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# **‘Square peg – round hole’: the emerging professional identities of HE in FE lecturers working in a partner college network in south west England**

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## **Abstract**

The professional status of Further Education lecturers has been widely debated and contested within the published literature (e.g. Shain and Gleeson, 1999; Spencerley, 2006). This article presents the results of a series of semi structured interviews undertaken with a small sample of college lecturers working within a partner college network in south west England. Regardless of the level of the Higher Education/Further Education teaching the lecturers identities remain strongly rooted in their role as teachers and commitment to supporting learners attain their educational ambitions. The lecturers’ identities were in a state of flux due to the dual demands of their employer (the college) and collaborating institution (the university). Their shifting identities may only be mediated through wider recognition been afforded to the role of a Higher Education lecturer working in a Further Education college from their managers, universities and supporting bodies.

**Keywords:** Professional Identity, Higher Education, Further Education

## **Introduction**

In 1997 Lord Dearing proposed a fundamental change in the delivery of Higher Education (HE) in England that would see Further Education (FE) colleges placed at the forefront of future expansion in HE (NICHE, 1997). Dearing cited the FE sector as been ideally positioned to promote the accessibility of HE courses to local communities. Although FE colleges have a longstanding commitment to the delivery of HE, for many institutions HE courses tended represent a minority of their overall provision (Parry, 2005). To support this expansion, in 2000 foundation degrees were introduced. Foundation degrees were intended to have either a technical, professional or vocational focus, consider flexible modes of delivery and encourage employer engagement (HEFCE, 2000). They were to be delivered primarily in FE colleges in conjunction with a named HE institution. Placing FE colleges at the heart of the planned expansion in student numbers resulted in a renewed period of investment as colleges strived to create an environment for HE that would ensure students have an equivalent and appropriate HE experience to those studying at a university (HEFCE, 2003a).

Traditionally colleges delivered courses that were approved, validated and inspected by external bodies. Therefore the introduction of foundation degrees resulted in change in both institutional and individual lecturer working practices (HEFCE, 2003a). Not only did they have to adapt to a new qualification, new quality systems and new collaborative partnerships with universities, for the first time college lecturers had the freedom to design courses in a supportive environment. It was also recommended that lecturers were provided with opportunities to undertake HE staff development activities including scholarly activity and research to ensure that

they had the current subject knowledge essential for their HE teaching (HEFCE, 2003b). Through the expansion in HE provision, college lecturers gained new avenues in which to explore their professional identity.

Regardless of an individual's occupation their professional identity is viewed as been dynamic and constantly evolving as their career develops (Stronach *et al.*, 2002). It is cited as being related to the culture of an organisation, social/professional interactions and an individual's self perception (Beijaard *et al.*, 2004; Sachs, 2001; Stronach *et al.*, 2002). Research undertaken into the emerging professional identities of trainee college lecturers (e.g. Bathmaker and Avis, 2005) and school teachers (Beijaard *et al.*, 2000; 2004) highlighted the importance of the teaching context, perceptions of their role and professional experience on an individual's identity. Equally the knowledge and skills individual's possess and the way they are expressed through their role also contributes to their professional identity (Stronach *et al.*, 2002). Those working in the FE sector are often enter teaching after establishing themselves as a professional within another sphere (Spenceley, 2006). As a consequence, they bring to their teaching role a range of professional values and skills associated with their area of vocational expertise, therefore adding further complexity to their professional identities. This paper will investigate the impact of expanding HE provision on the professional identities of a group of lecturers working within four FE colleges in south west England. Consideration of their professional identities will be framed through discussions of their perceptions of the roles performed by HE lecturers working within universities and colleges.

## **HE in FE provision in southwest England**

HE in an FE context has been supported by the University of Plymouth since 1978. The University of Plymouth, through its partner college faculty (University of Plymouth Colleges (UPC)), is the primary provider of HE in FE in southwest England. UPC is comprised of a network of 19 partner institutions, 15 of which are FE colleges. UPC provides colleges and their staff with support for all aspects of their HE provision including quality assurance, staff and development, administration and support for infrastructure developments. Since the introduction of foundation degrees in UPC in 2002 there has been substantial growth in student numbers which has contrasted the national trend of foundation degree growth (Selby, 2008). UPC's provision has grown from 6,000 students in 2002 to 10,000 students registered on 296 courses in the 2007-08 academic year. These students are supported by 1800 lecturing and support staff.

HE in FE provision within the UPC network is highly variable in terms of longevity and size. Therefore the experiences of lecturers delivering HE is dependant largely on the college in which individuals are working. Whilst several of the larger colleges in the UPC network have a longstanding commitment to HE, in other colleges their HE provision is still developing. Colleges within the UPC network in which HE provision had already resulted in developments to support HE staff and students, such as investment in infrastructure or HE specific staff development initiatives, were targeted to recruit volunteers to participate in this study.

## **Methods**

To explore the emerging professional identities of HE in FE lecturers, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with lecturers working in colleges in the UPC network. College lecturers who had undertaken a UPC staff development activity were asked to contribute to this research. From those lecturers who volunteered to participate in the research 12 lecturers from four colleges were selected. Practitioners from these four colleges were selected as their institutions had a longstanding commitment to HE provided in collaboration with UPC. Therefore in their college HE provision was established which had included investment in infrastructure and resources to support HE, HE related staff development/support and the development of HE processes (e.g. graduation ceremonies). The lecturers were drawn from a cross section of discipline to ensure that subject specific issues did not exert an overriding influence on the research findings. The interviews asked the lecturers to discuss their educational and professional backgrounds, including how they became involved in HE teaching, their perceptions of the role of HE lecturers working within universities, and how this compared and contrasted to the role they performed was then explored. Discussion also took place about the support available for them to undertake the role of a HE lecturer. All the interviews were undertaken by one member of the research team who was not known to the participants. They were digitally recorded and transcribed in full. All identifying features were removed to ensure the anonymity of individuals and institutions involved. The transcripts were manually coded using the constant

comparative approach; text being examined to identify comparisons and cross cutting themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

### **Professional profile of the HE in FE lecturers**

As a group the lecturers interviewed were diverse in terms of their educational backgrounds and professional experiences. Seven of the lecturers interviewed had progressed directly through the education system to university. Following graduation and throughout their professional lives, some of these lecturers had undertaken further study such as postgraduate qualifications and relevant professional development courses. The rest of the group could be classed as “non-traditional students” in that they returned to learning as mature students. Two of the lecturers had undertaken their study whilst they were employed full time. This had been achieved through flexible or distance learning to enable them to gain HE qualifications whilst balancing other commitments. The motivation behind these individuals’ decision to undertake HE again echoed the reasons mature students enter education e.g. to further their career or due to a life changing event (Mercer, 2007; Walters, 2000).

Although a four of the participants entered lecturing shortly after graduation, the rest of the group moved into teaching after they had spent time in another profession. This is well documented within the FE sector due to the importance of vocational expertise to many of the courses (e.g. Bathmaker and Avis, 2005; Robson, 1998; Spenceley, 2006). As with their entry into FE teaching, the majority of the

interviewees did not necessarily plan to become a FE or HE lecturer. Instead they entered teaching due to a variety of reasons such as a need for their vocational skills/experience, through employer engagement or because they wanted a career change.

### **Entry into HE teaching**

Of the 12 lecturers interviewed, half of the group were teaching at their college prior to the introduction of foundation degrees. Therefore they had experience of teaching FE and Higher National Diplomas/Certificates. They did not necessarily aspire to become HE lecturers, instead it evolved as part of their natural career development, as they had been successful in teaching a variety of FE level courses and the next step was into HE:

*“I suppose because of my vocational background (I entered FE teaching); I then started on a BTEC national level 3 programme. And I suppose I’ve been reasonably successful at that and it’s sort of developed so that a few years later I then started teaching on HNC programmes...”*

For those lecturers who joined their college after foundation degrees had become part of their college’s provision, teaching on HE courses was an accepted part of their role.

### **Roles and responsibilities of HE in FE lecturers**

All of the lecturers were employed on FE contracts as is usual for HE in FE practitioners (HEFCE, 2009). As with many lecturers working within the FE sector (e.g. Jephcote *et al.*, 2008; Avis *et al.*, 2003), not only were staff engaged in teaching on HE courses, their roles had a considerably wider remit in terms of the levels, courses and subjects they taught across, but also in terms of more esoteric but essential aspects of their role that are often key to students' success:

*“...so I teach, I personal tutor and I spend a lot of my time on employer engagement...”*

Of the 12 staff interviewed, three taught solely HE and the rest taught on a combination of HE and FE courses. One individual also had responsibilities for courses delivered to secondary school children and another had a dual role with teaching only a small part of additional commitments. Nine of the interviewees had responsibilities for programme management at either the HE or FE level.

Programme management means that lecturers not only have to run the course and manage the associated paperwork, they also have some responsibility activities such as marketing, recruitment, employer engagement and work placement visits.

Furthermore teaching to the non-traditional students that undertake foundation degrees also means that lectures have to manage wider learning or social issues students that are commonly associated with FE learners (Edward *et al.*, 2007; Jephcote *et al.*, 2008).

The perceptions of the role of a HE lecturer working within a university varied. They all had HE qualifications obtained at different times in their lives, albeit through a

variety of routes, and therefore they had an appreciation of the role performed by a HE lecturer working within a university. However considerable time had passed since they had completed studies therefore they were concerned how much the “student experience” and role of the lecturer had moved on since they were at university. These feelings were particularly acute for those individuals who had undertaken HE qualifications through alternative routes:

*“I don’t know for certain. I suppose it’s interesting in that I’m expected to teach like a university lecturer but perhaps I don’t really know what a university lecturer’s role is.”*

Despite these concerns they all had definite opinions on the role of a HE lecturer working within universities, particularly with regards to the contact they had with students and the support they received from their institution to fulfil their role.

The college lecturers viewed research as central to the role of a university lecturer and that their role as a researcher would be of primary importance over their role as a teacher. They viewed research as contributing to university lecturers’ teaching and resulted in them having current subject knowledge. They also perceived that financial and practical support would be available from the university to enable them to be research active:

*“I imagine that there is financial help, I imagine there is remission...”*

There was also a perception of the wider university ethos as being collegiate and research-focused. The college lecturers felt that this collegiality would encourage

people to talk, share and ideas and supported the generation of new ideas. The lecturers indicated that this culture was encouraged by the level of autonomy which university lecturers had to undertake their role. The college lecturers believed university lecturers could manage their own workload which due to the limited contact with students gave them greater freedom to undertake research:

*“...they have allocated time for research, they’ve got allocated time and plan time they have at the beginning of the academic year if they are marking, for everything is planned ahead and structured differently, anyway that’s my understanding.”*

In terms of university lecturers’ commitment to teaching and their students this was perceived as limited. They felt the relationship students had with lectures would be anonymous. Students would be taught in large groups and there would be limited one to one contact. This does not mean they felt that university lecturers do not support their students; instead they felt university lectures would encourage students to function as independent learners:

*“I just get the impression there is a greater volume of students and it is possible to have the same personal relationship?”*

The college lecturers’ overall perceptions of the role of a university lecturer focused primarily on the responsibilities they have for research and teaching. These perceptions are reminiscent of the so-called golden age of the university lecturer

where academic freedom prevailed and there was sense of collegiality (Barnett, 1990; Light and Cox, 2001; Nixon, 1990). Clegg (2008) perhaps encapsulates this through her consideration of the traditional public perception of an academic which she viewed as originating from elite universities where departments were often populated by white, middle class males. Whilst a sense of collegiality still exists in many university departments, it is often viewed as been undermined by the changes that have taken place within the university sector (Lea and Callaghan, 2008). Indeed, the college lecturers' perceptions do not reflect the impact of National Committee Inquiry into Higher Education (NCIHE, 1997). This may also reflect the invisibility or ambiguity surrounding the role and subsequently the identity of lecturers to those outside of the university environment (Clegg, 2008).

Whilst they acknowledge the contribution a university lecturer's engagement would make to their teaching, in terms of them possessing current subject knowledge, they tended to view research and teaching as separate activities that did not overlap. This is despite the focus within discussions on the research-teaching nexus of the positive benefits of research-teaching linkages to the student learning experience (Jenkins *et al.*, 2007). Although a few lecturers did make reference to wider aspects of the teaching role they expected university lecturers to perform (e.g. assessing students/designing courses) it appeared that they primarily viewed the role of a university lecturer as lecturing to large cohorts of students. Today university lecturers are required to have an awareness of the pedagogical needs of learners, to design, market and manage programmes, develop and nurture postgraduate researchers whilst simultaneously remaining research active, attracting research

funds and publishing papers (Nixon, 1996; Nichols, 2005; Lea and Callaghan, 2008). As with college lecturers, university lecturers are required to meet targets. However, rather than being focused on student attainment and retention they are centred on research activity through the Research Assessment Exercise (Elton, 2001; Nichols, 2005). Therefore whilst the contexts in which university and college lecturers perform their role and develop their professional identities may seem worlds apart, there may be more similarities in the roles they perform than college lecturers initially perceive.

### **The role of a HE lecturer working within an FE college**

In contrast to the perception they conveyed of the distance between university and college lecturers from their students, the college lecturers emphasised the central role students' play in their working lives, with nine describing their role in term of:

*“I perceive my job as to create a learning experience through the course design, staffing and classroom interactions that allows students to maximise their potential and to succeed...”*

Due to the socio-economic profiles of attending FE colleges they viewed their approach to teaching HE as being holistic, not only did they deliver the subject matter relevant to the course, but also had to consider the specific learning needs of their students. This reflects the non-traditional educational background of the students they taught:

*“So my experience with foundation degree students is that you are dealing with people who have to learn how to learn before they can learn what they are there to learn. They have to find the skills of reading, assimilating information, study, especially time management and they have to learn how to do all of that before they can learn about statistics, sociology, whatever it is they are there to learn from a subject point of view.”*

The focus on supporting students and the emphasis on skill development reflects the overall approach to teaching taken by lecturers working within FE colleges, especially their focus on the process of learning rather than the outcomes of learning as discussed by Hodkinson *et al.* (2007).

The majority of the lecturers felt that they delivered the same subject matter in their HE and FE teaching, but that it was differentiated through their expectations of their students and the assessment strategies they employed with their HE students to promote learner autonomy:

*“My view is that we continue to teach subject matter that is now at level 4 rather than level 3 so it’s a bit more involved, it’s a bit more detailed...I think the way that we assess our expectations on students is different, I am expecting more research, more analysis to be presented.”*

They also discussed employing different styles of teaching with their HE students that would not necessarily be suited to their FE students or an accepted mode of FE teaching, particularly in relation to FE quality systems:

*“I’ve just started doing some experiments using problem based learning as a method of teaching...and I find that I’m personally getting a real buzz from it because I see the students get a real buzz from it in terms of autonomy but also in terms of understanding the subject.”*

As well as promoting the autonomy of the learner, the college lecturers felt that the expansion of HE in their colleges had promoted their own autonomy as practitioners, which they had acknowledged as been a key aspect of the role of a university lecturer. Several individuals made references to the sense of freedom or liberty in relation to their HE teaching. This reflected the opportunities they had been afforded to design courses, direct their students’ development and collaborate with employers:

*“I feel we are given tremendous amount of freedom to develop our own programmes to pursue what we feel we should be pursuing (...) in a way you’ve got far more freedom than you have if you run BTEC or national diplomas, you have to take them off the peg, even if they don’t fit, if they don’t fit the students, they don’t fit the employers that you’ve got working around you.”*

For many this autonomy has contributed significantly to their sense of job satisfaction and in one case was cited as the reason why that individual continued to work within an FE college:

*“It means that basically I’ve been able to choose what I teach in terms of the modules that are offered. Whereas if there was no HE and FE I would just be*

*teaching hours and hours of repeated GCSE level classes and would probably be bored and be doing another job now.”*

The college lecturers all identified aspects of their HE role/practice which differed to the role they felt they, or their colleagues, carried out as FE lecturers. Therefore within their colleges the lecturers felt that they were performing a unique relation to their university and FE colleagues. They felt their role as HE in FE lecturers relied upon them drawing on their expertise in supporting FE learners and integrating this with their perceptions of the role a HE lecturer should perform.

### **Comparing and contrasting the roles of a HE lecturers working within universities and colleges**

In relation to university lecturers, the college lecturers felt that their role involved a greater commitment to teaching and subsequently to their students. Generally HE in FE student cohorts are smaller, which the college lecturers felt enabled them to develop a personal and supportive relationship with their students. Whilst this may be beneficial to students, and has been acknowledged as been essential to the success of many learners returning to college after a break in their education (Hodkinson *et al.* 2007), this can create an extra burden as lecturers can often feel at the beck and call of students, something which they did not feel would happen in a university setting:

*“I think the different type of student is probably the biggest issue; they are more the sorts of students that survive better in an FE context which has different types of support.”*

The college lecturers also felt that the smaller student cohorts meant that HE in colleges was delivered in a different way to universities. They thought it was not appropriate to use lecturing with small class sizes and therefore an emphasis was often placed on group work. In colleges where larger cohorts of HE students did exist, the facilities (i.e. lecture theatres) were not necessarily available to lecture:

*“...the first thing that comes to mind is how some colleagues I know at the college would think that teaching HE makes it legitimate to lecture students, whereas mostly because we have smaller rooms like this, we have 20-25 or 18-25 people in a room therefore lecturing doesn't seem very appropriate.”*

A central concern for the majority of the lecturers interviewed was the requirement for college lecturers to teach across subject areas and levels. Of the 12 lecturers interviewed nine were teaching HE and FE. Whilst the proportions of HE and FE teaching varied, HE and FE have very different audiences, teaching styles, quality assurance protocols and assessment regimes. Lecturers switching between HE and FE throughout the working week expressed a sense of being a *“jack of all trades”* due to the variety of roles they were required to perform. This switching between roles often left college lecturers feeling there was limited support from the college to

specialise in their subject area. For example this lecturer felt that there was limited support:

*“If you work here then I think you are expected to be able to teach anybody from sort of 14 going through to post PhD which of course you can’t do that. I think you have to specialise but it’s not recognised unfortunately...”*

Equally this lack of support gives the impression that there is a lack of recognition from the institution of the wider implications of being a HE lecturer, as highlighted in their responses to questioning about opportunities for HE related staff development opportunities, in particularly scholarly activity and research. The college lecturers were acutely aware of the importance of research, and the need for HE lecturers within universities to be research active. However, they tended to view the research conducted by their HE colleagues working within universities as being predominantly “blue skies” focused around knowledge generation. Within an FE context the college lecturers felt that it was essential for their HE teaching to have current subject knowledge and therefore they emphasised the need for HE lecturers to undertake scholarly activities such as conference attendance, professional updating and to be widely read:

*“Incidentally research (...) in developing academic knowledge isn’t seen as important in FE as it is in a university. In FE the research is subject based research.”*

The support available for college lecturers to undertake scholarly activity and research was highly variable and seemed to depend largely on the area of college

an individual worked. Overall the college lecturers indicated that the motivation for individuals to undertake scholarly activity and research relied primarily on the lecturer. It seemed there would be limited encouragement from college management. This does not mean that colleges were not prepared to support those individuals that wanted to undertake professional qualifications or attend conferences; generally colleges were forthcoming in providing financial support. Yet in terms of providing a lecturer with the time, college support was perceived to be limited. The lecturers felt there was an apparent reliance on the part of college management for an individual to meet the demands of a course or maintain current subject knowledge in their own time:

*“We have access to a range of CPD activities through the university, for example the xxxx programme. It just so happened it ran on a Friday, it was a convenient time for me, I applied and obviously could go. But I do think that the courses I’ve just been talking about, I chose to go on. The college has not said to me to do that and I don’t think there has been any guidance from the college really at all quite honestly...”*

This may reflect wider contractual issues. College lecturers are employed primarily on FE contracts of 828 hours of contact time over the academic year, which equates to approximately 22 to 23 hours teaching per week. Outside of this contact time lecturers are expected to undertake the usual preparation and paperwork their FE colleagues are required to complete. There does not appear to be the time or space within this contract for those lecturers with HE teaching commitments to meet the wider demands of this role.

The fact that HE in FE lecturing staff are employed on FE contracts perhaps demonstrates the apparent mismatch of HE and FE systems that appeared to exert an impact to varying extents on all the college lecturers interviewed. For example they made reference to the expectation of HE lecturers to take attendance registers, to participate in staff development activities geared toward FE teaching and the use of inspection or observation criteria that are suited to FE and not in their view HE:

*“I think it’s an interesting dilemma in that the college itself I think is very much focussed on FE where we have a lesson observation regime where probably after 15 minutes I’d be criticised if I’m still talking. If the students aren’t actively engaged in some sort of activity I would be criticised for that.”*

*“...all of that is [staff development, IT] geared to FE. So we don’t fit, we are a square peg in a round hole. For all of those kinds of things; our timetables are different; we don’t fit with that, that causes problems if you teach FE and HE.”*

This mismatch in HE and FE echoes the findings of Turner *et al.* (in press) which highlighted the presence of presence of a hybrid culture of HE in FE colleges, whereby college lecturers discussed delivering HE within the constraints of FE systems and protocols. It also indicates the target driven ethos of many FE colleges, where activities need to be measured, monitored and assessed in order to comply with the management style of the institutions (Edward *et al.*, 2007). This mismatch was taken by seven lecturers to indicate the lack of wider recognition or value attached to HE by their FE colleagues. They felt that currently there was a lack of support for them to perform the role they professionally felt they should as a HE

lecturer, regardless of the environment they were working within. Yet two lecturers questioned whether a strong distinction between HE and FE should really be made, particularly from the perspective of their FE colleagues. They felt that by addressing contractual issues or providing remission for HE teaching without similar changes being made for those teaching on FE courses could lead to an undermining of the role of a FE lecturer and create tensions between HE and FE provision. These individuals felt that whilst wider cultural issues regarding the support and identity of HE provision within their college did need addressing, these were not insurmountable. Instead they felt it was important that recognition should be given to the fact they were delivering HE within an FE context, and that HE in FE has very different purpose and audiences to HE delivered in universities:

*“I think you have to accept that here HE is a small proportion of what we do, so as an institution we are not or probably neither should we be (HE focused), we’ve got to get FE right, it’s what we do...”*

### **The emerging professional identities of HE in FE lecturers**

The professional identities of those working in any sector of education have been acknowledged as been complex and dynamic depending on the conditions of practice, an individual’s life history and social/professional interactions. Within universities lecturers identities cannot be considered solely through an individual’s responsibilities for research, teaching and management, instead they are cited as been highly distinctive and framed in terms of professional autonomy and personal agency (Clegg, 2008). The identities of FE lecturers are viewed as been equally as

complex and sometimes fragmented due to the vocational background of many lecturers for which an affinity often persists long after entry into teaching (Robson, 1998; Spencerley, 2006). However, unlike university lecturers, those within the FE sector are often viewed as having a low professional status due to the overriding managerial ethos of many colleges and the expectation of lecturers to be agents for numerous education policies and agendas, eroding the sense of professional autonomy traditionally associated with the sector (Gleeson *et al.*, 2005; Shain and Gleeson, 1999).

The lecturers who participated in this research possessed the professional characteristics commonly associated with FE lecturers identified by Briggs (2005) whereby they were committed to supporting their learners achieve their educational ambitions. Whilst their perceptions of the role of a university lecturer may be considered idealised or outdated, the role they viewed a HE lecturer in a university performing contrasted significantly to the role they carried out as HE lecturers working in FE colleges. This will have implications for their emerging identities as HE lecturers, and why we consider them as having emerging identities as HE in FE lecturers. Theorists of professional identity, particularly Bernstein, highlight the impact of physical location on an identity (Bernstein, 2000; Beck and Young, 2005; Day *et al.*, 2006). The lecturers interviewed here are delivering HE in an FE environment. Socialisations processes whereby an individual builds relationships with those performing similar roles or possess a similar identity have also recognised as been a fundamental aspect of an individual's identity formation (Bernstein, 2000; Beck and Young, 2005). However, as these lecturers stated, HE represents a

minority of their colleges overall provision. In their colleges, despite investment been made to support HE, provision is normally contained within isolated pockets of departments primarily geared toward the colleges FE courses and learners.

Therefore on a daily basis they have limited opportunities to meet other HE lecturers within their own college, or at the university. Indeed their engagement with the university is primarily associated with the partner college faculty and whilst this does provide a clear link to the university, opportunities to meet university lecturers are generally few and far between. Consequently they are developing and exploring their identities as HE in FE lecturers in isolation.

For many HE in FE lecturers working in the UPC network, participation in HE related staff devolvement activities provide a neutral territory in which they can explore their emerging identity. Often such activities are facilitated by the university but organised on the request of HE lecturers, therefore they can offer the socialisation opportunities lecturers need and bring them together from across their college(s). The lecturers interviewed as part of this study considered engagement with scholarly activity and research as key to a university lecturers identity, therefore as HE lecturers working in FE colleges they expressed a desire to have similar opportunities. Although in many FE colleges such opportunities may be limited, initiatives have successfully been implemented in recent years to promote scholarly activity and research (e.g. Cunningham and Doncaster, 2002; Minty *et al.*, 2007; Turner *et al.*, 2008). These initiatives have acknowledged the positive benefits of staff engagement with research on the overall ethos of colleges and motivation of lecturers. Developments in quality assurance protocols (e.g. the Integrated Quality Enhancement Review

(QAA 2008)) and policies for the future of HE in FE (e.g. HE strategies (HEFCE, 2006; 2009)) have reinforced the need for further support for engagement with scholarly activity. As the impacts of these developments begin to be felt by college lecturers, they should have a positive impact on their emerging identities.

The culture of these organisations and social/professional interactions also appear to affect the emerging identities of the lecturers. The college lecturers interviewed felt that there was an overriding sense of FE governance which for them was an obstacle to the HE experience they were trying to create. This clash of cultures could have a considerable impact upon an individual's identity, particularly for those who are teaching across HE and FE courses, as they are constantly shifting between cultures. This may result in individuals developing identities that are continually changing and in a state of flux. However, Stronach *et al.* (2002), in his discussion of the changing professional identities of nurses and teachers in the face of wider political levers acting upon their professions, acknowledged the presence of split identities among teachers. Whilst they viewed split identities as potentially causing teachers to juggle their own professional goals with additional external pressures that may lead to individuals having frustrated professional identities. They felt it was unlikely and unrealistic for teachers to have one professional identity as this would lead to a loss of the diversity of experience and personal traits an individual brings to their role. This is particularly true for half of the college lecturers interviewed for this study the majority of whom had entered HE teaching following a relatively circuitous route that included a range of other professional and vocational experiences that were not directly teaching related. This also to an extent echoes the sentiments of

those college lecturers who strongly felt that the uniqueness of HE in FE, and subsequently their role as HE in FE lecturers, should be celebrated.

Celebration of the role of a HE in FE practitioner has wider connotations relating to the recognition of college lecturers by college management, their FE colleagues, and also to a certain external audiences and professional bodies. Again Stronach *et al.* (2002) held strong views on the importance of professional recognition. They viewed recognition at the local and global level as being essential to the continued motivation and development of excellent professionals. At the college level appropriate recognition and remission from management needs to be given to ensure lecturers have the time and space to develop as a HE in FE professionals. Equally education policy writers need to formally recognise the emergence of the new role of an HE in FE lecturer which has resulted from the expansion of HE into FE colleges. Formal recognition of the role of the HE in FE lecturer by policy makers and supporting agencies may serve to overcome the perception from the college lecturers as being viewed externally as second rate to HE lecturers working within universities which can lead to an undermining of their emerging professionalism.

Overtime as the role of an HE in FE lecturer is further developed and recognised; college governance and management structures will develop to ensure lectures get the support they need to develop their emerging professional identities. However we are likely to find that whilst general traits of the HE in FE lecturer may be categorised with regards to the relationship they have with their students and their approaches to

scholarly activity, due to the diversity of professional and vocational experiences many FE lecturers bring to their role, each HE in FE lecturers own professional identity will be unique.

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