-led, widening participation, post-1992 institution in which this thesis is based, this question of the individual influences on the research part of an academic role could be an interesting source of tension,

although it will not be possible from this research to note comparisons with academic identities across different kinds of universities.

Another aspect of this role differentiation is those parts of the role for which the academic might appear to need training and development, such as teaching or quality assurance (Henkel, 2004). The requests or demands regarding staff development could create tensions around individual identity as questions are raised about the nature of academic competence.

The part of the role of the academic which is to do with administration may also contain significant influences on the question of identity. The requirement for continual monitoring and evaluation of many parts of an academic's role, the submission of statistical returns and general responses expected in the world of performance indicators, representing a 'hard' bureaucracy which has displaced the 'soft' bureaucracy (McNay, 2005b, 164) of collective governance, may have an influence on individual identity.

There is also a literature which emphasises the significance of the role of management as distinct from the role of 'administration' mentioned above (Rowland, 2002; Whitchurch, 2007), which suggests both major separations and overlaps between academic staff and those who manage them. In a different kind of study, Middlehurst (2004) points to increasing fragmentation even within the roles of management and leadership. While it is unlikely that the new academics who are the subject of this research will have moved into major management roles, it is possible that the influences of their experiences with management will have shaped their own identity. It is likely, that even as new academics they will quickly become module leaders or project managers. It is also true that some of the academic participants in this study may have come from other situations outside where they had a different relationship with their managers which may form a significant part of their experience.

In a world of short-term contracts and time-delineated projects, it seems increasingly likely that identity is continually changing and that although the combination of day-to-day roles experienced by new staff overall might still fall within a larger self-

definition of 'academic', the actual influences on ways in which certain parts of the role are foregrounded or submerged could be illuminating.

The role of 'teacher' within the academic identity might previously have been seen as unproblematic, although interpreted in different ways in different institutions. What appears to be happening now is a challenge to role of the teacher, as the relationship between staff and students has changed with the introduction of student fees leading to a significant consumer / client / market ideology (James, 2000; McWilliam, 2004). McNay (2005b) also sees evidence of tensions sector wide between the commitment of academic staff to ideals and values which included a belief in the importance of a personal engagement between students and teachers and the experienced operations of the higher education system with a focus on economic frameworks. This is the ground level implication for the 'service provider' at national level, reflecting the influence of students as consumers (Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006) and the changing relationship between the teacher and the taught. This thesis is a further investigation into the relationship between staff and students and possible tensions in the role of teacher in higher education by focusing on the evidence of critical incidents, in a particular 'widening participation' context in a post-1992 university as experienced by new academics.

It is this very local level in which the academic is daily immersed which forms the basis, and the continual reconstitution, of the academic identity (Trowler, 2004), involving the practical situations which reinforce or challenge meaning on a daily basis. If there is an increase in role ambiguity in the lower ranks of the institution (Becher & Trowler, 2001), then by locating the research at the level of influences on new academics, these tensions may become more evident in overlapping demands and role expectation before any clear personal direction is established.

In an attempt to avoid identity as a 'catch-all term', Jazvak-Martek (2009, 254) has made use of the notion of role identity, which she places in its developmental context and concludes that its usefulness is in the dynamism of its construction by both the context of the actions of others and how the individual enacts and reacts within that context. Given the literature in this section which emphasises the importance of role within the concept of identity, this concept of 'role identity' has been deemed a useful

term at the point of data analysis and discussion in order to identify the social position of the early academic (such as 'teacher' or 'lecturer') and the way in which instances of academic life challenge or confirm this. If roles are about function and identities are about meaning, then 'role identity' facilitates this combination of the analysis into what are the significant influences on a new academic which affect their career paths. Further discussion of this term will take place in later chapters in relation to specific evidence.

C: Conceptions / perceptions of academic identity

The third strand of the literature is about the conceptions or perceptions which precede or surround the experience of 'being an academic'.

Academic as professional

The most predominant theme in this strand is the perception and self-perception of an academic as a 'professional' (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006; Rowland, 2002; Williams, 2008), although this notion is contested. A great deal of the contestation is due to the fact that the actual notion of 'professionalism' is itself difficult to define. Kolsaker gives the most specific overview believing the defining characteristics of the academic profession to be 'shared values, altruistic concern for students, educational expertise, high level of autonomy, generation of new knowledge, application of logic, use of evidence, conceptual and theoretical rigour and the disinterested pursuit of truth' (Kolsaker, 2008, 516). Over twenty years ago Rice (1986, 14) suggested that the real world in which academia is situated has changed significantly, while perceived and internalised images (the 'assumptive world') of the academic have not.

Within the notion of the academic as professional, the characteristic of academic identity most frequently referred to is that of collegiate autonomy. Professionals are identified as a group which has internal control over its own professional knowledge, practice, competence and regulation (Clark, 1986; Eraut, 1994). This internal autonomy is seen as the essence of academic professionalism and the issue of academic control of its own professionalism as being that which is most under threat (Harris, 2005; Rowland, 2002).

Embedded within the notion of internal autonomy is the measure of control which a profession has over its own training and development – both pre-service and in-service. In Higher Education, the idea of training for the profession has gained in visibility and articulated parameters. The Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997; Scott et al, 2004) recommended that there should be a professional body of teachers, which was inaugurated as the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, then becoming the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The HEA has been a primary force in the development of the UK Professional Standards Framework, launched in 2006. However, these standards generally still appear to be regarded as an external imposition (Robertson, 1998; Elton, 2005; Allen, 2006) rather than a safeguard of professional integrity (Kolsaker, 2008). The idea of an individual having achieved academic professional status on appointment to a higher education institution but still needing specific training, is producing tensions (Blaxter et al, 1998; Henkel, 2004). The tensions emerge as what was once a question of informal socialisation into the beliefs, values and practices of a professional community, a 'professional habitus' (Beck & Young, 2005, 188) becomes a question of being measured against organisational performance, where professional development can be about the use of technology or management skills rather than discipline-framed progression (McWilliam, 2004). Some theorists take this a stage further and suggest that professional development in higher education could be seen as 'a form of identity work' (Edwards and Nicoll, 2006, 124), consolidating individual practices into those of the institution. It is at the point of the new academic where those tensions, with pressures to participate in mandatory staff development, such as the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, might be most evident.

In a previous section it was suggested that there were significant functional divisions between being a manager and being an academic. However, Kolsaker suggests that conceptually, 'perhaps dichotomous analyses of managerialism and professionalism are now outmoded' (Kolsaker, 2008, 522). It could be conception of academic identity amongst new academics embraces managerialism (Beck & Young, 2005).

In a strand of the literature which does not seem to be developed in any detail, the idea of 'professional practice' is analysed into three areas of: the technical expert, the

competent practitioner and the reflective practitioner' (Edwards & Nicoll, 2006, p115), where the notion of 'competence' is compared and contrasted with 'professionalism'. The DfES White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*, referred to the development of 'competencies' for all teaching staff (DfES 2003). A further aspect of professionalism that seems almost completely absent is the development and implementation of an internal code of ethics.

Academic as autonomous

The notion of academia having self-regulating autonomy as a profession, is clearly linked to the notions of personal academic freedom as an individual (Seymour, 2006). Several authors see individual academic freedom (both freedom from and freedom to) as the essence of the conception of academic identity (Tierney, 2001; Harris, 2005; Henkel, 2000; Rowland, 2002), allowing individuals to have control over and develop coherence around their own work, to manage their own time and, as a slightly different point, to be trusted – in both teaching and research. Nixon (2001) sees academic freedom in a more negative sense as a form of group self-protectionism, which is increasingly outmoded. In particular, whether an individual academic conceives of themselves as an autonomous being within an institution, based on the uniqueness of their knowledge, or as an employee, whose actions are bound by the operational rules of the institution (Kolsaker, 2008) is seen as a major source of unease.

Linked to the idea of academic freedom is whether an academic conceives of himself or herself as primarily an individual or part of a collective. Tierney (2001), in interviews conducted in Australia, and Henkel (2000) both see academia as a framework for an individual career path, where an academic works on his or her own and has a reputation which is individualised. This thesis aims to investigate further Tierney's own argument that conceptions of academic autonomy may depend on the very specific socio-cultural context (Tierney, 2004) in which he or she works. The new academic within the particular institutional framework of a post-1992 UK university may not hold those perceptions of individual reputation which are cited above as though representative of the whole sector. Barlow & Antoniou (2007, 70), in a survey of new staff in a post-1992 university, found that many of them

'expressed disappointment at the isolation and lack of real teamwork they found' and Jauhiainen et al (2009, 424), researching in Finland, state clearly, 'the reverse side of academic freedom is academic loneliness'. Again, it is possible that early academics in a 'new' university may experience the contradictory pressures to be both more corporate and more independent within a neo-liberal framework which seeks to provide a more flexible workforce.

Taylor (1999, 1) phrases this perception in a different way, as the extent to which an individual sees themselves as a part of a 'community of scholars' or a 'production worker'. Where universities are increasingly participating in knowledge-transfer partnerships (KTP) (Fearn, 2009b) and developing ever closer relationships with external companies, with emphasis on the generation of income (Harris, 2005), the question might be even more focused: am I an academic or an entrepreneur? The university where this research is based manages large numbers of KTPs and so it may be that this area of concern surfaces in the new academics here.

Academic as member of discipline

The debate about conceptions of academic identity and an academic career is also firmly based in the nature of the relationship of the academic to his or her own discipline – a knowledge-based professionalism (Beck & Young, 2005; Bernstein, 2000).

This initial conception of an academic as a scholar in a discipline which is organic and developed through collegiate peer-reviewed debate might be seen as challenged rather than supported by the role of Professional Bodies and the development of 'standards' and 'subject benchmarks' (QAA, 2007). The very fact that these reference points are called "standards' and 'subject benchmarks' seems to show a confusion between knowledge and the audit culture referred to in previous sections.

However, the notion of 'academic' is larger than that of 'discipline'. Significant theorists state that the influence of the institutional histories (Henkel, 2000) of individual universities and hence the social practices of disciplines in context (Blackmore, 2007) are likely to have an impact on the development of individual academic identity, but do not develop this idea with precise comparative evidence. A new academic who might have an ideal conception of academic life as personalising,

owning and extending the knowledge base of their discipline, but is currently on the fringes of any disciplinary network, might be influenced to see the discipline not as a subject which is inviolable but as continually mediated by the organisational form in which it exists.

The suggestion to be investigated further in this thesis is whether, for the new individual academic, the social identity of the institution is gaining strength compared to the disciplinary identity and that the institutional identity is being increasingly shaped by external factors (Lomas and Lygo-Baker, 2006, 5).

Although it might be seen that the influence of a discipline could work against the development of a generic professional identity, there is an argument that the fragmentation suggested by disciplines is exaggerated and that contiguous communities of practice provide common factors and ties across such divisions (Henkel, 2000). Edwards and Nicoll (2006, 119) suggests that this commonality can be evidenced in the large number of 'rituals and performances' which form part of professional existence, while McWilliam (2004, 156) argues that academic identity is not so much moving away from an academic knowledge-based professionalism as encompassing it within a new view of 'professional expertise'. In this research it has been decided that the discipline of the participants is not a central factor. The sample has not been based around membership of particular disciplines, but is a cross-institutional sample of new academics. However, academic identity does seem to be related to the larger notion of the kind of institution (Clark, 1989) and locating the research in a single post-1992, corporate university, where disciplines are less strong and among the newer staff should enable these tensions in perceptions to be most visible.

Academic as a new professional

Any change in the notion of the academic as professional could be seen not as its demise, but a constant (re)invention or (re)negotiation of identity, influenced both by new influences from outside the institution and the growth of new kinds of central development and support units from inside the institution. Several authors point out that since identity itself is always in a continual state of flux, with constant repositioning, it is not surprising that a new kind of academic professionalism is

emerging in an increasingly mobile world where new media and new knowledge challenge previous accepted hierarchies, which is becoming less bound to the origination and development of knowledge inside universities and more to the outside world (Beck and Young, 2005; Edwards & Nicoll, 2006; Henkel, 2004).

Several authors (Akerlind, 2005; Jauhianen et al., 2009; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009; Stronach et al., 2000) suggest that it is the way in which performance is being measured which is having most impact on how perceptions of academic identity are changing, as economic factors, relating to efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and evaluation influence the ways in which professionalism is perceived.

This kind of measurement is echoed by Harris (2005), who sees professional expertise as progressively being defined in terms of marketisation and professional work as the production of goods and services (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). This idea is related to the notion of continuing competence and professional practice; increasingly measured by behaviour rather than knowledge. So although 'being an academic' might be seen as a profession, individual professionalism is something which individual academics have to continually strive to achieve, based on continual overt and covert recognition and measurement systems, with which they might have greater or less sympathy. Edwards and Nicoll (2006) indicate that the perceptions of identity are changing due to the growth of a 'rhetorical framework', whereby such objects and categories as 'portfolios of work' or 'design and delivery' are becoming naturalised, reshaping the nature of any academic professional identity debate. The notion of professional obsolescence (Beck & Young, 2005; Dubin, 1990; Knight, 1998; Knight, 2006) suggests the continuing development of academics in order to maintain their status as professionals. It is the identification of the points of actual small-scale experience in a particular social context which have influenced this overall direction which is the subject of this thesis.

Overall, there is a general agreement by all authors in this field of academic identity, that unitary and universalist notions of professionalism (Harris, 2005) are developing as fragmentation and uncertainty and that individual self-perceptions of academics as

'professionals' are continually challenged. In this framework, it is likely that 'professional identity' becomes "professional identities" and that in an institution of 'multi-professionals' (Henkel, 2004) or 'blended professionals' (Whitchurch, 2007) academics assume multiple identities (Churchman, 2006). It is perfectly possible that an academic could hold multiple perceptions of his or her identity, which are challenged or substantiated at different points during a working career. It is suggested that the uncertainties and the pressures which create this challenged perception would be more likely to be identified by academics at the start of their careers. It is also possible that this is a view held by those who have the benefit of hindsight and that new academics would not see or feel this alleged pressure.

In a different and rather isolated perspective on the question of the conception of an academic, Tierney suggests that for some staff, this might be seen as 'a calling, a vocation, in the best sense of the word' (2001, 14). De Simone (2001), also in a perspective that does not appear to have much support in the literature, suggests that, particularly among new academics, the idea of self-identifying an academic is as an 'intellectual'. However, the research in this thesis is not about the ideal of being an academic, but about the influences on this process and as such is based in the reality of academic working lives in a particular institution.

There is a final part of this literature on the conceptions of being an academic (autonomous, professional, discipline-member) which links more closely with this thesis, in that it talks about changing conceptions. It is possible that through real knowledge and perceptions of particular persons, particular places or particular projects, the conceptions of academic identity, or the weighting of those conceptions are susceptible to change. It is anticipated that some of the most interesting challenges to conceptions of 'academic identity' may come at the beginning of a career. There is an interesting theoretical debate as to whether the process of one's career influences an academic identity, or conceptions of identity influence the direction of a career? For most theorists, this is a symbiotic process, where identity is continually being formed and reformed and may be in a conceptual limbo at any one moment. There may be occasions of greater stability or focus in terms of an academic identity, but generally it is a fluid situation. It is accepted that the point at which the new academics are interviewed is not necessarily a point of stasis.

The literature outlined above centres around the concept of academic identity, how it is defined by the possessor and what they might think about it. The research following is located not in 'coming to know', but 'coming to be'; in the identification of possible patterns of practical influences and the reality of academic negotiation. Rather than taking a more descriptive overview of academic identity across careers or across the sector, it is about a more dynamic investigation of the influences on the process as it happened within a particular part of the sector. It is not generally about what academics think their identity is, but what has actually happened to change or develop this thinking around identity. Undoubtedly these ideas will overlap. This research starts from new individual academics and asks them about early influences on their 'career' paths. It does not ask them what they think an academic should be.

D: Process of Academic Identity formation

The fourth strand of the literature, which is closest to the research question, is around the process of academic identity formation – the way in which it is actively shaped in reaction to and interaction with the structures of the university. It is not about the titles or responsibilities of an individual, it is about the way in which they have acquired, or had those roles thrust upon them and the way in which they have reacted to that experience. The previous section is about 'being'; this section is about 'becoming'.

There is a small area of literature which discusses the development of an 'academic identity' in doctoral students (Jazvac-Martek, 2009; McAlpine, 2007), which is allied in that it has new academics as its focus. It has a very different starting point from the teachers in this research but it does utilise the useful term of 'role identity', which will also be employed in the discussion later.

Many theorists talk about the way in which identity formation is constantly in a state of flux, so that what it means to be an academic is not a given identity, nor a matter of linear progression, but an experience of on-going forces, the relationships between them and the responses from the individual. Archer's research (2008b) discusses the perception of 'inauthenticity' in relation to new academics and Seymour (2006), in an individual, personal account describes how she felt herself to be a 'fraud'. In the

same way as the organisational units of the university are themselves in a constant state of reinvention regarding their meanings and relationships (Trowler, 2004), so are the individuals who are members of those units.

The general range of potential sources of influence on this formation process is extremely wide. Barnett states that the process of academic identity formation is 'matter of dynamic relationships between social and epistemological interests and structures' (Barnett, 2000, 256). The research in this thesis is attempting to look at the way in which the influences on this process are identified and experienced at an individual level in a particular social and structural context.

This process of identity formation is linked to the general influences of the sector which have been referred to in the previous sections, where the external and internal frameworks of higher education are becoming more fluid, which is influencing individual work environments and the individuals who inhabit those spaces (Taylor, 1999). One way in which this is happening is that the actual recruitment to the field of academia is wider than previously, reflecting the expansion of the sector into newer vocational fields (Baruch & Hall, 2004). It is the academics who are part of this identified expansion who are the subject of this thesis.

The strongest direction of a general identity move is seen to be in 'deprofessionalisation' (Kolsaker, 2008; Mayhew et al., 2004), due to both an increase in the audit culture resulting in a reduction of trust and the wholesale importation of managerialist ideology, corporate structures and linguistic practices into higher education, leaving some staff feeling that their own historical identity has been devalued. This overall structural move is echoed by other theorists looking from the individual view as evidenced in 'a sense of crisis and of loss' (Beck & Young, 2005, 184). However, the actual experience in practice of early career academics may not evidence this 'loss' at all.

Another aspect of general trends in the process of academic identity formation is to do with the massification and widening participation agendas of higher education which, at the level of the individual academic have required the acquisition of new knowledge now thought to be necessary for a career in academia (McWilliam, 2004).

This is not just about the pedagogical role of a teacher, it may be about the process of understanding student support and management techniques and processes, where being a student 'tutor' is not only to be an academic guide but sometimes closer to being a counsellor. It may be about a deeper understanding and articulation of ideas of student literacies in the planning of curriculum. These are ideas which may not have been experienced in the new academic's own individual path of study, personal qualifications and acquisition of an academic job. There is a pattern of ongoing stability and instability in identity (Bernstein, 2000; Blackmore, 2007b) which may emerge from this research. The gap in the literature is the factors at an individual level which contribute to this pattern.

There are some ideas in the literature of the way in which academic identity formation is not just about the acquisition of new knowledge and techniques in addition to the idea of disciplinary knowledge, it is about the relationship of the academic to 'knowledge' generally (Bernstein, 2000; Beck & Young, 2005; Seymour, 2006). So developments in pedagogy, from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning, the growth of problem-based learning, enquiry-based learning or distance learning may all impact on identity. When the nomenclature of 'lecturer' becomes that of 'facilitator', then the identity of the academic may change in response to or interaction with, that designation.

Another factor in the process of individual identity formation which is linked to changes in the overall context is the increased use of measurable performance targets. A measurement of teaching ability by student retention and progression or of research ability by a citation index, reifying knowledge as a commodity (Rowland, 2002) may change the way in which the individual perceives of themselves. An appraisal target which is based on numbers rather than peer approbation, which is set by a manager in line with a strategic institutional objective, rather than within a personalised career development process, is likely to have implications for the ways identity is formed. This thesis is looking for evidence of the actual incidents which have changed individual ways of thinking and practice around academic identity.

A major strand in this part of the literature regarding the process of individual identity formation is about the influence of organisational socialisation, defined by Trowler

and Knight (1999,178) as 'the accommodative process which takes place when new entrants to an organization engage with aspects of the cultural configurations they find here.' This theme has been a major focus of study (Blackmore, 2007b; Henkel, 2000; Kogan, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Tierney, 1997; Trowler & Knight, 2000) for the last twenty years. Bernstein states that, 'A pedagogic identity, then, is the embedding of a career in a social base' (Bernstein, 2000, 62).

My thesis attempts to investigate the actual significant instances of this process as experienced and identified by the individual during their first few years as an academic, rather than an overview of the 'socialisation processes' at the institutional or departmental level. Other theorists have focused on the more formal processes of induction (Barlow & Antoniou, 2007; Hodkinson, 2002; Staniforth & Harland, 2006) or of professional development workshops (McWilliam, 2004) in the creation of institutional or 'stylized' identities in line with the institutional 'mission'. My thesis is not necessarily focusing on overt, covert, formal or informal events or systems, and is not approached from a socialisation perspective, but from a realist perspective which focuses on the points of influence identified by the new academic themselves and the continual construction and deconstruction of a malleable academic identity.

From a view of the institutional influences on the development of an individual identity, the literature moves to a closer interrogation of the individual and their values and beliefs in interaction with these influences (Harris, 2005). In an angle which parallels the conceptions of learning and teaching theory, Hodkinson (2002) suggests that differential conceptions of context may lead to differential individual approaches and hence to differential values being placed on opportunities for development. So the identification of significant influences on identity may be inextricably linked to the way in which a new individual academic conceives of an 'academic identity' or a university in the first place, rather than utilising a socialisation framework into a given academic identity.

The literature then leads to the different ways in which individuals respond to external pressures, or take control of forging their own identities, as personal interpretations and alignments are built (Churchman, 2006). Barnett (2000, 258) sees that the current higher education environment has resulted in individuals being expected 'to

take onto themselves responsibility for continually reconstituting themselves through their lifespan'. Archer (2008b) confirms the transience of this process of identity formation as she raises the question of 'becoming and unbecoming' in the formation of an 'authentic' identity, while Seymour (2006) refers to her discomfort with the identity 'academic'.

These questions of conflict, compromise, consensus, tension, contradiction, negotiation and exchange are all touched on (Archer, 2008a; 2008b; Beauchamp, 2009; Henkel, 2000; Kogan, 2000) in the literature. There is evidence of academic resistance to identity change, which may take the form of identity consolidation or defence at the level of the department, against that which is perceived as initiative or changes imposed by management (Henkel, 2000; Kolsaker, 2008). From the critical realist perspective, there are points of individual challenge to what is seen as invasive modes of governance which misrepresent the 'true' nature of academic identity. This thesis is not framed by actions of resistance (Harris, 2005), subversion or distortion (Henkel, 2004), but remains within the realist frame by focusing on the kinds of prompts or instances which led to the challenge and response to individual identity formation in a particular context.

The literature varies in the emphasis and weight which is given to the active role of the individual and the question as to whether the emphasis given in this construction of identity is on the 'done by' or 'done to', which Clegg (2005, 150) refers to as 'willed activity or quiescence'. She suggests that academic identity at a day-to-day level is very much in the hands of the individual and becomes a 'task to be accomplished'.

There is a distinct area within this overall strand of process of academic identity formation which discusses the way in which professional and personal identities are interlinked (Colley et al, 2007; Clegg, 2008; Jawitz, 2007; Wellington & Sikes, 2006), showing academic identity to be part of a wider question of identity as a whole. De Simone (2001, 293), almost on her own in the field, sees the development of identity formation as an 'intellectual endeavour' which is often a painful 'process of self-discovery'. Bernstein (2000) suggests that academic identity has two faces, in essence the public and the private, which could be said to frame the 'real' and the 'ideal' academic. Where the institution or department is more determined by

marketisation, Bernstein states that the balance of the construction of academic identity is likely to be towards an 'outwardly responsive identity rather than one driven by inner dedication' (2000, 69). It is not envisaged that the psychological literature regarding inner identity (Jazvac-Martek, 2009) will be a major part of this study, but it is possible that the participants may evidence incidents which overlap into both kinds of identity.

From the literature it seems increasingly likely that what is emerging is evidence of individual negotiation and compromise showing an internal accommodation of multiple academic 'identities' as academics experience not a single linear career path, but 'a series of interrelated and overlapping careers' (Blaxter et al, 1998, 282). This thesis is not looking at the overall journey of particular academics, but at the kinds of incident which may prompt these changes of academic identification and direction at the beginning of a career. It is not anticipated that the research will identify 'causal factors' (Becher & Trowler, 2001, 132) in directions of academic careers, but that it will provide an analysis of the range of early career influences.

The lived experience

The literature about the process of the unique development of identity formation at the local level (Trowler, 2004) is based on insights into the 'lived complexity' of academics (Archer, 2008a; 2008b; Clegg, 2008; Davies & Petersen, 2005; Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006; Seymour, 2006; Staniforth & Harland, 2006), focusing on the self reported detail of their thoughts, lives and activities in relation to their academic practice. It is these messy actions which form a part of sense-making (Knight, 2002b); the actual world of individual practice that provides a basis for the expository, conceptual and theoretical level.

The most recent literature in this area discusses the way in which individuals negotiate their way through their lived academic experience, in what is identified as an unstable context at all levels, by creating their own spaces within and internal responses to the external world, which are then played out in their personal and public behaviour. De Simone (2001, 294) states that, 'the crux of the struggle is to mould a unified whole out of the disparate parts of our existence in academia'. It is

accepted that 'academic identity' will mean different things to different people and that therefore the 'critical incidents' which will form the basis of the data will be viewed from a different basis and experienced through a different filter. The participants in the research will have different understandings of the 'multiple discursive practices that cross the workplace, of the interplays of not necessarily compatible cultures and sub-cultures, and of the political and contested nature of organizational (and perhaps, especially, university) life' (Trowler & Knight, 1999, 185). My research is not looking for coherence in the individual responses, nor at reactions to particular policies, nor at the socialisation processes into a given identity, but at the nature of the incidents which may have stabilised, confirmed or challenged an individual career path and be related to a notion of academic identity.

Younger academics

There is a small literature around research completed with new academics (Archer 2008a; 2008b, Clegg, 2008; De Simone, 2001; Staniforth & Harland, 2006) Other researchers have mentioned new academics as a suitable site for investigating identity, but their research has not put this group at the centre of their work (Beck & Young, 2005; Henkel, 2004). All of these researchers have identified those who are new or recent entrants to the profession as the site where the tensions and conflicts mentioned above are most likely to surface. The challenge to identity is most focused when there is no history or experience to relate to which will provide behavioural guidance. It is the new academic who is in this position.

Only one source was identified that appears to investigate the *influences* on identity and this asks a range of academics directly about their identity (Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006). Therefore research in the following thesis which specifically focuses on new academics in a single institution and specifically asks about critical incidents which have influenced their personal 'career paths', rather than about identity in general would seem to be a new area for academic research.

Structure and agency

The final overarching literature which might impact on the way in which this research is framed, is around the much larger notions of structure and agency, elaborated by Archer (2000) as the complex relationship between individual determinism and the social framework within which it takes place. However, where Archer's work is theoretical, this research identifies the importance of the precise contextual variables involved. Within this context, ideas about the early influences on academics are likely to include notions of the alleged autonomy and possible negotiations of the individual academic. This will focus on issues of individual agency or situated practice (Becher & Trowler, 2001) and the dimensions of the creation and negotiation of individual space (Clegg, 2008) or ways in which social processes are characterised by the individual (Ashwin, 2009). While Clegg has identified some of the issues contributing to 'hybrid academic identities' (Clegg, 2008, 339), this thesis investigates more closely the points at which those identities are challenged and re-formed by the individual experience of a critical incident. Clegg refers to the 'reflexive moment of engagement' (2008, 330) but does not make this moment central to her analysis.

The literature, while suggesting that there are many factors which contribute to academic identity, has generally made no attempt to analyse the kind of kinds of academic identity influenced by type of university. Where use has been made of the term 'community of practice' in relation to new academics in the higher education setting (Jawitz, 2007; Jawitz 2009; Knight et al, 2006; Trowler, 2000), the term has assumed a community of academics, often based around disciplinary research networks. It has not looked at the early academic experience in relation to the community of teaching, which is predominantly in relation to students and the reinforcement or challenging of academic identity by students. Although new academics are obviously not trying to become part of a student community, the relationship to students and as teachers in higher education is a part of the academic identity. In this particular context, it has been concluded that although communities of practice has some descriptive use, it does not offer a framework for analysis which is helpful when analysing the relationships between structure and agency and the tensions inherent in the development of a role identity or identities for a new academic in higher education from a realist perspective.

The literature of structure and agency is more likely to be relevant to the analysis of the data, rather than providing an overall framework for the thesis. The thesis is not predicated on a research question about the relative power of structures or agency within career paths, but about individual identification of influences at the micro level. The choice of focus on the 'mundane' (Clegg, 2005) should enable some insights into individual decision making and the extent to which individual new academics believe they are constrained or supported by the institution. However, it will not attempt to draw major conclusions about the relative weight of structure and agency in any sectoral dimension. My choice to position the research at the level of the individual suggests that there will be more emphasis on agency, which may also mean that the very specific dynamics at the level of personal day-to-day actions and reactions will obscure any overall view of the role of the institution. In this view, there is likely to be an overall concurrence with the views of Archer (2000, 87) that the relative power of the individual neither exists as a 'pregiven' nor as 'socially appropriated' but is 'emergent from our relations with the environment', which will enable the data to be approached from an acceptance of analytical dualism (Clegg, 2005), requiring a research awareness, although not a framework, of the relationships between structure and agency (Ashwin, 2008), particularly as perceived by the individual in their choice of incidents and their reflection on them. As such, the data will give practical evidential weight to the existence of Archer's theoretical concept of 'reflexive deliberation' (2000, 7), by providing evidence of the incidents which have provoked this point and the reality of the personalised internal discussion.

Also in alignment with Archer's theoretical understanding is the importance of the focus of this data on 'unscripted performances', based on the 'continuous sense of self' (2000, 7). Critical incidents, by their nature, are often 'unscripted', but individual actions and reactions to the incidents can show the continuing importance of agency in constructing identity within recognised constraints (Trowler & Knight, 1999). While Archer suggests a theoretical overview of the realist construction of identity, her work does not give practical examples of this activity in practice, identifying the precise context in which particular academics exercise, or are constrained in exercising, their reflexivity.

It is suggested a study of new academics will evidence this awareness of, and possible conflict between, structure and agency or an illumination of the space and relationships between these terms (although not articulated as such), because they do not yet have an established identity, role or career path which has formulated their professional actions and responses. This group, in a particular post-1992 university setting, are those who are more likely to be in the process of overtly negotiating various possible role identities via their own internal conversations (Archer, 2003).

Archer states that the 'internal conversation', although requiring detailed dissection and analysis itself as a term, is basically 'the process through which structure is mediated by agency' (Archer, 2003, 93), which she outlines as a theoretical framework, rather than offering evidenced examples. This research will attempt to link the discussion of a 'critical incident' and the related internal conversation to show how the individual creates, reinforces, resists or affirms his or her own role identity. This use of the internal conversation is intended to demonstrate, at the level of the individual, that the 'continuous sense of self' (Archer, 2000, 7) is not the same as a linear sense of absorption of academic identity, but shows discontinuities and regressions. As such, the thesis will investigate further what McAlpine et al (2008) refer to as their own 'inner voice' and attempt to provide evidence of multiple voices in relation to the ways in which academia is experienced by new academics in a particular context.

Conclusions

This literature review is based on the subject matter chosen for the thesis. It does not cover the literature regarding the overall methodological framework (which is in Chapter 3) or the literature regarding the data analysis (which is in Chapter 4).

To return to the research question, **'What are the significant influences on academics which affect their career paths within a new university in the first few years of their academic careers?'** the conclusions of the literature review are summarised below.

Firstly, in the overall context of the current higher education sector and specifically within the 'new' universities researchers agree that this situation is one of increased government involvement and increased corporatisation in university management. The question of the degree of volatility in the sector as a whole is seen as variable. Interestingly the literature seems to present a view of the sector as simultaneously more corporate and more fragmented than previously. This context is generally agreed.

Secondly, the literature concurs with the view that career paths and any associated identities are multiple, fluid and fragmenting. There is no view of a trajectory of a relatively linear 'career' progression. In newer universities and amongst new academics there are more congruencies and contradictions between individual existence and university directions.

Thirdly, with regard to new academics, there are evidences of identity being linked to institution and to discipline. New academics are seen to be carving out their own negotiated spaces. The conflicting pressures on new academics are generally agreed, although there are differences about the strength of the influence of the individual, the department, the discipline and the institution.

Fourthly, the point of influences on this identity of new academics within the specific context of a post-1992 university is identified as the gap in the literature. There appears to be limited research on the question of influences and that which exists is not approached from the question of critical incidents, nor is it about new academics. Generally, the outcomes of pressured identities have been discussed and conceptual frameworks of socialisation have been suggested, but the actual influences on academic identity via daily experience in the first few years within a realist framework have not been researched and analysed.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Philosophical position

As with many researchers, my underpinning philosophical perspective on research methodology has been informed and formed by my personal experience, my professional interactions, my disciplinary background and my own reading and study. With a history of undergraduate and postgraduate study in the 1970s in the field of cultural studies and feminism, the mantra of 'the personal is political' is something which has never left my frame of reference. A period as a young teacher in inner ring schools with an idealist's zeal for promoting education as individual liberation, albeit increasingly tempered by an awareness and understanding of the systemic pressures which militate against such liberation, resulted in a commitment to raising individual belief in self-efficacy. As I progressed further 'up' the educational tree crossing sectors (Schools, Further Education, Higher Education), via a rather individualised route (Head of Library, Co-ordinator of Staff Development, Director of Curriculum, Associate Dean: Learning and Teaching) while continuing to teach in various curriculum areas (English, Communication, Sociology, Education), I became increasingly fascinated (and frustrated) by the interaction between institutional initiatives and individual responses.

The world of Barnett's 'supercomplexity' (2000a; 2000b; Trowler, 2004) in painting the large background has made a major impact on me. This is not because it has provided an easy post-structural response to the ineffectiveness of any possible strategic institutional improvement, but because it has provided a theoretical framework to understanding the 'messiness' of the world. At the level of the individual, I have experienced consistent evidence of the individual process of social constructivism (Crotty, 1998; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Cousin, 2009) as students or colleagues have produced a wide range of disparate and at times conflicting 'sense making' responses (Kezar & Eckel, 2002; Knight, 2002b; Taylor, 1999) to what is apparently the same information, stimulus or initiative, presented with the same justification. This witnessing, teaching and planning with an understanding of social constructivism have led me to a continual personal struggle with the concepts of structure and agency and the points at which these two concepts interact (Archer,

2000; 2003; Ashwin, 2009), tending more to the social constructionist (Ashwin) than the critical theorist (Archer) perspective.

So, as a social scientist by theoretical background, as an educationalist by academic background and a senior institutional manager by professional background, my approach to research has emerged as basically qualitative and interpretivist, with a focus on individual biography and personal narrative as a legitimate area of study, influenced by a belief that "(T)he subjectivities of the researcher and of those being studied are part of the research process" (Flick, 2002, 6) and where the research design and question is significantly influenced by the motivations and values of the researcher (Blaxter et al, 1996).

The qualitative perspective means that this research is not based on an experimental or survey framework and is designed to generate data focused on words rather than numbers (Silverman, 2000). It is a person-centred, individual approach accepting the 'complexity and variability of the social world' (Knight, 2000b, 41), which recognises the importance of context and diversity (Mason, 2002) and has a basis in naturally occurring events.

My research framework is firmly framed by pragmatism, with a focus on the practical implications of research to improve practice and a general view that "the research question is more important than either the method or the world view that underlies the method" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, 21; Knight, 2002b). This view has been somewhat tempered during the writing of this thesis and I have gained a deeper understanding of the influences of researcher reflexivity on research design. My response to reading a great deal of educational research is to ask how I can use that knowledge to improve the staff or student experience in the areas under my immediate control. My research approach comes from a realist ontology and the nature of my role as a manager with a necessary focus on problem solving within time-delineated and institutional parameters. I am not a theoretical career researcher, but a short-term action researcher with a strong commitment to theory in developing practical framing, understanding and evaluating.

The last four years have given me much deeper understanding of the importance of a precise research question, of improving the validity of the overall structure of the research and the constructive alignment of the research question with the methodology and the evaluation. It has also resulted in an understanding of the nature of processes of educational research which do not produce sector-wide 'truths', but via increased understanding of a particular situation, in a particular place, at a designated time, with specific people may allow for 'naturalistic generalisations' (Cousin, 2008; 2009).

From philosophical position to research approach

My research has its origins in a real managerial issue – how do we support new staff who are predominantly teachers in higher education? As such, I originally saw my research as being directly orientated to provide an answer to the above question. It would be a problem based approach which asked this simple question of new staff. However, an on-going literature review, integrated with my professional existence and leadership of the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PG Cert) has produced a more sophisticated research approach with a realisation that it is not always possible to have a direct answer as to how practice might be improved, and that a preceding step may be about understanding current practice and thought from the perspective of the participant. This research falls into that understanding of current practice bracket, with an awareness of the identity of the respondent.

I spend a lot of time talking to staff, both strategic managers and teaching staff, trying to work out the connections between an institutional learning and teaching strategy, focused initiatives, group responses and individual practice. I continually ask people to tell me stories of real experiences and actions, to explain how they feel on the ground about university-level initiatives. I am concerned about the way in which university 'directives' are mediated at departmental level, at subject level and particularly at individual level within certain cultural frameworks, believing that initiatives are often only as effective as the people who implement them and that individual interpretations in context can be significant. This has led me to a narrative

approach as a theoretical choice and to individual story telling as a powerful device for understanding cultural responses.

However, because I am also a pragmatist, I have chosen to ask my identified research subjects to focus this storytelling via critical incidents. Rather than asking the participant to tell their whole story as a narrative and then analyse what seem to be the significant points (Webster & Mertova, 2007), the individual participants have been asked to make their own choice of the relative importance of personal influences in their early academic 'journey'. The framework has been further restricted by asking for a specific number of instances or influences (three) from each participant. I am therefore using narrative, but in relation to small stories, within a structured framework. This self-identification of significant incidents is an important part of the research design, providing a practical limitation on the quantity of data and an initial framework for analysis.

It could be argued that there is a lack of alignment in my pragmatic, institutional, problem-solving research approach and my epistemological social constructivist framework which demands a qualitative research methodology based on individuals. However, the research methodology is justified by a belief that unmediated access to the social world is not possible (Ashwin, 2009) and that whilst my focus of questioning is on the actual practical influences on new academics which can be identified and articulated as real happenings, the research is also set up for interpretative purposes to try to understand individual interpretations of these influences in particular contexts. As such, the research will not 'assume a stable reality that can be validly (or reliably) represented' (Knight, 2002b, 47). The research does not take a positivist approach of believing that it is possible to uncover what is 'true'. It will take a post-positivist approach based on what the individuals take to be true for themselves.

The research is based on a belief in the primacy of practice and as such, the main question that is asked of participants is "What happened?" As Clegg phrases this in a conceptual article, 'This is not an argument for ignoring the discursive, merely for denying it ontological privilege' (Clegg, 2005, 150). This position means that the research does not ask academics to engage in discussion around the topic of

institutional corporate staff development offerings or the nature of academic identity, but focuses initially on their actual experiences, rather than their beliefs or perceptions. The questioning focuses on not what they think academics are, or what they think their own identity is, in a conceptual way, but about what actually happened to them in the first few years of their employment as an academic in a particular institution.

However, the use of the second question to each interviewee (“Why was this incident important to you?”) recognises the importance of Archer’s ‘inner conversation’ (Archer, 2000, 318), where she argues that the way in which individuals make sense of the world around them is tempered by the use of internal reasoning, but that this conversation is based on the pre-eminence of the ‘reality’ of experience and the centrality of the ‘embodied human being’ (Clegg, 2005, 152). Archer argues that this interior dialogue is not just a way in which each individual builds their singularity, nor is it just how we see or think about the world, but actually determines the way in which we act in and practically relate to the external world. Importantly for this particular research, she specifically points out that the time and place of these practical interactions with the world are not necessarily of the individual’s choosing. It therefore follows that a research design which concentrates on self-identified ‘critical incidents’ and personal interpretation recognises firstly, the primacy of practice, secondly the inner conversation for the individual and thirdly the lack of control that the individual may have had in initiating the incident. It is not asking individuals about their response to a particular institutional initiative, but about what they deem to be important.

There could be seen to be a contradiction between asking for identification of actual influences whilst accepting, within a social constructivist and supercomplex world such influences are always subject to individual interpretation and the way in which the individual makes meaning. This would be so if, in the data analysis and in drawing conclusions it was assumed that all the influences identified by individuals as meaningful were actual influences for all staff. My emphasis in the structuring of the research initially focuses on the former (the actual influences) rather than the latter (the personal interpretation), whilst accepting that these are necessarily intertwined and that an interpretivist view of the findings will recognise that narratives construct

significant individual meaning from an apparent external reality. Whilst also believing that individual personal histories (prior to the current focus of a role in higher education) may have a bearing on the way in which current influences are interpreted, there will be no attempt to link these prior experiences (for example, by asking for previous life stories) unless this connecting is done so by the interviewee.

Connection to other theorists' methodology

The choice of research design, methodology and methods was also influenced by a literature review of those researching in a similar field (Knight, 2002b). The methodological focus when looking at others' research was particularly on the strand of auto / biographical accounts of academic careers.

An attempt to determine potential methods from a reading of journal articles is problematic in that writers do not always clearly state their methodology or they seem to conflate a variety of methods (Tight, 2003). Where the reported research is primarily evaluative and relating to a particular initiative, the methodology is more likely to be evidenced, but where it is more open-ended and not related to a specific development, this is less so. In his wide ranging analysis of educational research methods based on current journals, Tight lists 'interviews' as one of the most popular methods and another category as 'auto/ biographical studies', defined as accounts based largely on personal and individual experience (Tight, 2003, 8). The research methods used in this research are primarily based on these two approaches.

It does seem that despite many excellent textbooks and courses on 'research methods', at the level of practical reported research the subtleties of chosen methodologies and related methods are not always obvious. Even where journal articles discuss their interview practice, the nature of articles is such that the authors do not offer a sample question briefing. Where the interview is said to be 'unstructured' the reader does not have an idea of how much input was offered by the researcher. Where the interview is said to be dialogic, we do not have a 'route map' of that dialogue or know how much or how little ended up being edited out.

Within an overall approach, this research in this thesis follows Clegg's theoretical justification for 'theorising the mundane', using methods which allow the researcher

to reveal the 'taking for grantedness' (Clegg, 2005) by focusing precise attention on the practical reality of staff existence. Clegg further justifies her approach as a means of understanding of the way in which university initiatives are implemented on the ground. However, this research is not about a particular university initiative or change, but about the general influences on staff behaviour as experienced by each individual, their responses to these influences and the effect it may have had on their future 'career' direction.

A literature review of methods has concentrated on identifying those methods and methodologies used by researchers who are working in the field of academic identity and using qualitative frameworks. In this attempt to identify relevant methods, I have excluded those using specific methodological frameworks outside my own (e.g. Akerlind, 2003 and phenomenography; Churchman, 2006 and ethnography) or those working on large scale sector-wide research (Kolsaker, 2008). Any research outside the UK (Clark, 1986; 1989; Delanty, 2007; Di Leo, 2003; Jawitz, 2007) has been read with an awareness of the differing context. Methods used in academic identity research, but in other educational sectors such as further education have been viewed tangentially (Bathmaker & Avis, 2005; Colley et al, 2007). Work on identity which focuses on groups other than mainstream teaching staff, such as researchers (Hakala, 2009) or managers (Whitchurch, 2007) has been considered, but not always seen as relevant.

In terms of choosing and defining the target group of interviewees, most researchers who have concentrated on academic identity have used some kind of opportunist sample. Clegg (2008) chose a sample of thirteen academics from a variety of backgrounds, whose time in the profession varied from less than a year to over thirty years and who were known to her. In this research there was a deliberate choice to interview across a balance of disciplines and areas of professional practice. The interviews, conducted by the author, used open-ended questioning around academic identity, asking the participants to frame the issue. My research is with a specific group of academics who are all predominantly teachers in higher education, but not defined or balanced by discipline or area of practice. The two interview questions in my research are deliberately framed and participants had prior knowledge of the framework of questions. In my research it is important that the participants have

conducted some personal reflection beforehand. The questions are not a direct enquiry about academic identity for reasons previously stated.

Archer (2008b, 269), whose research is focused on younger academics used 'snowball sampling through personal contacts', whereby she knew some of the contacts and then proceeded to use others referred to her who were in the same position as her initial sample. She then interviewed these academics using semi-structured interviews conducted by herself. The context of my research is more precise and therefore all the interviewees in my sample are from one institution and have been defined as within a precise time frame of their career.

Barlow & Antoniou (2007) conducted research within a single, post-1992 institution with lecturers within their first 3 years. As such, the sample is closer to my sample, but the research conducted here was around general 'topics' such as induction and their experiences of teaching. My research sample is closer to this, but I have used 'critical incident' technique in order to gain further precision about the new academic experience.

Lomas & Lygo-Baker (2006) focused more precisely on the question of academic identity and interviewed a small sample (16) of varying academics from nine English universities, including both pre and post-1992 institutions. This is the only research which has been identified with questioning which appears to be about academic identity, but this is across institutions, focuses particularly on a possible shift to a managerialist paradigm and does not use critical incidents.

Wellington & Sikes (2006), researching academics on a professional doctoral programme, used written responses to specific identical questions via email. This research was limited to academics currently on a particular programme and about their experiences on this programme. My research was conducted using identical questions about self-defined experiences and would have been feasible to conduct via textual accounts submitted electronically. However, given time was at a premium, and following the conduct of a small focus group with potential interviewees, it became obvious that staff were more likely to offer one hour of interview time, than to

spend time writing about critical incidents in the detail required. In order to maximise the sample size, it was decided to interview face-to-face.

An additional aspect of my research is that I have made a conscious decision to use a trained interviewer other than myself for reasons explained later. To the best of my knowledge, there does not appear to be any equivalent research where this decision has been taken.

Choice of 'client group'

Having decided that the research question merited a qualitative approach, using a single institution, a narrowing process of the potential population took place to determine the precise unit of sampling (Blaikie, 2000).

The choice of one particular post-1992 university gives a geographical location and a particular institutional context to the academic staff employed as defined in the literature chapter. The research question, which concentrates on 'new academics', automatically restricted this group. The phrase 'new academics' defines the length of time employed by the institution and not the age of the participants. A period of 5 years was chosen, as this was a time frame for which the researcher had access to the names of all new staff, which had been initially provided by Personnel and then further defined by participation in the Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PG Cert). The use of this client group was permitted by the institutional ethics procedure. It was felt that 5 years was a suitable time frame to recall influential critical incidents, which might remain in clearer focus than any longer time frame and that staff would still be open to various career directions and interpretations of their own academic identity. This time frame of a maximum of five years since arriving at the institution is for convenience of sample and the participant parameters do not appear to be precisely supported by any other literature.

Interestingly, in the actual research of this thesis, there was one interview included by oversight which was outside this time frame. The response of this interviewee to the same questions was clearly different from other interviewees and was discarded.

Since this research is not intended to be comparative, nor does it set out to replicate any other research precisely, this absence in the current literature regarding such a study of new academics is positively identified as a gap worthy of investigation.

No attempt was made to obtain a 'balanced' sample in terms of gender, ethnicity, age or discipline, based on the overall institutional or sector staff profile. The overall profile of the sample will be noted (Appendix 3), but it was not a function of the research method to select a group determined by specific demographics or identified role, such as might have been required by a positivistic research framework or a quantitative analytical design. The research is not about the way in which particular groups (e.g. young women) have been influenced in comparison with others, nor is it about the individual as being representative of a particular wider group and so a deliberate structuring of the individual demographics is not central to the research design; what is important is the recency of the staff appointment to the institution.

Within the initial selection of the overall population who were contacted by email, the interviewees were self-selecting based on an assumed response rate of 10%, following consultation with colleagues. It could be argued that the process of voluntary self-selection is an inevitable compromise in the research design which could result in the interviewees being those individuals who are likely to be positive about their academic experiences, who enjoy reflection and metacognition and may not be representative of the whole population. This is not necessarily so and within the qualitative, interpretivist and pragmatic framework outlined above, this restricted group is not deemed to be an issue.

Choice of Data Framework: critical incidents

The research is based on primary data, which has been collected specifically for this purpose (Blaikie, 2000) where the researcher has control over both the initial production of the data and the subsequent analysis.

Prior to the individual interview, each person who agreed to be interviewed was asked (via email) to think about three 'critical incidents' which had taken place since the individual was employed by their current higher education institution and which had an influence on their 'career path'. The participants were informed that they would be asked to describe these three incidents and to explain why they were 'critical' for them (Appendix 2).

The use of critical incident technique (CIT) has an accepted place within the qualitative research tradition (Butterfield et al, 2005) as a method of collecting data and as a form of analysis in both its positive and negative form (Edvardsson & Roos, 2001). It assumes a constructivist perspective by which researchers try to elicit 'the interviewee's views of their worlds, their work, and the event they have experienced or observed' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 28). It falls within the broad biographical approach, having a concern with people as 'social actors' (Mason, 2002, 56). It emphasises human interpretation in defining the individual moment of criticality, but is identified by a concern with grounded experience.

Participants are familiar with the use of critical incidents in the PG Cert; as an event which illuminates practice, is intended to encourage reflection and provides a structure for reflexivity (Francis, 1997; Tripp, 1993). The 'criticality' of the incident is self-defined by the participant, because it has in some way defined the professional path of the individual in relation to this given institution and is not a routine event. It is often after the event that it is seen as critical by the individual.

In the health field there has been discussion about the potentially destructive use of such techniques by inexperienced practitioners (Rich & Parker, 2006). However, all participants in this study had taken part in previous group seminars analysing their own and others' incidents, they have self-assessed these against academic criteria and produced at least two written critical incident accounts within an assessed portfolio at Master's level. The potential misuse of this technique is not therefore deemed to be an issue.

Within the literature relevant to education research and specifically to that of academic identity, there is limited reference to critical incidents as a method of data collection. Lomas & Lygo-Baker (2006,7) state that, 'critical incidents early on in their career in higher education had lasting impacts on identity' and suggest that the use of such incidents may have a relevance for the definition of the boundaries of identity, but although they mention this, they do not use critical incidents as part of their methodology.

The choice of both adjective and noun in 'critical incidents' is deliberate. There is no steering of the interviewee towards a particular major event, which suggests the individual has experienced a visible or radical change. There is a deliberate choice of an open-ended questioning frame which does not assume that significance can be equated with external visibility (Trowler & Knight, 1999). The significance of the incident is determined by the individual, recognising that what is 'critical' to one individual is not 'critical' to another. The incident could be totally invisible to the institution. The 'criticalness' can be a positive or negative experience involving compromises and confirmation, or conflicts and challenges. It is accepted that this is a current point of perception for the individual and that what is identified as critical at this point may not seem so at some future point.

The methodology presupposes that humans **do** know which incidents have significance for them and which have more significance than others. Archer (2000) argues that this is due to 'our human powers of reflexivity... to reflect ... to transform .. and consequently to re-order priorities' (222). The use of critical incidents as the basis of individual interviews is in order to avoid the danger of 'dissolving human kind into a disembodied textualism' (Clegg, 2005, 153). Hence the importance of 'practice' – of what actually happened to the individual. It is not framed by an identified external initiative (Henkel, 2000), but starts from the individual. It is not specifically a study of the community or group in which the individual is located although it is possible the conclusions may be about social groups. At the same time, it is important for this study that the individual is located within the institution, and so the focus is 'within some field of everyday social life, rather than a study of the individual per se' (Blaikie, 2000, 188). It would seem to be inevitable that individuals construct their meaning within a social context, influenced by the social arena in which they exist, but that context is not necessarily their primary frame of reference. As a critical incident retold, it is inevitable it is not just what the individual did or experienced, but how they thought about it. The narrative of the critical incidents will tell the interviewer what the incidents are. It may also tell the researcher why that individual thinks it is important and possibly how he or she made sense of it.

Critical incidents, by their nature, are often happenings which could not have been predicted; although the individual reaction to, and involvement in the action may be under the control of the individual. As such, the critical incidents often focus around 'unscripted performances' which involve 'a creativity which cannot be furnished by consulting the discursive cannon' (Archer, 2000, 7). The use of critical incidents may illuminate the relationship between the individual and the institution at that particular time.

Critical incidents can be used to illuminate 'sense-making' (Knight, 2002b, 69). These incidents are often important for identifying points of instability and the conscious and organised reflection provides a way of articulating a new equilibrium (Webster & Mertova, 2007). The incident can be a point at which previous personal equilibrium is challenged, and the narrative gives an insight into the way in which thinking and practice may intertwine at an individual level. It is also accepted that meaning is not constructed as individuals encounter one phenomenon at a time, but by overlays, multiple perceptions that are formed and reformed. The focus of the interviewing is not about an extended lifetime career story (Davies et al, 2004), it is about self-selected significant milestones, experienced within a specific institutional career with an anticipated maximum of a 5 year span. Strictly speaking, the evidence will be asked for in the form of individual closed 'stories' rather than open-ended 'narratives' (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, 109). It is not a description of the believed 'career path'; it is the identification of certain self-selected points which the interviewee connects to significant conjunctions or disjunctions along this path. The 'stories' will therefore have been chosen with the deliberate intention of illustrating a point about their significance, but are not expected to be necessarily connected in any way.

In this study the 'criticality' of the incident is self-defined by the participant and does not have to measure up to a series of benchmark statements or some pre-determined framework; nor will the participants be expected to provide a theoretical framework. It is 'critical' because it has in some way defined the professional path of the individual in relation to this given institution and is identified by being something other than a routine event. It is used as a device which facilitates a professional in education in reflecting on their practice (Tripp, 1993).

Choice of methods of obtaining data

Given a social constructivist paradigm, and a qualitative framework, using a length of service time-defined institutional population sample, involving the self-identification of a small number of critical incidents, then the appropriate method of eliciting relevant data was considerably narrowed. It seemed that participants could be asked to write three narratives or to deliver them orally. The willing reflective participation of individuals was important, as was a final product which included a certain amount of detail in the narratives which enabled meaningful analysis. There was also the question of practical implementation of the interviews within a relatively short time scale. A small focus group of potential participants gave a clear preference for being interviewed rather than submitting three written accounts. Although each of the participants stated that it was perfectly possible to write the narratives, pragmatism dictated that writing would take considerably longer than a one hour interview and their preference was for giving oral evidence.

Accepting that interviews provide evidence of what people say they think or do, rather than necessarily what they actually think or do (Arksey & Knight, 1999), the research was defined as an interview-based study, which is a prevalent form of methodology (Tight, 2003). It is also accepted that higher education research as a field may have an over-reliance on interview data (Clegg, 2005), but pragmatically it was not possible to view critical incidents relating to 20 members of staff over a 5 year period using ethnographic observational methods. It is also accepted that there may be pitfalls in relying on self-reported data without any further triangulated evidence (Blackmore, 2007b), but since the essence of the research question is about self-reporting, then additional external evidence was not considered necessary. It could be argued that since the researcher is based in the same institution, the advantages of the institutional case study frame mean that a certain amount of context knowledge by the researcher can provide some external verification of validity regarding structures and time frames.

The next methodological question then became about type of interview and the role of the interviewer. These two questions were intertwined, with the latter question causing considerable debate between the researcher and colleagues. By deciding on a qualitative research framework, the researcher herself should constantly be aware

of her own role in the research process (Cousin, 2009; Lea & Steirer, 2009; Mason, 2002). The recent rise in the amount of small-scale practitioner research in education (Mercer, 2007; Stierer, 2007) has been noted; possibly as a result of the growth of university Learning and Teaching strategies, Centres of Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Subject Centres of the Higher Education Academy and professional doctorates. It might then be expected that more literature would have been forthcoming on insider researcher methodology. Accepting that any conceptual analysis of the position of an insider researcher could see potential research positions as a continuum rather than a dichotomy (Hockey, 1993; Mercer, 2007), there is a power dimension to be taken into account when making decisions about the role of the 'insider' peer interviewer when proposing face-to-face interview methods.

The degree of insiderness needs to be considered with regard to its relationship to, or its potential interference with, or distortion of, the forthcoming data. In an ideal research design for the above study, I would have preferred to analyse sixty (20 participants x 3 critical incidents) anonymised, written critical incidents. Following the focus group and their preference for oral interviews, it also became clear that my position as a member of the senior management of the institution was not conducive to receiving entirely candid face-to-face evidence from all the participants. This view was not unanimous, but did apply to a significant number of the group, who suggested that since the incidents could potentially be negative about senior management itself and colleagues with whom I find myself in daily contact, and since the interview evidence was going to be anonymised anyway, it would be preferable to talk to a neutral interviewer. It was obvious that despite my own view of my personal neutrality and detachment regarding the evidence, this was a view that potential participants thought I might struggle to hold and I had to be aware of my own role in the process (Mason, 2002). The position of myself as the interviewer, encouraging in-depth responses by dialogic interviewing did not appear to be tenable. This discussion of the institutional role of the interviewer does not appear to be regularly articulated within any literature in this area, although Mercer (2007) suggests that had she occupied a more senior position, this might have been an issue. The research therefore proceeded on the basis of working with a 'neutral' interviewer not known to the participants, whilst I, as researcher, maintained the position of being

both an 'outsider' in receiving the anonymised, transcribed accounts, and an 'insider' by working within the same institutional context. I was an 'outsider' in that I did not work within the disciplines or Schools from which these individuals came, but an 'insider' in knowing the larger contextual frameworks. As will be seen later, the use of an 'external' interviewer, also had an effect on the type of interviewing structure chosen.

The venue for the interview, given that an external interviewer was being used, was a matter for decision between the interviewer and interviewee with guidelines which recommended that this was on university premises, in a private location where an interview would not be interrupted. This endeavoured to ensure that a professional location (Blaikie, 2000) was observed, whilst at the same time ensuring privacy for any interview response that might be engendered.

Focusing now on the specific data framework design, decisions were made regarding the mode of initial and continuing communication with the potential participants.

The initial communication was via institutional email (Appendix 1) to all participants (n= 145) on the PG Cert in the last 5 years (commencing in years 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008), excluding anyone who had left the institution and anyone who had participated on this programme as continuing professional development rather than as a mandatory requirement at the beginning of his or her academic career. It was felt that there was a need to frame this with a recognition of previous knowledge of the individual by the researcher, using questions which encouraged participants to commence some reflection on their academic 'career' to date, but with an emphasis on the anonymity of any data. The email therefore included a brief personal preamble from the researcher, referring to meeting participants on the PG Cert and then asked for some initial limited written responses and identification of a willingness to be interviewed by a 'neutral' interviewer at some point in the near future. There is a debate about how much information a researcher should offer to the participants. One view is that researchers need to avoid 'contaminating' their study 'by informing subjects too specifically about the research questions to be studied' (Silverman, 2000, 200). However, it should be argued that the interaction with the participant is not a general theoretical question, but one which is integral to the design. In this

particular case, although the participants were not informed that this was part of a PhD study, they were informed of the potential use of the data to improve the support the University gives to early academics (Appendix 1 and 2). It was felt that the identification of the research as a personal PhD would distract from the focus of the interviews on the interviewees' experience and was not relevant.

The initial email questionnaire (Appendix 1) asked:

- What was your job title when you were appointed? (Please give year)
 - what were your major responsibilities then?
- What is your job title now (if changed) ?
 - what are your major responsibilities now?
- What (for you) is the difference?

It then asked if the respondee was prepared to be interviewed (for about 1 hour) by an independent researcher, investigating the influences on them, via the identification of 'critical incidents'. This included all the usual ethical caveats about individual identity not being revealed, with a positive reference to a potential outcome of the research in terms of looking for patterns and ways in which new lecturers might be supported. No personal reward in terms of participation was offered. The responses were submitted via 'Surveyor' software, thus providing anonymised responses to a central point.

These initial limited questions were in the body of the text rather than as an attachment (Best & Kreuger, 2004). Many people only look at each email once and in order to get the highest rate of return, it is important that people see something to which they can respond immediately, rather than a detailed survey which they do not have time to respond to immediately and, although promising themselves to return, never do. The choice of vocabulary when asking staff to respond about personal issues had to balance an appeal about the importance of this survey for themselves, with an appeal to their altruism regarding improving situations for future new academics and an assurance that any participants were not about to involve themselves in a major commitment to a research project for which they did not have the time or resources. The email implicitly acknowledged that all staff are under pressure.

The responses were collected via the interviewer, who removed any data that specifically identified an individual, particularly any responses to the final question giving details of the self-selected respondents willing to be interviewed, and sent the anonymised responses to the researcher. This provided the interviewer with an initial point at which to begin the interview, that is, by verifying the email response and provided the researcher with a possible situated overview for the detailed data analysis following interviews. No attempt was made to balance the sample in terms of participant profile. All those who professed themselves willing to be interviewed were contacted and interviews arranged.

The interview required the interviewee to articulate three incidents. In order that the interview data regarding the actual incident was as rich as possible and based on reflection, a second email (Appendix 2), which was sent to those who were willing to be interviewed, gave further explanatory details before embarking on the interview (Becher & Trowler, 2001), listing the two interview questions quite precisely. The prospective participants were asked to think about and come prepared to talk about a maximum of three 'critical incidents' which had taken place during their time at this university, which may have influenced their 'career path'. It was recognised that for some staff there could be disjunctions and conflicts which had played a major part in their career route, that there could be emotional personal circumstances and for some interviewees there may be no traditional linear progression visible at all (Knight, 2002a). No examples were given, but recognition of the acceptability of both positive and negative incidents was stated. The second email reiterated the anonymity of the responses before being passed to the researcher.

The Interviews

The decision regarding the type of individual interview (Cousin, 2009; Knight, 2002b; Mason, 2002; Tight, 2003; Webster & Mertova, 2007) to be conducted was decided earlier in the research design, following the discussion with the focus group, but is reported here for logical discussion of the process. In order that the narrative was allowed to speak for itself and that the data was focussed on the details of the incident itself, it was decided that the interviewer should intervene as little as

possible. This was an attempt to be as close as possible to the original research idea which was to obtain written narratives of critical incidents. The interviews were therefore highly structured, in the sense that only the same two questions were asked of each incident, but open-ended in that any response was considered admissible. The interviews were therefore not approached as conversations (Young & Irving, 2005) nor as dialogic experiences (Delanty, 2007; Titscher et al, 2000) and the transcripts show that the interviews are significantly in the words of the participant without major prompts from the interviewer, allowing the interviewee to identify their own significance and bring their own consciousness to the incident described, with no external interpretative overlay at this point (Pring, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

The two questions which were given to the interviewees before interview and then used in the actual interview were:

- Can you describe the (first / second / third) incident?
- Can you say why this was 'critical' to you in your professional career in this institution?

These two questions follow similar studies about staff choices which investigate the impact of professional decisions (Scott et al, 2004; Wellington & Sikes, 2006), although they do not follow a more interactive and conversational approach apparently used by the interviewers in these previous studies.

Pilot Interviews

In order to test whether this very minimalist structure as identified in the email would yield appropriately rich and relevant data when implemented as an interview, three pilot interviews were conducted. The three interviewees for these pilots were individuals who, at the point of the focus group, had identified themselves as participants who would have been willing to talk directly to the researcher. The pilots were therefore conducted entirely by the interviewer, but the researcher sat in on the interviews as a silent observer. Following the interview, a discussion took place between the participant, the interviewer and the researcher based on the process, but not the content of the interview.

Following these recorded pilot interviews, very little was changed. The participants did not feel uncomfortable with the minimalist structure, nor did it seem repetitive. It

was agreed that the initial email provided a suitable framework for starting the interview. Due to the minimalist structure, the interview was shorter than the initial hour allowed, but lasted, on average, forty minutes. One aspect that seemed to emerge was that the choice of critical incidents, despite the email which asked for a wider emphasis on individual 'careers', was focussed more on learning and teaching. It could be that these participants were strongly influenced by their PG Cert experience, which requires this focus. It was therefore decided that the interviewer should confirm this wider context with the interviewee by reading the second email before the interview started.

There is a further debate in the methodological literature as to whether the transcript of an interview should be sent back to the participant in order to 'validate' it. Again, this should not be an absolute decision about all research involving interviews, but one based on the particular purpose of the overall research design. Savin-Baden (2004) argues that the return of transcript is required where there is a participative relationship with the interviewee. However, in this research study about influences on identity, it is argued that this kind of 'validation' is not required, because it is not a case of checking verifiable data or of agreeing arguments. Any return of the transcripts to the participants would suggest that the view of the interviewees is immutable and has some kind of absolute 'truth'. It is likely that a return of the transcripts would not produce verification, but amplification (Silverman, 2000) which might be continued *ad infinitum*. When the participant reviews their incident or their interpretation, it might also produce contradictions of reflection at a different time (Mercer, 2007). Therefore it was decided that the evidence would stand on the basis of the original interview.

One other aspect to be noted here is the way in which circumstances necessarily intervene in research designs, leaving small scale researchers potentially 'vulnerable and exposed' (Knight, 2002b, 48). In this case, the initial interviewer identified by the researcher, although interested and ideally experienced, was not available to conduct the interviews. This necessitated finding another interviewer and delayed the process by some weeks. Conducting interviews always involves negotiating mutually convenient times and this process also took longer than the initial time scale of the overall research plan.

The interviews were conducted and recorded by the interviewer on the basis described above and then sound files were sent to a transcriber. The transcriptions were anonymised by the interviewer and both versions were kept. The basis of the anonymisation was that all personal names were removed, but positions were used, such as 'line manager' to identify relationships. The interviews were labelled numerically as Interview 1, Interview 2 and so on and sent to the researcher. The researcher was able to begin looking at the research data before all the interviews were completed. In line with a use of grounded theory data analysis and as there was no externally defined data analysis framework, nor a hypothesis to be proved, this was felt to be appropriate.

Relationship with interviewer

My relationship with the interviewer was professional and positive. I explained and clarified the overall research design with her before any interviews commenced, outlining my reasoning for choosing this particular methodology. I drafted and explained the construction of the emails (Appendix 1 and 2) that went out to staff, especially where the second one went out in her name, but was framed by myself. Following the three pilot interviews conducted by the interviewer in my presence, we reflected together on the structure and language of the interview, but did not discuss the actual 'findings'. During the process of setting up and conducting the interviews, which took place over a summer period and took longer than either of us anticipated, I made suggestions about ways in which she might encourage a more rapid response from potential interviewees and confirmation of interview times and venues.

Partway through the interviews there was a concern from my reading of the transcripts about the restricted content and depth of the data from some interviewees. I was slightly concerned that the minimalist interview structure might not be resulting in data which gave the 'career' focus that I had intended and expected it to provide. This concern had been anticipated before the interviews began and was one of our points of discussion following the pilot interviews. I gave thought to a potential third question, "If this incident had *not* happened, what might have been the effect on your 'career'?" which could be used in an attempt to focus the interview, but finally decided not to alter the design at all. In practice, we

maintained the original structure throughout the interviews and accepted that the length and depth of the interview was going to vary.

The research is not deemed to be collaborative in that there was no joint planning of the methodology or joint analysis of the findings, but the interviewer was an important part of the process. On reflection, I feel totally justified in using an external interviewer who kept much more precisely to the minimalist structure and hence the research design than I might have done in her place.

Data Analysis and Grounded Theory

The overall theoretical approach within which this data was collected and analysed is based on a realist framework (Seale, 1999), with a pragmatic orientation. It is within the qualitative tradition and has been organised in order to enable inductive analysis which will generate possible hypotheses rather than to test hypotheses (Silverman, 2000).

At this point of data analysis, any professional desire to find management solutions to the issue of support for early academics was deliberately put to one side in order that the data initially generated wide understandings rather than definitive answers (Cousin, 2008). My personal position (Blaikie, 2000; Savin-Baden, 2004), based on beliefs in the importance of personal reflection, metacognition, individual narratives, self-efficacy and confidence, power and status, and ethics and morality in public life will have influenced my orientation to the data, but not the rigour of the analysis. It is inevitable that being an academic in the same institution as my interviewees, with personal knowledge of practices and procedures, I am likely to draw on those experiences to stimulate thinking about a range of possible aspects of the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Platt, 1981), but not to provide the significant categories which have emerged directly from the data.

Another way of regarding my personal role as researcher in the analysis of data is perhaps to take account of what Ashwin refers to as the 'cognitive unconscious' (Ashwin, 2008, 155). He suggests that reflections on learning and teaching

experiences may be influenced by the beliefs and framing which the academic could bring to the experience without any conscious articulation of these. It is possible that since many of these recounted incidents are about learning and teaching, I, as the researcher, brought my own 'cognitive unconscious' to bear on the data in deciding on coding and categories. It is hoped that the following description of the data analysis process will show that the analysis followed a process whereby the data were looked at in an organised, logical and iterative fashion reducing this unconscious influence.

Faced with 56 critical incidents in transcription form, it was at this point that grounded theory was employed as a method of data analysis, in line with an inductive approach to the generation of theory from data (Seale, 1999; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The analysis is based on the overall original conception established by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Their framework provided an analytical approach which contrasted with previous positivistic research designs based on a literature survey leading to the establishment of a hypothesis which is then tested against real data, using the categories and suppositions of the hypothesis. Glaser and Strauss' grounded theory approach outlined a method of carrying out investigations into real experience and then analysing the data without a preconceived hypothesis.

In this thesis, which is researching the influences on early career academics, there was no preconceived hypothesis or categorisation which came out of the literature and on which the analysis was based. However, despite having no preconceived hypothesis, it would seem impossible to carry out an analysis without any preconceived ideas. There was undoubtedly an agenda to my research, based on a management concern regarding the support which was provided to new academics. Before the questions were asked, there was already a research question, which framed the data. However, the interviewing questions and structure were deliberately within a minimalist framework, which provided very open ended data, in line with the expected use of grounded theory as a mode of analysis. Using grounded theory meant that there was no inspection of the data via a 'content analysis' method (Silverman, 2000, 128) which had previously established potential categories into which the raw data could be grouped. Nor was I using a narrative or discourse analysis method of regarding each word and pause individually.

The first stage involved reading and punctuating the original transcription before attempting analysis. I therefore read each transcription several times before I entered it into the software for analysis and coding. This was different from doing my own transcription, because I had not heard the original interview sound files. There were several occasions when the interviewer was asked to recheck the transcription with my comments on it and to go back and re-listen to see if the actual word, syntax or rhythm of speech suggested that words might have been misheard or mis-transcribed or mis-punctuated by the transcriber.

At the beginning of data analysis I focused on the individual stories, reading for general interest of ideas, phrases or emotions to try and get a 'feel' for what the data was telling me, rather than focusing on my research question and attempting to fit the data to it (Cousin, 2009). This initial analysis was conducted with an overall awareness that it would not be sufficient simply to read the data and indicate points of interest, or provide a description of an interpretivist view of the individual events, but recognising that this was an initial stage prior to a further more systematic, rigorous and iterative process to discover relationships between initial coding and final categories (Allan, 2003; Seale, 1999).

The original use of grounded theory as expounded by Glaser and Strauss (1967) 'advocated that through theoretical sampling, a researcher might extend and broaden the scope of an emerging theory' (Seale, 1999, 92). That is, the researcher might be continually redirecting the process of data collection in order to develop the theory that was emerging from the analysis of data already gathered. My modified use of grounded theory in this thesis is restricted to its use in data analysis and potential theory generation. I did not make any attempt, either during my ongoing analysis, or at the completion of it, to return to my original interview sample with new questions or a new orientation to the research question. Nor did I extend my interview sample beyond the original participants, although possible future directions for research were suggested by my analysis and will be referred to in later chapters.

Believing that, 'good research is not about good methods as much as it is about good thinking' (Stake, 1995, 19), the use of grounded theory in this thesis is not a rigorous

adherence to a textbook methodology in which a concrete stage of analysis was completed before the next one was begun. Seale (1999) outlines a precise and rather regimented process of the constant comparison method. He suggests that there are four distinct stages. Firstly, the data is organised into codes by a process of open coding, which identifies separate parts of the data. These codes are compared for similarities and differences and further defined into possible concepts and then categories. The second stage is where intensive work takes place within each category, concentrating on the parameters and conditions, establishing potential differences in context. This stage, using 'axial coding' (Seale, 1999, 91) also begins to examine the connections between categories. In an increasingly formulaic approach, Becker (1998) discusses the cross tabulating of variables to enable the mapping of relationships. The third stage, where each category has been 'theoretically saturated' and no new properties have emerged, enables the researcher to identify core categories, which provide the basis for emerging theory. The final stage has the gloriously simplified title of 'writing the theory', whereby the emergent categories become the chapter designation, the properties of the categories are the sections of these chapters and the coded data form the examples.

However, in contrast to this rule-bound approach, Glaser himself states that the method of formal labelling and then grouping is 'totally unnecessary, laborious and a waste of time. Using constant comparative method gets the analyst to the desired conceptual power, quickly, with ease and joy. Categories emerge upon comparison and properties emerge upon more comparison. And that is all there is to it' (Glaser, 1992, 43). Glaser and Strauss themselves, and latterly also Corbin (2008), continually modified their approach to grounded theory and their methodological suggestions to practising researchers. Corbin, who worked with Strauss for many years, acknowledges this softening of apparently hard line procedures, stating that, '... what was initially grounded theory has evolved into many different approaches to building theory grounded in data' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, viii). In practice there was a continual iteration between raw data, codes, categories, potential small explanations and possible large theory generation paralleled by continual reading of literature. This process accounted for a huge time gap between the initial completion of the interviews and any final analytical framework. It also accounts for some

overlaps between this chapter based around data presentation and the next chapter focused on discussion.

I did not extend my sample or revisit the interviewees to provide this 'saturation'. Instead, I took Glaser's own advice of some thirty years later where he recommended that 'if a researcher were uncertain about the process, just analyse the data in front of you and write what you see' (Allan, 2003, 1). However to 'just analyse' does not presume that grounded theory advocates a linear process of evidence examination and theory construction. All versions of this method point out that the implication of the 'grounding' of theory in empirical data requires systematic processes of interrogation (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996) and the 'continual cycling back and forth between theory construction and examination of data' (Seale, 1999, 91). It is this ongoing enactment of careful and consistent methods of analysis of evidence which gives the final account its claim to validity.

One distinct advantage of the use of grounded theory for the purpose of analysis is that the process of analysis can commence as soon as the first interview is completed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987).

Use of Software

My original intentions in coding of the data were to use manual methods of colour, highlighting, underlining, post-its etc. However, at an extremely opportune moment in the research, I was introduced to Atlas.ti software. This software enabled me to input of data in the initial Word format in which it was received, to code, add memos, to label and re-label, to see data easily collated under suggested codes and categories and to produce visual images of the emerging patterns and potential theory. The software was not used to create the codes, or to measure frequency of particular words or phrases. Without the use of this software, progress would undoubtedly have been much slower and process much less rigorous.

Coding and tensions

The process of coding began by noting parts of the text, highlighting, labelling and then comparing and contrasting the labels within the incident. This was followed by clarifying, establishing and re-establishing the relationships between these labels and across incidents as they emerged into underpinning themes (Atkinson, 1992; Silverman, 2000). In some texts (Allan, 2003) and in the particular software used here, this was referred to as 'open coding'. This initial coding process was conducted systematically following each interview in chronological order as it arrived. Being a novice at this process of systematic coding, I began by following Delamont's basic rule of analysis which suggests, "Index and code your data densely ... generate as many codes as you can; be 'wild' if you can" (Delamont, 1992, 151).

This initial procedure was simultaneously easy and difficult. Highlighting anything and everything that interested me - or more importantly interested the interviewee - was simple and enjoyable. However, after a few interviews it became obvious that this analysis had really only begun to reduce the mass of data to a mass of codes and I began to yield to the opposite temptation: seeing emerging categories as large and clear landmarks emanating from the fog. This process described above clearly illuminates the continual tensions of utilising grounded theory; between attempting to essentially reduce and codify transcript data into meaningful categories, yet doing justice to all the nuances of the individual stories being read. It was difficult to focus on the actual words of the interview as a process, when what was required was clarity of result as a product.

There were also tensions in initial attempts to use 'in vivo' coding, with phrases that seemed important to the interviewee, such as 'influenced my teaching' or 'it influenced my thinking'. This coding just seemed to produce codes which were a great number of disparate phrases and was discontinued after a few interviews. There were the points at which the participant seemed to begin a 'virtual' new paragraph, where a pause, change of tone or change of direction in the narrative seemed to be key and where grounded theory coding seemed very close to narrative analysis. This approach was also attempted and discarded as not being in line with the research design. At no point was any micro-analysis attempted, which followed the text with a word-by-word focus, which Glaser (1992) dismisses as an approach

which produces 'over-conceptualisation'. This was also a pragmatic protection against data overload.

There were descriptive parts of the incidents and reflective parts. There were points at which the interviewee described the situation as they saw it happening and points at which they described their own feelings about the situation. There were points at which the interviewee went into detail about the situation, focusing in close up, describing minutiae of the situation and points at which they gave an overview, looking at it in wide angle or looking at it holistically. These points of description and reflection might elicit the same code, but were not actually in the same context.

The same set of data was therefore often coded in several ways, providing multiple interpretations in the initial stages (Allan, 2003; Corbin & Strauss, 2008, Cousin, 2009), but initially with no differentiation between levels or weightings of these codes. Coding a new interview would sometimes remind me of something similar in a previous interview such as 'confidence challenged' and I would return to a previous interview or write a memo within the software reminding me to go back. The analysis often veered widely between minute codes and subcodes such as 'role', 'role change', 'role responsibility' and huge codes such as 'academic identity', which was a recognised genre from the literature review.

Sometimes I was conscious that a code I was using was becoming 'overloaded' in that I was perhaps becoming lazy in the coding and a warning to myself that the instance might be becoming so large as to be meaningless. So 'students' was then subdivided into 'student-staff relationship' and 'students one to one'. Data was continually revisited for emerging and submerging codes. The software enabled the collation of the codes with their constituent quotes, so that 'large' categories could be checked for alleged similarity of meaning. This took place as an on-going procedure of refinement and recoding before I had completed the initial coding of all interviews. It did not move logically from 'codes' to 'concepts' to 'categories' as is suggested by some of the literature. It was much more about ongoing tensions involving 'swinging from chunking the data to looking at it as a whole' (Cousin, 2009, 33). The process therefore utilised the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in the widest interpretation of trying to make sense of the data.

Savin-Baden (2004), in working with narratives, warns against 'fragmentation' of the original data. As my unit of analysis was the incident rather than the individual, and my process grounded theory rather than narrative analysis, I did not have to return to each interview and re-piece it to make sense of any individual story. The research question is to do with influences on early career academics and not the analysis of particular individual identities.

At various points while still doing initial coding, I therefore compared the actual quotes within 'large' categories of labelling; being aware that increased frequency of the use of particular codes could become a self-fulfilling prophecy and becoming so large as to be meaningless. There was recognition of that although this research was essentially within a qualitative framework, there is a quantitative aspect to analysis which involves recognitions of frequencies, emphases and relationships (Cousin 2009), though not a formal counting of the number of times a word or phrase has been used. I made use of some data questioning techniques suggested by Corbin (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 69) to enhance the constant comparative method; sometimes enabling myself to better understand the issues from the participant's perspective. Mason (2002, 149) suggests that it is possible to conduct a *literal* reading focusing on the actual words and structure; an *interpretative* reading constructed around possible inferences from the data; and a *reflexive* reading in which the researcher is part of the 'generation' of future data.

As an example of the result of constant comparison, data that was originally coded as 'students', 'student-staff relationship', 'student engagement' and 'students one-to-one' was examined under the generic label of students and then reconfigured as: students as individual cases, students as a class, students as a course and students as a culture. This categorisation was further refined to show that these were all influences within 'teaching', but that the first two applied to the 'teaching of students' and the second two as the 'management of teaching.' This thinking process and memoing for me was often visual with a grouping and regrouping of labels and quotes. There was use of the software to provide diagrams which illuminated relationships. There was constant use of post-its and large sheets of paper. However, I began to realise that this stage was not like completing a jigsaw which

comes together as a picture and can only fit in one way. It was more like a child's kaleidoscope – hold it up to the light one way and it makes one pattern, shake it and hold it up to the light another way and it makes a different pattern. This way of thinking emphasised for me that none of my pictures might be 'right', but some might be more 'significant' than others?

Chapter 4: Research outcomes

(In the following chapter, all quotes are referenced in relation to the number of the incident in which the quote occurred e.g. Inc 1, Inc 2. This is a purely chronological device relating back to the point at which the interview transcripts were received. The actual numbers have no significance.)

Following from the previous chapter which outlined the process of data analysis using grounded theory, including a description and discussion of the practical process steps in the creation of the analysis coding, this chapter is a detailed look at the emergence of the actual codes, concepts and categories of influences on early career academics and their career paths.

In some ways this chapter follows Miles & Huberman's definition of analysis as consisting of 'three current flows of activity: data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing' (1994, 10). The data reduction stage consisted of the initial process of analysis which selected, abstracted and simplified the transcription data via the continually iterative procedure of coding and categorising within the overall context. The data display stage comprises the synthesis of the data into a visual form with a detailed commentary which grounds the emerging categories in the words of the interviewees and enables the beginnings of tentative conclusions. The final stage suggests possible continuities and discontinuities in this overview.

By encouraging interviewees to recount experiences based in the minutiae of their everyday life within the university, the data ranges from the institutional context at its widest to the smallest and most restricted incident. It contains factual accounts of behaviour and emotional anticipation of and responses to that behaviour. It ranges across networks from individual relationships to participation in national contexts. It contains a diversity of personal interpretations from those which seem fully thought through, to expressions of bewilderment at the circumstances in which the individuals seemed to find themselves. However, all these recounted incidents exist in a reality of the experienced world and are told with a truth and a self belief in the sense each individual has made of their own experience (Knight, 2002b).

Given that range of data, what has emerged from this qualitative research framework is a complex range of potential areas of analysis, which has resulted in a holistic, interpretative view of the early academic experience rather than any detailed statistical quantification of patterns or trends. The interpretative methods have aimed to illuminate complex layering of meaning (Cousin, 2009), seeing the 'meanings' as emerging from the participants' perspectives (Coleman & Briggs, 2002, 18), but framing these perspectives in the concrete existence of university structures.

My basic unit of analysis and focus for this research (Tight, 2003) was originally thought to be the single critical incident. Although starting from a matrix overview of the types and focus of each of the individual critical incidents, what has finally emerged via grounded theory is an overview of the data from new academics taken as a whole, with recognition of the particular institutional context. I have not used the individual academic or a comparison of particular individuals or the individual incident itself to suggest any form of career trajectory. The overall profile of the participants in terms of gender and disciplinary area was noted (Appendix 3), but forms no part of the overall research design or conclusions. This information was deliberately not provided to the researcher by the interviewer prior to the analysis in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants. It is presented as an appendix for interest rather than as part of the analysis.

Matrix overview of Critical Incidents

One strategy for analysing the data, within the grounded theory parameters, which Corbin suggests in order to examine 'context, process and theoretical integration' (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, 88) is to produce a conditional /consequential matrix. Whilst not exactly following Corbin's diagrammatic outline, her questions about conditions and consequences enabled an overview of the critical incidents to be produced.

Although actually produced after the full grounded theory analysis of transcripts, this overview is outlined here to give an overall framework for the more detailed later analysis. All fifty-three incidents, from seventeen participants, were put into a chart as below which asked the questions: What was the subject of the incident (Stimulus / Cause)? Was it positive or negative? Who was the focus of the incident (Networks /

relationships)? Why was it important (Emotions / perspectives)? And what changed (Results / outcomes)?

	Incident 1	Incident 2	Incident 3 (etc)
What was the subject of incident?			
Positive or negative?			
Who was the focus of incident?			
Why was it important?			
What changed ?			

An overview of the subjects of these incidents, looking at what actually happened to define this moment as a critical incident in relation to the career of the early academic, showed that the incidents are totally from within the institution and overwhelmingly related to teaching. They are nearly all based on incidents which happened in the classroom / lecture room / tutorial and involved students. They are rarely about 'the School' and (apart from one case) not at all about 'the University'. There are no instances which took place outside the institution, or involve people from outside the institution. They are occasionally about administration, but this is in relation to the student/staff interface. They are very individual instances and generally quite lonely experiences. Considering that the email prior to the interview (Appendix 2) asked the interviewee to think about 'any kind of incident which may have had an effect on your professional career', it is interesting that there is only one incident which has a line manager as the subject of the incident, only one incident which centres on a conference and none which focus on external or internal academic networking or publishing. There was no mention of individual scholarship or research findings or academic publishing as a significant incident; although it might be that the word 'incident' suggested a visible behavioural happening and this affected the interviewee in thinking about his or her response. There are also no

incidents which cite a personal circumstance outside the university as the subject of a critical incident having any bearing on a particular career path. The incidents are almost equally split between being positive and negative, with slightly more incidents beginning from an initial negative experience.

An overview of 'Who was the focus?' shows that almost half of the incidents began with a focus around students, either as a group in class or as individuals. The second major focus, which was to be expected as a function of the research design and the questioning in the actual interview was that of the early academic themselves. Two much smaller foci were those of peers or colleagues and management. This range of foci and their relative 'frequency', illuminated by the matrix analysis, reaffirms the predominant influence of students and teaching which emerged from the grounded theory data analysis process.

A summary of 'Why was it important?' boxes, is divided into those incidents which related to teaching and those which related to self. In all cases the incident was important because it had not been anticipated and because it challenged ongoing practice or perception. In several cases the incident foregrounded a different perspective on a familiar situation. In many cases interaction with one individual revealed insight into a point of principle. The overview of this category is very often linked to the question below and what resulted from the incident.

An analysis of 'What changed?' showed that following many incidents the reflection resulted in the translation of a pedagogical principle into future individual developments in teaching practice. In some cases these were practical changes in the structuring of learning and teaching experiences. In many cases the change was one of perspective, of viewing student learning in a different way. Although the interview question had been phrased in relation to a career path, the conclusion of the incident was very much about small changes in personal day-to-day behaviour rather than in relation to any larger picture about a future academic career. Where the incidents were to do with systems and organisation, there was increased confidence in dealing with structures. In terms of the focus of this particular thesis and the individual career path, the critical incident resulted in a 'rebalancing' of future directions, but not always in a progression. There was little evidence of major change

and development, with decisions about specific roles or directions to be pursued and more about confirmation of current existence. There were several incidents which resulted in decisions to withdraw from any wider interaction. Academic existence outside the classroom was limited, with only one mention of a resolution to research or publish further.

Findings

The major part of the data analysis was carried out across all the interviews via grounded theory in line with the research question to discover the influences on these early academics which affected their career paths in this particular post-1992 university.

The results of the use of modified grounded theory, involving coding and constant comparison eventually led to the emergence of the following categories of significance:

- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|-----------------------|
| - | critical incident | } | <i>definition</i> |
| - | teaching | } | |
| - | PG Cert | } | <i>subject of</i> |
| - | peers | } | <i>influences</i> |
| - | research & publishing | } | |
| - | institution | } | |
| - | emotion | } | <i>process</i> |
| - | metaphor | } | <i>of influencing</i> |

What this seems to show is firstly that the 'critical incident' in terms of influencing career paths does exist and is a valid method by which early career academics are

able to articulate points of their everyday university existence which have played a part in their future professional direction.

Secondly, the subject of these influences is predominantly teaching and students. It is this primary practical relationship which shapes, and in some cases limits, the early career path, rather than any holistic view of 'an academic'. Another major, both extending and limiting influence, is the mandatory Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PG Cert). The third major influence is the peers of the early academic, but in an individualised way relating to increased knowledge of systems and operations, rather than as a disciplinary community. The fourth influence, but to a much lesser extent, is that of research and publishing. The fifth influence, which is hardly visible, is that of the institution.

These critical incidents often involve high levels of emotion for the individual, sometimes resulting in painful decisions about future career paths. The use of metaphor often expresses isolating personal experiences, focussing on difficulties and barriers. An overall analysis of these incidents reveals a very individualised existence.

Each of these individual influences will be described and defined in turn in this chapter, with quoted reference in relation to the specific incidents. Following that, these influences will be looked at as a whole in relation to the possible role identities in an early academic career path. Finally, there will be an examination of the discontinuities between the proposed role identities via the internal conversation.

'Critical Incident' definition

One of the first points that emerged from the grounded theory coding process was the difficulty that some participants had in defining what was expected by a 'critical incident', even though all participants in these interviews had used this technique previously in the academic context of the PG Cert. Staff used phrases like, "*I'm not sure if this is a critical incident.*" (Inc 5) or "*again, it's kind of, what's an incident?*" (Inc 10) or "*I mean I suppose it's a critical incident. It's difficult to know what that actually means in terms of defining it*" (Inc 41). From the researcher's perspective there was

deliberately no precise 'definition' given in the preamble to the interview, although there were wide parameters suggested in the email (see Appendix 2). It is possible that because the reference to a 'critical incident' in the participants' memories was from the PG Cert, that this put learning and teaching episodes to the forefront of their thinking. However, the fact that not *all* of the incidents were about learning and teaching suggests that the early career academics were actually defining a 'critical incident' within the wider framework of their whole early career as requested.

The general self definition of a critical incident was something that forms a very distinct memory and that had made a big impact on the individual in terms of changing the thinking about their practice or the practice itself: "*I found that was really quite cathartic and that moved us on as a group and it was a really sort of positive experience in the end*" (Inc 23). "*The incident that we've talked about ... it's going to be a massive change*" (Inc 30). The initial experience which caused the incident to be defined as 'critical' could be either positive or negative, although overall the number of incidents which started from the negative, where the basis of the incident was an issue or a problem, was greater than the positive. However, even where the incident began with a challenge to their current existence, the final outcome was predominantly positive. There were only a few incidents where the conclusion was negative or even neutral: "*So that to me was critical. It's a reminder of the big beast that we're part of*" (Inc 4). "*The institution just doesn't allow me to do it without a cost to myself that's just too big. So yes, that's a negative critical incident, yes*" (Inc 19).

In terms of 'size', the incidents varied, but were generally small: "*a minor one*" (Inc 32) or "*it was only a little throw away sentence*" (Inc 1). All the incidents were individual and very limited in time. Occasionally the interviewee would refer to a particular incident, but add that this was representative of several similar incidents that had happened: "*It's not kind of exactly an incident but, you know a series of events*" (Inc 8). Although the research design asked for the participants to self-identify three incidents only, some interviewees said that there could have been a greater number of significant incidents from which they had selected this small number. This does suggest that early career existence is not a logical or linear

progression, but continually throws up events which challenge personal perceptions of role identity and which confirm, extend or restrict the possible career paths.

In some cases the incident was recognised not just as a prompt, but as central to the way in which the early academic thought about themselves and their role: *“I think I had to go through that experience sort of, come out the other end, and make something positive of it ... I think that had a big impact, on me initially”* (Inc 7). *“It changed my whole perspective”* (Inc 50). *“It made me think about my role”* (Inc 36). *“I think probably helped me to think about this as a new professional identity”* (Inc 8). There was a recognition that one apparently small critical incident could bring into focus, and possibly change, the whole future career path.

Overview of Influences on the Early Academic

The use of visual images as presented throughout this section is for clarity of representation. It is not suggested that the reality is as clear cut as a particular diagram might suggest. It is acknowledged that in reality there is a lack of specificity across and around these delineated categories. It is also acknowledged that the visual representation of these ‘influences’ as apparently equal does not do justice to the subtleties of weighting which will be acknowledged in the commentary.

The five main influences on early academics in this particular institution in relation to their careers, which emerged after the coding and constant comparison stages had taken place are: teaching, PG Cert participation, peers, research and the institution. These five influences had very varied ‘weighting’. Importantly, the first three seemed much more significant in their influence than the last two.

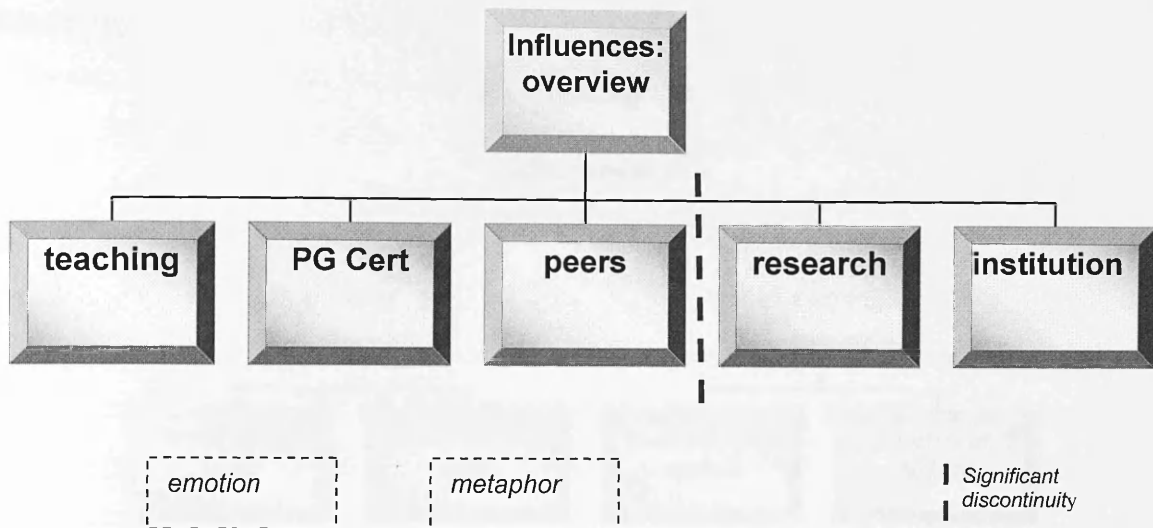


Figure 1: Overview of influences on early academic career paths

For these early career academics, the emphasis of influence in these first few years of their career is undoubtedly their students, their teaching and the management of this activity. Where Blaxter et al. originally suggested that 'A widespread, commonsense view would, therefore, be that academic work consisted of teaching, research and administration.' (Blaxter et al., 1998, 283) and then later stated that 'it seems more satisfactory to recognise at least five main academic roles - teaching, researching and managing, plus writing and networking - which, in differing combinations, make up academic work and academic careers' (284), it would seem that this is a picture of an established academic from a particular kind of research-orientated university. In the picture above, from this analysis in a post-1992 university, research, writing and networking are far less pronounced as critical influences; in fact there is a major discontinuity between the everyday teaching experience of most of these academics and the critical influence of any form of research. The influences are all very focussed within the institution. There are almost no influences at all which suggest academic relationships outside the institutional boundaries in these early years. One influence which is not mentioned at all in the literature, but which is important here - probably particularly in a teaching-led university - is the influence of the PG Cert experience and accreditation.

Teaching

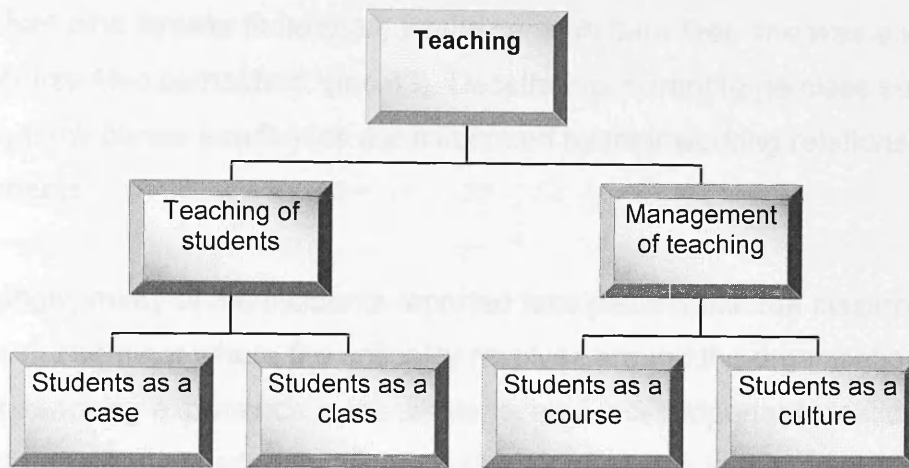


Figure 2: Influence of teaching

The main focus of the critical incidents which influence these early academics is undoubtedly teaching, with almost 50% of the incidents reported relating to teaching in some way. A closer look at all incidents which related to teaching divides into those incidents which relate to the student interactions and those which relate to the management of this teaching.

Influence of students

The original coding for all ideas to do with students had some very general codes, which overlapped, depending on how the member of staff had articulated this. I began with: 'students', 'student-staff relationship', 'students one-to-one' and 'student engagement'. Further detailed analysis of these original four categories of student influences produced a more coherent and satisfactory breakdown as: individual relationships with students as separate cases; relationships with students as a class / within the classroom; as managing a course; and students as a cultural entity.

Critical incidents with individual students are a significant area of reporting. All staff arrive at this interaction with individuals via their role as teachers. Members of staff have significant interactions with students where they become concerned with the students as individual people, their aspirations, their health and the way in which this affects their progression as learners: *"I was working with one of them who was a mature woman... she's such a engaging and engaged and committed student"* (Inc

17). *"There was this particular student and she was quite different, liked to be different, had pink streaks in her hair, would come in bare feet, she was a vegan, she would only use Mac computers"* (Inc 43). Despite the current large class size in this institution, early career academics are influenced by their working relationships with single students.

Unsurprisingly, many of the incidents reported take place within the classroom / lecture room / seminar where the criticality revolves around the organisation of the class. The teaching experience is the single, overall most important location of critical incidents for the early academic. *"There was a lot of energy in the room, it was very exciting and I'd done my initial teaching, and then they were doing this task, they were all going to get back together again, but during the task they were all coming to me saying, "Can I ask you this?" "What do you think about that?" And it was really, really good how students were engaging"* (Inc 25). *"When it got to doing the seminar exercises where I wanted them to do group work and feedback, in both instances and both times it was a slightly different way of feeding back, it was very hard to get them to come down to the front or to provide any sort of feedback"* (Inc 45). The detail of the instance itself varies, but the overall emphasis remains on the centrality and importance of the day-to-day teaching experience as providing the most significant influence on new academics – a place where they are isolated and have to make many individual decisions both 'in action' and 'on action' (Schön, 1983). There are no reports of incidents which are about student knowledge or grasp of their subject or about the teaching of a particular disciplinary concept. The focus is on the structure of the learning experience.

What emerges as a negative critical instance of this teaching experience is when an early academic is asked to take over a class or a course using someone else's material. This is seen as one of the most stressful aspects of an early academic's experiences: *"I was given a tutorial ... for a level one group and basically given a script and said, 'That's what you're teaching, that's when you're doing it, go and deliver it'... It really felt quite alien to go and deliver something that someone else had put together in a kind of script form"* (Inc 11). The opposite experience, of being expected to develop everything from scratch, is also critical to the early teaching experience: *"So it was completely new, new technology, staff had never used the*

technology, you know, before, obviously, you know all of the materials, everything was brand new and it was horrible, if I'm absolutely honest. You know, it was just so daunting. There was so much to try to manage and particularly, you know, introducing so many new things at once and the number of students on the module, I think there were 480 on the module, you know. So all of these together was just really daunting and really difficult to manage" (Inc 7). In some incidents, the technology of teaching is itself the focus of the incident.

There is an unpinning issue to do with teaching which is about confidence in both subject matter and the skill of lecturing: "*... the fact that they (the students) were challenging my knowledge..... that had quite a big impact on my confidence at the time, because I was quite early on in delivering at HE ...and this particular style of that delivery on that day, was how I felt it was appropriate but it did have a big impact on my confidence, really had a big impact on my confidence"* (Inc 26). This example of confidence about the actual knowledge base of the early academic is only mentioned on one occasion. The incidents about confidence, even where they do not actually use that term are mainly about expertise in the operation of the learning and teaching experience.

The next major influence on early career staff, after students as individuals and students as a class, is the relationship with students as a course, where the critical incident revolves around their role as a module or course leader. Again it is the organisational aspect which is the central aspect of the critical incident: "*We work differently to most Schools I think, because our students are 50% of their time here, learning out of books and learning from lectures and then 50% of their time is out on practice and we as staff have to go out and visit our clinical areas"* (Inc 30). "*It was when I first was appointed as an academic I was also asked to take responsibility for a module at level one, so this was my first teaching position, you know. I was given responsibility of module leader"* (Inc 7).

The final major focus of the critical incidents within the category of teaching is the aspect of students as and from different 'cultures'. This is in the context of a university which prides itself on its commitment to widening participation and it seems that these critical influences on new academic staff are based in the difference in

culture between staff and students. This can be literally at the level of experiencing students who come from outside the U.K., but also the influence of students who seem to have a different academic and social 'culture' to the staff who are teaching them. In one case it is from a member of staff who originates from outside the UK: "It's culture shock ... In (my country - outside UK) we don't call the teacher by their first name. We don't go to the pub with them, you know, all sort of things like that and actually, I realised I'd applied my culture to this specific context and it's tricky" (Inc 15). "... out on practice they're fantastic, but academically they struggle to put assignments together...the majority of our students are straight from school ... but they've never written an assignment" (Inc 29). "I think that the process of like educating people is about engaging with the subject but I'm aware that that's not the view of all students. A lot of students the end result is what they want. At the end of the day they want their qualification" (Inc 38). The critical influence is not about students and their subject, but the responsibility of early career staff to ensure their students achieve a degree and are employable.

Influence of the PG Cert

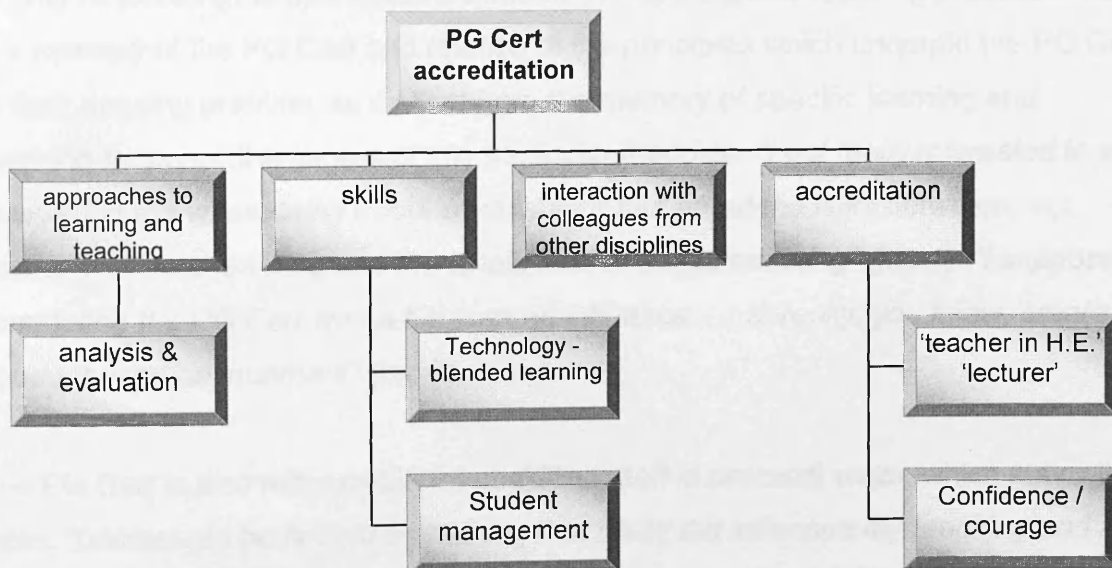


Figure 3: Influence of PG Cert

The PG Cert is undoubtedly a significant and positive influence on the early academic as evidenced by the number of times and the depth to which it is referred. This is true where it is referred to as a critical incident in itself, where it is a 'series of events' (Inc 8) and where it is referred to as part of the context of being an early academic.

In part, the visibility of this evidence of the importance of the influence of the PG Cert is obviously due to the choice and nature of the framing of this particular research. That is, all the participating staff were 'graduates' of the PG Cert; the initial email which was used to make contact made reference to their membership of this programme and the words 'critical incident' would recall their participation in this programme. The PG Cert would obviously not have the same influence if the 'early academics' identified as the focus of the interviews had been post-doctoral researchers.

The major influence on the interviewees has been to influence their approach to their future teaching. This is not to say that new academics become experts in learning and teaching theory, or that they continue reading and studying in this area. What the PG Cert appears to do is influence the way in which the participants relate to the activity of teaching, to their students and to the learning and teaching process. There is a memory of the PG Cert and relation of the principles which underpin the PG Cert to their ongoing practice, as distinct from the memory of specific learning and teaching theory or the names of any particular theorists: *"I got really interested in and involved in the whole thing about assessment and about the links between assessment and learning and the whole kind of alignment thing"* (Inc 4). *"I suppose, completing the PG Cert was a big, sort of, influence. ... to really, you know, create a good learning environment"* (Inc 6).

The PG Cert is also responsible for upskilling staff in practical ways, which stay with them. *"because to be honest something that really did influence my teaching and my skills, competence, abilities, was doing the PGC in teaching and learning"* (Inc 1). The technology skills are significant for several new staff: *"I guess related to the PG Cert, and sort of following on from it, was involvement with Pebble Pad"* (Inc 9). *"So, because I was doing the PG Cert, I got to learn about WOLF and Pebble Pad etc"* (Inc 14). *"At the time I was doing my PG Cert where we'd been taught about blended*

learning and incorporating blended learning more into our teaching activities So I embraced this fully" (Inc 33). The practical 'hints and tips' of the management of student learning are what are important for others: *"Obviously I had started the PG Cert, so I was getting some input from that on how to deal with things."* (Inc 48) *"The best bits about the PG Cert were (the PG Cert staff) would give you an idea, and you'd think right, I can do that tomorrow"* (Inc 53). Interestingly, this may not be an immediate process of theory and practice implementation, but aspects embedded in memory to which staff may return in the following few years. Even where some staff had not wanted to go on the programme originally, and could not see what it would do for them, there is an enthusiasm for the programme, which is also an emotional response to participation: *"When I did the course I was cross that the university sent me straight away ... but I enjoyed the course to be honest, I really enjoyed doing it"* (Inc 31). *"At the time I thought, 'This is incredible, how can I be asked to do a course when I'm just trying to take on a teaching role?' But it was the best thing I did"* (Inc 50).

A significant part of the PG influence is the meeting of other colleagues from across the university: *"I did the PG Cert and enjoyed it and got a lot from it, liked meeting people across the university"* (Inc 37). *"I think what I liked about the PG Cert Ed was setting up this network of people across the university"* (Inc 38). *"It gave me, not only access to people who knew how teaching worked but to talk to other people in my situation across disciplines, across different Schools"* (Inc 50). In all of the data the PG Cert is only point where the early career academic talks enthusiastically about the influence of a community of colleagues, but they also point out that this networking is short-lived and restricted to attendance on this course. Once the course finishes, so does this networking.

Another important influence of the PG Cert is the significance of the accreditation that it gives. Although this is not a qualification of choice, but is required by the institution, some staff feel that this is extremely important in validating their role identity as a teacher in higher education, especially where they have come from a previous identifiable professional identity: *"Being very, very new to higher education, having the PG Cert and completing the PG Cert almost gave me the sort of belief, I am now a teacher, you know I've got the certificate to prove it"* (Inc 6). *"At the end of it ...I feel*

like a lecturer now, not a nurse, that's the difference I think" (Inc 31). There is the acknowledgement that there is a relationship between the actual confirmation of status and the confidence this brings: "(The PG Cert)gave me increased confidence, you know, in terms of my status...I think it's given me more confidence as an academic" (Inc 6). "PG Cert experience was something that gave me courage and gave me confidence to start to develop my own approach and my own philosophy of why I'm here and since that time my head's been higher, my voice has been a bit louder and my confidence has developed" (Inc 25).

The final major influence that the PG Cert has on the early career academic is the way in which it shapes their future identity: *"(The PG Cert) ...helped me to think about this as a new professional identity" (Inc 8). It encourages these staff to see theories in reflection and skills in teaching as part of their on-going skills in their role as a teacher in higher education: "(What the) PG Cert did was, it gave me like I say, some theory and some models for that" (Inc 9). "The PG Cert that allows me to frame those conceptions" (Inc 11).*

Although the PG Cert seems to have been a significant influence for a number of interviewees, there is no logical or automatic progression to either an M.A. in Learning and Teaching, a Professional Doctorate or a PhD as a career route for these early academic staff. The influence is important, but it does not generally lead to further pedagogical study or the choice of a career path in learning and teaching. Where staff have taken this route, it has been an individual choice of something they wanted to do, rather than a route for the professional development of their 'career'. Where it fits with current professional practice, as distinct from academic practice, then it is pursued. *"I did carry on after I did my PG Cert to do the diploma and I've got my MA in education, so I do carry it on, because I really, really enjoyed the learning that came with it and the kind of practical, being able to practically apply it" (Inc 4). At no point is an EdD / PhD the actual subject of a critical incident. It regularly appears that staff think that further development is important to them, but that there is personal cost involved. This further step, far from being the next progressive step in an academic career is at best only to be achieved at some personal cost and at worst, is actually in conflict with their current role in learning and teaching, in terms of the time and effort demanded. "an MA in Teaching (Higher Education) that's where it*

ended up. And I did research projects around students' learning and teaching and my workload, like lots of people's workloads, isn't manageable without huge personal cost really. And trying to do a Masters on top of that was incredibly difficult and I finished the Masters in my summer break there's quite a lot of encouragement to do the Professional Doctorate and you know, there's no way I feel I want to do it, because I don't want my life to be what it's been like and I think that's really sad, that's really sad, yes" (Inc 19)

Influence of peers

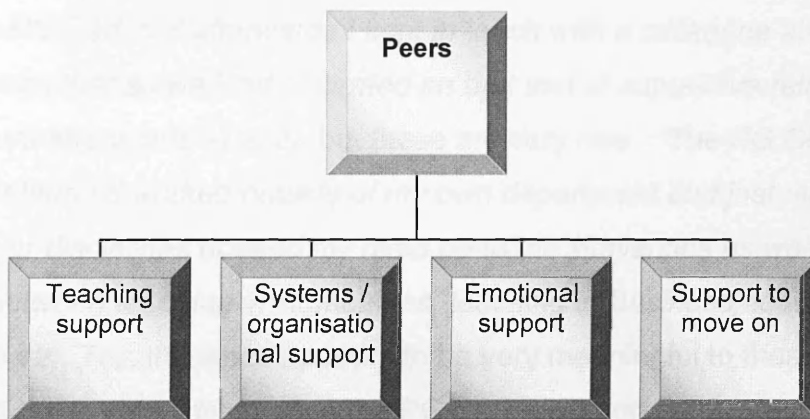


Figure 4: Influence of peers

The third major influence on new career academics is their peers. At one point it appeared that there might have been a coding of 'people', looking at a continuum of the type of peers, with an emphasis on geographical closeness. That is, colleagues within the department, within the School, within the institution and external to the institution. Eventually, it appeared that the codes were revealing not the importance of the location of peers, but the kind of support that they offered. This major influence on early academics is not in the sense of the academic discipline as such (Becher & Trowler, 2001); it is colleagues who are prepared to share issues of students and teaching. Peers are significant as influences in terms of providing teaching support, systems and organisational support, emotional support and support to progress in some way.

The main influence of peers on new academics is in their support for teaching issues in the classroom and the relationship to students. In terms of the criticality of these influences, it is very much about individual relationships rather than the influence of discourse communities (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

There is some mention of influential peers who are not necessarily those from the early academics' subject discipline, but colleagues from across the university who share views on learning and teaching. In some examples, there are friendships which are made across the university during participation on the P.G. Certificate in Learning and Teaching and then continue to be maintained.

"...within the PG Cert, but afterwards I kept in touch with a colleague and we sort of mentored each other so we kind of carried on that sort of supportive relationship for a good two years afterwards" (Inc 2), but these are very rare. "The PG Cert ... was really the first time I'd worked outside of my own department and just meeting other staff from other disciplines opened my mind up to the similarities as well as the differences between teaching in Humanities, teaching in Business, teaching in Science" (Inc 12). This influence appears to be very meaningful to those who experience it, but is very limited once the PG Cert has been completed. There is no mention of critical incidents involving cross disciplinary groups, or the influence of inter-disciplinary development groups or learning and teaching university groups; all of which exist in the university. The peers to whom these new academics relate are from a very narrow circle.

The reasons why these peer relationships are important and also what emerges from them revolves around general support for academic practice, rather than academic research or disciplinary developments. The closest debate comes to the subject area is in how to teach it: *"teaching a module ... wasn't an area I knew much about, but you know, I prepared as well as I could, got some advice from colleagues" (Inc 35).* What seems to be critical is the actual sharing of teaching and learning in operational terms: *"So there's a core group of people ... so we're actually going to take the teaching from here out to practice" (Inc 30).* The support of peers can extend from support within the classroom to support in understanding support systems across the School or the institution, but it does not appear to extend to subject support or debate: *"It made me aware that you know, if you need to ask for help, ask for help,*

because there is somebody out there who's either dealt with it before....and it was almost like a crash course on how to deal with a problem efficiently and professionally with the student as well as with the university" (Inc 49).

The peers who are mentioned as significant are often, but not always, the colleagues who work in physical proximity to the respondent and so are likely to be from the same or similar discipline. However, it is not their disciplinarity as such which is felt to be the important influence, but their understanding of university systems: *"I was sharing an office with another three people. So, we were four overall and two of these people had been at the university for a long time and so they knew the university inside out ...and I felt that being with them in the office and them being there all the time was actually the most important thing that could have happened to me because I was actually able to ask questions all the time and to actually integrate very quickly" (Inc 14).* What is important in the first few years is about systems and understanding the way in which the university works, rather than about the discipline per se. The focus is on learning about operational effectiveness in learning and teaching in higher education. This situation about understanding roles, responsibilities and regulations is repeated when these early career academics are working with other new members of staff: *"So I was asked ... could you also support this new member of staff and show her the ropes ... we were both sort of floating around trying to find ourselves within the context of our new roles and responsibilities" (Inc 24).*

The criticality of the relationship with peers is the importance of providing reassurance and confirmation of actions which are to do with issues based in the classroom experience: *"And luckily a colleague who I was friendly with came in and realised I wasn't feeling very great and sat down and talked ... There wasn't anything earth shattering or anything but she just helped me to talk through it" (Inc 35).* *"it made me very aware that sometimes you needed back up and it helped to share experiences with colleagues" (Inc 48).* The critical incidents which identified the importance of peer relationships are overwhelmingly about improving practice with students, rather than supporting the individual member of staff. The discussion with peers is valued and shows that the isolation of the classroom is not inevitable, but it does not focus on discipline, scholarly activity, research in the subject or even

research-led teaching. It is about developments in practice: *"It's made me realise the value of those sort of informal interactions and, if you want to have experimentation, if you want people to do exciting things, then you need to have an environment which supports that, it made me really realise the value of a kind of positive environment in which to work, a positive collegiate in which to work"* (Inc 22). There is some evidence of coming into conflict with peers, but relatively few incidents focussed on this personal aspect of early academic existence. Looking closely, it is still clear that these conflicts reflected organisational, departmental or institutional issues. *"There wasn't any collaboration prior to the planning, but there wasn't any planning, so what had actually happened is up to midnight that previous night nothing had been done and then one or two colleagues had sent emails"* (Inc 24).

There is little evidence overall that there were identifiable critical incidents which were major factors in encouraging significant directions in career development, in the sense that they could be measured as influences towards new roles or new jobs either within or external to the university during these first five years. There is some very limited evidence of educational development colleagues or external projects becoming significant influences: *"it was very much sort of encouragement from other people and other people getting me involved in things that really had an impact on me I think, so there are people within (Educational Development Unit) introduced me to my first conference, you know she took me along with her and we presented a paper, so that was my first sort of introduction to that side of things"* (Inc 5).

Interestingly, out of 53 critical incidents, there was only one instance of a line manager being the significant influence: *"And all the way along, you know sort of, from first day of joining up until now has been absolutely fantastic as a line manager and really, really encouraging"* (Inc 5). The evidence is that it is peers rather than senior colleagues who are more influential at these earlier stages and that senior colleagues are too removed from these early experiences to be immediately useful to early academics: *"the whole benefit of having a critical friend was that it allows me to develop and bounce ideas in a less formal setting so when you're looking to develop in my view, as a academic path as a career ... there can be quite a hierarchy in that and it can be difficult sometimes to go to senior colleagues and say, "Well did you ever experience this?"* (Inc 12). There is evidence of discussion

with peers in which the early academic is offering this support him/ herself, rather than this support being provided by a senior academic: *"The reason he's going to end up actually registering for a PhD which he's really interested in was actually because we get on really well and had time for an hour and a half conversation over a cup of coffee to talk about what he might be wanting to do"* (Inc 22). There is virtually no evidence of the critical influence of external networks, even in an era where the ease of electronic communication means that this can happen without any physical move or monetary expenditure.

Influence of Research

The next category to emerge in range of influences is in the area of conducting research and being published, but this is a very different kind of category. Research is tangential to the early career academic in this institution. Out of all the reported critical incidents there is only one incident when the activity of research seems to be embedded into the existence of the new academic. In the few incidents where research *is* referred to, it is not central. Research is a major step change from the everyday teaching existence of these new academics. Research is not a part of being academic, but is in addition to and in many cases in opposition to, the teaching part of the job: *"I'm not a researcher. I'm not really into that area at all, I am a teacher. That's what I like doing, that's what I came for"* (Inc 21). *"And I'm so teaching, teaching, students, students, teaching students, teaching students, meeting students, and you just don't get that time to step off ... I'd guess that the focus of producing people academically is that people are producing academic research and you know, adding to the kudos of the university rather than improving the teaching"* (Inc 39). There are some ideas that research is something that academics do, but that it is not essential or critical or sometimes even possible for these new members of staff, even where staff have been in the institution for a number of years. *"We're expected as part of being academic staff that we develop our academic stuff, research etc etc ...well I've been here for five years and I don't think I have taken a single day as [study leave]"* (Inc 39). *"And it all seemed very difficult somehow. Very much something that other academics did and seemed very intangible almost"* (Inc 52).

There is bewilderment about the process by which one enters this world of 'research', which is generally regarded as completely separate from day-to-day existence. *"the importance of communicating that with people, you know, through academic conferences, through journals, through research which I hadn't really thought about before ripple effects from that incident thinking yes, how do I write this up? How do I actually get something into a journal on that subject, because I think it's important stuff"* (Inc 9). *"but being published academically is quite, I think when you're new, especially to higher education, can feel really like, really daunting and you think, "Well, how on earth am I going to firstly generate the ideas for what it is I want to do, then sort of do the research and all of that kind of thing and actually then get it published?"* (Inc 52) There is nothing automatic about the practical academic process of researching and publishing. Nor is there any intrinsic understanding of how this part of the role identity might work.

Some critical incidents referred to being involved in research in learning and teaching, but not as the instigator of the research. *"I took part in a research project that was based here at the university ... around level one students and their perceptions of higher education and what factors influenced their engagement"* (Inc 18). *"My third incident was getting involved in a diversity project a couple of years ago where I was videoed doing some teaching"* (Inc 3). Later on in both incidents, it is obvious that what is critical to this experience is not the research itself or the publishing of the research as an activity, but what the students had to say and how that affected those members of staff's perception of teaching.

There is very little evidence of either subject or pedagogical research being critical to these early career academics. However, where it does happen, it is very positive. *"So what it did for my careerwas make me think well actually yes I can, you know, I can do this, and I can be part of this and god isn't it brilliant and fantastic"* (Inc 9).

Influence of the Institution

This code of 'institution' emerged near the beginning of the coding process and did not really change during the constant comparison stage. The main thing that new staff sense about the institution is that it is a long way from their everyday existence. Despite being employed by the organisation, and being a full time lecturer within the university, they do not actually see themselves as an integral part of it. All critical incident references to the university as a whole are negative. 'The institution' does not encompass them or work in the same direction as them. They are separate from it: *"all of this kind of stuff, that you are still in, caught in, a very bureaucratic, perhaps status conscious institution, organisation, or whatever you want to call it"* (Inc 4). The measures by which early career academics measure their own success or the quality of their working conditions are not those which the institution seems to use or value *"in kind of institutional measures of success or value, things like a collegiate environment to work in don't get measured, because the benefits they give are quite intangible"* (Inc 22).

The use of critical incidents has emphasised the perceived lack of organisational alignment between these individuals at the beginning of their careers and the institution within which they are employed. *"and that all the bureaucratic stuff that I've experienced over the last two years, all the political trauma if you like because I think a lot of people talk around in circles from what I see and nothing ever gets decided"* (Inc 25). The university is something that is in contradiction to the individual work being done, particularly at the level of teaching and in the relationships with students. *"The problem with the university is that you know, you're demanded, we almost get the three line whip, you must attend this ...some of the development days that we have to go to and you sit there and you think, "Well I have twenty five scripts to mark in the back of my car, I'm teaching all day tomorrow and I'm out to go and see students on practice on Friday. They want them back by next week and I'm sitting here in this which isn't really what I want to be in"* (Inc 39).

Where attempts are made by the early career academic to influence the wider university community, the evidence is about the lack of responsiveness to attempts at disseminating and embedding successful individual teaching initiatives: *"When you*

work in a sort of huge institution, you know, it's not particularly responsive. And I think that can be quite sort of frustrating to a degree, in that you have you know, particular ideas about sort of pushing the boundaries if you like, if you feel you've got something that kind of really works for students" (Inc 53). What has apparently happened is that the members of staff have attempted a foray into the wider world of 'the university' and on meeting indifference have retreated into their individual relationships with their students: "Although you can get quite excited about something, you can see the benefits of it and you've evaluated it and you can see that there's other people that might support it ... I had all this energy behind, wanting to make a difference, to you know, sort out assessments, and it just fell on deaf ears. So it's critical that I thought, you know, I could have made a difference and I just didn't get the chance, whereas in my own classrooms, with my own students, I'm responsible for my actions and I can, you know, I can affect some change there" (Inc 4).

Emotion

From a grounded theory perspective another category which emerged was the amount of emotion which charged these critical incidents. This is understandable as the interviewees are recounting incidents which would be expected to be a time of heightened emotion: "...so what turned into a critical incident, you know, this is a nightmare" (Inc33). "I did feel really upset and really confused." (Inc 35) "It was quite a baptism of fire" (Inc 48). As in previous areas of data focus, the primary area in which emotion is directly mentioned or referred to is with regard to teaching and the immediate experience of relating to students: "And it was like I'd given her the world really" (Inc 17). "Translating that to a new context of (students) ... was a really fantastic experience" (Inc 13). There are tremendous highs and lows in this learning and teaching experience, which are rarely mirrored by any other aspect of being an early career academic. There is evidence of a high level of personal negative emotion, which is also to be expected in a situation where staff are recalling critical incidents. "If I'm going to be treated like this then I'm going to walk". (Inc 10) "It felt quite alien to go and deliver something that someone else had put together." (Inc 11) "It was crucial that I was, you know, able to reclaim some of that territory during that few hours of torture" (Inc 24).

There is a significant representation of the idealised and altruistic academic who believes in, and is enthused by, teaching in a university: *"I made a decision that I wanted to learn and I've pushed myself through this learning experience and here I am as a somebody that supports other people now in their teaching and learning. It's made me re-visit that original passion"* (Inc 25). *"It just struck me as such a worthwhile thing to try and engage with really, to try to help people to, to unlock that potential."* (Inc 17) This is particularly from those early career academics who haven't come through a linear route into higher education themselves.

The picture is not as simple as saying that all the positive emotions that are experienced are to do with students and learning and teaching, and all negative emotions are to do with institutional barriers. Students can make staff feel annoyed, aggrieved and negative and the institution can offer staff opportunities for positive emotional fulfilment. The picture is not consistent in that sense. What is consistent is that positive emotions are evidenced when the early career academic is in control and can improve the situation: *"... the module leader who said, "Well, you can jolly well write your own stuff then, if that's your approach" and I thought that was quite liberating, so I was quite excited by that"* (Inc 11) and what is negative is when control or influence is not allowed or removed: *"..and not knowing what I was doing, you know, so I felt on the spot really; being able to accept that people are going to make judgements about me and that I'm at the front and I'm sort of walking in as the sort of 'voice of the university' and having to own that and apologise for it"* (Inc 23).

There is emotion associated with the importance of the growth of confidence in and identification with the academic role: *"So I think that was an incident that I remember changed me significantly and made think very early on you need to be absolutely clear and confident in what you're trying to project, because if you don't understand elements of the content you're delivering then really you're doomed to fail I think or end up feeling very insecure and very vulnerable"* (Inc 42). This confidence is not automatically acquired with the acquisition of a university job or the title of lecturer: *"I was new to teaching. Obviously I had started the PG Cert, so I was getting some input from that on how to deal with things but it was quite alien"* (Inc 48). The emotion emerges in relation to learning and teaching, institutional systems and the organisation. There is no evidence of emotion about the academic discipline or

subject: *"I pursued it and got quite angry about this and said that I felt that you can't just randomly change so that I can do more other things that you want me to do. You know there are rules about this"* (Inc 36).

There is no emotion or feeling describing any sort of academic scholarship or colleagues' research. Where there is an emotional relationship to personal research, in one incident only, it is a significant level of feeling: *"I know people who are at the leading edge and I'm somewhere very close to the leading edge which is just an amazing really place to be and very exciting. So what it did for my career, professional development was make me think well actually yes I can, you know, I can do this, and I can be part of this and god isn't it brilliant and fantastic to be, to be part of that"* (Inc 9). It is interesting that the 'leading edge' research mentioned above is about technology in classroom practice and evidenced with student use of the technology, rather than about research which is outside the classroom.

There is very little evidence of the emotional in relation to personal career path development. Where it does exist, it shows the loneliness or individualism of personal career development. Decisions about potential changes following critical incidents are made in isolation. General verbal support is identified for career development, but the lack of structural university support systems means that the individual feels there is too high a price to pay in terms of the quality of his/her personal existence: *"because I mean there's quite a lot of encouragement to do the doctorate and you know, there's no way I feel I want to do it, because I don't want my life to be what it's been like and I think that's really sad, that's really sad, yes"* (Inc 19).

Metaphor

Another category that emerged through the use of grounded theory on the data, which was not planned or foreseen, exemplifying the use of grounded theory as a research analysis method, was the use of metaphor by the participants. There was no attempt to include the use of metaphor as a part of the research question or the methodology. This section of data presentation has not been approached as discourse analysis (Olsen, 2006). There is no psychological input into the

methodology or literature chapters. No questions were asked which encouraged the participants to respond in figurative language, but many of the responses included metaphorical phrases as outlined below. At first glance, there is nothing surprising about the kinds of metaphor which are invoked to describe or illuminate the early academic experience. There are no wilds flights of fantasy or extended allegorical references. Metaphor seems to be used to give emphasis to personal feelings rather than factual descriptions of incidents and is often used in conclusions to incidents when staff are summarising their thoughts about the incident with reference to their overall career. Metaphor serves to put the incident into perspective over a longer period, which seems to justify the use of the critical incident as a research tool, in that staff are fully aware that one incident is not necessarily reflective of a whole career move, but was significant at that point.

Interestingly, the common metaphors of being 'at the chalk face' or being part of the 'grass roots' only occur in the one interview which was part of the sample by accidental error (Interview 7) and has been generally disregarded, where the academic was in the much later stages of their career.

The first point to note is that many of the early career academics recognise that they are a small part of an extremely large organisation. The emphasis is not about where they are as part of an academic subject or disciplinary area or of identifying themselves as part of a small local community. At this stage of their career, early academics see themselves as being rather insignificant and isolated individuals: *"It reminded me that, I suppose, that we're small fishes in a big pond and that's not a bad reminder and that's why it's important, I suppose, to focus concern on the students and their learning and let other people worry about the bigger stuff"* (Inc 4).

There is recognition that at the beginning of an academic career very little exists by way of formal induction or written rules to help and support new staff and there are high expectations of being able to cope as an individual. *"Knowing about systems and information that is shared with you when you come into Higher Education is very, very limited and you're expected to hit the ground running and to know and I didn't."* (Inc 23) There is recognition of the strength of hierarchical roles and systems. There is one description of an early career academic and their relationship to the institution

as a parent/child relationship: *"You know, my background's children and families and I suppose it's like if you completely lost respect in the parent. You know, they're still your parent but you don't have any respect whatsoever for them anymore and that's how I feel"* (Inc 10).

For new and sometimes young academics, some of whom have only recently moved from being students to being staff, there are metaphors which illuminate their identification with students. There is no immediate identification with the position of being an academic, just because they have the title of lecturer. *"And there was one of the things in particular where they talked about what it's like to be in a lecture. And they talked about, you know, you lose the plot, say in the first twenty minutes and then you're sat there for another two hours and you've totally lost the plot and then you disengage more and more and more"* (Inc 18). As staff move into a position of more confidence, and the incident is recalled from a greater distance, there is recognition that student behaviour can be put into a longer time perspective, by referring to childlike images: *"The first time I stood up was going to be so sort of traumatic really and I was going to be faced with students that were huffing and puffing and blowing the house down and wanting to leave"* (Inc 23).

There is reference to misconceived initial perceptions of being a lecturer in HE: *"You know I had this sort of ideology attached to what I was going to be doing within the teaching and learning environment and I didn't ever expect in my fluffy bunny rabbit Enid Blyton world that the first time I stood up was going to be so sort of traumatic really."* (Inc 23) There are no metaphors suggesting that academics are like any other career, apart from that of actor on a stage, and that is referred to in a negative sense: *"I was given this opportunity to teach but I didn't link it explicitly to learning to start with and it was following that session where I delivered this piece, a bit like delivering lines in a play more than a learning and teaching experience"* (Inc 11).

There are various metaphors which recognise struggle and adversities to be overcome, but that conflict is not a mode of on-going existence. Again the lessons are learnt as individuals rather than as a community: *"... you don't turn it into a battle between you and the students because it's not about that"* (Inc 34). *"I'm highly motivated so I'll break down the barriers"* (Inc 28). *"... when you're faced with a, sort*

of a bit of an uphill battle ... in the end you kind of go well, I'm going to stop now because it's just too hard" (Inc 53). "I had to realise that sometimes maybe people aren't on my side, kind of thing, and that I will have to stand up for myself I had to think about that a bit, that should it be like that?" (Inc 36).

One of the most obvious images that stands out in the data provides a metaphor for the isolation of new lecturers. The self-protection survival mechanism that they have put in place is stated quite blatantly: *"I've created what I've called a professional bubble. At the risk of being perceived as dismissive, I've made my own choices and I've kind of distracted myself away from the political agenda of my team ... and I've created this bubble and within the bubble is the students and me and that's the only way I can survive here and if that ever bursts I'll have to go" (Inc 25).* Far from the strength and inclusion of a 'community of practice', this is an individual totally dependent on his/her own resources.

Very often metaphor is used as a philosophical conclusion and a rebalancing of some assumptions or frameworks that have been challenged at some point during the incident. There is a certain amount of resignation to a situation that was painful to the individual and which did not always make sense at the time. This is part of the growth of a new academic, but in nearly all cases they have had to get there as an individual and by their own realisation rather than with help and support from any other part of the institution: *"This is the rules of the game, you know" (Inc 15). "Some things you can change, some things you can't. Hey, that's life" (Inc 4).*

Influences, Role Identities and Career Paths

The next section of the findings looks at the way in which these influences of teaching, the PG Cert, peers, research and the institution on early career academics affect the direction of their career paths. Where the previous section reported the data which had been collected by analysing the categories of influence and defining the nature of the influences, this section attempts to outline the relation of those categories of influence to possible career paths.

This section shows that the commencement of a career as an academic is not an

immediate acquisition of multiple role identities or even a necessarily progressive and linear path leading to an automatic combination of the roles of teaching, researching, managing, writing and networking which the literature suggests combine to create an academic career (Blaxter et al, 1998).

The following realignment of the data regarding the influences on new academics in a post-19992 university suggests that it is possible to see potential progressive stages of academic career progression, but that there are virtual barriers at each stage and this is linked to the actual work that an academic performs, the context in which they perform it and their interpretation of their own role, as they assume a particular role identity.

Early Academic career paths – overview

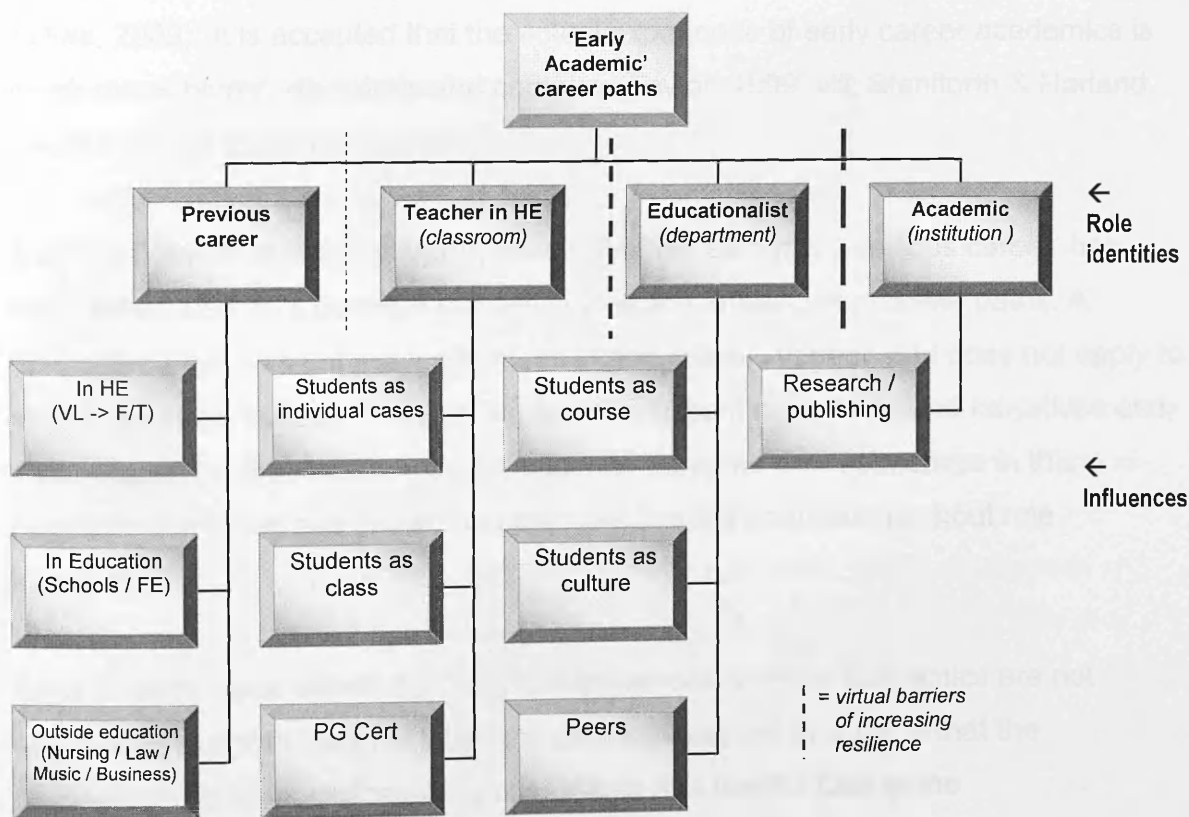


Figure 5: Conceptual overview of career paths for early career academics.

This diagram above is related to Figure 1: Overview of Influences' but is not a direct

correlation. The top line of 'Previous Career', 'Teacher in Higher Education', 'Educationalist' and 'Academic' does not represent job titles nor salary points, but conceptual roles, or role identities, that the early academic might assume, dependent on their self-positioning at any one time. The five influences of the previous section (students, PG Cert, peers, research and the institution) are shown beneath and between each of these points as the links to, and formative and confirming influences on, these role identities.

This diagrammatic conceptual overview carries with it the proviso that it is intended to be a heuristic and not a blueprint. The neatness of lines and equality of category size is not intended to imply that a career is a linear progression, or that the career paths and influences outlined are mutually exclusive. The inevitably static appearance of a diagram is justified on the grounds of its utility rather than its representation of a reality which is inevitably more fluid and unpredictable (Blaxter et al, 1998; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). It is accepted that the actual experience of early career academics is much more 'blurry', disorderly and complex (Taylor, 1999, viii; Staniforth & Harland, 2006) than the diagram suggests.

It will be noted that in this diagram above, that the category 'previous career' has been introduced as a possible role identity having influence on career paths. A previous career was not the major focus of any critical incident, and does not apply to all interviewees, but has been placed here because it occurs in some narratives and as a suggestion that this may be an influence for some new academics in this particular institution and should be considered in any conclusions about role identities.

It has already been shown that the main influences on early academics are not necessarily equal in 'weight'. What the data now appear to show is that the predominant influence of teaching of students and the PG Cert at the commencement of an academic career in this particular institution often restricts and possibly confines the role identity of the early academic to that of 'teacher in higher education'. The additional influences of the management of students and of peers enable the role identity to be expanded, but still comparatively restricted, to that of 'educationalist'. The final identified influences, which have been identified as hardly

visible and much less significant at this stage of the new academic experience, that of research and the institution, seem to facilitate the expansion of the role identity to that of 'academic' in the wider sense of the current literature.

At the beginning of the career path, the new academic has made a distinct choice and decision to accept a role at the university. As will be shown later, this is not necessarily an automatic transition from a previous career into academia, but is generally made with recognition of the links between the previous and the new position as an early career academic. The first role that these staff have within higher education is as a teacher, based in the classroom or lecture room and having a primary relationship with their students. The influences of students as individuals and as a class plus their experience of the PG Cert, confirms this role identity for the early academic as a 'teacher in higher education'. For several early career staff, this is the point at which they remain located within the first five years of their career.

For some staff the influences of students as a course and influences of their peers then inclines them towards becoming an 'educationalist'; a role which encompasses the role of teacher plus administrator of teaching. Again, there are staff who remain located at this point and do not move to any other kind of role or role identity.

There then appears to be a more significant gap before the influence of possible research activity is considered and the role of 'academic' is assumed, encompassing the role of teacher plus administrator of teaching plus researcher. It is not so much the fragmentation of the overall role which is unusual, but the fact that there are significant differences between these roles as seen by early career academics and that movement from one role into another requires the environment of a different range of influences, location or context and daily interactions. In the majority of cases it appears that these role identities are not complementary or progressive with staff moving easily between them, but that the influences are significantly different and suggest an exclusivity about each role identity, with major discontinuities and virtual barriers between each.

Role identities, Career Paths and the Internal Conversation

The third section of the findings now takes the three role identities and instead of focusing on the identities themselves, uses the data of the critical incidents to illuminate the gaps, differences and barriers between each via the internal conversation. Two major discontinuities have been identified: firstly between 'teacher' and 'educationalist' (Conversation A) and secondly between 'educationalist' and 'academic' (Conversation B).

The chart below identifies the three categories and gives examples of the internal conversations which encourage or discourage continuity. As with previous figures, it is not intended that the neatness of the boxes and lines mirror reality, but that the diagrammatic outline may be useful. The actual experience is undoubtedly much more subtle and 'messy' (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). The quotes have been chosen from the reflections on the critical incidents and often are prefaced by the words "I thought ...". The arrows (either ← or →) at the end of each quote indicate the direction in which the individual is likely to proceed. Full examples of positive and negative have not been provided at every stage, but an indicative range of responses is used with the intention of illuminating the 'gaps' between role identities, where the direction and location of a possible change in role identity are questioned.

Figure 6: The relationship of the 'internal conversation' to the early academic career path

<i>Role identity</i>	'teacher'	<i>critical incident - Internal conversation A</i>	'educationalist'	<i>critical incident - Internal conversation B</i>	'academic'
		← ----->		← ----->	
		<i>Role identity challenge or confirmation</i>		<i>Role identity challenge or confirmation</i>	
<i>Self perception</i>	Teacher	"If someone asks you to think about	Teacher + administrato	"I sort of thought .. (about curriculum	Teacher + administrat

<i>of role</i>	= relatively simple	your favourite teacher or best teacher, it's somebody that took the time and took the effort with you." ←	r Lecturer + module leader = more complex	development) .. has now meant that actually we're doing conference papers on that particular module and it's being sort of talked about as a very successful thing." →	or + researcher = most complex
Major influence	students	"I've created what I've called a professional bubble. I've made my own choices and I've kind of distracted myself away from ... my team ... and I've created this bubble and within the bubble is the students and me." ←	peers	"I think .. you're faced with a, sort of a bit of an uphill battle trying to sort of disseminate that and trying to have a sort of positive impact, in the end you kind of go well, I'm going to stop now because it's just too hard. It's just exhausting and it doesn't really get anywhere" ← ... →	external community
Location / context	Classroom	"I sort of thought well if I can get through that, you know, it can only get better, so I worked to sort of change the module and try to develop the module" →	Departmen +	"It was the realisation that all of these things should be interrelated and I don't know whether it necessarily helps but in terms of having a fulfilled and enjoyable career it's actually much better to have lots of these things going on and to explore the interrelations between them. →	School / university / external

<i>(individual actors)</i>	teaching activity & materials Perceived level of agency	<i>through which to reflect on how my teaching had actually developed to taking the challenge of teaching in a completely different context".</i> →	resources / Curriculum	<i>any further personal research because the institution just doesn't allow me to do it without a cost to myself that's just too big.</i> " ← ... →	
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It could be argued that the 'conversations' quoted here are, by definition, external, since they have been articulated in an interview with an external interviewer. However, it is the reflective part of the conversation which has been emphasised where the individual has used the phrase that they have 'thought' about the relationship of the original critical incident to their career path and so it is felt that this reported thought can be justified as the external evidence of an internal conversation.

The internal conversation illuminates these gaps between the role identities in various ways. Firstly, there are conversations which are clearly about the self-perception of the **role** being carried out. If it is accepted from the literature that being an academic is a multi-identity, involving multiple roles, then there are conversations which self label at the beginning of an academic career in an attempt to clarify that identity. In Conversation A, the 'teacher in higher education' quoted above sees her role and primary identification as a teacher in the classroom in direct relation to the student experience, gains her satisfaction from that identification and is unlikely to move into the role of 'educationalist'. The lens of the 'regressive' (←) or static internal conversation at this point confirms the teacher as a person that this member of staff would like to be known as, the 'favourite teacher', and hence this is the activity to which she gives most energy and from which she receives most personal reward. The educationalist in Conversation B sees her role as moving from teacher of students to management of the student experience to writing about that experience and delivering conference papers. She is moving into the role of 'academic' and perceives no conflict in this role identity development.

A second way of looking at these conversations is at the centre of the focus of this thesis and is about the **major influence** on the early academic. In Conversation A, the teacher experiences her primary influence as the students. Not only is it her primary influence, but she has deliberately excluded any other influences of peers, managers or research. The internal conversation of the 'teacher' emphasises the restriction and limitation of the physical and virtual environment to a relationship between the member of staff and their students, which the interviewee quoted above refers to as her 'professional bubble'. This is a deliberate choice she has made. She sees no reason to move into another role identity. A move towards the 'educationalist' would involve a relationship with her peers and the early career academic in this internal conversation has made the decision to deliberately distance herself from this departmental grouping of a work team. The decision to move into the role identity of 'educationalist' would take time and effort away from this central student focus and the individual 'teacher' makes the rational decision, based on their own internal conversation, that they do not wish to cross this barrier of time.

In Conversation B the educationalist has tried to move into a fuller academic identity by participating in scholarship and research, but has been rebuffed for some reason and has reverted to the role of the educationalist. The evidence of the significance of this barrier and the greater perceived difference between these two role identities is the way in which the internal conversation describes this move with difficulty and concludes with a retreat to the former role identity (← →). The internal conversation here, based on the critical incident, is about the lack of perceived impact in the new role identity in comparison with the apparent effort required to leap across the gap and pursue activities on the other side. The retreat is to a perceived point of agentic control. This conversation does not see the role identity of the 'academic' as related to the previous identity as an 'educationalist'.

A third factor which seems important in establishing the role identity of the early academic is in the primary **location** which the conversation identifies. In Conversation A the teacher has moved beyond the immediate location of delivery in the classroom to one of management of the module, recognises a longer timescale for their activity and sees herself as an educationalist. The 'progressive' internal

conversation (→) which takes the early career academic from 'teacher' to 'educationalist' focuses on the educational experience of the students rather than just the students themselves. The focus is still on teaching, but more on the systems behind the learning and teaching in the classroom. That is, this early career academic would see their overall situation through a more systemic lens. The internal conversation which is moving to cross this virtual barrier is about the early academic's whole approach to learning and teaching and views their critical incident across their whole teaching experience rather than focussing on particular individual students or students within a particular class.

In Conversation B the educationalist has moved beyond the management of the education experience towards an external community and is locating himself beyond the educationalist and towards having an academic identity. In this kind of internal conversation the wider context is viewed as part of a freedom to move out into, rather than seeing the closed parameters of the classroom as giving freedom. The experience of the classroom is valued by the role identity of the teacher, but the perception of the virtual barrier as evidenced in the internal conversation means that the 'teacher' sees greater freedom for agentic movement within the classroom, while the 'educationalist' sees greater freedom outside. The experience is similar, the structures are similar but the 'lens' of the 'teacher' is different from that of the 'educationalist'. The 'progressive' internal conversation (→) which crosses this barrier (of which there is hardly any evidence in the data of this thesis) sees the move from 'educationalist' to 'academic' as a part of the continual expansion of the parameters of experience, from the personal classroom, to the institutional module improvement to the national arena. In this kind of internal conversation, all experiences are regarded as an integral part of one ongoing role identity.

A fourth way of looking at the spaces between these role identities is in the nature of the **networking** or interaction which is part of the daily experience. In Conversation A, the teacher's main networking is with her students, rather than her peers. In an altruistic comment, she defends her day to day activity as improving the student experience, giving her immediate rewards, rather than any longer term personal career focus. In Conversation B, the educationalist takes a longer and wider view of

his role as part of the network of staff within a department and moves towards taking an academic identity.

Other factors that help to understand the discontinuities which are evidenced here, and lead into the Discussion chapter, are the ways in which the experience of ***structure and agency*** are reflected in these internal conversations.

In Conversation A in relation to structure, the teacher has attempted to move beyond the classroom and to share her experience in a wider arena. In the full critical incident she recounts how she took a curriculum development position – moving into an educationalist role identity - and participated in the School committee structure, only (in her view) to have her initiatives blocked by the university procedures. The evidence of this virtual barrier between the two role identities is shown by the early academic who makes attempts to cross from 'teacher' to 'educationalist' then, based on the negative critical incident experience, retreats (← →). The internal conversation of the 'teacher' moves into the role identity of an 'educationalist' who wants to be active at a systems level and then, following the incident of her apparent rejection, withdraws to her previous role identity. The retreat is to the point at which the early academic feels that they have an agentic role identity that is under their own control and he or she is back within the defining boundaries of the classroom and the students.

In Conversation B, the educationalist has an internal conversation about an academic identity which incorporates research activity, but then cannot see the reality of the time in which he can achieve this and returns to his role as a educationalist. The lens of the 'regressive' (←) internal conversation at this point confirms the early academic as an educationalist who does not participate in any research activity. He is within the operational frame of daily learning and teaching systems and his internal conversation confirms the location of his role identity as an 'educationalist' dealing with the planning of the learning experience.

In relation to agency, the teacher in Conversation A refers to seeing his teaching through a new lens and in his enthusiasm for moving into a new context, which in the full incident is a different international location, he moves towards taking on an

educationalist role identity, because this feels within his control. In Conversation B, the educationalist has moved beyond her own classroom and beyond her immediate peers into the arena of research, but has been overwhelmed by the personal control which she has had to give up. Faced with this (in her view) lack of support for her agency from the university, she has returned to a role as an educationalist and could possibly 'retreat' further into the space and role identity where she believes she has most control, that of a teacher in higher education.

Overall, the gap or virtual barrier between the role identity of the 'educationalist' and the 'academic' seems more substantial and significant than that between 'teacher' and 'educationalist'.

Archer's 'continuous sense of self' (Archer, 2003) does not exist in the sense of an unchanging direction of a continuous view of an academic career path which progresses through inevitable stages of role identity. The continuous sense of academic self can meet with continual barriers across any apparently 'progressive' path and may look at the barrier and have no wish to cross it, or may attempt a crossing and find the ensuing role identity untenable with current practice.

Although these conversations have been quoted in a way which could still give the idea of a linear progression into a wider identity, it is important to reiterate that the significant evidence of the data collected for this research suggests that there is no automatic continuum, but that these conversations represent significant discontinuities between the three identified role identities. At each point the early academic can justify their own point in a career path and deliberately elect not to proceed further.

Nor is this description intended as a pejorative commentary on the early academics quoted above. As will be noted in the later discussion and conclusions, it is more important that an institution recognises these differential role identities, the factors that are involved, the choices that are being made and the reasons behind them in the management of a post-1992 university and makes no assumptions about early academics and any automatic self directed 'career progression'.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter, based on the analysis of data collected regarding fifty-three critical incidents described by seventeen early career academics in one particular institution, delineated the actual influences on these academics in the first few years of their academic careers and grouped these as students, PG Cert, peers, research and the institution. It then realigned the data and outlined a possible way in which these influences might affect the career path in these early years by aligning them with the construction and maintenance of three role identities: the teacher in higher education, the educationalist and the academic. Thirdly it used the data to illuminate the discontinuities between these three role identities via the internal conversation.

There is no attempt to provide a predictive model for individual academic careers in higher education based on the previous data, given the author's epistemological position that 'it is not possible to have direct and unmediated access to the social world and therefore it cannot be known directly' (Ashwin, 2009, 17). However, the data does provide some evidence from early career academics in this particular institution that the previously described combined roles of teaching, researching, managing, writing and networking (Blaxter et al, 1998) is not a model which matches this post-1992 experience. Even if the identity described in the literature is a multiple-role identity which is achieved later in academic life, the evidence of this thesis suggests that there is no inevitable progression or continual broadening of the academic experience to encompass all these roles, but that there are major disconnections between the role identities which early academics in this post-1992 university assume which deserves further investigation.

Henkel suggests that the model of progression through an academic career is 'the development of identity within three key roles - researcher, teacher and academic manager' (Henkel, 2000, 149). Taylor refers to three 'levels' of academic identity, linked to location of practice, to discipline and to a wider academic identity (Taylor, 1999). What the research based in this post-1992 university seems to show is that the focus of the early career academic in the first five years is very much on the role of teaching in higher education and that not only is there no automatic progression to, or inclusion of, other roles, but that there are distinct self-envisioned and self-

articulated barriers to that progression. It also suggests that the near invisibility in these early years of the criticality of the disciplinary community or any linked research community means that for these staff, who often do not come from a research background, there is no foundation being laid for the inclusion of any future research role.

The idea of choices in the direction of academic career paths, based on Archer's idea of the 'continuous sense of self' which 'derives from our embodied practices in the world' (Archer, 2000, 7) has been shown not to be synonymous with any continuous sense of an academic career. This thesis has taken as its evidence base the actual practical instances of the moments of challenge, when the early academic is faced with a point in their everyday work existence which requires an active response and a reflective thought which redefines the relationship with their career path, in a range of major or minor ways. The analysis began with the individual critical incident, rather than an ongoing narrative of an individual, in order to explore the idea of 'unscripted performances which hold society together, (which) need an active agent who is enough of a self to acknowledge her obligation to perform and to write her own script to cover the occasion' (Archer, 2000, 7). The overview of the influences which initiate or contribute to a career path showing the way in which the practitioners self-define their role identity suggests that there is a dynamic interaction and active individual construction of the early academic role, within the social framework of this particular university environment. However, it does not suggest that there is any continuous sense or developmental sense of 'becoming an academic'.

This chapter firstly revisits the concept of role identity and discusses its usefulness as a term in this research. It underlines the usefulness of structure and agency and the internal conversation as an analytical framework. It then goes on to further define the three role identities as outlined in the data and discuss the importance of context in relation to previous literature regarding academic identity, 'overlapping careers' (Blaxter et al., 1998), multiple identities (Churchman, 2006). It suggests that it is the discontinuities and the absences, evidenced by the internal conversations, which are a fruitful site for investigation. The discussion concurs with ideas of academic isolation and a refutation of the idea of academic homogeneity (Churchman, 2006; Churchman & King, 2009).

The concept of 'role identity' (Jazvac-Martek, 2009) has been shown to be both descriptively and analytically useful, rather than using either 'role' or 'identity' as the central construct which are the concepts which appear in most of the literature.

Taylor distinguished between these two concepts by defining 'identity' as aspects which characterise the person, while 'role' refers to the 'part played by an individual in a particular social setting (Taylor, 1999, 40). Since the basis of the research design was focused on the descriptions of practical events and then the articulation of the reflections and the applied implications of decisions taken during or following those events, the emerging 'role identity' has been a logical combination of the person and the specific location.

This research was not originally designed to illuminate aspects of the psychological construct or personal definitions of an academic identity, but was focused on 'how our species-being interacts with the way the world is, which is independent of how we take it to be, or the constructions we put upon it' (Archer, 2000, 7). All the data began as practice, but has then included personal reflection. This has enabled a picture to emerge which combines the concepts of the self which are based in the social world (the influences) and the sense of self which is personal (the role-identity) (Clegg, 2005). For these early academics there is no evidence of any early academic having a future-based, theoretical, rounded, notional conception of themselves as an 'academic', but rather a realistic conception of what is attainable and personally liveable with, based in the social context rather than the psychological.

The combined term 'role identity' has been used to allow this assemblage of interpersonal and intrapersonal experience, combining meaning, values and obligations (Henkel, 2002) which interact to continually challenge or confirm a sense of self to produce coherence (Taylor, 1999), but showing that in practice the specificity of the context, the location and the environment – in this case a post-1992 university – rather than the higher education sector in general is the significant factor. An academic identity emerges from and is confirmed by the day to day existence.

The following discussion takes a holistic frame of analysis and concentrates on 'what is placed in the foreground and background in the analysis rather than treating

perceptions, practices, discourses and systems as mutually exclusive categories' (Ashwin, 2008, 154). The overview of the early academic taken here is less analytically distinct than Archer's development of individuals as '...self, agent, actor, and particular person' (Archer, 2000, 295), but retains some of that specificity, where it is recognised that the individual has chosen to move actively into being the 'actor' at particular points of his/her career path. Where earlier theories of role acquisition were seen as formal and staged processes, the view taken here suggests that role identity is much more of an interplay between the structured environment of the university and the personal interaction of the individual with their immediate environment which can result in assumptions of particular role identities at particular points of the career. However it can also be seen that some individuals choose not to 'progress' into a more inclusive or more extended career path and in certain cases choose to 'revert' to a narrower definition of their role identity.

Where the single term 'academic identity' has been used in previous literature, it is suggested that the specificity of 'role identity' gives more precision to the analysis. In line with this it is suggested that a discussion of 'multiple role identities' may be more useful than the previously used multiple identities (Churchman, 2006) or hybridised identities (Clegg, 2008).

The theoretical framework for understanding and interpreting reported critical incidents and the influences on the early academic career path was based on Archer's idea of structure, agency and the internal conversation (Archer, 2003). It is suggested that the data analysis and the ensuing discussion has been more illuminated by seeing this development not as a socialisation process into a given organisation but about individual experience and negotiation. Earlier 'tribes and territories' literature regarding peers and academic identity suggested that this identity was achieved by increasing socialisation into different disciplinary networks and cultural organisation (Becher, 1994; Becher & Trowler, 2001). The evidence of this thesis seems to suggest that what binds these early academics to their colleagues at the beginning of their career is not the discipline, but the organisational framework and that any community, such as it exists, is more about the systems and professional expertise (Edwards & Nicoll, 2004; McWilliam, 2004) of institutional and

pedagogical practice. In this post-1992 university, it appears that the process of attaining any kind of academic role identity is not about socialisation into a given community of practice, but about individual experience and a realist view of personal negotiation.

The 'critical incidents' as reported, articulated points at which various influences and interactions required a review of the way in which the individual regarded their current and future role identity. The use of critical incidents has helped illuminate the relationship between structure and agency. In examining the critical incidents and the conclusions that staff reached during and as a result of the interaction, I am not arguing for relative 'weights' of structure and agency, but attempting to hold Ashwin's view that, 'structure and agency are not different *kinds* of processes but different ways of grouping or conceptualizing complex social processes. Thus they can represent the *same* processes viewed through a different lens' (Ashwin, 2009, 19). The importance of the idea of a 'lens' in the reality of the critical incident situation of the early career academic is that the individual within the situation creates and reinforces their own lens via human reflection which plays a major role in a personal mediation between structure and agency (Archer, 2003). It is not a simple case of either structure or agency being the 'stronger' factor at a particular point, but a more complex view of the inter-relationship and mediation between these. The 'critical incident' creates a sense of imbalance and its ensuing reflection is the point at which the current role identity is challenged or confirmed and equilibrium is re-established. The current or future role identity is then further legitimated by confirmatory action. At the point of the critical incident, it is obvious that the early career academic is not able to be entirely agentic, but has to think and act in interaction with the surroundings. Even if there is a general idea of 'the academic', at this particular time, it is not always possible to behave according to some idealised personal conception which produces continual progression along a given or idealised conception of academic identity. It is an interaction between the person and the situation. It is not a result of the relative 'forces' of structure or agency.

This idea of interplay between the structure and agency does not deny the existence of power as a variable (Ashwin, 2009) but, in line with the above framework, power is not analysed as a force in itself. Power relationships are implied in some of the

internal conversations, but it is the early career viewpoint of his/her situation about where power is seen and how it is negotiated, rather than an abstracted view of power relations which is the central focus.

The critical incident itself might involve immediate practical negotiation. The reflection on the critical incident forms an internal negotiation which is essential to working out interconnections with those influences which have been foregrounded and then reinforces the attachments to the current role identity or relocates the role identity to a new framework (Burke & Stets, 1999). The reflection or 'internal conversation' is therefore a particular example of a reflexive dialogue which takes place continuously. In Archer's terms, with my interpretation in brackets, 'all agents attempt subjectively ... to establish their own personal *modus vivendi* (i.e. role identity) in objective social circumstances (i.e. the influential context) which were not of their making or choosing (i.e. a particular critical incident)' (Archer, 2003, 16). Through their internal conversations 'individuals reflect on their social situations in the light of their personal concerns - asking themselves 'what should I do?' and answering their own question' (Archer, 2003, intro). This internal conversation is not just a reflection on the past happenings, but a causal influence on personal futures in that it clarifies subsequent aspirations and motivations. This internal clarification can then be acted on in a way which actually modifies the immediate and future academic practice. The formal identity, in the sense of labels and performance, is continually personally reinterpreted, with ongoing fluctuations and stabilities (Blackmore, 2007b) and is therefore a much more flexible, unstable and contextually defined notion than previous literature on academic identity in higher education might suggest.

Although all the early career academics interviewed for this research would be seen by outsiders as 'an academic', the way in which they have chosen to act out their role in the university within this overall definition falls into three kinds of role identity: a teacher in higher education, an educationalist and an academic, and is also influenced by any previous career. This is not a linear progression in the profession, but role parameters which are defined by increasingly resilient virtual barriers. At each stage the 'influences', as encountered by the pattern of work, combine and confirm or challenge the perception of a career path by forging or restricting new choices. Each of these role identities is now discussed in further detail.

Influence of previous career

The rapid expansion of the number of students in the university sector has produced a parallel expansion in not just the numbers of academic staff, but in the diversity of personal and professional backgrounds (Baruch & Hall, 2004; Becher & Trowler, 2001). Although this diversity of staff is referred to in the literature, it is not delineated with reference to the different kinds of university or suggested as a significant variable in the acquisition of an academic identity. In the staff interviewed for this research, some had come into a full time higher education from a visiting lecturer post, some from a different sector within education, such as schools or further education, and some from completely different professions outside education such as Business, Law, Social Work or Nursing. In particular, in the teaching-led, vocationally orientated university in which this research is based, over half of the staff interviewed had previously been employed in a different profession. It is this difference in the actual original constituency of the profession in this post-1992 university which needs to be taken into account as role identities are assumed.

None of these staff used the influence of a previous career as the subject of a critical incident, but referred to their previous existence in order to define what they saw as the differences between that and their current role in academia. It seemed that these staff had clearer thoughts about the definition of the role of a teacher in higher education because they had a point of comparison.

Some comments referred to the wholesale change of environment, *"I came into the university from a totally different sort of environment from the private sector and I'd been running my own business"* (Inc 2) and refer to teaching as a completely different role, which is not automatically assumed or internalised: *"I think when you first come into teaching and learning, certainly for myself, I can't speak for anyone else, but I had this awful de-skilled feeling that I didn't know anything. And when I first stood up in front of the large undergraduate group and they were all poised with their pens and their paper, I couldn't quite believe that it was me they were going to be listening to and I didn't trust just how much I knew"* (Inc 24). Others did not see this change from doing 'it' to teaching 'it' as a major change: "I had been a social worker

for eighteen years or something like that. I'd been a manager for about three years and thencoming to the university, I was teaching stuff that I knew as a subject and it kind of seemed quite natural" (Inc 8). For others, the change of role had to be justified: "I'd just left that Senior Practitioner role and I had to try to make an excuse for having come into Higher Education and not knowing what I was doing" (Inc 23).

Some staff seemed to have drifted into a career in higher education: "So it was a route that I sort of came into almost by chance" (Inc 2). "I got into teaching through professional practice really. Stumbled into it would be a better description I think" (Inc 51). Others had made a deliberate and significant choice to enter the university: "I do think that I've been tentative and worried about leaving school and coming to university and being a lecturer" (Inc 35). "So that's where I made the shift into HEI and it was that a post came up at the university and I applied for it and got it" (Inc 44).

However, what is significant for this thesis is the way in which all these staff developed their notion of the role identity of a teacher in higher education in comparison with their previous existence. Those who have come from a previous role outside the university show more concern and then a more articulated internal conversation about defining themselves as an academic than those without this experience: "I was interested about how HEI interfaces with practice, what makes a student nurse competent? What is the impact of their clinical skills, experience? How important is partnership and collaboration? How does policy fit practice? All the sort of, these things were bubbling around in my head" (Inc 43).

There is evidence of epistemological internal conversations based on a previous existence which are then translated into pedagogical concerns and practice: "(in the university's modular structure) ...we are in the McDonald's world where people just learn this little bit and then put it aside because they've passed it now and it doesn't matter. I think as a nurse you can't afford to do that. I just don't think it's on. I don't think it's an acceptable way of behaving because knowledge develops on from knowledge and enhances previous knowledge and goes back to previous theory to make sense of it. You know, you've got concrete experience and you've got

knowledge and the two within reflection go to make people better learners and better practitioners in whatever they do' (Inc 38).

These staff are very aware of the skills needed to perform in academia, because they can see the transferability from their previous career (Jawitz, 2009). They are practical and analytical about the skills needed: *"So it was all last minute rush and within Social Work also we, you know, were involved with something called 'crisis intervention' and we're used to actually going out and fire fighting with people and I think that kicked in very much - that those transferable skills from Social Work practice at the front line of Social Work practice, kicked in into the front line of this MA exam and I managed the crisis. I think it links directly to Social Work practice, it links to handling change and trusting my own knowledge as well"* (Inc 24). The practical challenges in some critical incidents result in a challenge to the continuous sense of self (Seymour, 2006): *"I started to wonder whether or not I'd made the right career choice because it was just chaos and it was everything I didn't want to be"* (Inc 23).

It is accepted by those with a previous career that there are both connections and contradictions between the previous role and the current role. It has been a definite and defined transition which means that these people are much more aware of career transitions and more able to utilise 'selective recontextualising' (Bernstein, 2000, 67) in deciding about any prospective moves than those who have always been in education. *"I'm not currently a social worker, I'm not currently a manager, I'm not currently an NLP practitioner, which is something else that I do; I'm a lecturer and there is a different set of skills and knowledge and attributes and capabilities and beliefs that belong to that professional identity which kind of overlap with other things but they're not the same"* (Inc 8).

For these staff with a previous career, the internal conversation recognises different parts of a job, or when to move on, or when to see that the job entails something different. They recognise the need for changes of allegiance as role identity changes: *"to change my allegiance from being in social work and being in local authority to my allegiance to the university and that was a big transition as well and letting go of a lot of pre-conceptions about what the role was going to be like"* (Inc 23).

These staff, through maintaining their previous professional contacts, also often maintain the idea of a dual career, or at least the possibility of returning to a previous role: *"I've still got feet in other camps in terms of practice and management and development within local authorities"* (Inc 10). *"In fact, I don't even see myself as an academic really, I see myself as a nurse that works at a university"* (Inc 40).

The recognition of a transitional identity, related to a previous identity or the ongoing concept of a dual professional identity which is not subsumed within an overall academic identity is not recognised in the literature.

The Teacher in Higher Education

The major influences of students as individual cases or as students in a class show that the early career academic in this institution essentially defines him or herself as a teacher in higher education. The idea of academic work being a 'hybrid of activities' (Jauhiainen et al., 2009, 421) or as 'having five main academic roles - teaching, researching and managing, plus writing and networking - which, in differing combinations, make up academic work and academic careers' (Blaxter et al., 1998, 284) does not occur until later in a career. This in no way contradicts the Blaxter, Hughes and Tight analysis, but this research, focusing on the idea of 'differing combinations' at the beginning of a career, suggests that at this stage teaching is overwhelmingly the primary role and for some staff remains a defining and confining role by choice.

The role of 'scholar' does not appear as a major part of the teaching role. There are several incidents about new academics having to use others' materials and the difficulty this results in until the material has been personalised, but there are no incidents or references from the grounded theory analysis which suggest personal scholarship as a major influence. There does not seem to be any integration of the role of 'scholar' and developing one's own understanding or academic specialism as a major influence. This is in line with Rice (1986) who suggests that scholarship has now become synonymous with research and not teaching.

The view of the dedicated higher education teacher with a major focus on students emerges as the centrality of the early academic existence with almost no evidence of the influence of research, writing or networking: *“I’ve wanted this all my life really ... and here I am as a somebody that supports other people now in their teaching and learning. It’s made me revisit that original passion”* (Inc 25). *“At the end of the day, you know, all I want to be is a good teacher”* (Inc 3). *“I think all critical incidents have been quite emotionally charged, but all have had a big impact on what I feel that I’m going to do for the good of the students”* (Inc 28). This differs from Henkel, who says that the commitment of young academics and their enthusiasm for learning is to their disciplinary subjects, rather than specifically to their students (Henkel, 2000).

The essence of the teaching role for early academics is the relationship with students and teaching in a narrowly focused sense of their career path, although they may have a very deep experience of this interaction. The points of influence which substantiate the role of ‘teacher in HE’ are not to do so much with the planning or assessment of learning, or with the creation of disciplinary knowledge with students (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009), but with the face to face learning and teaching activity involving students. It is this activity which confirms a primary role which appears to be more like a school teacher or a further education teacher (the author has worked in both these sectors), but within a higher education setting.

For many early career members of staff at this university, their role as a teacher is both their major function and their dominant function. They have come into academia employed as ‘lecturers’, but asked to do a job as teachers. Their own previous experience of academia has been as a university student some time ago. They then became a member of a different profession and now hold a teaching job in university, employed on the basis of their professional expertise. They have not reached their employment via a researcher role and are often without their own PhD. Therefore their concept of an ‘academic’ is the role that they have previously seen as a student – an academic as a teacher. From this view, the role of an academic as ‘writer’ or ‘networker’ or ‘researcher’ would have been largely hidden.

In line with Taylor’s view of the ‘situated academic’ (Taylor, 1999, 41) that influences and is influenced by the individual workplace, the teacher in higher education sees

their major location as the classroom / lecture theatre / tutorial or seminar area. All major influences as described by these teachers take place in this micro context: *“I guess you compare yourself to others who seem very polished and perhaps very erudite and you kind of, maybe not consciously but kind of see being in the classroom as a performance and it’s all about you”* (Inc 18).

The move into this view of oneself as a teacher is also influenced by the relationship with teaching materials and the ownership of these materials: *“I was given a tutorial to do on for a level one group and basically given a script and said, “That’s what you’re teaching, that’s when you’re doing it, go and deliver it” and that came from the module leader. And it made me think, “Well, hold on a minute. It’s not a case of jackanory in terms developing teaching material”* (Inc 11). There are several incidents which cite points of unease when the early academic is given materials and expected to ‘deliver’ these without any form of internalisation. The personalisation of teaching materials is felt to be a point of control over the environment.

In terms of structure and agency, the focus of the teacher in higher education is strongly based on personal concerns of agency (Ashwin, 2008). The data shows early career academics definitely positioning themselves as isolated individuals with singular concerns about their own classroom practice: *“It was something I could have dealt with myself if I’d have known, so I need that knowledge because I don’t want to be put in that position again”* (Inc 32). It is about control over their own materials *“...the module leader who said, “Well, you can jolly well write your own stuff then, if that’s your approach” and I thought that was quite liberating, so I was quite excited by that”* (Inc 11) and it is about individual performance: *“When I arrived I was all geared up and I’d done a lot of rehearsing and you know, staring in the mirror and practicing and gearing myself up for my very first experience of being in the public arena as a teacher”* (Inc 23).

As such, this fits with Archer’s view that ‘the properties and powers of the human being are neither seen as *‘pregiven’*, nor as *‘socially appropriated’*, but rather these are emergent from our relations with the environment (Archer, 2000, 87). The development of themselves within this role of teacher in higher education is about the

individual improving effective performance in the classroom, by developing individual skills: *“so that really did have a big impact on my development as I am now and I’m very conscious of trying to keep up to date with the way we sort of, you know, deliver our lectures really”* (Inc 26). Their way forward in their career is about personal teaching competences: *“So I truly believe that you’ve got to be able to do the job to teach it and this is a way of getting back into practice, getting back into the clinical area. I will be out there doing, you know, personal care with clients on wards with the student, bathing, dressings, whatever,... so for my personal skills and my clinical skills, they’ll keep updated”* (Inc 30).

At this stage of role identity, as teacher in higher education, the PG Cert has been shown to be a significant influence. However, this mandatory staff development does not seem to promote a wider academic role, but to emphasise and confirm the early academic in their teaching role. When staff talk about the influence this accreditation has had on them, it is in the area of teaching skills when interacting with students, not in the areas of curriculum management, research or networking.

It has influenced teachers’ perceptions of learning and teaching in higher education and their classroom skills, but not their career as an academic in a university: *I really enjoyed doing it and at the end of it I felt that it had really given me a lot of skills to use in the workplace.”* (Inc 31) *‘I am now a teacher and I’ve got the certificate to prove it’* (Inc 6). *“Something that really did influence my teaching and my skills, competence, abilities, was doing the PGC in teaching and learning”* (Inc 1). The PG Cert has not given the staff the broader skills or perception that they might need as an academic: *“I’ve been taught how to look at outcomes and aims and structure my lessons and I haven’t been taught to deal with people on an individual basis and that’s where I struggle really”* (Inc 29).

The part of the PG Cert that is often appreciated by new staff is the opportunity for networking across the university, but this is not continued after the course is completed: *“because of all these dilemmas of all these other things that you’ve got to do, that you’re not having the chance to forge those relationships further, you know. They’ve happened and then they’ve ended and I just think it’s a shame. I think it was*

a great opportunity to network across the university” (Inc 40). “I think inevitably, the kind of relationship has, sort of, gone its separate ways because you know it was a couple of years ago now, and we’re doing different projects and different things” (Inc 2). So where networking is suggested in the literature as an important part of the academic career model (Baruch & Hall, 2004; Becher, 1999; Blaxter et al, 1998; Knight & Trowler, 2000; Watkins & Drury, 1994), there is no evidence of this skill as an influence or a critical part of the development of these early academics even in intra-university working.

Even where the PG Cert might have opened up opportunities for a career in learning and teaching or a focus on academic practice, this rarely happens: “So the way my path went was I, after the PG Cert I did an MA in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education ... that’s where it ended up. And I did research projects around students’ learning and teaching and my workload, like lots of people’s workloads, isn’t manageable without huge personal cost really” (Inc 19). There is only evidence from one critical incident of the PG Cert opening a wider career: “having done the PG Cert, I’ve since started the Doctorate in Education so that’s really sort of ... confirmed for me that that’s the route I want to follow” (Inc 6).

This first stage of the academic career emerges as very individualistic and isolated, confirming Churchman & King’s research which concludes, ‘One way of preserving an academic identity is to avoid excessive confrontation and challenge, which can be achieved by confining interactions to those who share that identity or maintaining isolated conditions’ (Churchman & King, 2009, 513). At this stage, those who share in this identity as teacher in higher education are the students. So there is evidence of deliberate isolation by the individual early academic as a mode of survival: “I’ve created this bubble and within the bubble is the students and me and that’s the only way I can survive here and if that ever bursts I’ll have to go, that’s it really” (Inc 25). “It’s important I suppose to concentrate on the students and their learning and let other people worry about the bigger stuff” (Inc 4). “What I see from some folks that I work alongside now have become jaded and they’ve almost lost their vision for a support network for students and they’re more focused upon their own desires to research and to develop and the students are just an annoyance and a sideline that they have to fit in and I don’t want that to happen for myself, and if I’m perceived

really as somebody, as a result of that, who doesn't want to sort of pursue professional development then that's something I'll have to address ... but I just want to keep the focus on me and Joe Bloggs within the classroom" (Inc 24).

Staff in this role of 'teacher in higher education' tend to positively pursue an agentic control of their circumstances, by deliberately drawing structural barriers around themselves, defining the space in which they are in control. This definition of a controlled area tends to result in a measure of personal satisfaction (Knight, 2002). The situation for the early academic is not about being influenced by either structure or agency in the classroom, but about the interaction between these two. When there are occasions which threaten the confidence of the early academic in relationship with their students, the early academic tends to reflect on that incident and at that point to devise ways to build their own confidence within the arena that they know, which leads them to retreat from any wider engagement with an academic role.

The Educationalist

The word 'educationalist' has been used here to label the second stage of the early career academic as meaning teacher + administrator of teaching. In reality this second stage usually means that the new member of staff now has responsibility as a module leader, or a practice area leader or a subject responsibility, as well as a teaching role. This alters the relationship with students from a purely direct teaching relationship to a more indirect relationship of managing the learning experience. In terms of day to day relationships, this also means that peers now move into the frame of influence previously occupied solely or mainly by students.

In terms of context this means that the physical frame of reference moves from the classroom to the department or from micro to meso level (Trowler, 2004). The important finding evidenced by this thesis suggests that it is not the discipline which provides the focus of the inter-relationship, but the workgroup or the 'enterprise' (Henkel, 2002): *"the important thing was the opportunity to have a cup of tea and really talk informally to your colleagues and get that rich discussion going about their*

students, the attitude, the approaches of their students, to find out that actually it wasn't just your own personal experience where you've had difficulty managing a diverse class"(Inc 12). "And here I really felt we can do team work" (Inc 14).

The department is an important physical and virtual location for the new academic, influencing practical teaching and administration. *'In terms of my professional career, I would say that I probably communicate more effectively with the team ... which is quite important for me, so that's probably improved. Whether it's then, actually I'm going to be a PL or the Associate Dean? No, in terms of professional development and in terms of my reflective communication and working with the team, effectively that's where it's helped me" (Inc 28). "I think probably afterwards it is a good thing to realise that you know, yes I'm very happy to work in a very collegiate way and we'll all support each other and try and make things work" (Inc 36).* There are critical incidents which show the importance of very meaningful conversations about learning and teaching (Putnam & Burko, 2000). However, influence of the department as a location of disciplinary debate and research activity (Rice, 1986; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009) is almost completely absent.

In Ashwin's more fluid view of structure and agency, context here is not seen as a structural box, but as an interweaving and overlapping of different 'characterizations of different sets of structural-agentic processes' (Ashwin, 2009, 24). Seen from the view of a university manager or a senior academic, a department might be the site of disciplinary articulation, research development and career activity (Malcolm & Zukas, 2009). Seen from the view of an early career academic, their interaction with their peers is about organisational and systems clarification. *"Everything I'd been learning was suddenly real and that sharing experiences, asking for advice, finding help, going to different departments, different people, finding out how the university works, all that really helped me and it was almost like a crash course on how to deal with a problem efficiently and professionally with the student as well as with the university" (Inc 48).* This is especially true when the experience of the new academic is that the reorganisation of departments and Schools appears to align with practical and economic institutional needs, rather than disciplinary debate. *"..getting an email that says you will be moving to the School of and it's like, hang on, this is a major structural change, whatever happened to a consultation process? ...where people*

have put, you know, a lot of time and energy into writing a properly argued formulated academically sound report that says for these reasons we have objections and so on and for them to say, well we're not reading that report, it just seems crazy to me" (Inc 10). It is this organisational nature of university life which frames the discursive practice of the workplace (Trowler & Knight, 1999) rather than the discipline as a framework for academic role identity at this stage of the academic career.

In this sense, the community of 'practice' is the practice and management of teaching and learning and any career trajectory is firmly based in this day to day experience. The agency of these new academics as shown by their critical incidents is in relation to their peers and department and is now linked to curriculum development: *"Yes, as a result of this problem we'll change the whole way we do things completely ... there's five of us, going to be a, form a clinical team"* (Inc 30). In this study, the interviews with new academics do not suggest that 'discipline, research, pedagogy and academic identity appear to be inextricably entangled' (Malcolm & Zukas 2007 in Malcolm & Zukas, 2009, 498) with equal balance, but that at this early stage it is pedagogical and organisational practice that generally dominate the interplay between structure and agency to create and reinforce the role identity of the 'educationalist': *"The first kind of thing that influenced my career since I've arrived at the university ... has been that I was sharing an office with another three people. So, we were four overall and two of these people had been at the university for a long time and so they knew the university inside out ... and I felt that being with them in the office and them being there all the time was actually the most important thing that could have happened to me because I was actually able to ask questions all the time and to actually integrate very quickly"* (Inc 14).

The argument is not that new academics appear to have difficulty in exerting their agency or that they are confined by structures, but that this agency is exerted within a limited view of themselves and the structure in which they practice: *'and a career as an academic had never occurred to me, if I'm absolutely honest, so it was a route that I sort of came into almost by chance. I started as a placement officer and it was only in my second year that I became a lecturer'* (Inc 5). It is not about the relative 'weight' of structure or agency, nor does it appear to be about the differential

disciplinary contexts giving different space for individual agency (Blackmore, 2007b; Jawitz, 2009; Malcolm and Zukas, 2009) but about the lens through which this interaction and context is perceived. The new academic interacts with their disciplinary community as an organisational entity and that is how their role identity as a lecturer is confirmed.

Formal professional development which is offered to support a move from 'teacher' to 'educationalist' is non-existent. From the point of the ending of the PG Cert, there is no influence of a process of formal support: *"In other jobs that I'd been in, you know, there are specific qualifications or specific training that you have to go through to then be able to call yourself a particular, you know, to have a particular role, but with a lecturer, an academic position, you know, there isn't really that sort of qualification"* (Inc 2). The discourse communities which form an important part of these new academics' lives are not structured or proactively developed around individual needs. It is up to the individual to take the steps, make the contacts, ask the questions and generally invest in themselves (Baruch & Hall, 2004) as they see necessary. The construction of their new educationalist role in developing their practice is not influenced in any structured way by the immediate professional community or the institution.

Evidence of active agency encouraging legitimacy of role identity outside the immediate classroom existence is about teaching and pedagogy. The critical exchanges and interactions with colleagues are practical not disciplinary: *"colleagues who make feel ... that I was useful, that I helped them do things as well. Because, for instance, they weren't very interested in you know, VLEs and e-learning and all that, and they all came to me and said can you help me with (technology)? Can you help me with this? So they've made me feel like I've was actually on the same level as them"* (Inc 14). The community in which interactions take place, and where role identities are reinforced (Bleiklie, 1998; Henkel, 2002) has been enlarged beyond students to include peers, but the subject of the interaction is organisational and not epistemological.

In common with the 'teacher in higher education', the 'educationalist' also appears to be individual at best and isolated at worst. There is almost no evidence of positive

critical incidents leading to an inclusive role identity as an academic where the new member of staff is welcomed into a collegiate environment and where a teaching role and a research role are seen to be related.

The Academic

The third stage of the progression in role identity for new early career academics is the stage of approaching a full academic identity. In this research, that appears to be the point when the individual practice combines teaching + administration of teaching + researching. The category of 'academic' is generally perceived to be problematic (Tierney, 2001; Henkel, 2000), requiring continual negotiation of 'social and epistemological interests and structures' (Barnett, 2000b, 256). Henkel suggests that 'The critical relationships within which academic identities are pursued are therefore those between individual, discipline, department and institution, although the balance of importance between these relationships varies between individuals' (Henkel, 2000, 148). The evidence from this research seems to show that at the early stages of an academic career, the importance is based on the individual and the department; that the influences of the discipline are limited and that the influence of any aspect of research and the institution are almost invisible. It is again accepted that the staff who were interviewed for this thesis are not staff who were appointed as researchers, but staff who were appointed as 'lecturers'.

What is suggested from this research is that there is a major gulf between the role of 'educationalist' and that of 'academic'. There is very little evidence to suggest that these roles are overlapping and progressive and much more to suggest that the current role as teacher or lecturer is actually at best separate from and at worst in conflict with that of 'academic' (Seymour, 2006). There is no externalised or internalised blueprint for this professional journey: *"I hadn't got a good understanding in terms of career paths for academics and this sort of thing"* (Inc 4).

Based on the previous evidence of practical influences on career paths, it seems that there are no given strategies or institutional support for managing the potentially diverse parts of the identity. It seems that it is inevitable that teachers in higher

education focus on the deadlines and issues of immediate delivery and student issues. Theoretically the roles in academia are expected to overlap, but the sheer physical organisation of daily experience keeps them separate and acts to confirm how the separate parts of the identity are viewed. *“I suppose that what I am trying to say is I still consider that although I’m an experienced nurse I’m not an experienced academic. In fact, I don’t even see myself as an academic really ... Maybe over time that I’ll become like academics perhaps, I don’t know, that’s a really bad word. Maybe the dilemmas that I have will disappear, maybe I’ll see other openings and perhaps when we look at something it’s about how you view it”* (Inc 40).

Henkel suggests that new academics are more efficient in their organisation of time (Henkel, 2000). This research was not designed to provide any comparative data of this nature between new academics and more established academics, but the reported experience of these early career academics suggest that they are pragmatic in fulfilling their immediate responsibilities and that the immediacy of every day experience excludes or severely restricts any longer term view of an academic identity. Henkel suggests that new staff are deeply involved in their own disciplines and therefore see their career path as establishing their own place within the discipline (Henkel, 2000). However if, as argued above, these staff are *not* embedded in an ongoing disciplinary debate in terms of their daily existence, then this move towards a career disciplinary niche or identity is not a logical progression. Staff appear to be *in* the discipline, but not *of* the discipline.

The primary context for the role identity formation and confirmation of the teacher is the classroom, for the educationalist it is their department and for the academic it would be expected to be the face to face or virtual disciplinary research community. In this post-1992 context, there is almost no evidence of research activity or research colleagues as being significant influences on the career path of the early career academic. There is little evidence that the idea of research is automatically in the frame of thinking of a new academic in this institution: *“My interest in, kind of like, love of ideas and speculation and creativity and all of that alongside the value of research and of actually, you know, going to conferences and presenting papers and all the rest of it, which was something that I didn’t value before”* (Inc 9).

The School and the University are not identified as significant influences or context for the early academic. There is no evidence of critical incidents which relate to an ongoing research community either within or external to the university.

Where there are successful moves into an academic identity, they appear to have come about where there are overt links from the teacher to the educationalist to the academic: *"I worked to sort of change the module and try to develop the module and also lessons from the PG Cert, you know, my increased knowledge, has now meant that actually we're doing conference papers on particular module and it's being sort of talked about as a very successful thing"* (Inc 7). It is easier to move into a role identity of an academic where the context of all identities does not vary dramatically. That is, where student behaviour forms the basis for being a teacher, an educationalist and a researcher: *"I'm just very interested in researching and understanding what's happening for students in the classroom and in their learning processes"* (Inc 18).

There is very little evidence of the critical influence of networking deemed necessary with senior colleagues within or external to the institution in order to structure any transition into this more complex area of the identity, which might involve a new community and new colleagues (Staniforth & Harland, 2006). There is agreement in the literature that conversations and interactions regarding research are central to what constitutes an academic role identity (Baruch & Hall, 2004; Blaxter et al, 1998; Henkel, 2000) although there is little detailed research in this area evidenced in the literature. Only one incident in the data suggests that there is evidence of active networking support which is a significant influence on the new academic: *"My line manager introduced me to M... (who) introduced me to my first conference. You know, she took me along with her and we presented a paper. So that was my first sort of introduction to that side of things"* (Inc 5). The evidence of encouragement to step outside the role of teacher is limited: *"And I say I'd not really sort of considered a career as an academic and you know but these people encouraged me to do this, you know that I could get involved in things like research and conferences and that sort of thing"* (Inc 5).

There is evidence that research is not part of a considered or internalised identity, but something which is the response of an individual to their current practice at a particular time: *“This is a tremendous opportunity and a responsibility that we do some thinking about how these things are going to transform the work really and the importance of communicating that with people, you know, through academic conferences, through journals, through research which I hadn’t really thought about before”* (Inc 9). The argument is not about the power of the institutional structure which prevents this progression, but the lack of an identified supporting framework which is clear and available to the early career academic. The evidence from those few incidents which reflect on an external academic existence, shows bewilderment at the direction the career path has taken, with no identification or recognition of the route that has been travelled: *“what the hell am I doing here?” ... “How did I get here?” ... “somehow I’m like a member of this group”* (Inc 9). When this transition to a more inclusive role identity is made there is real enthusiasm: *“So what it did for my career, professional development was make me think well actually yes I can, you know, I can do this, and I can be part of this and god isn’t it brilliant and fantastic to be, to be part of that, which it is”* (Inc 9), but there is extremely limited evidence of this transition actually happening.

In the data, there is little emphasis on development or training for research, despite the importance of this for career paths. Research is a very ‘hidden’ and privatised part of existence. This concurs with conclusions reached by Blaxter et al, (1998, 289) ‘For most British academics, the processes involved in learning their research role remain essentially secret or craft knowledge: under researched and little disseminated. If they are fortunate, individual academics may be inculcated into the mysteries of research in the academic career by a more senior and experienced colleague. If not, they will likely just pick up such knowledge as they can, by trial and error, as their career develops.’ Where involvement in research does occur, there is often reference to the short-termism or transactional nature (Baruch & Hall, 2004) of this activity, rather than as a central activity: *“I mean, I’ve got enough things that I’ve got that are kind of you know, developing and coming to fruition some of the things that I said. I was very busy, so things like, you know, developed an MBA course. I’ve got a knowledge transfer partnership research project ... the bid goes in this month”* (Inc 10).

There is not just an absence of the critical influence of research, suggesting staff that never move beyond the role identity of teacher or educationalist, there is evidence of actual conflict between the roles involving teaching and those involving research. Not only is there no overlap in these areas for the new academic, there is evidence of a gulf which can not be bridged: *"It's not a line manager's fault, it's just the fact that I sit and look at my diary and I think well I've this to do, I've got that to do, I've this to do, I've got that to do, and I have identified it (research) as something I should do for September but I'm already looking between September and December and I'm thinking well I've got so little time, so little spare time to fit in to (do research)"* (Inc 39). Research is not seen as integral to the academic experience and supported by structural timetabling, but as something that has to be fitted in 'spare time'. Even where time is allocated, there is evidence from the critical incidents that this time has to be fought for by the individual rather than experienced as an institutional framework: *"So then I actually went higher up to her line manager and again I said that I was angry about it and actually it was resolved that I did get the (time for research) in the end, so it had been worth you know, making a stand and stamping my feet"* (Inc 36). *"(if I) went to my Head of Department with this they would be sort of supportive in principle but would focus on all the difficulties that, because I was a course leader and module leader for a lot of modules and they were focused on the perceived immediate difficulties in terms of who's going to replace you for that module?"* (Inc 20).

The data only reveals one critical influence on career paths suggesting that an integrated experience of managing a range of activities which contribute to an academic identity is an accepted and enjoyable daily existence: *"There's an assumption that if you're doing learning and teaching research, that's all you're doing, you're not going to be doing any subject research and vice versa ... so actually if I want to have a successful career I should really try and focus on research and ditch as much teaching as I can and not do any admin or you know, or do it in as cursory a manner as I can because I've decided to focus on research. And it was the realisation that all of these things should be interrelated and that I don't whether in terms of you know, getting a Professorship or climbing up the academic ladder, I don't know whether it necessarily helps, but in terms of having a fulfilled and*

enjoyable career it's actually much better to have lots of these things going on and to explore the interrelations between them. You know there's different aspects of an academic career" (Inc 21).

Discontinuities, virtual barriers and the internal conversation

What the outline of role identities above demonstrates that the continuous sense of self (Archer, 2000) is not necessarily the same as a continuous academic identity for the early career academic. Each individual has their own sense of themselves and at the point of critical incidents may have an internal conversation which confirms or relocates their role identity. The previous section looked at the role identities and suggested these are not progressive or necessarily overlapping but may be seen and experienced as discrete categories with virtual boundaries or barriers. This stage of the discussion takes a closer look at these barriers which have to be negotiated (or not) by the individual.

There is not one academic career path, but many. There is little evidence of any singular long term visionary route with a series of logical hurdles to be overcome. There is no obvious series of incremental career performances to be achieved. A sense of coherence, but not necessarily continuity (Henkel, 2002) in academic role identity is achieved by negotiating a series of possibly unrelated incidents and opportunities and using the internal conversation to rationalise the interplay between structure and agency at micro points which paradoxically may show interpretations of an individual both wishing to assert their distinctiveness via agency and their embeddedness by aligning with university structures.

It is these points of discontinuity which might be envisaged as 'glass doors' between stages of academic role identity. A simplistic view of structure and agency would state that the doors represented the institutional structures and agency would be the power of the academic to open these doors. The relative strength or weakness of each variable at a particular point would determine whether the door remained open or closed. In the conceptual framework used in this thesis, instead of structure and

agency representing two completely different forms of being, they represent 'two different ways of characterising sets of social processes - one that foregrounds the way in which individual actors shape the world and the other that foregrounds the ways in which the world shapes individual actors' (Ashwin, 2009, 10).

This might mean that from a systemic (or structural) perspective there are no actual barriers to the progression and achievement of a full academic identity. From a relational (or agentic) perspective individuals experience these barriers to varying degrees in relation to their everyday practice. In addition this experience is reflected on, mediated and used to re-form new variations of personal role identity via the internal conversation which legitimises and self-verifies the ongoing everyday behaviour. Earlier studies of the academic socialisation process tended to focus on the structural and formal (Trowler and Knight, 1999), describing the situations and contexts of academic role identity in terms of factors which enabled or constrained agents. The research in this thesis goes some way towards validating the view outlined in the literature chapter that the community of practice model and its inherent socialisation framework is limited in its usefulness as an analytical framework. The following analysis focuses on the inter-relationship between structure and agency at the point of discontinuity, but inevitably the internal conversation is articulated by the individual and therefore leans towards the agentic lens.

The internal conversation is based on individual situated practice and experience. Similar conditions which may be experienced by different individuals, even at apparently similar points in their career, do not lead to similar outcomes. The internal conversation is also based within a particular context and so any self-justification of a career path direction 'involves references to agents' subjective and reflexive formulation of personal projects - in the light of their objective circumstances' (Archer, 2003, 5) at that particular time and in that particular place. It is also obviously not just the present context which influences the early academic, but previous contexts and their interweaving into current experience. The context of these personal internal conversations with reference to role identity will also reflect the internal conversations of others within the sphere of daily interaction.

Focusing on the points between role identities, and the possible emergent identities, enables a closer view of the process, factors, conceptualisations and concerns which influence progressive, stabilising or regressive identity moves. It is noted that the nature of this research, based on interviews with individual early career academics, inevitably foregrounds the individual rather than the institutional. It is possible that, given a different research design, the original data could be re-examined and re-analysed under structural codings such as 'administration' or 'meetings' and agentic codes such as 'control' or 'confidence' to see if a content analysis might show a different view of identity.

The internal conversations are articulated at possible transition points from one role identity to another one which might be coterminous. These role identities are not articulated within the internal conversation as overt labels and categories, but the characteristics associated with the role identities are seen as having different points of behavioural practice within the overall role of an academic. The moves are not permanent and it is perfectly possible for a member of staff to move across this gap or surmount this barrier into a more extended role at one point and then 'retreat' later on. All the internal conversations reflect a combination of rational, realist thought with an emotional element which results in a practical, often behavioural, decision. The internal conversations show the way in which the individual chooses their own role identity differently at different points, dependent on their actual experience.

The 'silent' conversation?

Another way of looking at this internal conversation, which has not been investigated in detail, is to look at what 'agents' are **not** saying (Archer, 2003). In this focused analysis of critical incidents related to influences on particular career paths underpinning particular role identities, the absences could be seen as relating to the people and structures that might enable glass doors to be opened or gaps to be traversed or barriers to be overcome. The identifiable absences in the critical incidents, not just as the subject of these incidents or as significant influences, but almost without mention at all are: the disciplinary community, critical friends, mentors, line managers, particular conferences, getting published and being a scholar. These

absences serve to emphasise the lack of support from the university system (structure) and the loneliness of the academic journey (agency).

What this research suggests is that the context of a post-1992 university does challenge a previous whole-sector view of academic identity and that a closer focus on the particular influences contributing to differential role identities suggests that academic identity is more institutionally specific than was previously implied.

The post-1992 'academic identity' in context

One aspect that has not emerged in these views of early career academics is the articulated intrusion of an economic reality which is creating a new academic (Baruch & Hall, 2004). The literature survey seemed to show a supercomplex (Barnett, 2000a) world of continual conflicts, constraints and conjunctures, but the actual world of the new academic is much smaller and seemingly less open to opportunity in these early years than that picture suggested. Although the research was not set up to investigate views of the economic framework of the university sector, the centrality of a market-driven institution did not emerge in the focus of the incidents themselves, the references to the university backdrop or the metaphorical language employed by the participants. What was congruent with the possible 'supercomplex' world was the isolation, individualism and possible anomie of these new academics as distinct from the previously cited positive notion of individual academic freedom (Harris, 2005; Henkel, 2000; Rowland, 2002; Tierney, 2001).

Another aspect of the larger context of university life which did not emerge with any clarity was the increase of inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary activity (Henkel, 2002) although the emphasis on the teaching environment does suggest that the influence of traditional discipline areas is not strong in this particular institution.

A further aspect of the changing context of academic existence suggested by commentators which is partially validated by this research is the move towards performativity in the sector, or the 'visualisation of work' (Henkel, 2002) where 'what counts is less what individuals know and more what individuals can do' (Barnett,

2000b, 255). It could be argued that the lack of influence of disciplinary discussion or personal increased scholarship and the centrality of teaching performance is a reflection of this sectoral direction in general and the direction of the post-1992 universities in particular. The fact that there were no critical incidents for the early academics which reflected the importance of the academic subject discipline, personal reading or writing could be said to support Barnett's view. However, it is also noted that none of the critical incidents were actually based around the measurement of teaching, or the academic standards of achievement of the students or the pressures of retention targets. There was some mention of the general pressures of teaching in relation to finding space for any other activity and the size of student groups. However, the central relationship between the early academic and the students is still not generally seen as an economic one, although there is some reference to a changing culture of students, but as a learning and teaching relationship. Suggestion that it is the way in which performance is being measured in terms of efficiency, effectiveness or accountability (Akerlind, 2005; Jauhianen et al., 2009; Malcolm & Zukacs, 2009) does not surface in this study. Nor has the idea of a university academic as being a service provider (Mann, 2008) emerged at the level of the individual teacher in higher education, even in this post-1992 university with a widening participation agenda. While these ideas may have some validity at the management or conceptual level or for those who have a longer time frame, this has not yet translated wholesale into the higher education daily teaching existence of new academics.

Linked to this idea of the increasing economic influence was a general agreement in the literature about the predominance of external frameworks as influencing the academic identity. However, it does not appear that the early academic is significantly influenced by the outside world, but operates within a fairly restricted environment and, in agreement with Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006, is more likely to be influenced by internal factors.

One of the gaps that was identified in the literature discussion of the context of higher education was the idea of differential institutional identities within the sector. This idea of distinctive academic identities which are institutionally situated and linked to the types of institution in which the academic is employed, rather than the singular

notion of 'an academic identity' is a central finding which seems to be validated and deserves further investigation.

As well as clarifying the need for further research to investigate the 'academic identity' within different parts of the university sector, it has also become clear that more work needs to be done on the idea of different identities at different stages of the academic career and the points at which different aspects of the academic role identities are acquired or not. Context and access to particular influences and opportunities are seen as more significant than an abstract sector-wide 'academic identity' or even the concept of multiple identities has previously suggested. Investigation of the role of academic staff appointed for their vocational expertise from a different area outside academia (Baruch & Hall, 2004) appears to be a particularly fruitful area for the investigation of further aspects of academic identity.

The idea that both teaching and research are automatically a part of the academic identity has been particularly challenged by this research which shows that for many of those in the post-1992 university, the move to take part in any research is a real 'step change' and is not an automatic part of an academic identity continuum. This is not just a question of the differential time it might take to achieve what is seen from the research as a full academic identity, but the distancing or deliberate rejection of this part of the identity by many who are employed as lecturers by the university, supporting Seymour's acknowledged discomfort with the notion of being an 'academic' (2006).

This research showed no evidence of a portfolio career being developed in the first five years of an academic career as suggested by some theorists (Baruch & Hall, 2004; Kolsaker, 2008). However, the fact that recent full time academic employees of the university maintained a parallel view of themselves incorporating their previous identity as social workers or nurses, suggests that this is a possible direction of academic identity which may happen more in the future, with any increase in part time or temporary contracts, supporting McNay's view (2005b) of increasingly diversified roles.

In the changing immediate context of academic identity in a post-1992 institution, the strength of the discipline or subject identity does seem to be reducing as a predominant influence. This research adds to those more recent studies (Clegg, 2008; Lomas & Lygo-Baker, 2006) which seem to show that subject identity is only one influence on a total identity and endorses the idea that for the early academic who does not have a responsibility for or interest in research, the discipline does not appear as a significant influence. It might be argued that the disciplinary existence of an academic is so ingrained that it is unlikely to appear as part of any critical incident. However, the fact that within seventeen academics and fifty-three incidents, there was not one mention of subject discussions, networks or individual scholarship, suggests that a changing relationship to the discipline in the post-1992 institutions may be worth investigating further. Again, it is not a sector-wide picture of a general changing relationship of an academic to their subject which is emerging, but something much more nuanced and contextualised. Conclusions can not be drawn from this research about the increasing fragmentation of knowledge within disciplines (Beck & Young, 2005) which is contributing to this lack of primary identification with a subject, but, within this post-1992 university, the mention of several instances of discomfort when the early academic is appointed on the basis of a certain expertise but asked to teach a subject outside this suggests that there may be some evidence of this continual knowledge specialisation and fragmentation.

The strength of the teaching identity and the multiplicity of influences on the early academic in terms of the students, the teaching environment, any professional development activity, organisational systems, pedagogical developments and the growing influence of technology supports Lea and Steirer's view (2009) that within the academic identity, 'teaching' itself is actually a more plural activity than has previously been suggested.

The early academic, by definition, has no other institutional context to compare him or herself with. Therefore the possible tensions identified in the contextual literature with increasing administrative roles (McNay, 2005) or with a changing student consumer ideology (James, 2000; McWilliam, 2004) were not identified in any major way and would require a different longitudinal study and revisiting of particular

academics at various stages in their career. For the same reason changing notions of the academic as losing professional autonomy over time were also not evident.

What has become obvious is the very individualised experience of these early academics. This is not the pre-1992 experience of the individual career path (Henkel, 2000; Tierney, 2001), where the individual establishes their own academic reputation, but rather the individual teaching experience and the isolation of the classroom. This supports the idea of more recent research (Barlow & Antoniou, 2007; Jauhianen et al, 2009) that what was generally accepted as academic freedom may be, in particular contexts, academic loneliness. The evidence also supports Kolsaker's notion of the development of 'autonomous niches' (2008, 513), but with the suggestion that these are not necessarily positive choices, but necessities of protection of the individual as in the reported metaphor of the 'professional bubble'.

The general conclusion by newer research in this field that unitary notions of academic identity are fragmenting seems to be validated. The research in this post-1992 institution suggests that early academics find it difficult to develop or hold multiple identities and that any professional identity is very contextually bound by day to day experience. The insights into the lived complexity of these new academics, focusing on the self reporting of critical incidents, are of a relatively small world, where the major influence is the relationship with students and the teaching experience. What this thesis seemed to show is that there is, in fact, a reluctance by many of these early academics to develop multiple identities because of the difficulty of practically maintaining multiple roles, the lack of any widespread perception of the vision of such a broader identity and the absence of the support necessary to attain it which combine to produce a limited and limiting self view.

It is this restricted view and the implications for management, staff and educational development and future research which will be revisited in Chapter 6: Conclusions.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis has attempted to investigate the influences on new academics in a particular post-1992 university which affected their career path direction. In actuality, the thesis has begun to explore not only what the influences actually were, but the ways in which these influences modified the role identities of these early career academics.

This chapter briefly reflects on the overall research design, confirms an overview of the findings and suggests possible implications for university management and further research. It is accepted that this is small scale research (Knight, 2002b) in a single institution and that replicated research in another institution might yield a different pattern with different implications. It is likely that these findings will have more resonances in other post-1992, student-focused institutions than in pre-1992, research-focused institutions.

Reflections on methodology

The research design of this thesis was based on a pragmatic and realist framework, focused on the individual and based on articulation of critical incidents, using an external interviewer. The data were analysed using a version of grounded theory and discussed through a structure and agency framework (Archer, 2000; 2003), foregrounding the 'internal conversation'.

It is clear that the chosen sample of interviewees were a distinct group of seventeen early academics, based on those for whom teaching is their main professional focus and who volunteered to take part in this research. Had these early academics been post-doctoral researchers, it is very likely that the findings regarding influences and role identities would have been somewhat different. Based on fifty-three critical incidents, the findings had an internal consistency. It therefore seems likely that these findings would have been closely replicated had the sample been larger, so the actual size of the sample is probably justified. Using a maximum of five years of professional employment as a parameter for the chosen group also seems to have yielded reported significant 'critical incidents' without any difficulty for the participants.

The one interview which arrived in the sample by accident – that is, the interviewee was a recent graduate of the PG Cert, but not within the first 5 years of their employ in the university – showed a completely different picture of a previous ‘golden age’ and was discarded.

It might be argued, that since it is suggested that the individual early academic has an evidentially restricted community, it might have been useful to use ‘communities of practice’ (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) as a theoretical framework.

However, because the research question was working from the individual, looking at the range of influences on the individual, rather than the communities of which they said they were a part, this was not appropriate. The framework was not one of socialisation into a given community, but individual interaction and negotiation. Had the research begun from an assumed academic ‘community’, the essential influence of students might have been missed, as the new academic might not have seen students as one of their ‘communities’ in any reflection or discussion.

The use of the ‘critical incident’ technique as an interviewing focus and the minimalist interview structure also seem to have yielded appropriate data in terms of content and depth. The analysis showed a justification in looking at the actual influences rather than asking questions about academic identity. A possible methodological weakness might be seen in the lack of evidence of more direct links from each critical incident to a particular career path. This could have been an unintended consequence of too close an association with the articulation of critical incidents during the PG Cert and the participants were therefore recounting critical incidents *per se* rather than with specific relation to their career path. If this research were to be replicated with a further cohort of interviewees, the orientation of critical incidents to a career path might be stressed in stronger terms prior to interview than was done in this research. The basis of the data in reported practice rather than perceptions of identity has enabled conclusions to be drawn which relate to university practice. The focusing on the lived experience of role identity as influenced in its on-going formation through individual critical incidents and the internal conversation enabled tensions and interplay of structure and agency to be seen in a larger picture of early career academics.

My personal 'distance travelled' since embarking on this research has confirmed my perspective on the centrality of individuals to any institutional direction or directive (Jazvac-Martek, 2009). As a senior manager, the research has strengthened my original position that management initiatives claiming to support early career academics are unlikely to succeed without a closer analysis of by what and whom these new participants in the university are influenced. In an era of proliferating research paradigms (Wright & Lather, 2006), I remain a pragmatist and a realist with limited critical leanings. In a practical world of targets and benchmarks, I am even more convinced of the importance of linking institutional policy and institutional research.

Reflections on Findings

The overall findings of this research, within the given epistemological position, have confirmed the centrality of practice with the articulation of actual events in the early academic experience. By providing a micro-analysis of the early academic experience in a particular institution, it suggests that Blaxter, Hughes and Tight's view (1998, 281) of academic work as having 'five overlapping roles: the commonplace triumvirate of teaching, research and managing, plus writing and networking' was a view of an academic at a particular point in their career in a particular kind of institution. As such, this research does not provide a completely new point but claims a deeper understanding of one part of a previously outlined overview (Cousin, 2007).

The research confirms the increased fragmentation of a higher education academic identity across the sector, contextualised by institution. It also seems important to note that a previous professional identity for members of staff who have been appointed for their vocational expertise may produce a different view of academic identity from that previously identified by research based on academics whose careers have been spent solely in a university setting.

This view of individual practice confirms that 'our singular solutions were what secured our strict identities as unique persons' (Archer, 2000, 318). The analytical overview of this practice emphasised the integration of activity and structure, but

within the specificity of a limited context (Lave & Wenger, 1991). If the individual world view is limited by the restriction of context, then there is a parallel restriction on the view of potential agency and possible practice. For many of these early academics, the world is the lecture hall, the activity is teaching and the agent is the teacher relating to students. The research suggests that the point of investigation is not just in the centrality of practice, but in the inter-relationship and interdependencies *between* the individual and the social (Wenger, 1998) or *between* structure and agency (Archer, 2003; Ashwin, 2009). In the early part of an academic career, this interaction between the individual and any potential wider academic community is significantly limited.

The conclusions of the research identified five main influences, linked to three role identities: the teacher; the educationalist and the academic. The first two are closer with possible overlapping; the third is very distinct and suggests a step change in self-view and practice. The early academics in this research are only part of a 'community of practice' in a very limited way. Their interaction is tangential and when interaction with others does become central it is about operational and systematic matters, rather than about disciplinary or research networks.

Blackmore, in reiterating Lave and Wenger's views on situated learning, states that 'groups develop shared ways of being, of thinking and doing, and the joining of such a group requires a progressive assimilation of those ways' (2007b, 236). This thesis is not based on these theoretical ideas of socialisation and assimilation. However, it is recognised that it is not possible to 'assimilate' in the sense of moving towards a wider role identity, if there is no such group to belong to, or if there is no such awareness of such a group or if there is a deliberate choice not to identify with such a group. For the early academic in this institution the 'shared ways of doing' are shared ways of doing *teaching*. If learning is about interplay, the evidence is that there is limited interplay between the practice (agency) of being a teacher in higher education and the context (structure) of being an academic in a university. The word 'interplay' suggests active engagement with the world, but in several cases this 'interplay' is significantly restricted by self view and self choice.

New academics in the context of this research do not participate in any wider world of the 'academic', because they do not enter that community. In some cases even where they recognise the community they do not want to enter it because, far from being a place which opens opportunities, it is in addition to or even in conflict with their current existence. It is a separate world. The reflected lens of the everyday teacher / student experience maintains the smallness of the world and the barriers around that experience. It is not that early academics don't 'know' about research but they are not active in communities in which research discussion and practice are a daily part of their identity.

If role identity is about the 'interplay of participation and reification' (Wenger, 1998), then it is about a process of becoming and constant change and development. What seems to be important is the way in which this 'becoming' is facilitated, or not facilitated, by the individual and the institution. Role identities are encouraged by whatever practice is engaged with and, by definition, not engaged with. If it is desirable that new academics should eventually participate in the widest possible definition of an academic identity, then the crossing of virtual boundaries which seem to exist should be positively enabled.

Where existing and potential role identities and their underpinning influences have been identified, it is the lack of overlap between them that is important. The community of the 'teacher' is with the students. It is relatively easy to cross to the 'educationalist', because the common thread is concern for the student. It is relatively difficult to cross into the role identity of the 'academic' and the world of research where there are no structured links to support the early academic. The lack of support to develop an academic career has been mentioned previously in the literature, but this absence seems to be particularly significant where the individual concerned has no personal history of research at doctoral level, which is more common in a post-1992 university.

The analysis of the 'internal conversation' between role identities has revealed articulated aspects of the individual early career academic which deserve to be engaged with and possibly challenged. These positions of survival and effectiveness in context, or entrenchment and retrenchment (depending on the viewing lens),

require recognition and brokering from both sides of the divide, rather than a total reliance on the individual to identify and negotiate hidden trajectories. This requires more deliberate visual modelling of successful multi-identities, which are currently not manifest to the early career academic rather than aspects of identities which seem invisible at best or conflicting at worst. The practical negotiation of tensions in role identities should be facilitated, providing the support to counter the evidenced isolation. Timetabled, integrated, networked links to more established staff who have managed to negotiate an academic existence which balances teaching and research, which provides experience to support and scaffold the early academic in any tentative forays into research in progress would enable a bridging across the evidenced gap between 'educationalist' and 'academic'.

Implications for management

The research is undoubtedly small-scale and therefore any attempt at extrapolating from these findings and the following management recommendations for change should be treated with caution outside the situation in which they have been evidenced. However, if issues of practice and identity are inseparable (Archer, 2000; Archer, 2008b; Becher & Trowler, 2001; Henkel, 2005; Trowler & Knight, 1999; Wenger, 1998) then there is a logic in suggesting that the changing of some ways of practice (as a management responsibility) might have some impact on the negotiation of academic role-identity (as an individual responsibility) by facilitating the interplay between institutional structure and individual agency in terms of career paths and engaging with the internal conversations of new academics. Identification of the importance of interplay still does not provide any predictive powers for the success of a management policy. The success of creating particular policies or structures is ultimately reliant on a constant interaction of contextualised experience between the institution and the individual.

In order to make some practical recommendations it is necessary to take a wider view of the individual and their individual role-identity by looking at the place of the early career academic in the institution and suggest a management role in structuring university communities and networks particularly for the new academic in the first few years of their career. The university has to create transparent and overlapping communities which are identified by the new academic as groupings to which they

wish to contribute, rather than ones which are in conflict with their current role identity.

In essence, as has been suggested by others (Baruch & Hall, 2004; Beauchamp, 2009; Beck & Young, 2005; Jauhianen et al., 2009; Lea & Stierer, 2009; Malcolm & Zukas, 2009; Rice, 1986), the definition of 'the academic' has to be extended in order to acknowledge the wide range of current practice across the role identity of 'academic as teacher' 'academic as educationalist' and 'academic as researcher'. The difference in emphasis in this research is to make links *between* these practices in a way which facilitates the choices of career path of the new academic, especially in a student-focused institution. The pressures on university strategy, structure and development have changed and the development of the academic has not kept pace.

The framework of this research does not allow for a detailed commentary on the human resource function or the management structures of the university. The recommendations below are in the nature of general directions to be explored. In 1995 Arthur et al. introduced the idea of an 'intelligent career' based on three perspectives of 'knowing why, knowing how, and knowing whom' (Baruch & Hall, 2004, 248). I would like to use these as convenient shorthand for the recommendations below and to suggest that 'knowing why' needs to encompass 'knowing what'.

Knowing why (and knowing what)

'Knowing why' involves the increased transparency of structures and systems to provide the new academic with answers to: What is an 'academic' in the context of this institution? What does the institution expect of me – now, next year, over the next few years? Why would I be expected to engage in ways other than I am at the moment? The current systems have the advantage of apparent freedom for individuals, but the disadvantages are in the evidenced isolation for the individual academic, confusion of direction and possible under-utilisation of talent for the institution. The institution needs to develop models of academic multi-identities in line with its corporate framework and strategic plan, recognising that the actuality for

each individual is specific to their own situation, reflecting the 'many ways of being an academic' (Churchman, 2007,14).

Another completely different way of viewing the conclusions of these findings, which can not be fully developed here, is to recognise the impossibility of every academic pursuing all aspects of the role traditionally regarded as contributing to an academic identity and to seek to develop more fully the idea of a more bounded identity – such as 'teacher in higher education' - with the appropriate reward structure and opportunities for career progression.

The early career academic should be supported to become more aware of the career paths, options, roles and routes available, without the apparent expectation that it is entirely an individual responsibility to uncover the tacit knowledge locked in the system. This is about the 'sociocultural organization of space into places of activity and the circulation of knowledgeable skill' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, 56).

Knowing whom

'Knowing whom' is about providing the early career academic with answers to: If those are the expectations and possible career paths open to me, then who is my community? Where are my networks? Who do I talk to and engage with? This is about providing frameworks for developing structured networking within the institution post the PG Cert and providing space for disciplinary and inter-disciplinary debate, which does not initially commit the new academic to additional workload, but opens up the possibilities.

Since there was almost a complete absence of line managers as significant influences on the career of new academics in this research, it is suggested that this current management structure does not fulfil this supported role and that a more flexible system of guidance, such as academic peer mentors is considered, although this is outside the scope of this research.

Knowing how

'Knowing how' is about supporting new academics with practical answers to questions such as: What are the actual steps I have to take? How do I get there? The

management responsibility here is to make career progression steps more transparent, particularly for those for whom teaching is their dominant activity. If research activity is deemed to be influential for career progression, then this should be articulated in practical guidelines and not assumed by those who progressed in other kinds of institutions in previous eras. Whilst not wishing to produce an ever-more restricted daily existence or to force all academics down an identical path, it does seem that on going guidance and support in career paths would expand the limited view of role identity articulated in this thesis.

At present, apart from the PG Cert, there is no structure to the academic development, no scaffolding of steps towards a fuller academic 'becoming'. As one interviewee remarked, "*maybe reflecting back upon it was that maybe, you know, part of the PG Cert Ed could have been for an ongoing support system*" (Inc 40). The 'influences' in the early years have no pattern of support from the institution. New academics need to understand what is possible and how to become a part of it, or, at least, how to keep their options open.

In my own professional area of educational and academic development the findings of this thesis give weight to the conclusions of others working in this area that as educational developers we need to move from a 'historical position as prescriptive, interventionist and focused principally on academics as teachers, ... to something more ... grounded in the totality of lecturers' lived professional practice' (Lea & Stierer, 2009, 426). It appears that as educational developers should be taking a longer term strategic perspective and both working more closely with human resource managers and line managers to support a continuing development institutional programme, but also working with individuals and departments to support a more open structuring of career paths and role-identities for new academics who are predominantly teachers. This will involve promoting a wider view of what is meant by academic practice as universities become more diverse organisations.

Future Research

It seems that there are three directions in which further research could be taken in relation to the existing literature which might come directly out of this research.

Firstly, the focus for further investigation into the continuing fragmentation of the academic identity and the notion of contextualised academic identities across academia. In particular, to investigate further the difference between the pre- and post-1992 universities.

Secondly, from the literature there also appears to be an area for further study to look at any differences in role identity between those early academics appointed mainly as 'researchers' and those appointed mainly as 'lecturers', *within* the same institution.

Thirdly, the area which is still under-developed is in the connections and mediations, or lack of them, *between* the everyday practices of the academic and the links to emerging and established role identities and the differential negotiation of the separate role identities within each individual over time.

Universities are constantly working out their developing corporate identities. In this particular institution, it is beginning to work out what it means in terms of being a 'widening participation' university with a focus on student recruitment, retention, progression, employability and knowledge transfer. What it has not yet worked out is, what is the role of an academic in this environment and hence, what support and development do they need?

Appendices

Appendix 1: 1st email: to potential participants (n=145)

Strap line: Once upon a time Please respond

Dear Colleague

Once upon a time you studied for a Post Graduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Wolverhampton.

I would like to conduct some research into the 'journeys' of early academics at the University of Wolverhampton, looking at the critical incidents which have framed your experiences and your possible 'career paths' in the last 1-5 years. It is hoped that this research will enable the University to improve the support we give to early academics.

I would very much like your help in this research by **completing the introductory attached on-line anonymous questionnaire.**

This asks 4 questions only:

1. What was your job title when you were appointed? (Please give year)
- what were your major responsibilities then?
2. What is your job title now ?
- what are your major responsibilities now?
3. **What (for you, personally) is the difference?**
- *4. Would you be prepared to be interviewed individually about the kinds of 'critical incidents' which have influenced your 'career path' at this university?

What we are interested in are any kinds of 'incident' which may have had an effect on your professional career – be it positive or negative, academic or personal, practical or theoretical, disciplinary or institutional, student or colleague–orientated, individual or team based.

[The Interview. This will be conducted by a 'neutral' interviewer (i.e. not myself) about the kinds of incidents which have influenced your 'career path' at the university. The interview should last a maximum of one hour and will be at a time and venue to suit you. The data collected via these interviews will be transcribed and anonymised (i.e. all references which would identify the individuals will be removed) by the professional interviewer.]*

I very much hope you will agree to take part in this.

I would be grateful if you would complete the attached questionnaire as soon as is convenient. (whether you wish to be interviewed or not)

My thanks in anticipation
Helen Gale

Appendix 2: 2nd email: to those agreeing to be interviewed

Strap line: Once upon a time - dates for interview?

A study of 'critical incidents' and their influence upon early career academics

Dear Colleague

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in the above research. It is hoped that this research will enable the University to improve the support we give to early academics.

I would now like to organise an interview with you at a time and place to suit your convenience. The interview should last about one hour.

Before I meet you I would like you to think of 3 'critical incidents' which, in your opinion, have influenced your 'career path' in the first few years of your employment at the University of Wolverhampton. You are not expected to provide any theoretical underpinning, but to tell 3 stories which are important to you.

We are interested in any kind of 'incident' which may have had an effect on your professional career – be it positive or negative, academic or personal, practical or theoretical, disciplinary or institutional, student or colleague–orientated, individual or team based.

The following questions will be asked for each incident:

- Can you describe the (first / second / third) incident?
 - Sub questions if required for clarification: e.g. when did this occur?
- Can you say why this was 'critical' to you in your professional career in this institution?
 - Sub question if required: e.g. what was the result of this incident? What changed, if anything?

The data collected via these interviews will be transcribed and anonymised (i.e. all references which would identify the individuals will be removed).

Please indicate below 2 or 3 dates and venues when you could be available. (I will agree a private interview space with you.)

1. Date: Time: Preferred campus:
2. Date: Time: Preferred campus:
3. Date: Time: Preferred campus:

My thanks in anticipation
(Interviewer)

Appendix 3: Profile of participants

No of interviewee	Male / female	School / discipline
Interviewee 1	F	Business
Interviewee 2	F	Law
Interviewee 3	M	Social work
Interviewee 4	M	Science
Interviewee 5	F	Languages
Interviewee 6	F	Social work
Interviewee 7	M	Computing
Interviewee 8	M	Drama
Interviewee 9	F	Social work
Interviewee 10	F	Sport
Interviewee 11	F	Health
Interviewee 12	F	Art & Design
Interviewee 13	F	Education
Interviewee 14	M	Health
Interviewee 15	F	Health
Interviewee 16	M	Tourism
Interviewee 17	F	Art & Design
Interviewee 18	M	Music

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