



Exploring the Transition to Becoming an Academic: A Comparative Study of Australian Academics With and Without a Doctorate

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ABSTRACT

Staff taking up their first academic position come from a range of backgrounds. One key distinction on entry is whether the individual already has a doctorate or attains one later. The transition experiences of staff taking up their first full-time academic position and the effect of entry pathway are under reported. This study aimed to explore these transitions (n=24) and determine whether background influences the experience. Participants were grouped as either with a doctorate (D) or with no doctorate but extensive professional practice experience (ND) at the time of their first full-time academic appointment. Semi-structured interviews by purposive sampling at four Australian universities – regional (n=2), Group of Eight (Go8), research intensive universities (n=1), metropolitan non-Go8 (n=1) – were undertaken. Transcripts were confirmed by participants for accuracy. Manual content analysis was conducted by two independent researchers, followed by Leximancer© software analysis. Findings were grouped into similarities and differences between the two groups. Similarities exist for staff at the point of entry regardless of background and when they entered academia. Key similarities were the pressure of time, feeling overwhelmed and managing the competing demands of the position. Differences exist in the way pressure is felt as a result of the participants' background. Those from the no doctorate group found a tension between keeping their professional ties and attaining a doctorate while still keeping up with teaching. The group with a doctorate found a greater tension between initiating their research careers and managing their teaching. Staff development premised on the strengths of new staff rather than on their deficits may provide a more positive and supportive model. Staff development models that enhance resources help to buffer demands, thereby creating a more productive and satisfied work environment.

Keywords: Transition; identity; professional socialisation; Australian academics; professional practice; staff development.

Introduction

Embarking on a new career and entering a different work environment is always challenging. Academics need diverse skills and expertise in teaching, research and graduate training, academic citizenship and service to the community (LaRocco & Bruns, 2006). According to Coates and colleagues, it takes a minimum of seven years to produce a novice academic (Coates, Dobson, Edwards, Friedman, Goedegebuure, & Meek, 2009). The background of an individual first taking up a position in academia may have an important influence on their successful transition to the university. Holding a doctorate at the time of first taking up an academic appointment may be a key factor in their successful transition, given that the attainment of the doctorate is seen as the entry point to independent research ability. This study builds on the paucity of information regarding the effect background has on staff when they first take up an academic appointment and their transition to the role. Findings from this study provide insight into issues encountered by staff at the time of their first full-time academic appointment and are valuable for academic support programmes.

Change in profile of academic staff

In Australia, Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) merged into universities in 1987 (Anderson, Arthur, & Stokes, 1997), which led to an increase in the number of university academics without a doctorate. Prior to the merger, over two thirds (70.2%) of university academic staff held a doctorate, compared to just over half (51.8%) in 1996 (Anderson, Arthur, & Stokes, 1997). Only recently has the

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academic workforce approached the 1987 figure, with 69.9% holding either a PhD or a professional doctorate in 2012 (Australian Government Department of Industry, 2012). Anderson, Johnson and Saha (2002, p. 5) report that the “typical” new academic is one who has completed an undergraduate degree with a high academic achievement, completes a PhD and then takes up an academic appointment at Level A (Associate Lecturer). The report notes that exceptions to this are to be found within the more recently introduced university disciplines where successful practice can be substituted for the PhD. These new staff may enter the university without a doctoral qualification but may then be required to obtain one. Jackson and colleagues’ study of sessional teachers for nursing indicates that there is a barrier to continuing employment without a doctorate (Jackson, Peters, Andrews, Salamons, & Halcombe, 2011).

Research imperatives

Measured research output first became a necessary component of Australian academic employment in 1987 (Anderson, Johnson, & Saha 2002). Over the past two decades, increased links between university funding and research output have raised the research demands on Australian academics (Australian Government 2013; Henkel 2005; Anderson, Johnson, & Saha, 2002; Winefield, Boyd, Saebel, & Pignata, 2008). The impact, as shown by two Australian studies of academics (Cretchley, 2009; Goldsworthy, 2008), has been to indicate that research output is increasingly more important to career progression than teaching.

Diminishing funding

Decreased funding to Australian universities has influenced the way they operate, particularly with staffing levels. In Australia, a substantial amount was removed from university operating grants between 1994 and 2000 and, due to a failure to link base funding to indexation with inflation, it has decreased further (Winefield et al., 2008). Between 1990 and 2001, the student to staff ratios increased dramatically from 12.9 to 20.8, forcing changes in university teaching practice (Anderson et al., 2002). In 2010 the national average was 21:1 (Go8, 2011). The implication of high student to staff ratios is a substantial challenge to teach efficiently and effectively for not just new but experienced academics.

Time pressures and stress

The increase in required research output and teaching loads means that academics encounter a greater demand on their time. A study performed in 2000, with repeat measures in 2003/4, determined stress was highest in the junior academics, that is level B and C (n=447 academics from 17 Australian Universities), and that psychological strain and work–life conflict had increased (Winefield et al., 2008). Furthermore, performance benchmarking of participating universities indicated poor results for factors such as ‘wellness’, ‘work–life balance’ and ‘change and innovation’ (Langford, 2010).

A recent Australian study evaluating work stress (Boyd, Bakker, Pignata, Winefield, Gillespie, & Stough, 2011) identified increasing demands on experienced academics’ time. Levels of satisfaction and engagement have fallen as resources and support decreased (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulos, 2007). Job stress and job satisfaction have been measured across 19 countries with the result that Australian academics are highly satisfied but at the same time highly stressed in comparison to others (Shin & Jung, 2014). New academic staff, who have not yet built their diverse skill set to meet the competing demands and with potentially less support from more experienced staff, may encounter more pressure than those more experienced.

Support for new academics

There is a strong indication that the quality of the mentee–mentor relationship is key to successful transition in a new job (Boyd, 2010; Hemmings & Kay, 2010; Hemmings, 2012; McCormick & Barnes, 2008). Unfortunately, in parallel to the increasing demands on academics there has been an increase in retirement rates (Hugo, 2008) and reduced workplace mentoring (Ryan, 2012).

Contemporary academia is more pressured and performance driven, impacting on both the more experienced and newer academics (Archer, 2008). Therefore, a greater understanding of the issues faced by those new to academia needs to be explored to better prepare and support their successful integration to the workplace.

Purpose and rationale of this study

The aim of this study was to explore experiences of those taking up their first-full time academic appointment and whether differences exist for those who enter with a doctoral qualification to those who enter without a doctoral qualification. This paper

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reports the perceptions and experiences of Australian academics from four universities, highlighting the similarities and differences according to their background.

Our findings can help shape induction programmes and institutional strategy by raising awareness of professional development needs and alerting new academic staff to the issues they may encounter. This quotation by one of the participants in this study sums up the pressure new academic staff encounter: “And it always seems to be – ‘after this semester it will be easier’” (Ruth D1).

Methodology

Design

A mixed method approach was taken. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and recorded by four researchers from different disciplines. Manual and automated analysis of the interview data was conducted providing qualitative and quantitative results.

Triangulation of the analysis using content analysis and automated software increases the accuracy and credibility of the findings (Punch, 2009; Patton, 2002). The in-depth literature review was conducted after data analysis to minimise the effect of preconceived themes and concepts.

Participants

Participant recruitment was by purposive sampling. Participants self-selected as a result of impromptu meetings with academics showing an interest in the study (e.g. at conferences) as well as general invitations in four universities (one metropolitan Go8, one non-metropolitan Go8, two regional multi-campus universities). Participants (n=24) were from a range of disciplines: nursing, teaching, medical imaging, paramedicine, anthropology, theatre and arts, geology, medical laboratory science, vocational education, health management, physiology, engineering, microbiology and biochemistry.

Although the study was exploring academics' perceptions of when they took up their first full-time academic appointment, we did not exclude those who had been working for some years. We considered their recollections to be valid for the purpose of this study.

Participants who held a doctoral qualification prior to their academic appointment were assigned to the D group, whereas those who commenced without a doctoral degree were allocated to the ND group.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted between January 2010 and June 2012 and were transcribed as quickly as possible (within nine months of recording). Human Research Ethics Committee approvals were obtained prior to the commencement of the study. Information sheets were provided and signed consent forms were obtained for each interview.

The semi-structured interview began with a lead question, and other questions were provided to assist the participant to reflect upon their expectations and experiences of their first full-time academic position. These questions were:

1. Tell me what was happening in your life when you decided to work for the university. What prompted you to enter the university as a lecturer/tutor?
2. What did you think this position was all about? What did you think being an academic involved?
3. How did you envision the position would proceed, 'play out', for you?
 - a. Tell me in what ways your expectations of the position have been supported or not supported.
 - b. Tell me how you feel your contribution has met the expectations of the position.
4. Where do you see yourself in five years? Ten years? And how do you envision reaching your goals?

The chief investigators and an administration assistant completed the transcriptions, and they were returned to each participant for verification and the opportunity to make changes in order to clarify points before the thematic analysis commenced. Anonymity has been maintained by using pseudonyms.

Data analysis

Manual content analysis was conducted by two researchers. These researchers are themselves academics and bring to the data interpretation insider knowledge through their own personal histories. As a means of avoiding bias the triangulation of automated software analysis with manual content analysis was employed.

The manual content analysis consisted of deep reading and re-reading of the transcripts to allow themes to arise without the imposition of preconceived answers. Reflection and self-questioning was used by the researchers to maintain validity of the findings (Punch, 2009). Once the initial individual analysis by two researchers was conducted, we further analysed the arising themes. Inter-coder agreement through rigorous discussion, rethought and redefining of the concepts was conducted until agreement was reached. If there were ambiguous areas within the interviews we checked with the interviewee to ensure internal validity. Further analysis was then conducted using the agreed concepts. From these concepts similarities and differences were identified. Clustering the concepts into major themes was performed by consensus. This analysis was performed without the knowledge of the automated software analysis results or the literature review to minimise the effect of preconceived concepts and themes.

A validated software package, Leximancer®, was used to objectively search for themes in the interview material. Leximancer® builds a ranked list of terms according to their frequency and co-occurrence. These terms are used to develop a thesaurus based on iterative learning of the definitions determined by the context and these are then weighted to form a concept list. The software creates the context for the definitions by determining the occurrence of words either side of the word being examined. The program parameters were set for a search across three sentence blocks, and for each block the text is classified against the preformed concepts to form a co-occurrence matrix. These relative co-occurrence frequencies are then used to create the 2D concept map (Smith & Humphries, 2006).

Concept maps are colour coded according to a heat scale with hot colours (red, orange) indicating a higher importance that cool colours (blue, green). The size of the theme circle does not indicate prevalence or importance; it is a boundary for the concepts within the theme (Leximancer®, n.d.). Topical maps are provided that emphasise differences and direct relationships (Leximancer®, 2011, p. 119).

Findings

Demographics of participants

The participants' average length of time as a university employee at the time of interview was 7.6 full-time years, the median value 7 years and a range of 1–27 years of employment. The D group (n=9) were from arts and media, anthropology, physiology, geology, physics and microbiology. The ND group (n=15) were from allied health, nursing or school teaching. In total six participants were employed at Go8 metropolitan universities, with four in the ND category and two in the D category. The remaining 18 participants were from regional multi-campus universities.

Teaching experience prior to taking up their first full-time academic appointment was varied. Some of the D group began developing their teaching skills as tutors during their PhD or their postdoctoral period. One participant had spent some years doing part-time contracts for the university. Teachers from the ND group obviously had experience in teaching prior to entering academia. Of the ND group, 73% either had undergraduate education degrees or had undertaken teaching/education qualifications at Certificate, Masters or Graduate Certificate level immediately before or after entry to the university.

No participant in the ND group had completed an Honours degree. Those in the ND group had usually spent many years in practice before undertaking further study at Masters level, most completing this after commencing university employment. At the time of interview, two participants had completed professional doctorates, one was nearing completion of a professional doctorate, two had completed PhDs and three were undertaking PhDs. Of the D group, five had experience in research-only positions prior to employment as academics.

Similarities and differences

Similarities and differences derived from manual content analysis are displayed in Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 displays concepts experienced by both groups on entry to full-time academia. Table 2 lists the differences experienced between the groups.

Table 1 Summary of concepts that were similar to both groups derived through manual analysis (no particular order)

Similarities between groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of holding a doctorate is high • Regardless of skill set at entry there was a deficit in skills • Formal and informal support strategies were often unhelpful (all except 2 participants). Lack of successful mentoring, ‘sink or swim’ • Sense of being overwhelmed; time stress • Unrealistic performance expectations; need to be very good at everything very quickly • Unfulfilled research output; lack of resources • Feelings of not being valued • Want the position; committed to the role • Challenges of teaching for those without teacher training

Table 2 Summary of concepts that were different between groups derived through manual analysis (no particular order)

Differences between groups	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing of doctorate attainment • Skill (teaching, research) deficit on entry influences which university key performance indicator causes most stress 	
Concepts Specific to ND group	Concepts Specific to D Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their perception of ‘being’ an academic was often considered only when they had attained their doctoral qualification • Academic moral stance: giving back to industry/community more evident in ND group • Need to maintain professional practice credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already view themselves as an academic • Already socialised into academic style research • A greater sense of pressure to get their individual research career established

Table 3 displays the six most prevalent themes and their captured concepts for each group arising from the Leximancer© analysis. Themes and their concepts are listed in ranked order relative to the most persistent theme for each group. Research was the most persistent theme and for both groups ranked 100%.

Teaching was identified by both groups, although ranked differently and containing different concepts. However, similar percentage connectivity for teaching was reported by both groups (D=61%, ND = 64%) relative to research (100%). Time appears as a theme for the D group (82%), whereas time is a concept within the theme work for the ND group (89%). The theme work is identified by both groups although vastly different in the percentage connectivity.

The ND group includes the themes ‘academic’ and ‘professional’ with quite high percentage connectivities that do not appear in any similar form with the D group. The absence of a doctoral qualification and a tie with a professional association may be the key influencers for this difference.

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Table 3 Leximancer© ranked thematic summary — Comparison between groups of derived themes and associated concepts. The % connectivity column provides an indication of how connected each derived theme is to most prominent theme; in both cases the theme 'research'.

<i>D themes</i>	Concepts captured	% connectivity	<i>ND themes</i>	Concepts captured	% connectivity
<i>Research</i>	Research, doing, people, university	100	<i>Research</i>	Research, people, school	100
<i>Time</i>	Time, things, guess, thought, having, able	82	<i>Academic</i>	Academic, position, experience	91
<i>Teaching</i>	Teaching, students, job, course	61	<i>Work</i>	Work, time, different	89
<i>PhD</i>	PhD, working, looking	39	<i>Professional</i>	Professional, role, academic	72
<i>Work</i>	Work, project	28	<i>Teaching</i>	Teaching	64
<i>Teach</i>	Teach, academic	17	<i>University</i>	University, PhD	56

Figures 1 and 2 display the topical concept relationship maps derived by Leximancer© analysis. These maps provide a visual display of the themes (identified as the coloured word within each circle), the concepts (identified by the black words) within each theme and their association with other themes. Minor concepts have not been displayed. The heat scale indicates the importance and reflects the percentage connectivity reported in Table 3.

The theme in the hot coloured red circles (highest important) is the same for both groups (research). Time and teaching are the next most important themes for the D group, whereas academic and work are the next most important themes for the ND group. Teaching as a theme is coloured quite differently between the groups (hot for D group and cool for ND). This may be interpreted as a difference in level of importance, but in reviewing Table 3 the percentage connectivity between both groups is quite similar (61% vs. 64%). It would appear that the ND group have more factors influencing their transition to academia than the D group, hence the shift down in level of importance to teaching. Perhaps the D group, already holding a doctorate, have one less substantial factor to contend with when they first take up their full-time role.

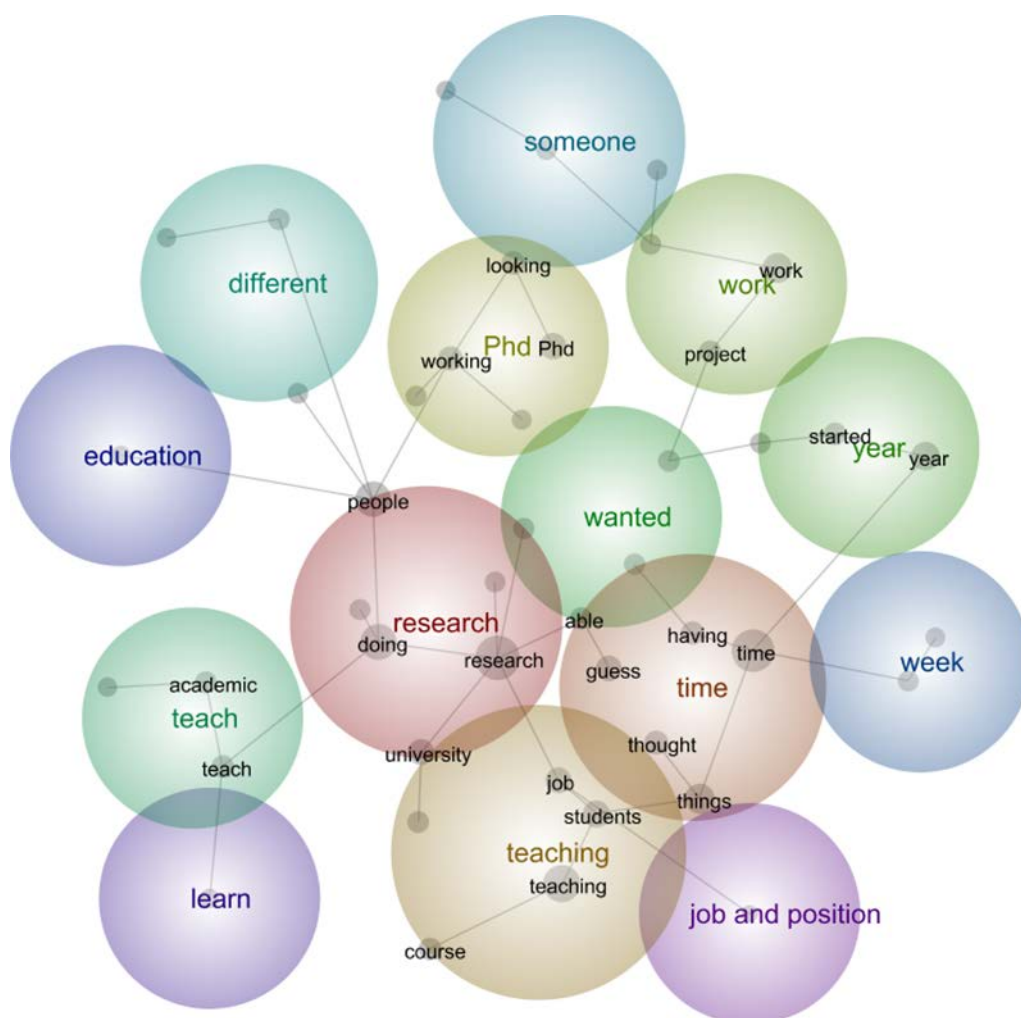


Figure 1 D group concept map

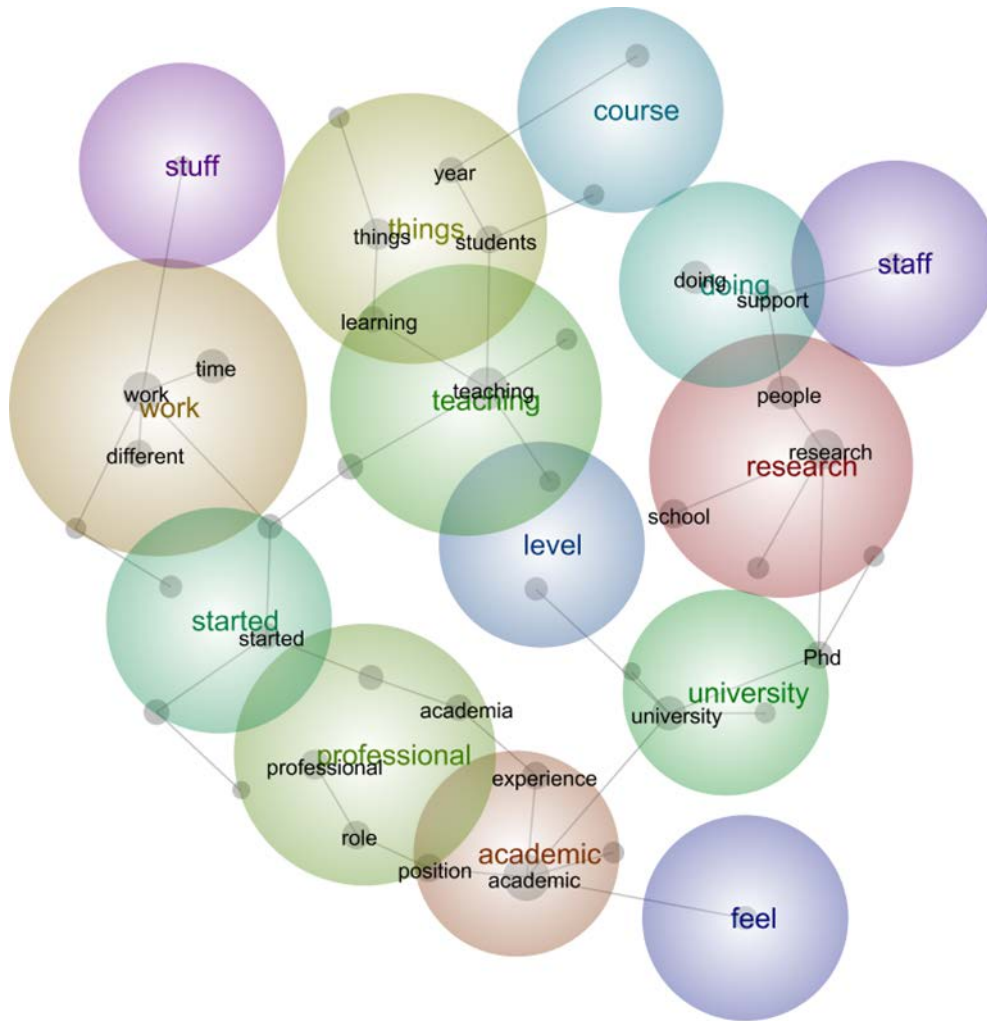


Figure 2 ND group concept map

Three major themes

Three major themes emerged from manual clustering of concepts arising in Tables 1 and 2 for both groups. These were: issues relating to the transition to academia, issues related to teaching and issues related to research. Clustering of concepts presents the overarching issues experienced by our participants when they first commenced as a full-time university academic. Quantitative data are presented to provide the extent of similarities or differences between groups. Interview excerpts representative of each group are presented. Note these major themes are interconnected and concepts such as time pressure arise within them all.

Issues of transition into academia

The major theme ‘issues of transition to academia’ covers broad aspects of taking on an academic role and one that is primarily influenced by a time pressure. The concepts – a lack of time to accomplish all aspects of the position, the role of an academic being very different to what was expected and a lack of support in their new role – were clustered.

Feelings of being overwhelmed by the expectations and workload was felt by 75% of the participants (n=18), with a greater proportion of the ND group (47%) feeling this than the D group (33%).

The requirement to meet performance-based measures in research and teaching resulted in competing time allocation and a sense of pressure. This pressure created competition between becoming a good teacher and achieving research output. Ruth (D1) states: “... everyone says you shouldn’t be a perfectionist when you’re teaching and you’ve got to do the bare minimum and get your priorities right...I just can’t do it.”

Further evidence of the competition between teaching and research outcomes is noted by Dexter (ND10): “I think you can be an excellent teacher ... [but] you are not going to be anywhere in academia unless you publish.” Steph (ND3) indicates that involvement

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in professional practice through maintaining industry contacts is important but time consuming: "...a lot of my time has been engaging with my industry". Ruth (D1) further highlights the competition between teaching and research:

They are basically, more or less, two full time jobs, and to do a research project properly you have to be able to throw yourself into it and really do it ... I go fill out an application and then the following week I haven't finished because everything else has got in the way, I mean teaching ... Honours students... supervision, is time consuming. Ruth (D1)

Generally, the position was not what it was expected to be:

I didn't realize it was a life commitment. ...with all the things the uni wants us to be aware of – the strategies for the next four years and their research agendas – what they want academics to do and achieve, isn't really supported in the time we get allocated to do our duties. ... there was a lot of expectation of what I would do in terms of research and in terms of professional development and teaching and all that sort of stuff and I thought at the beginning it would be easy to achieve. Mary (D2)

A lack of support was raised in a number of areas; teaching, research, and how to work in their new role. The following quotation highlights how time pressure impacts on the ability to provide mentoring for the new academic by those more experienced: "It's very hard, everyone's very busy and it's very hard for people to ...help each other I guess." (D1)

Issues related to teaching

Taking on the role of teaching was more challenging than anticipated by many of the participants, and support for teaching was often lacking. Just over half (54%) found teaching challenging: "I suddenly realised I didn't know how to teach. I quickly identified that I was struggling with the teaching aspect." Cath (ND7)

Limited support for the development of teaching skills was voiced by 42% (n=10) of the participants. This was exacerbated for 21% (n=5) of the participants, who began their career teaching subjects for which they did not have the content expertise. The need to develop teaching resources from scratch was identified by nine participants, six of whom had no previous teaching experience: "... I had three weeks to write all the lectures, it was overwhelming... writing two full subjects and of course trying to teach them and do the pracs." Wendy (ND1)

Mandatory introductory teaching programmes were available for new staff. Of the 24 participants, one reports being advised not to do the course (D9) and concentrate on getting the research career established, whereas two were not aware of these courses. Five indicated that the mandatory course was, however, of little value. Bill (D4) described them as "patronising", stating that "a three day university course on university teaching is not very helpful" and Carly (ND9) asks "why wouldn't you do a Masters that is a higher qualification in teaching and learning". Carly had entered the university after starting such a qualification only to be told it would not be supported by the university. For Warrior (D8) the course came too late – years after her commencement, and Seth (D7) felt it had come too early for him to be able to make the most of it. These academics had begun without prior teaching experience and needed support.

Fortunately there were stand out exceptions. Denise (ND14), while holding a joint appointment between industry and the university, was supported to undertake a postgraduate certificate in university education.

Issues related to research

Although 71% of our participants wanted to focus on research and considered it crucial for their career, time, lack of resources or support and competing demands made this very difficult. Two D group academics had yet to establish their research career after three years. Both indicated heavy teaching loads and a lack of senior academic mentorship had prevented consistent attempts to get established.

The majority of the D group (78%) thought they would have time for research once they took up an academic position, but this was not realised. Mary (D2) provides an example of this unrealised expectation:

I guess I was a bit naive to think that I would have so much time to do research or even so much time to do teaching and evaluate teaching and care about my teaching – I haven't had as much time as I thought I'd have to just do normal admin like filling in grades and marking – that takes up so much time – and just getting back to people in emails – and I didn't really consider all that as part of my job.... I just thought it would be planning lectures and planning tutes and great ways to engaging students – I didn't think about the big picture of academia. Mary (D2)

The D group recognised that teaching would form part of the workload, and some believed the two aspects should have equal weighting, but they didn't enter the university specifically to teach so the competition for their research time was unexpected. Mary highlights the constancy of competition between priorities and the negative effect it has on conducting research. "...Research, as the days, weeks and months go on, I am becoming less passionate, which is sad as that is what I was passionate about 5 years ago" Mary (D2).

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In contrast, Faith (D9), who at the time of interview was coming to the end of her first year as an academic, felt supported and was very enthusiastic. Her institution had provided an Early Career Research grant upon entry to help her get established. However, Faith also indicated an extremely organised approach to her regimen that included several hours' work prior to retiring every evening. The research output priority was evident at this institution as Faith had been advised to complete teacher training workshops at a later date and concentrate on establishment of the research programme first.

The lack of a doctorate for those in the ND group was a major issue in meeting the performance measures for research and being considered an academic. Clare (ND8) reflects on this issue.

...sink or swim in terms of research. They...try to run these workshops, introduction to research, but they are crap. They, the professors and associate professors, have forgotten what it is like to be an early career researcher – think everyone has gone on from a PhD to academia, don't know that you have no idea what ARC is, everyone uses acronyms. Clare (ND8)

The ND group felt, despite their entry having been based on their professional practice competence, they were disadvantaged by their lack of a doctorate. Not only did they need to attain a doctorate they also had to participate in research. Many (87% in the ND Group) reported a feeling of being a 'second class' academic without the doctorate. Dexter (ND10) explained this as: "It's about 'I'm an academic, I have a PhD and I know all about it. You listen to me'. Basically, until you have the PhD you don't have the right to voice an opinion."

Clare (ND8) notes, after a career of 16 years in the university, she has only considered herself a real academic in the last two or three. Matt feels the shift in identity is related to the timing of gaining the PhD:

What is different is their [the D group] avenues of access...far more open than my avenues of access...those three letters carry a great deal of weight...it is inevitable that they will progress faster through the system because they have that qualification and I will always come up against that invisible wall, be held back, their identity will develop faster than mine. Matt (ND5)

A lack of support for research activities was voiced by almost half of all participants (42%); six of the ND group and four of the D group. The lack of support ranged from lack of leadership to lack of funds to lack of time. Seth (D7) provides some context:

...to get a decent [research] program going takes time (taken me the best part of a decade). And to be blunt, I would say that a substantial research experience is nearly essential prior to coming to this university if you are to be successful to the point of getting funding such as NH&MRC or ARC grant. I think that a lot of people try to do too much on their own too early. In the full time research world you are regarded as a trainee (post doc) for at least 3 years full time after gaining the PhD and most people find that they need much more than that before they are able to emerge out from under the protection of someone more senior. Most people who arrive at this university are either pre doctoral or post docs. So I think, really, ... need to move into the research program of established people if they are to get going properly. It is too hard to 'fly without a net.'

Discussion

Our research indicates there are similarities in the experience of those entering academia for the first time, regardless of whether they hold a doctorate or how long ago they took up their first appointment. However, there are also some differences that may be important to consider when supporting staff in their development. The findings in this study add to this under-reported area and provide insight for institutional policy and staff development programmes.

Of primary concern to both groups was a shortage of time in managing their teaching and research commitments to an acceptable standard. The pressure was such that our participants were uncertain they could be successful in both teaching and research, despite being highly committed to their role. Our findings are supported by research indicating that academics experience time pressure because of competing demands (Bexley, Arkoudis, & James, 2013; Winefield et al., 2008). When considering Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) model where work stress occurs when workplace demands outstrip the job resources (aspects of the job that provide support, invigoration and satisfaction), it is important to find ways to better support new staff. If the pressure of time becomes so unbalanced that job resources cannot compensate, staff will disengage and the quality of work will be undermined.

Bakker and Demerouti's (2007) model also indicates that support in the form of mentoring and feedback are helpful in offsetting the job demands. Our participants were committed and dedicated to their role, but a lack of support led to a sense of being overwhelmed and frustration at being unable to meet the diverse demands of the job. In a climate of reduced funding, increasing staff to student ratios, increasing demands to demonstrate quality teaching and research outputs and a diversification of the academic role (Bexley, Arkoudis, & James, 2013), the need to effectively support the new academic increases. Descriptions of decreasing academic well-ness, academic malaise and academic zombie-ism (Langford, 2010; Winefield et al., 2008; Ryan, 2010) indicate the academic role is challenging, therefore early effective support is needed to counter these challenges.

Teaching research academic positions require performance in both aspects of the role. Depending on the new staff member's background and skill set, a lack of targeted support in the early stages of a career will impact adversely on meeting these two aspects

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successfully. Almost half of our participants noted they received only limited support to help them in learning how to teach and how to develop their research. Teaching programmes for new staff were of limited help for about 20% of those who participated in them. Many of our participants reported teaching in areas they were unfamiliar with or having no resources to get them started. It is no wonder a sense of being overwhelmed was experienced when the participants generally received limited or no support for teaching, in addition to teaching in a new area or starting with no resources.

A lack of support in research was identified in the areas of leadership, time and funds. Hemmings (2012) noted that those who achieve peer-reviewed publication early in their career were more successful in their career development compared to those who do not. Even though half the D group in our study had come from research only positions prior to taking up their academic role, they felt burdened by being unable to make progress with their research. Two of our participants reported that after being employed for three years they still had not made any progress with their research. It would appear the competing demands between research and teaching are such that even with the skills and experience it is difficult to balance both roles well.

Effective mentoring and staff development programmes have the potential to provide resources leading to increased job satisfaction and productivity. Although our study is small, increased demands on academic staff are well supported in the literature, so it is reasonable to assume the lack of effective support encountered by our participants is reflective of many in Australian universities. Induction programmes therefore need to address the lack of effective support in teaching and research if they are to be successful. One of our participants commented that more experienced academic staff are so busy that they can't help and this is a major hindrance in getting support. In fact, their busyness acted as a barrier to asking for their support. Appropriate workload allocation needs to be attributed to the experienced staff who take on this role and recognition for good work should be included. Perhaps clear evidence for good work in mentoring could be part of academic promotion applications.

Institutional policy or culture may need to be reconsidered for new staff with or without a doctorate. In our study, first time academic staff without a doctorate reported feeling like "second class" citizens or that they were not real academics. These staff also felt a tension in keeping their professional ties and becoming an academic. Commencing a new job is difficult enough, but to commence and then feel you aren't worthy adds pressure to the transition.

Although the authors of this paper consider the attainment of a doctorate important and something that should be encouraged for all academic staff, perhaps a change to the institutional culture to appreciate the value of staff from professional backgrounds would help to mitigate the effect our participants encountered. Induction programmes that operate from the basis of addressing deficits in entry criteria undermine confidence as they aim to 'fix' the deficits, whereas induction programmes that work from a basis of furthering recognised skill sets are much more likely to have a positive impact. Francis and colleagues (Francis, Ramdhony, Reddington, & Staines, 2014, p. 2716) indicate that structural "power asymmetry...imposes engagement strategies" that in fact lead to disengagement, whereas active conversations promote engagement "sustaining a reciprocal exchange of views" (p. 2721). The diversity of academic background at entry means that carefully designed and timely resource allocation to meet individual needs is necessary for encouraging development as an academic. Studies on work engagement indicate that when staff have a voice in their engagement strategies, work engagement increases and is more authentic (Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013). This principle could be translated to staff development, and therefore new staff could identify what they most need and when.

Our participants found the reality of the academic role very different to what they expected. The ND group took a position as an academic primarily to teach and give back to their respective disciplines. They expected to be involved in research but did not expect the pressure to develop individual research careers. The competition between developing a credible academic identity through research, whilst maintaining good teaching and remaining credible as a practitioner, was, for some, overwhelming. In contrast, the D group had anticipated they would develop their research careers but found their teaching loads depleted their time for research, which led to frustration or disappointment. Staff development programmes that better prepare new staff for the challenges and environment they will encounter may reduce the impact of unrealised expectations.

Conclusion

The findings from this study provide valuable feedback to those developing academic staff development or induction programmes. Challenges encountered by academic staff taking up their first full-time academic appointment can be influenced by whether or not they hold a doctoral qualification. A more targeted approach to new staff development is required than a one size fits all approach. Regardless of the doctoral qualification there is a consistent sense of being overwhelmed by the competing demands and a shortage of time. This is a major concern and one that needs addressing because staff who experience high levels of work stress and lower levels of support will disengage, and the quality of their work will diminish. In this era of heightened performance measures for universities, it is good to have staff who can positively contribute to the overall performance of the university. Redesigning staff development programmes to work positively with the skills new staff bring and institutional recognition for these strengths may be the change that more effectively supports new staff.

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Patricia began her career as a Nuclear Medicine Technologist entering the university sector after 20 years in practice. A move to regional Australia resulted in a discipline shift to teaching physiology and pathophysiology. Her research areas include science education, clinical practice and academic transition. See <http://scholar.google.com.au/citations?user=gEOMfhgAAAAI&hl=en>

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Edwina has worked for almost 20 years as an academic at both Go8 and regional universities. Her research interests have been in workforce issues, primarily attrition and work engagement, and teaching and learning in higher education. Currently she teaches in the Graduate Certificate for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, which is part of the probation requirement for all new academic staff at Charles Sturt University.

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