

Chapter 10

From Graduate to Employee: The Birth of the Fully Fledged Lecturer – A Case Study of the Teaching Fellows Programme

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ABSTRACT

Teaching fellows within this study are graduates participating in a paid postgraduate programme of training and development, providing them with skills for lecturing in higher education. Identifying with widening participation characteristics, as well as the attributes of Y and Z Generations, this study examines a programme firmly rooted in the philosophies of both work-based learning and work-integrated learning. This was a unique approach to offering opportunities which went beyond undergraduate study to graduates of the institution, preparing them for employment through exposure to experiences of shadowing and eventual teaching. This therefore highlights three distinct areas which crucially impacts on their development: social learning within a community of practice (CoP), emotional challenges of imposter phenomenon, and reflective practice. The study concludes with evidence of how providing this opportunity to a generation of individuals, who may not have considered it before, can promote the connections between theory and practice as part of their practical experience.

INTRODUCTION

There is power in the experience of learning. It is about the nature of experience and the process of learning from it. It should bring about transformation, deviate from traditional classroom experiences; challenge emotional intelligence and encourage us to reflect deeply on what has been learned, sharing these experiences within the camaraderie of like-minded others.

Ideally, learning from life experience should complement, not contrast, the learning experienced in classrooms and lectures, because it is within both of these strands where the learner is exposed to the realities of the experiences being studied (Keeton & Tate, 1978). One should not exclude the other as they work together to form an experiential learning opportunity allowing students to acquire and apply knowledge, practical skills and emotions in a setting that is both immediate and germane to the experience (Brookfield, 1983).

This chapter focusses on a case study of a UK higher education institution which delivered a graduate trainee lecturer programme, framed within Work Based Learning (WBL), where the focus was on what was learned by undertaking activities, real work and real life (Helyer, 2015). This programme illustrated the tripartite partnership between the learner, higher education and industry, and was also related to the philosophy of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), essential for influencing the design of a curriculum responsive to the needs of the community as well as industry (Smith, 2012). It was the combination of traditional academic study, or formal learning, with learners being exposed to the world-of-work in their chosen profession, which furthered the sole purpose of developing their preparedness for work after graduation.

Both the terms of WBL and WIL are fluid within this chapter, as each encouraged learners to experience genuine work practices; promote job-readiness; learn; practice the application of skills and knowledge in a real-world context, whilst developing confidence in their ability to perform (Jackson, 2015).

Whilst there are innumerable studies charting the development of graduates on initial teacher training programmes for those wishing to teach in schools, when undertaking this study, there was a lack of research to be found which focussed on trainee lecturers within the higher education landscape. This lack of research was not entirely problematic, as the issues facing those participating in standard teacher training are not dissimilar to those that were faced by the trainees within this case study. For example, the first year of employment is considered critical, because this year is the time when the concept of oneself as a teacher develops. The experience and knowledge gained from this experience significantly influences the future professional development of the teacher (Calderhead & Shorrick, 1997). This chapter illustrates the journeys of the trainee lecturers within this study, exposing similar experiences to those experienced by those on training programmes preparing them to teach in schools and post-16 colleges. The term *teacher* is therefore used throughout this chapter when referring to the academic research which supports this study.

The approach taken within the programme discussed in this chapter helped to provide trainee lecturers with the skills to enable them to feel confident from their first days in the classroom, enabling them to practise like experienced lecturers and manage the delivery of content to very diverse learners. This all took place within a professional learning community, which engaged this group of professionals in learning within a supportive, self-created community, with shared understandings and concerns about what they were doing and its impact on their lives, the lives of their students and the wider community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

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