

**Title:** Exploring influences on new academics in developing identity

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### **Abstract:**

#### **Session Learning Outcomes**

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Discover the factors influencing a small group of new and early career academics
- Have an appreciation of contributing factors to identity formation
- Engage in a debate about the multi-faceted nature of identity
- Explored the support required by new and early career academics in discovering and cultivating their developing identities

#### **Session Outline**

In his work looking at the accrediting of teaching in higher education, Pennington (1999) discusses the ranges of levels that academics operate at. He speaks of the macro level, pushed by government imperatives which see them fostering the next generation's higher level skills and knowledge which will contribute to the economic status of the country. Yet at the micro level they are there to lead students to the ultimate goals of a liberal education and supports cognitive, moral and emotional development in these individuals for the many roles that lie ahead of them. It is such a complex role, so if new entrants to the profession are to succeed then it requires institutions to support them in their personal and professional development.

From Dearing (NCIHE 1997) to the very recent Browne Report (2010) there have been many a call to adequate prepare, support and train those new to teaching in HE.

This doctoral study looks at the experiences of new academics in the development of their identity in the first year since joining a post-92 university in a teaching role. The conceptual centre of the study is the complexity, fluidity and multiplicity of identity, what it means, how it is constructed and influenced. The study adopts a predominantly empirical approach but is underpinned with a conceptual analysis of identity and its development. This approach has been taken as the aim of the study is gain a greater understanding of the experiences of the participants alongside a deeper understanding of the conceptual goals that they are aiming for.

This session explores the first data gathering of the study, a group interview with early career academics reflecting on their first year teaching in HE, exploring the emergent themes and consequential messages for those involved in supporting academic staff development.

### **Session Activities and Approximate Timings**

- Session will begin with a brief outline of the doctoral research
- The focus will be on the themes identified by a small group of early career academics as being influential, both in a positive and a negative sense, on their professional development as a new teacher and in particular on their emerging and developing identity as a teacher.
- Once the themes are introduced and their classification explained, small groups/threes will be encouraged to debate the themes, identify those with resonance and those incongruent to their own contexts and explain the thought behind this.
- Feedback to the whole group will conclude the session, with wider discussion on the support that can be provided in the form of staff development to support the needs raised in the themes.

### **References**

Browne, J. (2010) *Securing a sustainable future for higher education; an independent review of higher education funding and student finance*, HMSO London, available from: <http://hereview.independent.gov.uk/hereview/report/> [last accessed 30/10/2010].

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997) *Higher Education in the learning society*, HMSO London, available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/ncihe/> [last accessed 20/06/2010].

Pennington, G. (1999) 'Towards a new professionalism: accrediting higher education teaching', in H. Fry, S. Ketteridge and S. Marshall (Eds.) *A Handbook for Teaching & Learning in Higher Education, enhancing academic practice*, Kogan Page, London.