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Title: **Emerging academic identities through involvement in teacher development programmes. A case study involving six higher education institutions across Wales.**

Emerging academic identities through involvement in teacher development programmes. A case study involving six higher education institutions across Wales.

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Abstract

The recent Browne Report (2010) has stressed the importance of professionalising teaching in higher education to raise quality and standards across the sector. Higher education institutions design and deliver their own teacher development programmes which are aligned with institutional strategic goals and there is diversity in the way they are structured and delivered within the UK. Such development programmes often occur during the early stages of an academics' career during their probationary period where their identity is being shaped. Despite the increasing attention given to such programmes and their potential to influence identity, there is a paucity of empirical research in the UK. Within Wales, as with the other home countries there has been ongoing review of HE policy to be more responsive to student choice and demand.

This study explores the attitudes and experiences of colleagues involved in a postgraduate teaching awards across six higher education institutions within Wales. Questionnaires (n=38 responses) and follow-up interviews were used with 4 course directors and 33 colleagues involved at various stages of their awards to gain insights into their views on the course and the perceived impact on their academic identity. Six institutions were involved, three being 'pre-'92 and three 'post '92. The data indicate that colleagues felt that it was professionally useful and had developed their reflective practice and teaching skills.. Whilst most agreed that the award would be valued by colleagues within their respective institutions, some expressed a doubt that it would. This reservation increased in line with the length of time colleagues had been at their respective institutions. However, this picture is varied and influenced partly by institutional priorities and moreso by disciplinary area. For most colleagues, there was a positive impact on identity with the award providing a rite of passage to becoming a teacher, particularly for those who had trained and practised in areas outside education. A common feature in responses was the impact that the award had provided in developing perceived levels of self-confidence to be able to work with

students and some colleagues reported that they felt there had been a shift in their conceptions of teaching to being more student-centred and ability to be self-critical.

Keywords: Academic Identity, teacher development, higher education

Introduction

Whilst In most developed economies, and widely in Europe, teachers in higher education are not required to hold accredited teaching qualifications (Parsons, Hughes and Walsh, 2010). Elsewhere in education, including non-HE areas of post-compulsory education, all teaching staff are required to be qualified (or qualifying). However, this situation is changing and there has been growing interest in encouraging and delivering teaching development strategies, especially since the 2003 English Higher Education White Paper (DfES, 2003). There have been a variety of approaches established across the UK which, in part, reflects the different policy contexts across the four nations, the origins of different parts of the sector and independent pedagogic traditions associated with institutions (Gibbs, Habeshaw and Yorke, 2000). Public policy in the UK has shaped these developments including the development of the HEA in 2004 which is focussed on enhancing learning and teaching in HE. There have been a series of cross-institutional and partnership arrangements including the HEFCE-funded Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) programme (England and Northern Ireland) 2005-2010, the Scottish Quality Enhancement Themes (2003-present), Wales' Future Directions initiative (2009-present) and the HEA's continuing UK-wide support. With institutions likely to be facing more informed choices by applicants, teaching quality emerges as an even more important factor for many institutions. Consequently, the quality and effectiveness of their teacher development programmes is set to receive more attention in institutions' strategic responses to managing these and other challenges.

Postgraduate teaching awards often happen at the start of an academics' career where staff are working with a wider variety of career choices in the creation of their new identities. Identity formation is, as Lawler (2008) suggests, a fluid process of co construction in a variety of social situations. The early stages of an academics' career within university are important and represent a period in which their identity can be contoured. Despite the probationary period being such an important time, and lasting

up to a maximum of four years, there is a surprising paucity of research in this area. Smith (2010) in a study using interviews with 23 colleagues from 11 UK universities found that, for some, the transition to academic life is unremarkable, however, for others, “this appears to be a more troublesome time and a good deal of dissonance is encountered: an academic identity is hard fought and felt to be forged in difficult circumstances.” (p.577).

Review of literature

The most recent policy review for HE (BIS, 2011), set out a programme of further reforms and a vision for building a world-class HE sector. Central to the current reforms is the principle that providers have the obligation to be more responsive to student choice and demand, and should be free to respond to those needs. The interest in teaching quality, its improvement through staff development and the understanding of its effectiveness, is consequently not new, however, it could be argued that undergraduate education in the UK is now, more than ever, regarded as a commodity within a competitive domestic market. Participants’ choices are seen increasingly as life investment decisions related to employment prospects (Chalmers, Lee and Walker, 2008).

Within the UK there has been rising activity in promoting and delivering teaching development strategies especially since 2003. D’Andrea and Gosling, (2005); Stes, Min-Leliveld, Gijbels. and Petegem, (2010) have noted that the emergence of discourse around learning and teaching is one of the more remarkable phenomena within higher education during the last decade. In some institutions, teaching development approaches have been mandatory for newly appointed academics, or during their early career, but compulsion has not been a feature of the development of established staff. The qualification pathway for new academic staff is becoming more a feature of institutional strategies. (Parsons, Hill, Holland and Willis, 2012).

Butcher and Stoncel (2012) used an institutional case study approach to explore the nature and extent of the impact of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) on teachers appointed for their professional expertise. Data were collected

in four iterative stages to investigate perceptions of graduates from the course (2006-2009), as well as current participants, midway through their programme. The research involved mixed methods (document collection, survey, semi-structured interviews and a focus group). Analysis revealed that teachers were willing to adopt new approaches to teaching, planning and assessment. A shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches (Prosser, Rickinson, Bence, Hanbury, and Malgorzata, 2006) was apparent, together with a shift in 'professional identity'. In particular, the study confirmed the benefits of interdisciplinary discourse. The same study also showed impacts beyond teachers' attitudes and conceptions, on the student experience and on participants' careers, and these were also discernible at departmental levels. Beyond this, however, few studies in the UK or elsewhere seem to distinguish between programmes (or qualifications) that are wholly centred on new or young entrants, or make provision in the analysis for distinguishing effects on older or newer entrants (e.g. where career length is a determinant variable).

Within many UK institutions there are specific research pressures on some staff who also have teaching and managerial/administrative responsibilities. These can create tension between what academics perceive as their professional identity and that prescribed by their university. (Billot, 2010). Traditionally, academic staff have comprised a 'community of scholars' (Harris, 2005, p. 424) who identified more with their discipline than their institution. However, as commercial interests have increased within the higher education sector, the boundary between academic and institutional identity is becoming complicated. Clegg (2008) suggests that Identity is understood not as a fixed property, but as part of the lived complexity of a person's project and their ways of being in those sites which are constituted as being part of the academic.

Lucas and Turner (2007) completed a review of nine Teaching and Learning programmes being run in universities in the UK and Canada in order to find out the extent to which they directly address linking research and teaching. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with a small group of early career academics from a variety of disciplines at the three case study institutions to explore their existing conceptions of the link between teaching and research and strategies for the integration of teaching and research. Finally, running workshops with 10-15 early

career academic staff at each of the three institutions to pilot and evaluate the materials, activities, and examples of best practice. Experiences on Teaching and Learning Programmes: mixed positive and negative responses on these programmes were reported, in keeping with other research studies (Kahn *et al.*, 2006; Prosser *et al.*, 2006).

Prebble *et al.*, (2004) found no evidence that university teaching staff who had taken a programme that incorporated training in reflective practice were able to make decisions on the basis of reflection as opposed to convention, even if some programmes resulted in promising outcomes. In contrast to some evidence about effective interventions, for example, the findings of Prebble *et al.* (2004), suggest that: 'short training courses tend to have limited impact on changing teaching behaviour' (p. 29). Cilliers and Herman (2010) been shown here to have a substantial and lasting influence on teaching practice.

Donnelly (2008) used qualitative questionnaires with 25 successful graduates of a Postgraduate Certificate Third-Level Learning and Teaching programme with teachers in a variety of higher education institutions around Ireland to explore the self-perception of change in teaching approaches by lecturers. All indicated that change had been made in their teaching approaches, and a number of alterations had taken place. The most significant changes identified were increased reflection on current teaching approaches, the introduction of new teaching strategies, increased focus on the design and delivery of classes, more work taking place on course teams, an increase in confidence about learning and teaching and a more student-centred approach towards teaching.

Smith (2010) used a longitudinal approach by gathering stories from probationary lecturers to investigate how academic identities come to be formed. She found that overarching trajectories through the probationary period emerged from the data. For some, the transition to academic life is unremarkable, and identity is untroubled. For others, this appears to be a more troublesome time and a good deal of dissonance is encountered: an academic identity is hard fought and felt to be forged in difficult circumstances. The 'underlying game' of UK higher education may thus be

experienced as confounding and inhospitable. Attention to this 'game' and explaining the 'rules' may well be beneficial to new colleagues, smoothing a sometimes difficult journey.

This work builds on earlier research by Donnelly (2008); (Knight, 2006); Prosser *et al.*, (2006) and Smith (2010). There is a relative paucity of published research in higher education into the experiences of new lecturing staff and, in particular, their engagement with PGCHes. Bangor University is involved in a unique collaboration with four other institutions across Wales in delivering and organising the PGCertHE which is now also run in parallel through the medium of Welsh. The principal aim of this project is to investigate changing identities amongst practitioners involved at various stages of a PGCertHE in six universities across Wales. The study focuses on the changes in teaching approaches for these individuals and examines the influence of postgraduate teaching awards and context on identity formation and reformation.

Method

Short questionnaires with follow-up individual (course coordinators) and focus group interviews were used as the main source of data collection. Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Task Group in Education at Bangor University to carry out the research. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data have been processed initially using thematic analysis for the purposes of this initial report and will be analysed more thoroughly at a later date.

Data was collected using interviews with Course Directors and questionnaires (see attachment) and follow-up interviews with colleagues at various stages of the award

- 1) Just embarking/embarked on the scheme ('Starters')
- 2) About to complete/ recently finished and, ('Completers')
- 3) Completed at least two years ago. ('Completed > 2years')

Interviews were semi-structured (see attached interview schedule) and conversations focussed on the key issues relating to the aims and objectives of the research namely:

- Identifying practitioners' role and recent biography
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- Attitudes towards support they have received/did receive for those completed.
- Perceptions of award structure and content.
- How being involved in the award has affected their teaching.
- The extent to which the award has influenced them as a reflective practitioner in higher education.
- Whether being involved in the award has changed their perspectives on learning and teaching in higher education.
- The impact of the award on their identity.

For the purposes of this report, the results from Likert scales used within part of the questionnaire have been tallied and reported. The responses to open-ended questions within the questionnaires and responses to interview questions have been summarised.

Results derived from initial analysis of questionnaire data

Responses from new starters (n=9)

Males: 4 Females: 6

Roles: 8 full-time staff, 1 Part-time, 1 postgraduate

Preferred language: 7 English, 2 Welsh, One Mandarin

<i>(Please tick <u>one</u> box only in each row)</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I expect this PGC course to be/this course has proved to be professionally useful to me and will help/has helped my career	6	3	1		
I expect that my students will benefit as a result of my enrolment/completion on this PGC course	5	5			
My involvement in the course will be/is/was recognised as valuable by colleagues and my institution	2	6	2		
Involvement in the course will/has changed my conceptions of teaching	3	5	2		
The course will/has developed me as an academic practitioner	4	4	2		

How do you anticipate involvement in the course will affect you as an academic?

Summary of responses:

- I will be more reflective and take quality assurance more seriously
- It will make me a better teacher, consider students as whole people and be more caring
- I will value sharing learning outcomes with students
- Course has already made me much more aware. I plan more carefully
- A shift towards learning from teaching and responsive to needs of a wide range of students
- Allows us to be more systematic
- I revise my lectures based on feedback from students
- Reinforced previous knowledge and given me new ideas to put into practice.
- Enabled me to explore new methods of teaching and work with new colleagues.
- The university seem more confident in giving me teaching opportunities.

How will the course influence your conceptions of teaching?

Summary of responses:

- I see everything I do as encouraging students.
- I understand I can inspire rather than just impart knowledge. It has benefitted me as well as the students
- I can bring together theory and practice
- Involve students more actively. And realise they all learn differently. I understand there are theories of learning and teaching.
- My philosophy has changed from delivering content to facilitation of learning.
- Helpful to get to know what type of learner I am
- I now realise students learn in different ways and I understand the importance of feedback.
- I have taught previously so this course has not affected my philosophy but rather my style.
- Enabled me to explore relationship between learning and teaching.
- The importance of interactive learning, student engagement and the importance of feedback.

Do you feel that your professional identity will change through being involved in the course?

Summary of responses:

- I believe I have improved and can provide better feedback
- I am not sure how, but I know it has
- I am perceived as a technician and hope that colleagues will start to see me as an academic. Both students and I will benefit as I become more confident about my teaching.
- Not sure but in my discipline of Pharmacy a doctorate and research output are viewed as far more substantive than a teaching course.
- It will not change but help me to recognise my professional identity
- “The course has shaped my professional identity y giving me an insight into how others learn and perceive.”
- No as all staff have to undertake this award.

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- My identity as a Welsh Tutor has been strengthened through involvement in the course.
- The course is extremely valuable in providing a recognised marker that established a certain standard in teaching in HE. It has given me more teaching opportunities.

Responses from completers (n19)

Males: 9 Females: 10

Roles: 11 full-time staff, 5 Part-time, 3 postgraduate

Preferred language: 13 English, 3 Welsh, 1 French, 1 Arabic, 1 Bengali

<i>(Please tick <u>one</u> box only in each row)</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I expect this PGC course to be/this course has proved to be professionally useful to me and will help/has helped my career	10	7	2		
I expect that my students will benefit as a result of my enrolment/completion on this PGC course	13	5	1		
My involvement in the course will be/is/was recognised as valuable by colleagues and my institution	9	4	4	2	
Involvement in the course will/has changed my conceptions of teaching	9	8	2		
The course will/has developed me as an academic practitioner	12	5	2		

How do you anticipate involvement in the course will affect you as an academic?

Summary of responses:

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- It has enhanced my teaching practices. Researching this area has been enlightening and students have noticed a difference. I have also benefitted from meeting colleagues from a range of disciplines.
- More awareness of different models/strategies for teaching.
- Changed to being reflective and having the ability to research my practice
- Made me think more about how I communicate and how others receive this. Also how I integrate teaching and research.
- Forced me to reflect and realise I was becoming too teacher-focussed.
- Exposed me to a wealth of experience within and beyond the university- a network. “The importance of knowing why you are teaching...to reflect and analyse your practice.”
- Deepened understanding of various aspects of academic practice.
- Appreciate different learning styles and importance of delivery
- Greatly improved my teaching already, greater confidence also. I am so enthused that I plan to continue onto a MA education. I can already see how it is benefitting me and my students.
- Made me more aware of teaching as a scholarly subject in itself. As a result i feel the quality of my teaching is much better and I have been much more reflective regarding sessions and why they worked/didn't work.
- Enhance my performance improve my teaching practice.
- Helped me learn about teaching philosophy, makes me more confident about student-centred teaching method.
- Learning from others n managing teaching.
- It has given me greater empathy with my students, asked me to challenge my assumptions about my own learning processes and that of my students.
- Enabled me to learn on the job. As an academic I now feel confident that I understand what is expected and how best to deliver.
- I learnt many new things related to teaching and learning. It has given me a lot of confidence.
- Less than I anticipated although I learnt from discussion with colleagues.

- Through reading I have broadened my understanding of key issues such as formative assessment. It has strengthened my knowledge of the whole academic procedure. The skills and knowledge i have gained from the course have contributed to my duties as a teaching fellow within the institution.

How will the course influence your conceptions of teaching?

Summary of responses:

- I am now aware of research in this area and the importance of keeping up-to-date. I feel well-read having had to read to complete assignments within the course. The workshops inspired me and I intend to continue going to future workshops.
- I am now more focussed on the learner.
- I used to talk about training, now I talk about teaching. I have changed my teaching and now do more group work.
- The course has revived my fondness of a constructivist pedagogy and the idea of learning to learn.
- Completely changed them. I am not from a teaching background and had no previous knowledge. I based my teaching on my own experience of learning. This course has made me reflect on what teaching and learning is to me and how I want to teach to encourage learning.
- I am aware of academic theory and current developments. I have shared what I have learned with other colleagues.
- Enabled me to incorporate learning and teaching theory into academic practice. To reflect and base this on theory.
- More focussed on understanding students' needs. Allowed me to communicate effectively.
- Helps with planning and setting learning outcomes.
- Deeper understanding of assessment procedures and content delivery. I am now a subject specialist and able teacher. Future emphasis will be on student-led learning rather than teacher-led delivery.
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- It has been hugely influential in my thoughts on learning and teaching. Without the award it would have been a long, lonely process. It has given me structure to my introduction to academia. The theories we covered have shaped my teaching.
- It motivated me to look at innovative ways to deliver sessions.
- I better understand experiential learning. Better understanding of the philosophy of education. Now know that knowing your subject is not a guarantee that you will be a good teacher.
- I am now much more aware of the needs of an individual and attempt to promote personalised learning experiences and opportunities for autonomous learning wherever possible.

Do you feel that your professional identity will change through being involved in the course?

Summary of responses:

- “I am immensely proud of having achieved a distinction and this alone has served to enhance my confidence in teaching and my ability in this area. I have no doubt that, having completed the PGCertHE, I am adept to undertake such a post (lecturing) and that citing this qualification along with the FHEA status gained from its achievement when applying will hold me in good stead so as to succeed in my application and in the profession thereafter”
- Hopefully it will be recognised and I will receive a permanent contract of work.
- “It has. I am now able to take seriously CPD specific to teaching and learning. I used to identify myself with reference to my disciplinary specialisation, now I find myself claiming that I am a practitioner in higher education”
- Very much so. The course has given me a lot of teaching opportunities through contacts I have made.
- Yes, I feel it has been suitably altered. Being one of the few in my department to have such an experience I am sometimes regarded as some kind of pedagogic expert. Overall, this is positive though it does sometimes involve being asked to take on extra responsibilities. A small minority are disdainful of the award and the ideas within the programme.

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- Feel it is beyond the School and University. There is a lot of scepticism within the School and University on the merits of this course.
- As a new member of staff, increasingly changing to that of a HE lecturer.
- “I feel much more confident in my abilities in terms of teaching and academic planning. I feel this gives me greater credibility as a lecturer.”
- “Yes, I feel more confident as a ‘teacher’”. I came from a healthcare background and I think the programme has assisted my transition into academic world i.e. my identity as a lecturer.
- Yes, became more aware of different methods of teaching and learning and applying theories to my practice.
- Surely, more focussed on student-centred and problem based learning.
- To a modest extent, yes. I feel I’m the same lecturer, just a slightly more considerate facilitator. It will probably affect how others view my professional identity.
- I guess I feel it has changed. When I started in my post, I was an audiologist who was trying to teach. Now, completing the award makes me feel like I am an academic who specialises in Audiology. I also feel I can now teach beyond my subject specialism given time to prepare.
- Yes, in so far as I am first and foremost viewed as a postgraduate student with teaching responsibilities. But nonetheless, it has certainly strengthened and deepened my identity as a teacher with research responsibilities rather than (as it had been) the other way round.

Responses from those completing more than two years ago (n=9)

Males: 2 Females: 7

Roles: 8 full-time staff, 1 Part-time

Preferred language: 5 English, 2 Welsh, 2 German

<i>(Please tick <u>one</u> box only in each row)</i>	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I expect this PGC course to be/this course has proved to be professionally useful to me and will help/has helped my career	5	3		1	
I expect that my students will benefit as a result of my enrolment/completion on this PGC course	4	5			
My involvement in the course will be/is/was recognised as valuable by colleagues and my institution		5	4		
Involvement in the course will/has changed my conceptions of teaching	4	4	1		
The course will/has developed me as an academic practitioner	6	3			

How do you anticipate involvement in the course will affect you as an academic?

Summary of responses:

- I found that studying teaching models was useful and helped me evaluate own practice
- Has been useful for my professional development and I am now more aware of the need for variation.
- Motivated me to research learning and teaching and given me opportunity to publish. Provided great networking opportunities.
- Developed skills of reflection and peer review; helped me develop my own practice; moved away from assessment driven teaching; have been able to influence assessments in my course.
- Provided network and support, now my decisions and reflection is informed.
- More aware links theory and practice. More aware of the many stakeholders involved in my discipline. More aware of building knowledge in small chunks. More aware of importance of social context and importance of being genuine with students.

- How to be creative in the classroom
- Enabled me to progress to masters and then doctorate in Education.
- Although already had background in teaching, course helped me re-conceptualise and re-contextualise how I support learning and model best practice.

How will the course influence your conceptions of teaching?

Summary of responses:

- Helped me think creatively when introducing new techniques, students react better, I now have a better understanding of how people learn and assess which techniques are likely to be most effective.
- New ideas on how to approach my teaching. Helped me understand how students learn.
- The CPD workshops have affected me with a consequent change in my role.
- Now understand that students learn in different ways and have different backgrounds and needs.
- Has helped me understand the needs of learners more effectively
- More aware of the importance of transferable skills.
- Put me in the role of the student.
- Helped me shift my contact from FE to HE
- Moved towards student-centred approach and be more innovative including use of VLE

Do you feel that your professional identity will change through being involved in the course?

Summary of responses:

- Yes-especially as I came into higher education immediately after graduating. I did feel unequipped for the task ahead. I feel that the certificate is an acknowledgement of one's ability to teach at a high standard. Therefore, I feel much more confident having completed the course, and feel that I am respected by other staff members because of it.
- I feel more equipped as an academic and am more confident.

- Not really changed identity although the contacts I have made have had a significant impact on my role.
- Was unsure of myself when I came in from clinical practice and felt I lacked credibility, having achieved FHEA I now feel I have an identity as a teacher
- Yes. My physiotherapy and learning and teaching practice/identity complement one another more and are grounded more securely together.
- Yes because I have been able to engage in a critical dialogue with colleagues. I have since gone on to MA and professional doctoral programme. I value engagement in research to support my practice. I am a more confident individual as a result of postgraduate study.

Emergent themes from interview data (based on brief initial thematic analysis)

1. Unexpected benefits which stretch beyond our institution

For nearly all colleagues at various stages of the award, there was a recognition that the time spent studying for the qualification had been worthwhile and that there were multiple benefits. Most of the benefits were perceived to be opportunities to link and network with colleagues from other disciplines and share good practice; the increasing attention nationally to the importance of having such a qualification for career development; encouraging reflective thought and having the ability to be able to critique one's own practice. Whilst some were initially sceptical about having to do the award, they were often positive towards the end. Some highlighted that it had provided unexpected benefits for them:

...it is quite different to how I expected where on the one level turning up I was thinking, this is going to teach me how to teach. It's like it's not, it's teaching you how to think about teaching and learning. It is very different.

Some colleagues reported that they felt they had increased credibility, particularly amongst their peers if they had completed the award. For many, it also provided a springboard for future CPD activities and some reported that it had given them the skills to reflect at a deeper level about their practice.

I think it encourages you to critique your own research really and looking it from a pedagogical point-of-view.

2. Meeting needs and expectations

Nearly all comments about the ways in which the courses were structured were very positive. All of the institutions involved in this study provides an induction, some at a residential venue outside university, and others in-house. Following this, the courses follow an action-based learning model where colleagues work with a mentor in their own discipline. On-going academic development workshops feature and these received particularly positive comments from colleagues. The generic nature of the schemes was criticised by a minority who felt that there should be differentiation between disciplines. There were often initial tensions with adapting to the new language associated with pedagogical theories and a reluctance to engage with them. However, for the most part, colleagues who progressed through the award ultimately saw real purpose in engaging with relevant theories:

I started off wanting tips and was a bit disappointed because the programme, when we're actually in class is quite theory based but then I think something that's quite clever with this programme is the assignments are much more reflective on your teaching, so that's where you pick up the practical oh this is what the theory means in practice stuff and I think that's quite clever really

A number of colleagues had gained a momentum which they continued with further postgraduate study or making contributions to the award such as offering to deliver workshops or setting up initiatives relating to learning and teaching in their disciplines. There was also, amongst many, a realisation of the growing importance of having a relevant teaching qualification:

I also think culturally across the country, across the UK with the fee structure changing teaching is going to be a much bigger thing, and any school that is ignoring it is going to have a very nasty shock when their student numbers drop Now there are about nine of us who have completed this course and we're really did quite a lot, we formed these little communities, advising all the members what teaching is and etc, etc. And, we've started climbing up the league tables.

3. Realising that I can teach and increasing my confidence

For colleagues who are new to university and those who have moved from other professions, the award provided them with insights into the nature of teaching and a willingness to try new ideas with their students. For those who had previous teaching experience it either provided them with new ideas they could apply to higher education or reaffirmed that their practice was good.

I've come on leaps and bounds as a lecturer in the last couple of years and I think that it can't be down to anything other than this particular course.

A striking aspect from interviewing colleagues was the impact that studying and/or completing the award had on their confidence. They felt in a better position to be able to answer questions from students, and following student leads in a more student-centred setting:

I'm much more confident in just going with the flow and exploring different avenues and know that I've got the skills to get back to the point eventually, somehow.

I'm probably more confident asking questions and going with the flow, I don't feel I have to have a huge structure like I used to of everything but my thinking behind what I do is very different, I think my reasoning of why I do stuff is different I think.

4. Understanding what it is to be a teacher in an academic context

Interviews focussed on exploring colleagues' thoughts on whether being involved in the programme would have or had an impact on their academic identity. Identity is a complex issue and the interviewer first spent time with respondents discussing their interpretations of what they thought identity meant in an academic context.

Recognising that academic identity is likely to be shaped by a range of factors, many of the topics covered earlier in the interview would have relevance such as whether colleagues thought that the award would benefit their profile, how colleagues across the institution would view their passing the award and the extent to which it had affected their conceptions of teaching. As far as possible, the questions relating to identity were left open-ended and interviewees were encouraged to lead and provided with an opportunity to explain what this concept meant to them.

Most answers focussed on how it had allowed them to create networks and make new connections so that they felt they had become integrated into their respective communities. Also the way they felt that they were viewed by students and particularly colleagues with whom they work closely. For some, there had been no noticeable shift in their identity although they felt that their personal credibility would be enhanced by gaining recognition through achieving accreditation with their professional organisation.

I think this question of identity then is a recognition of perhaps your viability for doing what you're doing perhaps, for being able, because alongside the PG Cert of course you get the Fellowship to the Higher Education Academy and I think that does present itself as a status of having achieved that level maybe.

The focus of most answers identified with gaining the identity and status of being a teacher rather than a broader conception of academic identity. The idea of gaining recognition as a teacher and the associated shift in identity was particularly important for colleagues coming from different professions.

Definitely more confident as a teacher because I'm a clinician, I'm an occupational therapist who has somehow ended up here teaching, not by plan just it's evolved really so the whole academic world is a bit alien to me really so it's really helped me to feel like a teacher rather than a clinician is telling people about what I do.

If somebody says, what do you do? I wouldn't say, I'm a senior lecturer or an academic, I just say I'm teaching, because if you like that's my perception of myself. If somebody said, "What are you?" I'd say, "I'm a teacher".

For some, the new identity of being a teacher allowed them to attain a new confidence separate from their own persona

Not by anything significant but it kind of worked, but the point for me was it allowed me to reflect enough that assertiveness was a real issue for me and it changed me massively. I'm not joking, it really did and I started to see in terms of identity, I started to see myself as more of a teacher and Sarah (name changed) is separate.

Reflection and way forward

The research adds an important and much need dimension to the existing research evaluating the provision of initial teacher development programmes in the UK. In particular, there is a paucity of research which considers the situation in Wales. Secondly, there is very limited research which has looked at the impact on teacher development programmes on staff identity. The research findings reinforce some of the results from similar studies which show a positive impact that such programmes have on the confidence of colleagues who successfully complete their programme. The impact on identity is complex although many colleagues report that they feel that it has influenced their conceptions of teaching and learning, helped them towards integrating into an academic community and made them feel like a teacher.

Following a systematic analysis of the data, the author will make a number of recommendations which will be shared with the institutions involved in the research and disseminated more widely through further conference presentations and peer-reviewed journal articles.

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